

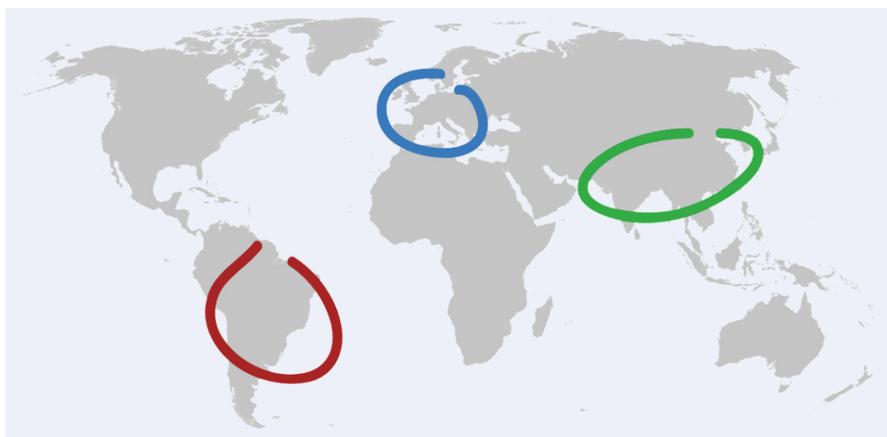


# Language & Space *News*

The Newsletter of the University Research Priority Program (URPP) *Language and Space*

February 2016

## Morphology in Time and Space



Language families in comparison: Europe (Romance and Celtic), East Asia (Sino-Tibetan), and South America (Quechuan, Tupian, and Cariban)

**On February 1, 2016, a new, interdisciplinary research project took off at the University of Zurich: “Linguistic Morphology in Time and Space” (LiMiTS), funded by the SNSF Sinergia Program.**

Rik van Gijn

The central question of the project is: How does morphology develop in different genealogical and geographical contexts and to what extent is this development affected by language contact? In order to answer this question, morphological patterns in three widely different geographical and genealogical contexts are studied: Europe (language families Romance and Celtic), East Asia (Sino-Tibetan), and South America (Quechuan, Tupian, and Cariban). These language

families show (sometimes considerable) internal morphological variation, which seems to be areally determined. This begs the question of what the role of language contact is in shaping these patterns.

In order to link the linguistic information to temporal and spatial dimensions, the project aims to develop a methodological toolkit based on phylogeographic methods, a combination of phylogenetic methods (language trees) and spatial distribution models. In developing the toolkit, the project focuses on Celtic and Romance, language families for which we have a lot of linguistic and extra-linguistic information. In a second phase, the toolkit will be applied to Sino-Tibetan and the South Ameri-

can families, for which we have much less information.

The approach the project will take to morphology is based on theories of grammatical and phonological word domains (paying close attention to non-isomorphism), recent research on the clitic/affix distinction that suggests more variation than commonly assumed, and multivariate versions of morphological typology that introduce more fine-grained variables.

If successful, the results of the project will provide a new way of tracing historical developments, even in the absence of a written historical record.

[www.arealmorphology.uzh.ch/limits](http://www.arealmorphology.uzh.ch/limits)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Summer School of the URPP

*Kloster Kappel, 4–9 September 2016*

#### 1<sup>st</sup> International Summer School *Language and Space*

Seven leading experts in the area of language and space will present and discuss their recent research findings in these fields. Students will also have a chance to present their own research projects if they wish.

Organizers: Andreas H. Jucker, Barbara Sonnenhauser, Elisabeth Stark

Deadline for late applications:

June 30, 2016

[www.spur.uzh.ch/summerschool](http://www.spur.uzh.ch/summerschool)

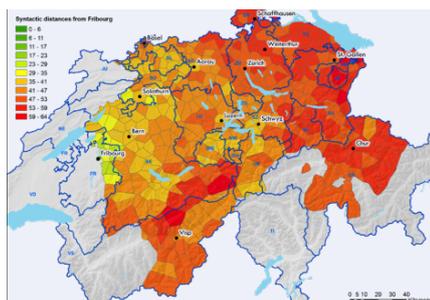
## Morphosyntactic Areas

The interdisciplinary project “Modelling Morphosyntactic Area Formation in Swiss German” (SynMod) aims to link research questions and methods of the two disciplines dialectology and geography, especially in the field of Geographic Information Science.

Philipp Stoeckle

Project members from the German Department and the Department of Geography are conducting joint studies employing quantitative methods of GIScience to verify linguistic hypotheses about distribution patterns of morphosyntactic phenomena in the *Syntactic Atlas of German-speaking Switzerland* (SADS).

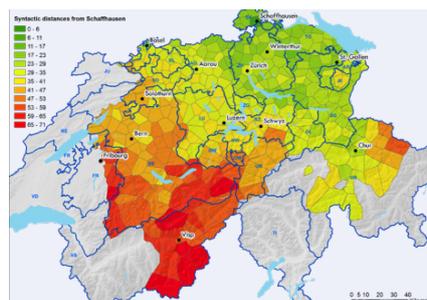
Péter Jeszenszky deals with the relationship between syntactic distance and geographic distance. Using many phenomena of the SADS, a linguistic distance measure was built between SADS survey locations. On the lefthand map below, we see the syntactic distances between Fribourg and all other survey sites, while the right map depicts the syntactic distances from Schaffhausen. Although the general patterns are similar—smaller syntactic distances in the proximity vs. bigger distances in remote areas—it becomes apparent that Fribourg seems to be linguistically much more isolated than Schaffhausen, while the syntactic distances from Schaffhausen better correlate with geographical distances.



We hypothesized that travel times correlate better with linguistic distances than Euclidean distance. We could show that 1) in most cases geographical distances explain the majority of variance in syntactic distance, 2) travel times are significantly better predictors for syntactic distance than Euclidean distance, and 3) the differences between prediction values of travel times (in 1850, 1950, 2000) are statistically not significant.

Philipp Stoeckle focuses on a particular construction, the so-called “doubling” of the verb *afa* (‘to begin’) as in “[Dann] fangt s Iis *afa* schmelze” (lit. ‘[Then] begins the ice *begin* to melt’) as opposed to “[Dann] fangt s Iis *aa* schmelze”. The construction shows variation: while being absent in the east, it is optional in the western part of the research area. In order to examine whether this variation points to language change we performed an apparent-time analysis by dividing the SADS informants into two age groups and comparing the mean percentage rates of *afa* occurrences for the two age groups at each survey location. The significantly higher values for the younger speakers point to an increase of *afa* doubling and therefore suggest a consolidation of the construction in the western periphery. The result demonstrates that language change towards non-standard variants can be observed in Swiss German.

[www.spur.uzh.ch/synmod](http://www.spur.uzh.ch/synmod)



Linguistic distances between all survey sites and Fribourg (l.) and all survey sites and Schaffhausen (r.)

## Workshops & Colloquia

March 13–14, 2016

**Frontiers of Early Human Expansion in Asia: Linguistic and Genetic Perspectives on Ainu, Japan and the North Pacific Rim**

Organizers: Hiromi Matsumae, Kentaro Shimizu, and Balthasar Bickel  
Co-financed by the two URPPs *Evolution in Action* and *Language and Space*  
Contact: [hiromi.matsumae@ieu.uzh.ch](mailto:hiromi.matsumae@ieu.uzh.ch)  
Registration: <http://goo.gl/forms/b8JiOCKW9o>

March 17–19, 2016

**Variation in Space and Time: Clausal Complementation in South Slavic**

Convenors: Barbara Sonnenhauser, Björn Wiemer (University of Mainz)  
Contact: [barbara.sonnenhauser@uzh.ch](mailto:barbara.sonnenhauser@uzh.ch)

Several researchers are invited for a short fellowship at the URPP. In this context, they will offer workshops and colloquia in their research fields:

April 15, 2016

**Workshop on “Referenzsemantik”**

With Klaus von Heusinger (University of Cologne)  
Organizers: Johannes Kabatek, David Gerards, Marianne Hundt, and Elisabeth Stark  
Contact: [davidpaul.gerards@uzh.ch](mailto:davidpaul.gerards@uzh.ch)

April 18–22, 2016

**Text im virtuellen und materiellen Raum**

Susanne Tienken (Stockholm University) will present several talks.  
Organizers: Angelika Linke and Christa Dürscheid  
Contact: [alinke@ds.uzh.ch](mailto:alinke@ds.uzh.ch)

May 9–13, 2016

**Linguistic Pragmatics and Cultural Analysis**

With Leelo Keevallik (Linköping University) and Anja Stukenbrock (University of Lausanne)  
Organizers: Angelika Linke and Heiko Hausendorf  
Contact: [heiko.hausendorf@ds.uzh.ch](mailto:heiko.hausendorf@ds.uzh.ch)

For details, see: [www.spur.uzh.ch/events](http://www.spur.uzh.ch/events)

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## Portrait

## Urban Linguistics



Antonia Steger joined the URPP Language and Space in October 2015 as a PhD student in the research group "Interactional Spaces."

Interview: Nathalie Meyer

*How would you describe your doctoral thesis in two sentences?*

**Antonia Steger:** I am interested in the social practice of lingering in public squares in Zurich. This focus of interest requires a multimodal analysis not only of spoken language but also of body language.

*In your master's thesis, you have already studied the interactive production of space by the example of a main public place in Zurich, the Sechseläutenplatz. What motivates you to continue your research on this matter?*

**Steger:** Spending leisure time in public space has (again) become an important part of what people cherish about living in a city. And what seems to be something simple, such as "doing nothing," is in fact a complex system of interactions which is highly influenced by cultural routines and

the built space. In all of this, the Sechseläutenplatz is a unique place, designed for the maximum of freedom of action for the visitors with even the chairs being freely movable. Having established an initial approach to this complex field in my master's thesis, my PhD project will elaborate on my (so far highly hypothetical) theses.

*In what ways does your affiliation with the URPP Language and Space affect your work?*

**Steger:** The URPP is in many ways an ideal realm for this kind of research. Firstly, it is a melting pot of disciplines. It is an excellent starting point for linguists to collaborate with geographers, ethnographers, cognitive scientists, and even architects. Furthermore, the VideoLab offers a range of technical equipment and methodical knowledge which allows me to elaborate on my data in more detail than the usual urban fieldwork studies do. Last but not least, working together on a daily basis with other PhD students who do research in similar topics creates one of the most constructive environments.

## Save the Dates!

**June 6, 2016**  
Retreat URPP Language and Space  
Conference Center Schloss Au

**September 14–15, 2016**  
Second Meeting with Scientific Advisory Board, Zurich

## New Staff Members

Since December 2015, several new assistants and young researchers have started at the URPP and in associated projects: Raffaella Zaugg (Head Office), Noëmi Aepli, Tatyana Soldatova, Fatima Stadler (Corpus-Lab), Luca Scherrer, Adriana Zanda (GISLab), Gerard Adarve, Dolores Batinić, Adriano Sabini (research projects).

## Upcoming Colloquia Talks

Room SOD 1-105, Schönberggasse 9, 8001 Zürich, 16:15–18:00

**March 3, 2016**

Eleanor Coghill (URPP Language and Space) and Ariel Gutman (University of Konstanz)  
*Aramaic Dialects across Space and Time*

**March 17, 2016**

Sara Fabrikant (Department of Geography, University of Zurich)  
*Maps that Answer or Raise Questions*

**April 14, 2016**

Klaus von Heusinger and Chiara Gianollo (University of Cologne)  
*Zwischen definit und indefinit – vier Gebrauchsweisen von Demonstrativa*

**April 28, 2016**

*Plenary Meeting URPP Language and Space (with Apéro afterwards)*

**May 12, 2016**

Anne Zribi-Hertz (CNRS, Université Paris 8)  
*Are creole grammars exceptional? Some empirical input from Matinikè and Haitian*

**May 26, 2016**

Presentations by the Special Interest Groups "Language Contact" and "Theories of Space"

Full program: [www.spur.uzh.ch/lingkol](http://www.spur.uzh.ch/lingkol)

## Highlights of Fall Semester 2015

Agnes Kolmer

Besides the great success in raising third party funds for the realization of new Language & Space related projects achieved by URPP members in autumn 2015, three noteworthy events took place during the past semester: the relocation of staff members to Freiestrasse 16 (FRF) in Sep-

tember, the celebration of the new location opening with Michael Hengartner, President of the University of Zurich, and Andreas H. Jucker, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, on October, 13 (see picture), and the occasion of the Site Visit with the External Board members on October, 26–27, 2015.



Opening of the new location (f.r.t.): E. Glaser, M. Hengartner, A. H. Jucker, H. Hausendorf, A. Kolmer

## GISLab's "GiveMeMaps!" Initiative

The analysis of linguistic data is one of the core businesses of the GISLab, and visualization is not exactly the same as data analysis. Nevertheless, nice visualizations are great and therefore the GISLab initiated the "GiveMeMaps!" initiative.

Curdin Derungs

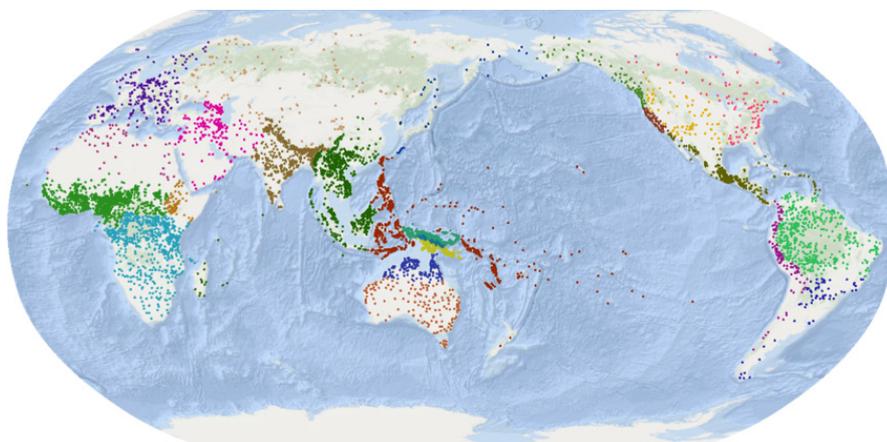
The goal of the initiative is to transform the wealth of spatial data, in the hands of URPP Language and Space members, into pleasant cartographic visualizations. An important side product is to introduce a corporate design layout for maps with recognition value, which will thus be associated with the URPP by a wider public.

To wake up the dormant need for maps, the example below shows the first output of the "GiveMeMaps!" initiative. It is based on language data from the AUTOTYP database. The colour code represents a distinction of languages into 24 linguistic areas. A particular feature of this map is the use of the Robinson map projection, centred on the 120° meridian. The Robinson projection is a compromise of representing the earth, i. e. a sphere, on a plane with only minimal directional, distal and

areal distortion. In other words, everything is distorted, but not very much. Centering the world on the Pacific instead of the prime meridian is a linguistic particularity. Only disciplines with a strong focus on large scale human migration find the Pacific, and in particular the Bering Strait, more interesting than the newer "bridge" between the old and the new world, the Atlantic.

Producing nice maps sounds simple but obscures the fact that cartography is an artistic and a scientific discipline of long history. In order to fully appreciate the beauty and richness of cartography I would like to recommend you to consult the seminal work of Jacques Bertin on "Sémiologie Graphique" (1974) or to enjoy the curio collection compiled in "How to lie with maps" (Mark Monmonier, 1996). A more approachable entry point to cartography, however, will be the URPP Language and Space colloquium on March 17, 2016. Sara Fabrikant, professor of geographic information visualization and analysis and Vice President of the International Cartographic Association, will present us with her take on cartography.

[www.spur.uzh.ch/givememaps](http://www.spur.uzh.ch/givememaps)



24 linguistic areas, represented by a Robinson map projection (service layer credits: Esri, DeLorme, GEBCO, NOAA; map design: GISLab, University of Zurich)

## Joint Discoveries

The project "Interactive Discoveries" aims at a better understanding of explorative learning processes in science centers.

Wolfgang Kesselheim

What is the difference between a science center like the Technorama in Winterthur and a traditional science museum? It is the way visitors are introduced to natural phenomena. Traditional museums show phenomena to visitors and explain them by additional descriptions. In contrast, science centers provide experimentation stations that encourage visitors to approach natural phenomena in an active manner. By offering many opportunities of engagement, these stations aim less at the transmission of factual knowledge but more at the empowerment of visitors to discover natural phenomena by themselves.

So far, there is very little research on how this "explorative learning" works. To close this research gap, the VideoLab will start its project "Interactive Discoveries" this summer, financed by a three-year grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

To track the discovery processes of visitors, we make use of the fact that people hardly ever move around alone in science centers. In front of experimentation stations, they share their ideas about how to explain the phenomena at hand, trying to find a satisfying solution together. For the project, we document these conversations by video recordings and by mobile eye-tracking devices, to have a basis to reconstruct the interactive processes of discovery.

The VideoLab's project will contribute to the exploration of a mechanism that is of fundamental importance to science centers as an institution and to the promotion of the public understanding of science.