

I MUND OG BOG

25 artikler om sprog
tilegnet Inge Lise Pedersen
på 70-årsdagen d. 5. juni 2009

Redigeret af

Henrik Hovmark
Iben Stampe Sletten
Asgerd Gudiksen

Afdeling for Dialektforskning
Nordisk Forskningsinstitut
Københavns Universitet
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Nordisk Forskningsinstitut

Københavns Universitet

Njalsgade 136

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nfi.ku.dk

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PETER AUER

Dialects do not usually play a part in the formation of linguistic landscapes, since in general they are not written. In analysing one of the few exceptions (rest area names along a national road in the southwest of Germany) it is shown how linguistic spaces are created. It is argued that the way in which dialect is used presupposes and reinforces a certain representation of the local dialect. It creates a gap between dialect use and dialect ideology, thereby contributing (other than intended) to the further disappearance of dialectal ways of speaking in the region.

1 Introduction

In this paper, I will discuss one of the rare examples in which a dialect becomes visible and is employed in writing on public signs in order to create a dialect space.

Language(s) locate speakers in geographical space; the way in which somebody speaks is used by others to link this person to a place, region or country. The possibility of establishing such a link is never questioned, even though it is not always trivial. First of all, of course, it is subject to error: somebody may sound to somebody as if s/he was from location X while in fact s/he is from location Y. More importantly, the meaning of 'being from place X' has become highly context-dependent in (post-)modern times: often, language will not provide a cue to the person's current home but only to that person's place of origin, i.e. the birthplace or place of upbringing. The granularity of the relationship between speakers and locations may also vary from situation to situation, and it surely has changed over recent history. For many centuries it was possible in many parts of Europe to locate people very precisely on the basis of their language, i.e. their place of origin, upbringing and dwelling could be narrowed down to a small area such as a village, for example. For many present-day speakers, this no longer holds, and their way of speaking may link them to a large geographical space only, such as a region or a nation state, and even the latter relationship may be opaque.

But the relationship between space and language can also be (and is often) seen in a different, more de-personalised way, which only seemingly follows from the fact that language locates speakers in space, while in fact it brings along a range of additional

theoretical problems and presuppositions: geographical space itself can be associated with language. Then a geographical region 'is the home of' a certain dialect, a standard language 'belongs to' a certain nation space, or a village is 'situated' in a certain dialect area. This association between geographical spaces and languages or varieties is only a shortcut, or a metonymic way of speaking, of course. In reality, it is not the space itself, but the people who live in it who are linked to that language/variety. However, the way in which linguists (and dialectologists in particular) speak about 'language spaces' often treats the link as if it was primary and naturally given. In particular, the usual way in which linguistic maps (be it of national languages, minority languages, dialects, language families or *Sprachbünde*) are drawn suggests a natural grounding of these linguistic varieties or sets of varieties in geography: linguistic borders are shown on maps just like rivers or mountains. (The very notion of an isogloss, perhaps the most central concept of traditional 'dialect geography', with its obvious parallels to other iso-lines such as isothermes, isohyets or isokrymes,¹ strongly implies such a natural grounding.) In this view, language is not only a cue which indexes the speaker's place of origin or dwelling, it becomes a dynamic force in itself which creates spaces, with all the consequences which such a change of perspective entails (no two languages can inhabit the same space, spaces do not overlap, there are clear boundaries between spaces, etc.).

The idea that language varieties inhabit geographical spaces comes natural to European linguistic and lay thinking. But at the same time, its empirical foundations seem shaky. The sense by which we perceive space most directly and efficiently is vision; but (spoken) language spaces are not visible. Dialect spaces can at best be heard, where the 'at best' refers to the necessary condition of an immobile population which is glued to the soil in such a way that a geographical space and the population of speakers who inhabited it can be equated for all practical purposes.

On the other hand, there is written language which is visible by definition. Yet written language is located in geographical space much less easily than spoken language. It is of course true that the style of a writer may also betray his or her provenance, or at least his or her native country. But contrary to the traditional immobile dialect speaker, the carriers of the written language are typically mobile. And the book, the prototype of our literate culture, is a transportable carrier of language which *eo ipso* is not well suited for creating language areas. While listening to the people in a village may indicate which language space they live in, seeing (and reading) the books in a library does not. Visible language does not seem to construe language spaces well, and certainly not dialect spaces, since dialects are mostly spoken varieties.

Yet this picture is not the whole truth. Of course the most important exemplars of writing are tied to transportable carriers such as books, which are severed from their place of origin and can be read (i.e., their texts fully interpreted) when taken to any

¹ In meteorology, isothermes are lines of equal temperature, isohyets are lines of the same amount of water fallout, and isokrymes lines of the same lowest temperature.

other place than the one where they were written. But ever since the invention of writing, there has been another type of written signs, signs that are not mobile, but essentially linked to the place in which their carriers were erected. Written language on these signs is located in space, and through them, written language creates space.

Immobile, spatially anchored writing is typical for public places, not for private places. It serves a number of functions that are linked to the social organisation of life in public, from commemoration in the form of monuments over orientation and direction-giving to strangers, to the marking of belonging or possession. It is frequent in semiotically densely structured environments, such as the inner cities, but less relevant in rural surroundings, and usually absent in nature. Recently, this kind of writing has become the object of a rapidly expanding field of sociolinguistic research known as "linguistic landscapes" (cf. Backhaus 2007).

On public signs which contain writing, language becomes visible; it is detached from the writers and readers (i.e. depersonalised), it is stable, and it is permanent (de-temporalised). Yet it is also in most, though not in all cases,² indexical in the sense that its meaning cannot be understood outside the place in which it is located, i.e. it is not de-localised. As such, writing on signs in public is exquisitely suited for creating and delimiting language spaces. It is no wonder that political battles have been fought in bilingual areas over the presence or dominance of one language or the other on such signs. In most of these cases, the two varieties in question have been (standard) languages. Ironically, dialects, the language varieties most prominently discussed from a spatial perspective, hardly ever profit from the inherent advantages of visible "language in place" (to quote the title of Scollon & Scollon's important book on this topic; 2003). We will now turn to one of the exceptional cases where they do.

2 Dialects in place: an example

In most parts of the world where dialects are spoken, they are invisible, and therefore 'out of place', which is a logical outcome of the fact that they are exclusively used in oral communication, not in writing. This holds true even for countries such as German-speaking Switzerland, where the position of the dialects is extraordinarily strong, and where their prestige is higher than that of the standard language.³ There are very few exceptions. For instance, dialect is used in Switzerland on some billboards, and dialect names for pubs and inns are not infrequent both in Switzerland (Lüdi 2007) and Germany (see Picture 1, taken in Freiburg, Germany). Another, more interesting exception is the bilingual street signs in Strasbourg which are in French and Alsatian – the latter is not a standard language but a regional language of France not any longer roofed by

² Notable exceptions are billboards which for this reason should not be treated in the same way as other, non-transportable public signs.

³ Cf. Scharloth 2005.

standard German. The official language policy of France denies the status of an official language to Alsatian but at the same time has cut it off from its traditional roots in German, and diminished or even eliminated its orientation towards standard German; this leaves no option other than to make Alsace bilingualism visible through a written non-standard language (which one may call a dialect or not). Also revealing is the restricted visibility of Lëtzebuergesch in Luxembourg, whose linguistic landscapes are dominated by the two other official languages, French and (to a lesser degree) German. This restricted visibility of the national language despite its symbolic value is due to the fact that Lëtzebuergesch is the only European national (standard) language which is more often used in oral than in written communication; in addition it may still reflect the former status of Lëtzebuergesch as a dialect of German which remained undisputed until some 100 years ago.



Picture 1: An inn name in Freiburg (note the dialectal diminutive suffix *-le* which is used instead of std. German *-lein* or *-chen*).

In southwest Germany, the region we will now turn to, the Alemannic dialect is largely absent from the linguistic landscape; this certainly applies to all “top-down” signs (Backhaus 2007), e.g. those put up by state authorities. Street names, road signs, traffic signs, public announcements are all written in standard German. “Bottom-up” signs designed and put up by individuals (such as pub or sometimes shop names, cf. Picture 1) may sometimes appear in dialect, but even this is rare.

Over the last 100 years, the repertoire of the speakers in this area has undergone a double shift. In the model and terminology outlined in Auer (2005), the first shift was

from a diglossic area with the local dialects representing the L variety, and standard German the H variety, to a diaglossic area in which the speakers developed intermediate forms (regiolects), first in the cities and towns, and later everywhere. The second shift which is underway at the moment has led to the gradual loss of the most dialectal forms of the diaglossic pyramid. There is a strong push towards the standard variety which has accelerated during the last century and seems to be continuing (cf. Spiekermann 2009). Another necessary qualification is that the traditional dialects in southwest Germany are not uniform but show a huge amount of internal variation. The most important division is part of everybody's folk linguistic knowledge and is usually captured by the distinction between "Alemannic" in the narrow sense, and "Swabian". The main isogloss of traditional dialectology which delimits the two areas from each other (diphthongal vs monophthongal realisation of MHG long high vowels, see below) is shown as the grey/black line on Map 3.

Our example is not only exceptional in that the signs involved carry "Alemannic"⁴ dialect words, it is also remarkable because we are dealing with a case of rural linguistic landscaping while almost all of the existing research on linguistic landscapes has dealt with urban landscapes. It is not a city or town on which linguistic spaces are mapped (be they monolingual or bilingual), but a larger, rural area or region. But the intended recipient of these signs is not the traditional farmer or shepherd, nor the romantic wayfarer or even the modern tourist who spends his or her summer holidays in the picturesque corners of the region, as might suit a romantic approach to dialects; the intended recipients are motorists on their way from East to West or vice versa, on a large road crossing the Black Forest. I am referring to a set of names for rest areas (*Rastplätze*) along National Highway (B)31 between Freiburg and Donaueschingen. Starting from Freiburg, the driver will encounter:⁵

- After ca. 13 km (47°56'30,7"N; 8°00'48,5"O) *Tschuuderecke*
(Alem. *Tschuuder* ~ StdG. *Schauder* 'shudder, shiver' + Alem./StdG. *Ecke* 'corner')
- After 13.5 km (47°56'18,3"N; 8°01'07,9"O) *Hirschsprung*
(Alem./StdG. *Hirsch* 'deer' + Alem./StdG. *Sprung* 'jump')
- After 14 km (47°55'41"N; 8°01'53,2"O) *Höllbach*
(StdG. *Hölle* 'hell' + StdG./Alem. *Bach* 'creek')
- After 18 km (47°54'53"N; 8°03'51"O) *Oswaldskapelle*
(Alem./StdG. *Oswald* = proper name + infix + StdG. *Kapelle* 'chapel')
- After 21 km (47°54'52,1"N; 8°04'48,1"O) *Teufelsschwänzli*
(StdG. *Teufel* 'devil' + infix + Alem. *Schwänz+li* ~ StdG. *Schwänzlein* 'little tail')

⁴ From now on, inverted commas will be used in order to refer to Alemannic in the narrow (folk) sense of the word, as opposed to Swabian.

⁵ Thanks to Rudolf Post and Renate Schrambke for their valuable details about the dialect words used for the names of the rest areas.

- After 22 km (47°54'50.3"N; 8°04'52.0"E) *Verschmaufleckli*
 (Alem. *verschuuft* ~ StdG. *verschmaufen* 'to have a rest' ~ Alem. *Eck+li* ~ StdG. *Ecklein* 'little corner')
- After 31 km (47°54'22.0"N; 8°08'03.5"E) *Vierthäler*
 (standard German, but with archaic orthography: *vier* 'four' ~ *Tal* 'valley' + suffix)
- After 32 km (47°54'22.0"N; 8°08'03.5"E) *Wiidewiibli*
 (Alem. *Wiide* ~ StdG. *Weide* 'willow' + Alem. *Wiibli* ~ StdG./archaic *Weiblein* 'little (old) woman')
- After 37 km (47°54'11.4"N; 8°15'25.1"E) *Schatteloch*
 (Alem. *Schatte* ~ StdG. *Schatten* 'shadow' + StdG./Alem. *Loch* 'hole')

On the way back, from Donaueschingen to Freiburg, the driver can take a rest in the following rest areas:

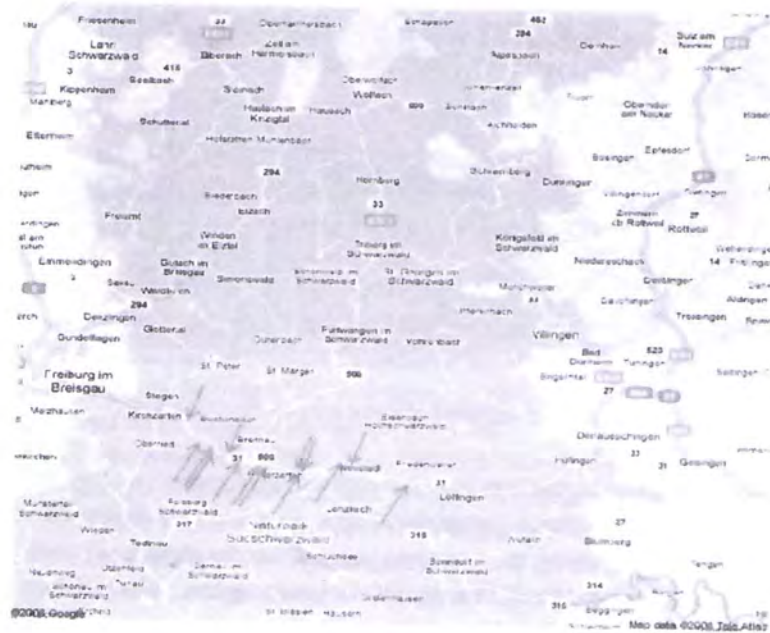
- Ca. 36 km before Freiburg (47°54'39.3"N; 8°12'30.6"E) *Bosseharzer*
 (Alem. *Bosse*, unclear etymology + Alem./StdG. *harz* 'resin' + suffix for deriving nomina agentis)
- Ca. 29 km before Freiburg (47°54'20.3"N; 8°07'50.9"E) *Goschehobel*
 (Alem. *Gosche* 'mouth' + StdG./Alem. *Hobel* 'plane'; dialectal meaning: 'mouth harp')
- Ca. 29.5 km before Freiburg (47°54'20.6"N; 8°07'30.1"E) *s'Grafewäldele*
 (Alem./StdG. cliticised determiner < *das* + Alem./StdG. *Graf* 'count' + Alem. infix ~ StdG. *-en* + Alem. *Wäld+ele* ~ StdG. *Wäldlein* 'little wood')
- Ca. 21 km before Freiburg (47°55'21.8"N; 8°02'43.1"E) *Poschthalde*
 (Alem. *Poscht* ~ StdG. *Post* 'post' + Alem./StdG. *Halde* 'cline')
- Ca. 15 km before Freiburg (47°56'54.2"N; 7°59'40.0"E) *s'Himmelriich*
 (Alem./StdG. cliticised determiner < *das* + Alem./StdG. *Himmel* 'heaven' + Alem. *Riich* ~ StdG. *Reich* 'empire': 'heaven').

The location of the rest areas is shown on Map 2, and Map 1 may help the reader to locate the area in Germany. At first sight, it is surprising that there is a high density of rest areas within a short distance of only 20km, while there are none before or after on the way from Freiburg to Donaueschingen or back. However, the puzzle is quickly solved when the topography of the area is taken into account.

Shortly after Freiburg (more exactly, after Kirchzarten, see Map 2), Highway 31 climbs up the hills of the Black Forest quite steeply before it reaches the high plane of the Schwarzwald with tourist spots such as Hinterzarten and Lake Titisee. The rest areas are located in this most picturesque part of the road. The motorist who enters or crosses the Black Forest is invited to stop in these surroundings and admire the scenery.



Map 1: Southwest Germany.



Map 2: The rest areas on B31 between Freiburg and Donaueschingen.

Now, it is one thing to build rest areas (and thereby create a touristic ambiance), but another to name them and create an additional, symbolic layer of meaning through lan-

guage.⁶ The signs which indicate the entrance of the rest areas all show the same structure and style which makes them recognisable as official signs set up by the state of Baden-Württemberg ("top-down") and as belonging to the same discourse. Along the B31, they are structured as in Picture 2 (*Tschuuderecke*). The important and exceptional part is the right-hand section of the sign (white writing on brown background). Here, we find the name of the place on top, and below it in most cases (as in our example) an explicit categorization of this place name (toponym) as "Alemannic". After that, the name is translated and/or explained where necessary. Indirectly, this explanation makes it clear that we are not dealing with a traditional toponym, for old toponyms are never explained. The constructed nature of the toponymic series is also suggested by the semantics of the name to which we will turn below.



Picture 2: One of the signs at the entrance of a rest area on the B31.

My claim is that these picnic area names create a dialect space, i.e. they link a certain way of speaking with a certain geographical area. However, no direct reference to dialect geography is made; rather, the toponyms suggest that the signs have been put up in an area that 'belongs' to the "Alemannic" language space. This is done by a double metonymic extension. First, although they refer to places, the signs, by virtue of forming an ensemble, extend their reach from spots on a road to the road itself to which they belong. Highway 31 (or rather, the 20 km of it in which the signs occur) thereby becomes an "Alemannic" road. In a second extension, the symbolic meaning of a line

⁶ It is not unusual for rest areas in Germany (and other European countries) to have names, but by no means obligatory. The large majority in Germany are unnamed.

(road) is extended to a two-dimensional space: it is suggested that the highway cuts across an "Alemannic" area, i.e., one in itself linked to a language variety.

Let us now turn to the semantics of the toponyms. The explanations for the names the signs themselves provide are the following:

- (1) *Tschuuderecke*: "Angstecke vor dem Eingang ins Höllental" ('shiver corner before the entrance into the hell valley'). *Höllental* 'hell valley' is the official name of the narrow and steeply ascending gorge which for a long time has been used to enter and cross the southern Black Forest. The place name of the rest area right in front of the entrance to the gorge evokes the picture of a wayfarer who rests before he dares to enter this frightful gorge.
- (2) *Hirschsprung*: The name of this parking space (it has no facilities for a rest and therefore does not conform to the pattern) refers to its location in the most narrow part of the gorge, where the rocks are said to be so close to each other that a deer could jump from one side to the other. The sign is one of two which contain neither an explanation of the toponym nor categorise the name as "Alemannic" (which in fact it is not).
- (3) *Höllbach*: "Alte Bezeichnung des Rotbachs" ('old name for the Rotbach creek'). Since the place name is standard German, no translation is given, and the name is not classified as dialectal. Here, the place name is identical to the hydronym of the *Rotbach* running alongside the road. Giving the old name of the creek links it to the name of the gorge (*Höllental*), and the gesture of the sign is one of disclosing traditional, pre-modern connections between names and places to the visitor.
- (4) *Oswaldkapelle*. Again, no translation is necessary since the name is standard German. The name refers to a nearby chapel and its saint. This sign, like #2, neither contains an explanation nor a categorisation of the toponym as "Alemannic".
- (5) *Teufelsschwänzli*. Although the sign categorises the place name as "Alemannic", no translation is given. Since the dialect word is not far from standard German, it is presumed that it can be understood by speakers of standard German. There is no obvious link between the semantics of the name and this particular place. However, the semantic field of the 'hell valley' in #3 is continued by reference to the 'devil', and a dark, mystical atmosphere is evoked.
- (6) *Verschnuufleckli*: "Platz zum Aufatmen nach kurvenreicher Strecke" ('place to breathe after a winding road'). Again the image of the traditional wayfarer is evoked who takes a rest after the winding path of the gorge, now he reaches the top. This sign refers to the topography since the rest area is located right after the end of the steepest part of the rising road, shortly before the village of Hinterzarten.
- (7) *Vierthäler*: "Historischer Name der Gemeinde Titisee" ('historical name of the commune of Titisee'). Surprisingly, the name, which is standard German in all respects, is categorised as "Alemannic". Semantically, it links up with #3 in providing a historical explanation, and the time-depth of the old village name is indicated by the archaic spelling (*thäler* instead of *täler*).

- (8) *Wiidewiibli*: "Sagengestalt, die Wanderer erschreckte" ('fairy tale woman who frightened the wayfarers'). No reference to the place is made. Instead, the name evokes the world of fairy tales which matches that of #1, 3, and 4 by referring to old times when the wayfarers through the *Höllental* were superstitious and believed in sagas and legends.
- (9) *Schatteloeh*: "Schattiger Rastplatz" ('shadowy place to rest'). The toponym takes up a feature of the location in which the picnic area was built. The translation of *Loch* 'hole' as *Platz* 'place' does not render the negative connotation of the original though which makes the place appear to be an unpleasant one (not one in which one would like to take a rest).
- (10) *Bosseharzer*: "Sagengestalt, die Harzsammler erschreckte" ('fairy tale man who frightened the people collecting resin in the woods'). Takes up the theme of #8.
- (11) *Goschehobel*: "Mundharmonika" ('mouth organ'). Mouth organs are traditionally associated with wayfarers, which means that the toponym once again refers to old times in which the journey was made by foot. However, unlike in most of the previous signs, the connotation is positive.
- (12) *S'Grafewäldele*: "Westlichster Besitz der Grafen zu Fürstenberg" ('westmost possession of the count of Fürstenberg'). This is one of two toponyms which appear to be traditional ones.
- (13) *Poschthalde*: "Haltestelle der früheren Postkutsche" ('former stop of the mail stage coach'). The semantic field from which this toponym is taken does not fit into the wayfarer frame but evokes a different image, while still referring to old times. The original does not contain the meaning 'stop', since *Halde* means 'cline'.
- (14) *S'Himmelriich*: "'Himmelreich' ist ein Ortsteil von Buchenbach" ('Himmelreich' is a part of Buchenbach'). This last picnic area is already close to Freiburg, after the traveller/car driver has left the heights of the Black Forest. It does not explain or justify the place name *Himmelreich* 'heaven', but correctly describes it as a traditional toponym. The connotation is of course positive.

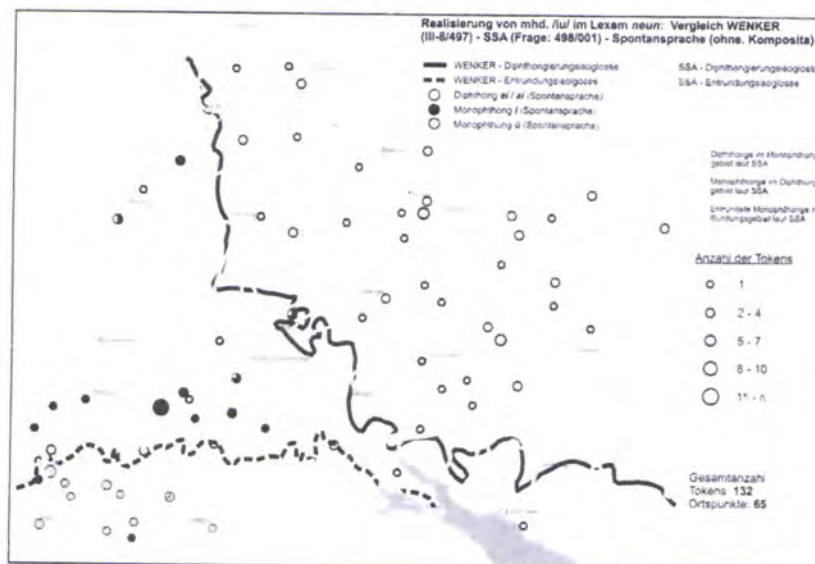
The common semantic denominator which covers almost all names is reference to old times. Among those, most evoke the picture of the wayfarer who travels by foot or by mail stage coach; some others give old place names. The "Alemannic" dialect space is thereby associated with a traditional way of living, which is no longer valid.

What kind of dialect is used for the place names? On all signs apart from #2, 3, and 4, the toponyms are explicitly categorised as "Alemannic". The term is used in the lay sense, i.e. as referring to the non-Swabian dialects. Do the dialect words phonologically and morphologically fit this description?

(a) The most prominent phonological dialect feature found in the toponyms (and one which occurs with high frequency in the few tokens) refers to the reflexes of the MHG long high vowels. In the "Alemannic" area, they have remained /i:/, u:/, y:/, while both Swabian and standard German have diphthongised the old monophthongs, although to different degrees. Names such as *Tschuuderecke*, *Verschnuufleckli* (for MHG /u:/), *Wiidewiibli*, *Himmelriich* (for MHG /i:/) show that the toponyms on road

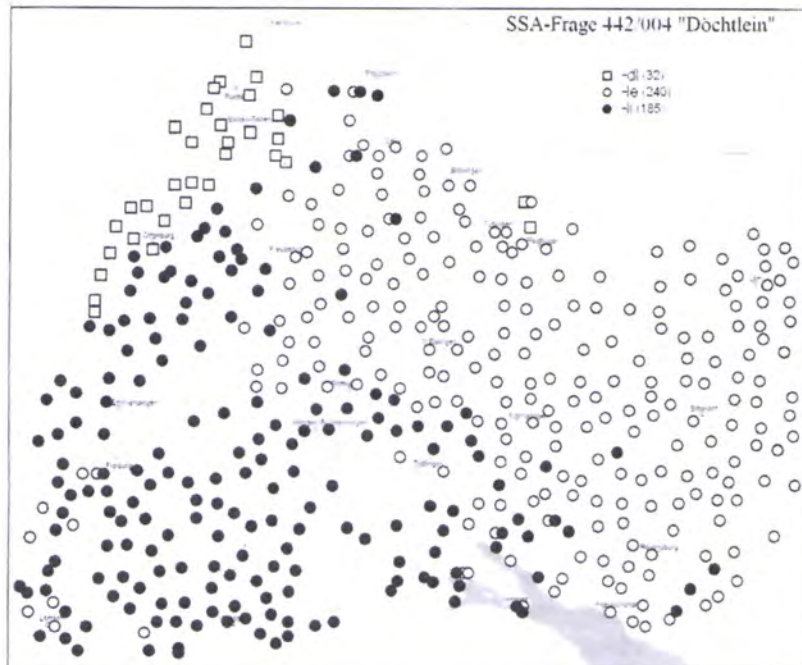
B31 clearly aim at the traditional “Alemannic” form. In fact they may have been chosen partly because they contain these old forms /i:/, u:/, which for dialectologists and lay persons alike represent stereotypical features of “Alemannic”. But note that the only example of MHG /y:/ in the place name *Teufelsschwänzli* is treated differently (<eu> is pronounced /oi/): while in the traditional dialects, monophthongal *Tüüfel* is to be expected, the inventor of the name chose the standard form in this case. This may be seen as a compromise, since even in traditional dialect speakers recorded in the 70s of the last century, the monophthongal variant was little used in the area (cf. Map 3).

Today, the traditional dialects are hardly spoken, and speakers of the regional dialect of the area will readily recognise the “Alemannic” dialect aimed at, but not necessarily their own language, in which the old monophthongs have often been replaced by the diphthongs /ei/, /oi/. This also applies to the word *Teufelsschwänzli*, since the modern, regiolectal way of pronouncing the variable MHG /y:/ is usually neither traditional /y:/ nor StdG. /oi/, but a fudged form (/öi, öü, äi/ or similar). It is clear that the signs assume a diglossic instead of a diaglossic situation: it is either the (old) dialect or the standard form which is chosen, intermediate forms (which often have a wider reach, stretching out into Swabian) are avoided.



Map 3: Realisation of MHG /iu/ in the word *neun* ‘nine’. Solid lines represent the isoglosses from Wenker’s atlas (DIWA, solid line) and the southwest German Dialect Atlas SSA (questionnaire data, broken line). Symbols represent tokens from spontaneous language, taken from interviews with traditional dialect speakers in the 70s of the last century. Only simplicia are taken into account, no compounds. Analysis and map by Christian Schwarz (Freiburg).

(b) Of interest also are diminutives used in the toponyms. Here, the traditional dialectal form is /-li/ as in *Teufelsschwänzli* or *Verschnuufleckli* (cf. Map 4). However, we also find one place name, in which the more general southwest-German form /-(e)le/ is used, i.e. *s'Grafewäldele*.



Map 4: Distribution of diminutive suffixes in southwest Germany (map drawn on the basis of questionnaire data collected by the Southwest German Dialect Atlas (SSA) by Christian Schwarz).

(c) The remaining phonological dialectal features such as n-deletion in schwa-syllables (*schatte* > *schatten*) and s-palatalisation before obstruents (*poscht* > *post*), and the dialectal lexical feature *Goschehobel* (for StdG. *Mundharmonika*, 'mouth organ') are general features of Alemannic (in the wide sense of the word, i.e. including Swabian) and they are not exclusive to "Alemannic".

In sum, the dialect used in the toponyms clearly aims at the traditional forms, but it does not show it consistently.

So far we have seen that an ensemble of signs (grouped together by form and function) symbolically turns geographical space into dialectal space, i.e. it spatialises language. The transformation is not done by delimiting the area in which a dialect is spoken (neither do the signs start at the boundaries of the "Alemannic" area, nor does it

stop there), but rather by claiming for a particular national road which is attractive for tourists, that it is "Alemannic". In this sense, the idea of a dialect area conveyed by the signs is as pre-modern as the way in which the place is portrayed; it is not defined by its borders but rather by a symbolically important element in it, namely the way from the valley up into the mountains of the Black Forest or back.

Studies in linguistic landscapes often disregard the authors of the signs they investigate and restrict themselves to the analysis of the end product of the process of sign-building. But public signs are not 'just there', they are planned and erected by authorities or individuals. We therefore need to ask who the 'author' of the rest area signs is. In fact, the signs have a complex authorship. As the local newspaper informs us (*Badische Zeitung*, October 7, 2001), they were designed under the control of the district government (*Regierungspräsidium*)/authority of road construction (*Straßenbaubehörde*) together with the communes of the region. They were put up in October 2001 in an official ceremony in which the sign *Goschehobel* (presumably as the most dialectal lexical item and perhaps the one deemed most entertaining) was unveiled. A little detail is important here. The signs are of course pure top-down signs. However, the district government had a 'dialect specialist' take part in their design, who was the chairman of a conservative association for the protection and propagation of the "Alemannic" dialect, the "Mother Tongue Association" (*Muettersprochsgesellschaft*). If one takes a closer look at Picture 1, one notices a "transgressive" sign on the sign, in a multi-layering of semiotic resources: on the left side, somebody has attached a small sticker, which clearly is not part of the official sign but rather looks like a comment on it. It is the sticker of the *Muettersprochsgesellschaft* with its slogan "Bi uns kammer au alemannisch schwätze" ('Here you can speak Alemannic, too').



Picture 3: Detail of Picture 1.

The Association presents itself not as a co-author of the signs (which it actually was), but rather as a "bottom-up" commentator on the "top-down" signs put up by the state authorities. This conforms with the way in which the (self-elected) representatives of the dialect speakers and defenders of the dialect against the standard language present themselves as a force from below. Through their sticker, they voice their opinion like in a graffiti written against the state authorities (which are associated with the standard language), while in reality the discourse of the signs was a victory of their lobbying.

3 Discussion

What can an analysis of linguistic landscapes tell us about the language situation in a region or country? Sometimes researchers in this evolving field of sociolinguistics seem to believe that what is found on public signs (bilingualism, for instance) is a truthful mirror of language use in the society concerned. Nothing could be further from the truth, of course. What we find in visible language and its situated use in public and private signs is a symbolic representation of the language situation in the area which is moulded by the language ideologies of its producers (and recipients). In this paper, I have looked at one of the rare instances in which dialect is used in Germany in public (top-down) signs, i.e. a series (discourse) of signs designating rest areas in the south-west of Germany. The signs reveal an ideological representation of the local dialect which is of interest for subjective dialectology. In order to capture this ideology, a look at dialects from a life mode perspective (as developed in Pedersen 1994) is revealing. Which life mode does the dialect suggest for its users?

As shown in the previous analysis, the signs couple the traditional "Alemannic" dialect with the image of a traveller who crosses the Black Forest on foot or in a mail stage coach, who is afraid of the ghost in the 'hell valley', and exhausted by climbing up through a narrow gorge. No doubt this life mode is not compatible with that of any of the motorists crossing the Black Forest today. The ensemble of signs is designed in such a way as to link dialect to the place, and thereby it localises language. But in addition to that, it frames it in a far-away, historical life mode, close to a kind of fairy tale. There is something to be gained from such a contextualisation for the Black Forest tourist industries; it commodifies the dialect together with other folklore elements in order to 'sell' the region. But there is also something to be lost: speaking dialect is not compatible with modern life modes any longer. This disjunction is created by the linguistic landscape, and it expels dialect from modern life.

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Peter Auer
Professor, Dr.
Institut für Germanistische Linguistik
Universität Freiburg/Breisgau
peter.auer@frias.uni-freiburg.de