Spatial Boundaries and Transitions in Language and Interaction
Perspectives from Linguistics and Geography
International Conference

April 23-28, 2017
Monte Verità, Ascona

CALL FOR PAPERS

(DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ABSTRACTS IS OCTOBER 31, 2016, LINK TO CONFERENCE WEBSITE WITH FURTHER INFORMATION: http://www.spur.uzh.ch/boundaries, LINK FOR ONLINE ABSTRACT SUBMISSION: https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=btli2017)

Description and Goals

Spatial boundaries can be considered as real or imaginary lines separating two things. Hence we may find natural, social, linguistic or geographical boundaries. Boundaries are often visualized on maps, and the scientific discipline most obviously concerned with them is geography. Within linguistics, the fields of dialectology and typology are traditionally concerned with boundaries, in that they mark linguistic areas on maps. Aside from this local scale, interactional spaces emerge in concrete social situations. It is this micro level of face-to-face interaction and its delimitation of being "inside" and "outside" that provides the focus of interactional linguistics. Linguistic boundaries are never clear-cut, but are better characterised as overlapping transitional spaces because of myriads of interaction episodes arising from migration and urbanisation. Moreover, human interaction is being transformed by new communication technologies dissolving physical boundaries, while socio-cultural and linguistic ones may persist.

The interdisciplinary symposium "Spatial boundaries and transitions in language and interaction", organised by the University Research Priority Program (URPP) "Language and Space" (University of Zurich) will combine perspectives from geography and linguistics, bringing together eminent experts and highly qualified young researchers from various linguistic fields (including contact linguistics, dialectology, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics and conversation analysis); cultural and human geography, anthropology, and geographical information science. It will address the role of boundaries and transitions at different levels, theoretically as well as empirically, and will bring focus to the methodological underpinnings of a wide range of relevant approaches.

The conference has three major objectives: to bridge the disciplinary boundaries between linguistics and geography, to provide new scientific insights into the roles of spatial boundaries, and to develop and exchange new methods for the measurement of boundaries in linguistics and interaction. As to the first objective, the conference brings together experienced and young researchers from hitherto rather separated sub-disciplines of linguistics and geography. As to the second goal, we want to launch a profound interdisciplinary debate on the issue of spatial boundaries by exploring why and how linguistic, natural and social boundaries change, how linguistic and spatial evolution proceeds, and how communicative spaces work. The third objective will be achieved by a workshop at the end of the conference, which also deals with the current impact of big data on linguistic and geographic research.

Core Topics and Sessions

The relevant disciplinary perspectives with regard to spatial boundaries and transitions in language and interaction will be covered by talks from eminent experts. These include the roles of spatial boundaries within linguistic areas, within human geography, within interactional spaces, and within GIScience. The core topics of the conference will be developed within four sessions dedicated to different ways of conceiving, and representing spatial boundaries. The sessions will be introduced by renowned experts in their field of research. An evening talk open to the interested public will discuss very current issues of migration, borders and boundaries from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Invited Speakers are:

Peter Auer (University of Freiburg): Physical boundaries in language and interaction

Christian Berndt (University of Zurich): The role of boundaries within human geography

Nick Enfield (The University of Sydney, Department of Linguistics): The role of boundaries within Interactional spaces

Frans Gregersen (University of Copenhagen): Shifting boundaries in time and space

Tom Güldemann (Humboldt-University Berlin): The role of boundaries within Linguistic Areas

Setha Low (City University of New York): Boundaries of linguistic areas and socio-cultural interaction

Dan Montello (University of California, Santa Barbara): The role of boundaries within GIScience

Barbara Tversky (Stanford University): Mountain and valley: the categorization of geographic objects

Ruth Wodak (Lancaster University): Migration, borders and boundaries from an inter-disciplinary perspective

We call for papers in the following sessions:

Session 1 will discuss the ways in which physical boundaries are treated in linguistics, conversation analysis, social geography and the social sciences. Physical boundaries are most prominent as natural boundaries (such as mountains or rivers) but also comprise built boundaries in terms of architecture (leading to entities such as cities, districts, buildings or rooms). Physical boundaries are known to have impacts on linguistic and social differences and are accordingly claimed to establish relevant linguistic and social areas ranging from face-to-face interactional spaces to regional communities. Nevertheless, their status as material givens has long been challenged from different points of view. Take, for instance, the classical sociological argument that boundaries should not be taken as spatial facts with social impact but as social facts with spatial forms. The theoretical as well as methodological and empirical question then is to account for the social construction of boundaries without neglecting their physical and material manifestations. Talks related to this question may address the formation of physical boundaries within concrete settings of face-to-face interaction, within urban public spheres or larger regional areas.

Session 2 is dedicated to boundaries of linguistic areas and socio-cultural interaction. It focuses on factors that play a role in shaping external and internal boundaries of linguistic areas. Determining the boundaries of linguistic areas is a notoriously difficult task. The main reason for this is that linguistic areas are complex multi-faceted constructs. For instance, areas with shared linguistic features are not necessarily congruent with climate zones or areas with shared socio-cultural values. At the level of interpersonal interaction, intergroup attitudes can override the general tendency of interlocutors to converge in conversation and therefore contribute to the maintenance of boundaries. We explicitly encourage a multi-disciplinary dialogue, in order to increase our understanding of the interaction between linguistic, socio-cultural, and ecological factors that may impede contact between speakers of different languages or language varieties and therefore contribute to shaping the boundaries of linguistic areas.

Session 3 is concerned with the encoding of space in language describing geographic objects, such as *mountains* and *valleys*, and relationships between them. How are such places referred to in language? Is their linguistic categorization clear-cut or vague, on which factors does this depend and what implications does this have for communication? Talks in this session will address categorization of geographic objects from multiple perspectives including (cognitive) semantics, deixis and expression of spatial relations in language, linguistic diversity and onomastics, and work linking representations of geographic objects to language.

Session 4 concerns shifting boundaries in time and space, the diffusion and disappearance of linguistic features in dialect contact (with regard to syntax, morphology, phonology, and the lexicon), but also the dissolution of boundaries as in virtual space or as a consequence of migration. As mobility and migration are at last blurring the boundaries between linguistic regions, how do people describe themselves and how does this conform to regions as they are conventionally thought of? In a wider perspective, research questions in this session also concern self assignment and identity construction: what labels do we assign ourselves in cultural, ethnic and linguistic terms? Topics of this session may also include: qualitative and quantitative methods in linguistic geography and variational linguistics, the description/determination of boundaries with regard to linguistic change.

Abstract Submission for Session Talks

Abstracts should be 400-500 words (English) and submitted in PDF-format until October 31, 2016. Reviewing will be double-blind, so please refrain from including author's names or affiliations. Please submit your abstract to: https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=btli2017 (account needs to be created if not already happened).

You will have to decide for which of the sessions above you would like to submit an abstract. Please indicate the session chosen in the abstract. For the online submission it is mandatory to provide key words. In order to facilitate the review process please make sure you indicate the following key words depending on the session you choose:

Session 1: *physical boundaries, social areas, interactional spaces*

Session 2: *linguistic areas, socio-cultural interaction, language contact*

Session 3: *mountain and valley, geographic objects, categorization*

Session 4: *shifting boundaries, dialect contact, diffusion*

University of Zurich

Workshop

In addition to the scientific talks, the conference also includes a hands-on workshop entitled "Inferring and Visualizing boundaries from data". The one-day workshop at the end of the conference (April, 28, 2017) is conceived and hosted by the URPP members Curdin Derungs (GISLab), Wolfgang Kesselheim (VideoLab), and Tanja Samardžić (CorpusLab). The hosts will present different types of data that require the application of boundaries to continuously distributed data, for example: annotating meaningful spatial entities in interactions from video data, defining geographic object (e.g. mountain or valley) boundaries from continuous topography, modelling language boundaries from dialectological data

The participants will have the opportunity to relate issues discussed in the previous four days to practical examples. Our aim is to discover new intersections between the disciplines and their methods for inferring and visualizing boundaries. Registration for the workshop will be open from 1.10.2016 to 31.1.2017.

Important Dates

- Abstract submission deadline: October 31, 2016
- Notification of acceptance: December 2016
- Registration: October 1, 2016 to January 31, 2017
- Conference dates: April 23 - 28, 2017

Organizing Committee

Elvira Glaser, Heiko Hausendorf (both University of Zurich, Department of German Studies and URPP Language and Space), Paul Longley (University College London, Department of Geography), Agnes Kolmer, Charlotte Meisner, Raffaela Zaugg (URPP Language and Space)

Scientific Committee

Wolfgang Behr, Christa Dürscheid, Elvira Glaser, Susanne Günthner, Jonathan Harrington, Heiko Hausendorf, Christian Heath, Marianne Hundt, Wolfgang Kesselheim, Alfred Lameli, Adam Ledgeway, Angelika Linke, Paul Longley, Anke Lüdeling, Damaris Nübling, Dennis Preston, Ross Purves, Hanna Ruch, Joe Salmons, Tanja Samardžić, Daniel Schreier, Barbara Sonnenhauser, Bernhard Tschofen, Rik van Gijn, Richard Watts, Robert Weibel, Paul Widmer

Publication of conference papers

It is planned to publish selected papers of the conference within a special issue of the *Journal of Linguistic Geography*.

Contact

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Conference Website

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