

English translation of our article in the «Bündner Woche», June 26, 2019, p. 39

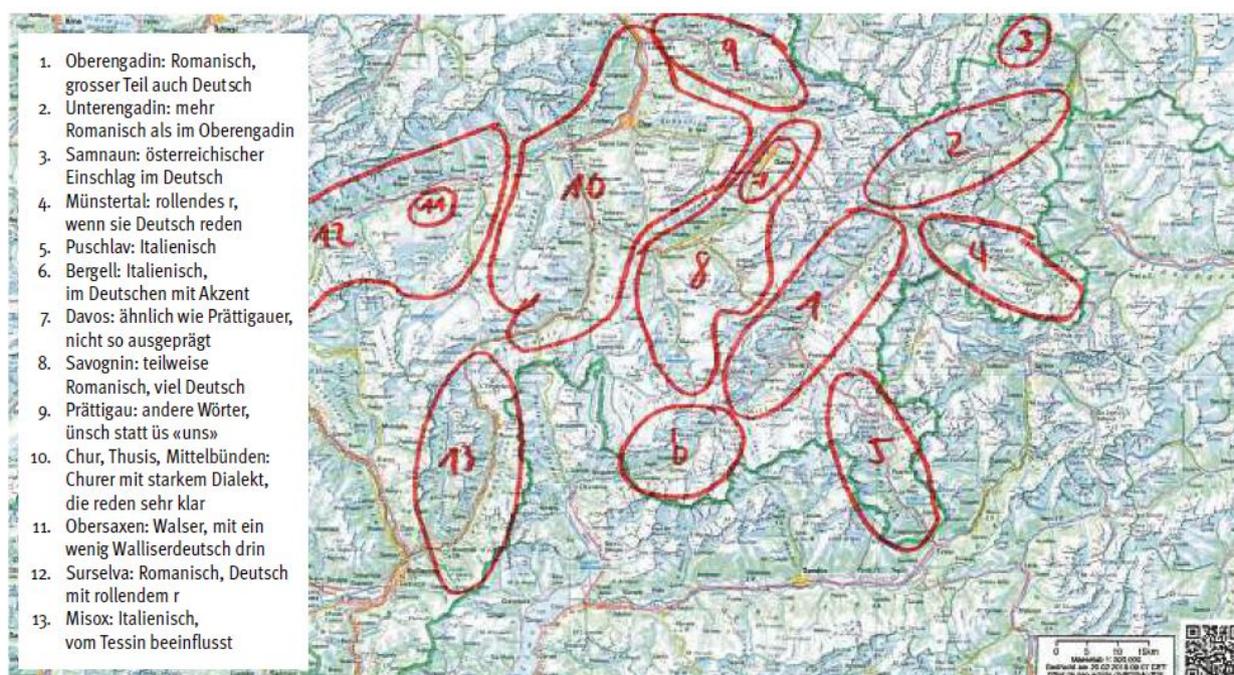
Research in Graubünden

"Grüezi", "Ciao", and "Allegra"

What do the people of Graubünden know about linguistic diversity?

The linguistic diversity in Graubünden is remarkable. How do Grisonians perceive the three cantonal languages German, Italian and Romansh and the various regional dialects? Which regions do they assign these to? Which language or dialect is particularly popular? Noemi Adam-Graf, a Chur native, explores these and similar questions in her research project, which she started in October 2018. The young doctoral student discovered her passion for languages at an early age: "My family often spend their holiday in our caravan on the Italian island of Elba. That's why the Italian language has accompanied me since childhood."

The linguist considers herself very fortunate that the Institut für Kulturforschung Graubünden (ikg, Institute for Cultural Research Graubünden) will financially support her project over a period of three years. "Three days a week I do my research at the institute. I also teach two classes in Italian at the cantonal school. I find it a luxury not to have to choose between my two professional passions, research and teaching." Her research discipline, perceptual dialectology, is a branch of linguistics. It examines the attitudes of laypersons to regional linguistic varieties.



An example of the subjective, regional allocation of languages and dialects by a respondent. Map: Swiss Federal Office of Topography

"In our relatively young branch of research, there is still no uniform method for questioning people about their perception," explains Adam-Graf. "After a few tests, I decided on a written questionnaire. I collect data

on age, gender, and education. How do the respondents rate the three cantonal languages and the different dialects: beautiful or ugly, cultivated or clumsy? Do they describe themselves primarily as Europeans, Swiss citizens or Grisonians? Or is their identity rather linked to their place of residence? Next, we meet for an interview. Using a topographical map of Graubünden, I ask my interview partners to design a mental map. They have to sketch where German, Italian or Romansh is spoken in the canton and what they think about the language region in question.”

By autumn 2019, Adam-Graf intends to have interviewed eight people each from eleven locations in all of the canton’s political regions. “My first interviews in Chur, Flims, Thusis, St. Moritz and Landquart have shown that people are very open to the topic and have an opinion on it. Their mental maps so far look quite similar. Some statements are very subjective, others appear again and again. The people of Chur like the Italian of the valleys of Southern Grisons. The Engadine with its Romansh idioms is also popular. Samnaun and Misox are sometimes forgotten in perception. It would be great if I could present my research results to the people of Graubünden in a small book after the end of the project.”

The Expert



Noemi Adam-Graf

After completing her bilingual Matura (German and Italian) at the Bündner Kantonschule, Noemi Adam-Graf followed her older sister to Zurich to study German and Italian linguistics and literature there. She is writing her doctoral thesis at the German Seminar of the University of Zurich and at the Institut für Kulturforschung Graubünden. If you have any questions on this topic, please contact the expert at info@graduateschool.ch by July 3.

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Find out more about research in Graubünden: www.academiaaetica.ch, www.graduateschool.ch.