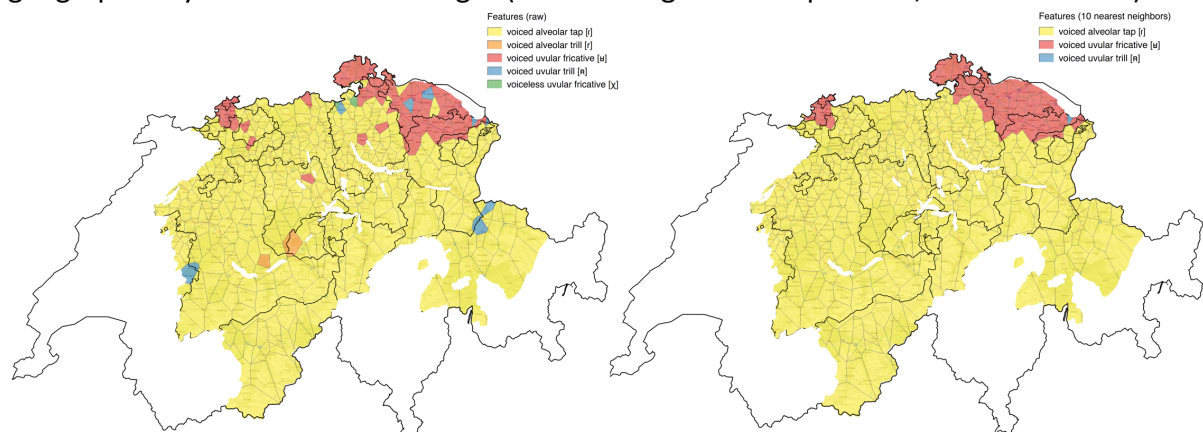


Geographical distribution of rhotics in Swiss German

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In German-speaking Europe, virtually no other sound class shows as much sociolinguistic variation as rhotics (Auer 1990). In Swiss German, for example, the phoneme /r/ has at least five variants: [r, ʀ, ʁ, ʁ̥, χ]. Historic Atlases indicate uvular variants for the NE/NW while reporting alveolar variants for the other areas (SDS 1962-2003). Since the publication of the Atlases there has been a lack of large-scale studies on regional distributions of this feature. This paper has three aims: (1) To assess the current distribution of rhotics across German-speaking Switzerland, (2) To discuss the utility of crowdsourcing sociolinguistic data, and (3) to examine the consistency of coding /r/ among multiple coders (cf. Stuart-Smith 2007).

Nearly 3000 speakers from 438 localities recorded themselves with the crowdsourcing app 'Dialäkt Äpp' (Leemann & Kolly 2013). The isolated word 'trinken' (to drink) was annotated by four phonetically trained researchers (one recording per speaker). Inter-rater reliability was substantial (Fleiss' Kappa = .67). The figure below shows the geographical distribution of /r/ – displaying mode responses only (QGIS 2017); raw distributions on the left, geographically-smoothed on the right (nearest neighbor interpolation, cf. Blaxter 2017).



Results revealed relatively little change across the past 60 years when compared to the Historic Atlases' data – uvular variants are still dominant in the NE/NW. In this paper, we discuss potential social and cultural correlates for this persistence. Given the new crowdsourcing methodology applied, we will spend a good portion of our paper on discussing methodological caveats and on coding /r/ amongst multiple coders.

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