

Linguistic Landscape 16 – Spaces of Collapse and Transformation – 3-5 September 2025 – University of Duisburg-Essen

Change of the Linguistic Landscape in montane recreational areas: The rise of English

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Subject

While doing research for a paper on culinary linguistics in the border area of Austria/Italy (Mutz/Tröster-Mutz 2024) we discovered that the traditional bilingual signs (German/Italian) are more and more supplemented or substituted by English as one of the languages. We also looked at other regions: in Switzerland (Flims, German and Rhaetoromance speaking area) and in Germany (Harz, German speaking area). Our main area of research is Nassfeld (Hermagor) on the Austrian/Italian border, traditionally bilingual (German/Italian), sometimes trilingual (+Slovene). English signage is becoming increasingly widespread as tourist leisure activities increase, often at the expense of Italian. sometimes even instead of Italian.

Development in Alpine-Tourism

– Traditionally: skiing in Winter, hiking in Summer

– More variation nowadays: Ski, Snowboard, Nordic Ski, hiking, mountain biking, kiting and bouldern, „event-tourism“ (Skywalks, zip lines etc. (cf. Luger 2022:183–184; Bätzing 2022:20))

– Growth of summer tourism compared to winter tourism since 2003 (Bätzing 2022: 19)

– Need for new activities due to climate change, i.e. non-snow sports in winter

Language in Alpine-Tourism

– Dannerer et al. (2017: 121): About 40% of the tourists come from non-German speaking countries

– Dannerer et al. (2017: 128): 85% of the people in western Austria speak a foreign language, the dominating language in school is English

– The role of national varieties / dialect is not considered in this poster

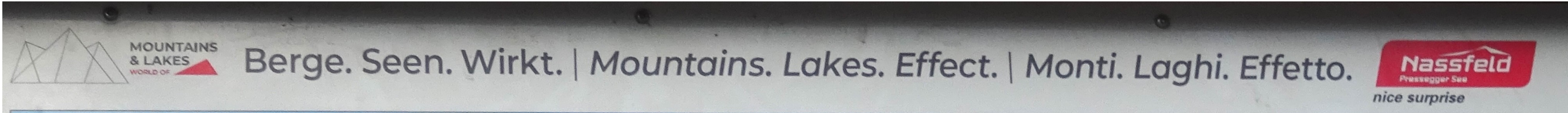
WKO STATISTIK																
Ausländerübernachtungen nach Herkunftsländern, TOP 10																
Ausländerübernachtungen, in 1.000 (Reihung jeweils nach dem letzten verfügbaren Jahr)																
Herkunftsland	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024		
Deutschland	65 579	56 846	52 334	48 156	50 199	52 653	53 576	56 285	56 683	38 508	32 084	53 402	57 435	56 440		
Italien	9 748	9 112	7 236	9 021	9 136	9 510	9 765	10 036	10 355	7 416	4 234	9 986	11 138	11 990		
Schweiz u. Liechtenstein	1 320	1 176	2 492	3 797	4 912	5 080	5 563	4 975	4 831	3 143	1 992	3 748	4 392	4 403		
Tschechien Republik	-	-	685	1 972	2 379	2 478	2 848	3 082	3 297	2 116	1 424	3 071	3 688	3 802		
Vereinigtes Königreich	2 208	4 931	2 066	2 203	2 700	2 704	2 740	3 802	3 478	1 477	310	2 548	3 254	3 439		
Belgien	-	-	2 035	2 465	2 405	2 742	2 793	2 858	2 897	1 737	1 211	2 835	2 884	2 942		
Italien	703	3 091	2 514	3 021	2 927	2 875	2 897	2 863	2 886	1 996	1 011	2 102	2 640	2 749		
Polen	124	341	795	1 423	1 708	1 748	1 885	2 014	2 169	1 460	1 083	2 111	2 492	2 639		
USA	1 333	2 139	1 876	1 243	1 675	1 642	1 793	1 926	2 050	326	375	1 580	2 088	2 384		
Ungarn	282	333	729	1 310	1 445	1 771	1 921	2 042	2 100	1 237	827	1 485	2 080	2 145		
Anderer Länder	8 837	14 770	8 232	13 945	18 029	18 465	19 763	20 579	21 739	7 883	5 310	14 872	19 300	20 055		
SUMME	90 303	94 830	82 534	89 857	98 824	102 843	105 977	110 430	112 745	64 380	49 964	98 031	113 243	114 058		

Quelle: STATISTIK AUSTRIA

 Märsching, 01. April 2025

Quelle: STATISTIK AUSTRIA

Abbildung: April 2023



Signs in sports facilities

Border region Italy/Austria, Nassfeld, 2023

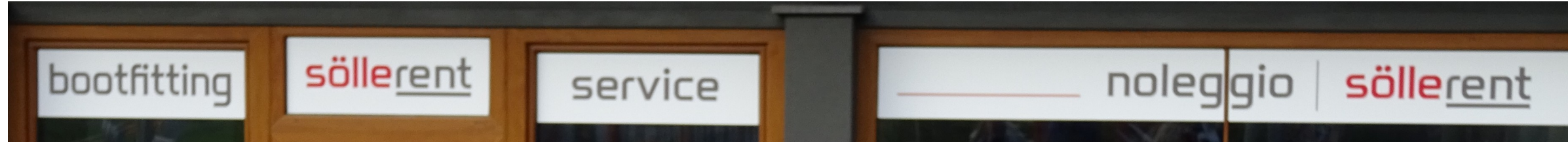
– Languages in the region: German, Italian (depending, on which side of the border, often both languages on either side)

– Languages on signs:

Shop (Sölle): English, Italian

Bikeschool, Bikewash, Pumtrack: English/German

Paragliding: English/German; note on Nederlands service



Harz Mountains, Germany, Braunlage, 2025

- Language in the Region: German
- Language on the signs: German, but many English names
- Note: Sign „Rodelbahn“ only German
- Note: Sign „Pferdeschlitten“: Cellophone number called „Funk“ instead of „mobil“ or „Handy“
- Languages on door / touristic facilities: German, English



Showing Change in LL

– Blommaert/Mali (2015): Linguistic landscape studies allow the documentation of change and can make (in their specific case) demographic change visible.

The problem: When doing LL-research, one often notes changes, but it's very difficult to get access to photographs of former periods. Research in the WWW leads mostly to historical pictures, but not to items that are only ten or twenty years old.

– Kallen (2010) shows change in the linguistic landscape of Dublin within only two years and points out the role of tourism as important factor of change.

– „Language choices can impose on landscapes in [...] the widespread use of international languages such as English within the tourist bubble“ (Metro-Roland/Soica 2019:360).

– „English is naturalized as the language of tourism to Switzerland, and, of course, beyond – Switzerland is hardly an exception in this regard“ (Jaworski/Piller 2008:316).

General signs, warnings, parking information (border region Italy/Austria)

– Warnings: above Nassfeld 2016, 2023: German, with Italian, Slovene and English in the headline; below Nassfeld 2023: German and English in same size

– Parking sign: above: Nassfeld 2016: German/Italian/(English), below Nassfeld 2023, metal sign in German, later attached: bilingual Engl./Germ. laminated paper sign



Signs in gastronomy

– In the border region Italy/Austria, Nassfeld, 2023: Older sign „Remo“, newer sign „The Remo“



Flims, Grisons/Graubünden, Switzerland, 2021

– Languages in Graubünden: German, Rhaetoromance

– Languages on the signs: left: German/Italian/English, right above: German and Rhaetoromance place names / English, right beneath: German/English

– Jaworski / Piller (2008: 315) point out, the Romansch is overrepresented as an exotic language (in British tourist information brochures); our material shows Romansch in villages frequently, but only in place names (cf. „Trudg dil Fem“), and not in tourist signs

