

# Numeral Gender in Bernese Swiss German

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Christa Schneider

# Overview

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- > Numeral gender – The phenomenon
- > A short introduction
  - The PhD project and the chosen method(s)
  - Research area: The Greater Area of Bern
  - Object of research: Bernese Swiss German
- > Results

# Numeral gender – The phenomenon

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- > Numerals play an important role in morphology
  - Russian:
    - 2, 3, 4 + Genitive Singular; 5 and bigger + Genitive Plural
    - два, три, четыре пальца (two, three, four fingers)*
    - пять, шесть пальцев (five, six... Fingers)*
  - Choice of case and number influenced by numerals

# Numeral gender – The phenomenon

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— German:

- Numerals treated like adjectives in OHG and MHG
- Distinction in gender and number

*MHG: zwene, zwo, zwei (two; masc., fem., neutr.)*

# Numeral gender – The phenomenon

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## — German:

- Northern and Middle Germany
  - Unclear use of forms → syncretism and simplification starting in late 16th c. (Hotzenköcherle 1971)
  - 17th c. preference of neuter form *zwei* (*two*) (reason unknown)

# Numeral gender – The phenomenon

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## — German:

- Upper Germany
  - Trichotomy remained until late 18th c.
- Contemporary Standard German
  - Basically no distinction in case or gender left, with some exceptions

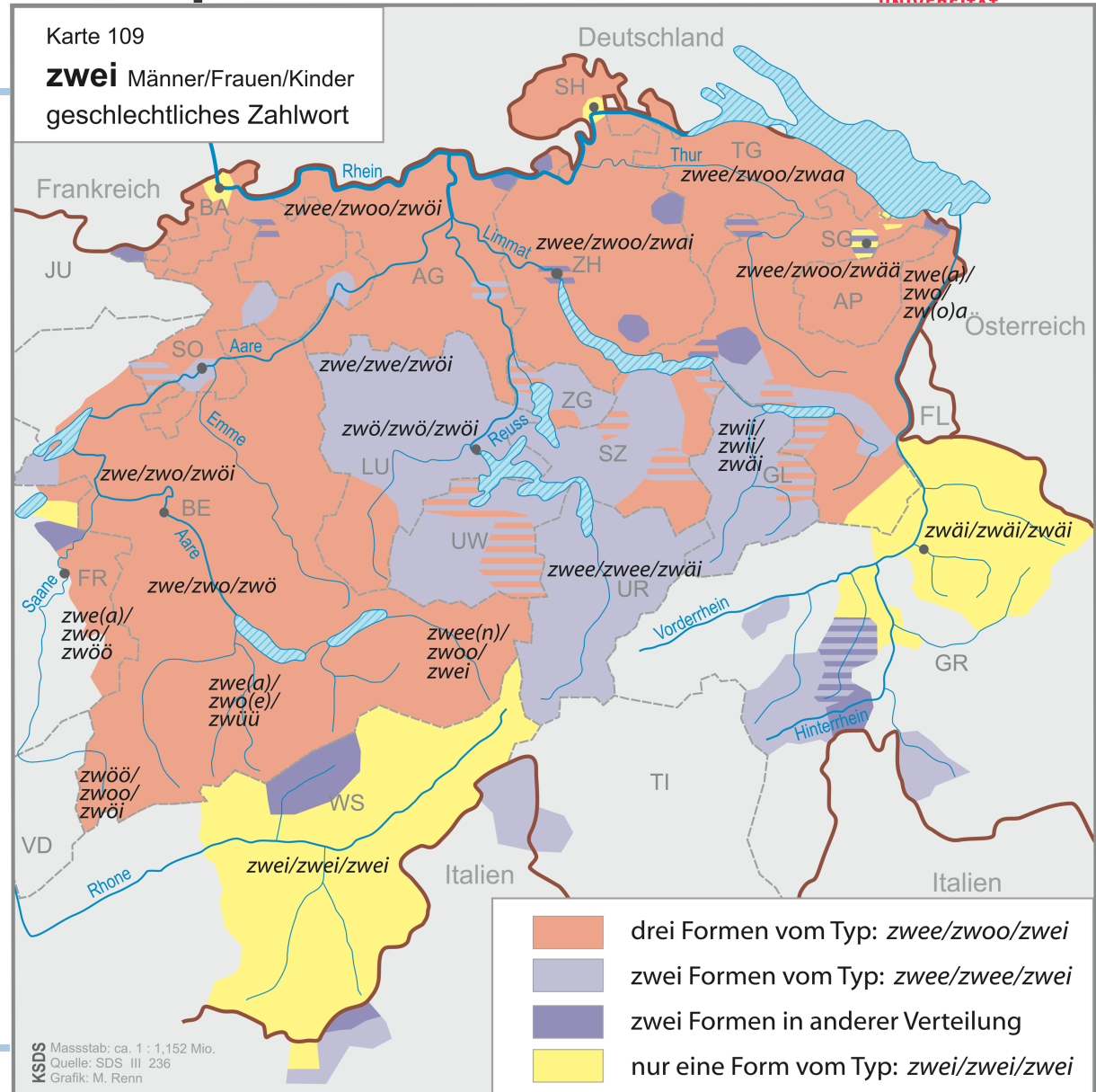
*Zwei Männer, zwei Frauen, zwei Kinder, (two men, two women, two children)*

*but ein Mann, eine Frau (one/a men, one/a women)*

*drei Söhne, Vater dreier Söhne (three sons, father of three sons)*

# Numeral gender – The phenomenon

- Alemannic dialects of Switzerland:
- Trichotomy in the most areas.
- Closeness of Alemannic dialects to MHG



# A short introduction – The PhD project

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## > PhD Project:

### — What:

- Document language variation and change in the dialects of the Greater Area of Bern

### — How:

- Comparison of new data with the original data of the SDS (atlas of German-speaking Switzerland)

### — Why:

- Show language change and language contact phenomena
- Reasons for the identified changes
- Isoglosses?



# A short introduction – The chosen method(s)

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## — Locations

- 20 locations documented already in the SDS (Atlas of German Speaking Switzerland)

## — Informants

- 4 informants per location (18-30, 30-60, 60+ and a farmer)

## — Data collection

- Questionnaire, spontaneous speech, translation (*Northwind and Sun*)

## — Variables

- 120 variables, covering phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon, SDS and new

## — Analysis:

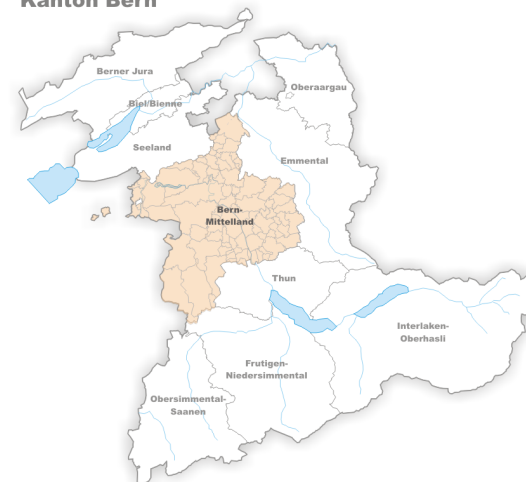
- Transcription with ELAN, later maps with inkscape

# Research area - The Berner Mittelland



## Verwaltungskreis Bern-Mittelland

### Kanton Bern



### SCHWEIZ



# Object of research: Bernese Swiss German

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> Regional stratification:

— Northern Bernese German

	Northern BSG	Southern BSG
Jahr (year)	Johr	Jahr

— Southern Bernese German

	Southern BSG	Northern BSG
Fenster (window)	Fäischter	Fänschter

# Results



## Frage 93 von 113 (Question 93 of 113)

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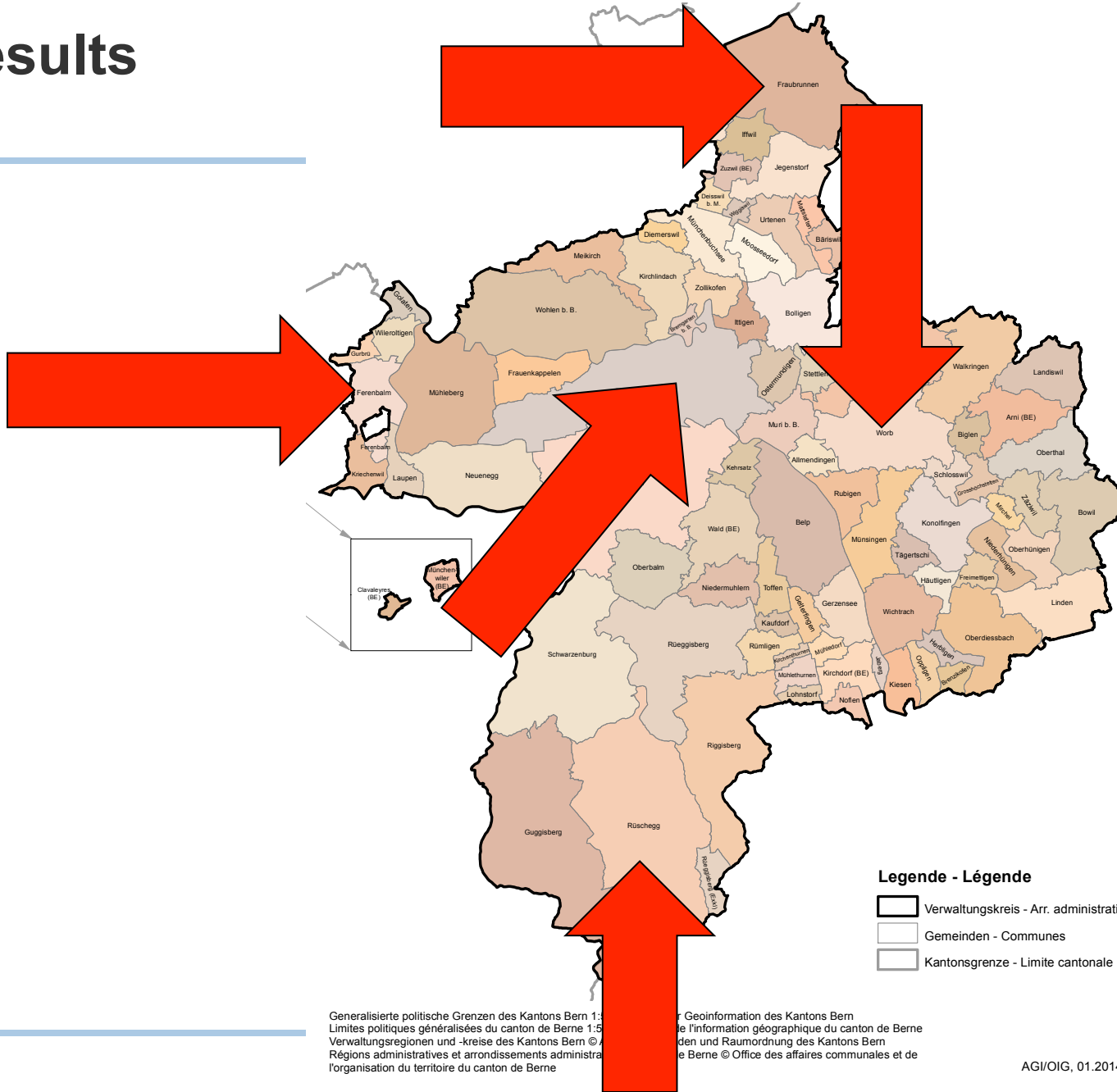
> Bitte uf Bärndütsch übersetze (Please translate to Bernese German):

— 2 Männer (*two men*)




— 2 Frauen (*two women*)

— 2 Kinder (*two children*)

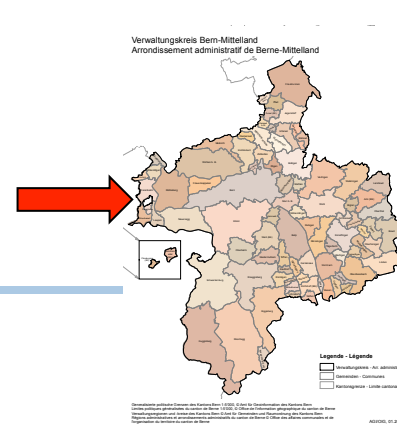
# Results



### Legende - Légende

-  Verwaltungskreis - Arr. administratif
-  Gemeinden - Communes
-  Kantonsgrenze - Limite cantonale

# Results



**u<sup>b</sup>**

**b**  
**UNIVERSITÄT**  
**BERN**

## > Ferenbalm

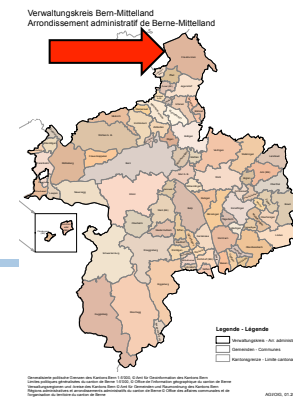
	Trichotomy	Dichotomy	One form
SDS	x		
F'balm1			x
F'balm2			x*
F'balm3	x		
F'balm4	x		

\* aware of trichotomy, produces it when conscious, spontaneous only one form





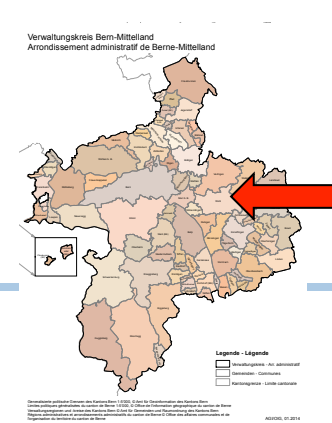
# Results



## > Fraubrunnen

	Trichotomy	Dichotomy	One form
SDS	x		
F'brunnen1			x
F'brunnen2		x	
F'brunnen3	x		
F'brunnen4			x

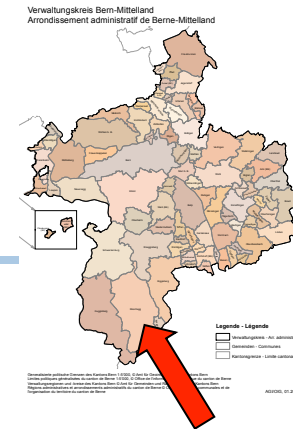
# Results



## > Worb

	Trichotomy	Dichotomy	One form
SDS	x		
Worb1			x
Worb2	x		
Worb3	x		
Worb4	x		

# Results



## > Rüeggisberg

	Trichotomy	Dichotomy	One form
SDS	x		
R'berg1	x		
R'berg2	x		
R'berg3	x		
R'berg4	x		

# Results

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- > Oldest generation (60+) and farmers are able to produce the trichotomy spontaneously (almost all) (100% and 80%)
- > Youngest generation (16-35) is not aware of the trichotomy anymore (almost all) (80%)
- > Middle generation (35-60) has to be divided into three groups:
  1. Speakers, who still produce the trichotomy spontaneously
  2. Speakers, who are aware of the trichotomy but – generally – do not produce it
  3. Speakers, who are not aware of the trichotomy anymore

# Results

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> Reasons?

# Results

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## > Reasons?

### — Oldest generation:

- is the most conservative group, confirmed by other variables
- Results of oldest group do not vary much from the SDS

# Results

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## > Reasons?

### — Oldest generation:

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- Results of oldest group do not vary much from the SDS

### — Farmers:

- Speakers between 35 and 65
- Are basically a conservative group
  
- Farmer in Fraubrunnen (Male, 35, has five younger siblings. They only use one form *zwei*.)

# Results

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## > Reasons?

### — Youngest generation:

- Uses almost only one form *zwei*
  - *Zwei* is the neutral form of the trichotomy
    - Schwarz 2015: Reason for the selection of the neutral form is still unclear
- Change observed in the whole research area, maybe prestige reasons?
- Speaker in R'berg (female, 20) very conservative speaker, more conservative than oldest speaker. Reason: Highly identifies herself with her very rural home, will marry a farmer and stay there



# Results

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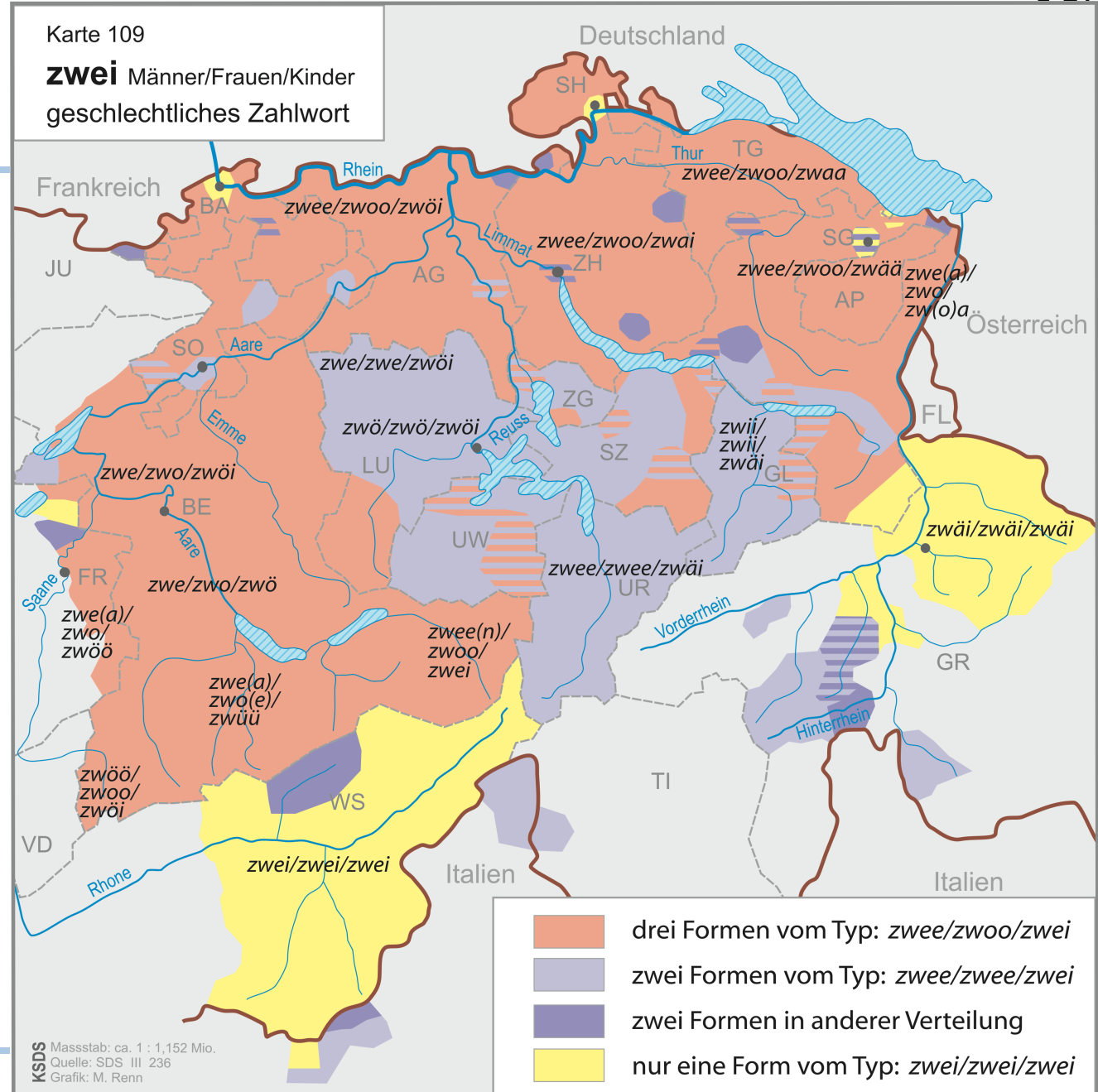
## > Reasons?

— Middle generation? A summary...

- F'baln: One form (zwei) but aware of trichotomy
- Bern: Trichotomy
- F'brunnen: Dichotomy?
- Worb: Trichotomy
- R'berg: Trichotomy
- To sum up: Trichotomy still produced, but decline visible.
  
- Dichotomy? Place close to an area, where the dichotomy was used

# Results

Karte 109  
**zwei** Männer/Frauen/Kinder  
geschlechtliches Zahlwort



SITÄT

# Conclusion

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- > Numeral gender in Bernese German is an example for change in progress.
- > Historic trichotomy is stable among old and/or conservative speakers
- > Variation found in the middle group
- > Stability in the youngest group → trichotomy is lost, neutral form *zwei* is dominant



anJeldor.

Thank you  
for your  
attention!