

# **(Dis-)entangling traditions on the Central Balkans: Performance and perception (TraCeBa)**

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## **Summary**

In the tradition of Balkan studies, the focus has mostly been on the converging tendencies and the convergent features shaping this area in linguistics and cultural aspects. Still lesser studied are the diverging tendencies and divergent features, which are to a large part triggered by various kinds of boundaries crossing this area. Moreover, the individual subjects actually shaping and perceiving this plurality-in-unity still await a detailed study. The present project takes up these desiderata, investigating on an empirical basis the role of boundaries – geographical, political, perceptual – on the transformation of linguistic and cultural traditions and their perception by the acting subjects. To do so, linguistic methods (from dialectology, areal typology, ethnolinguistics) will be combined with language technology (corpus linguistics, natural language processing, geographic information sciences). This combination of qualitative and quantitative data will allow to draw conclusions about the traditional culture of an area expressed within the framework of a local language. The focus will be on the Torlak region, which represented a linguistic and cultural unit until 1878, but which since the end of the 19th is divided by the Serbian-Bulgarian political boundary. In addition to collecting new authentic regional linguistic data in Serbia and Bulgaria and probing into the role of boundaries in linguistic and cultural transitions, the project aims at raising awareness among the speakers for the traditional values connected to Torlak and at contributing to the preservation of an endangered language and culture. An additional project outcome will be the development of new and/or improvement of existing tools for corpus linguistics and natural language processing that will also be applicable to cultural studies. Documentation, preservation and awareness raising will contribute to the sustainability of the project.

## **Project consortium**

Barbara Sonnenhauser, University of Zurich (Project coordinator)

Andrej Sobolov, Russian Academy of Sciences

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## **Run time**

36 Months