MLO Modern Languages Open

A "Devolved Minority": Contemporary German and French Guidebook Perspectives of Wales

SPECIAL COLLECTION: MINORITISED LANGUAGES AND TRAVEL

ARTICLES – GERMAN STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Guidebooks play an important role in increasing the visibility of a nation, as they introduce the country to potential visitors and create images prior to travelling. However, they also tend to reinforce stereotypes and create "romantic fictions" (Mahn 2008). This article examines the representation of Wales in French and German guidebooks and consequently elucidates the cultural and political recognition of Wales in these continental texts. The depiction of Wales as a distinct entity on an administrative, or rather on a cultural and linguistic level will be discussed, as well as the commonalities and differences between French and German views.

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Dijkstra, Anna-Lou 2023 A "Devolved Minority": Contemporary German and French Guidebook Perspectives of Wales. *Modern Languages Open*, 2023(1): 27 pp. 1–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.203

INTRODUCTION

Travel guidebooks used to be dismissed by critics and academics as clichéd and superficial accounts of places. As a result, they have long remained ignored as sources for research on place perception. However, the times when the guidebook was rejected as "an agent of blindness" ("un instrument d'aveuglement"; Barthes 115) seem to belong to the past. In recent years, these texts have become recognised as important and illuminating sources for academic studies. As many of these studies have focused on the historical development of the guidebook genre and this academic angle has consequently been discussed at length, the present article will not attempt to contribute to that particular line of study (see, for example: Guilcher; Keates; Parsons). Instead, the issue dealt with here is the significance of the guidebook in the construction of place discourse, being a key resource for tourists to learn about a certain area. By describing the world as an orderly divided place while furnishing the tourist with unambiguous images of a destination, these texts are arguably important contributors to the "tourist driven spatialisation of the world" (Bergman 3).

This spatialisation is especially pertinent in the case of Wales, the travel destination under examination in the following study. As a geographically small, peripheral nation, located on the borders of Great Britain and Europe, Wales is often overlooked abroad. A telling example is the fact that Wales was "forgotten" on the map of an EU report, leaving a blank space where the country should have been (Hellegouarc'h-Bryce 253). Scholars tend to agree that in comparison to its Celtic siblings Ireland and Scotland, Wales seems to lack a clear overseas image, typically disseminated through national symbols or other familiar consumable goods (e.g. Irish or Scottish whisky). As a result, Wales is not negatively perceived overseas, but generally fails to evoke any expectations at all (Botterill et al. 21; Pride 120; Sherrington 183; Smith 2). It is in this respect that guidebooks have the ability to significantly influence the socio-spatial conceptualisation of a tourist destination, influencing discourses and framing perceptions.

The aim of this article is to examine the discourses in contemporary French- and German-language guidebooks which are used to conceptualise Wales as a 'devolved minority'. The analysis focuses on the textual depiction of Wales as a nation that has only recently gained political and administrative relative autonomy. It is examined whether the country is recognised as a distinct cultural, political and geographical entity within a globalising world, and to what extent the construction of Wales differs between the two languages.

The first section of this article contextualises the process of Wales's devolution and its alleged effects on the perception of the country internally as well as externally. The influence of tourism on the creation and dissemination of a Welsh identity is also considered. This is followed by a theoretical elucidation concerning the significance of guidebooks in the creation of a discourse of place. These socio-political and theoretical contextualisations are essential for the following analysis of the primary material, as they bind together ideas from different academic fields, such as travel writing, tourism studies, identity studies, as well as the field of discourse analysis and postcolonial theories. This multidisciplinary framework is subsequently used to scrutinise the primary material, consisting of a selection of German- and French-language guidebooks to Great Britain and Wales published between 1995 and 2015. This is followed by some concluding remarks which relate the outcomes of the analysis to French and German attitudes towards regional cultural diversity in their own countries. Finally, it is demonstrated that guidebooks can provide revealing insights into international, as well as intranational relations.

As with every academic study, the current research also has its limitations. First, it has already been stated that this is a textual analysis, and visual aspects of the guidebooks, such as photographs and cover images, will therefore not be taken into account. The imagery of guidebooks would certainly be a fruitful future topic of research, but this deserves separate academic attention (cf. Osborne 85–90). Secondly, it would be interesting to compare the guidebooks' representations of Wales to those of other 'minoritised' Celtic nations, such as Cornwall or Scotland. These comparative studies could demonstrate whether the representations of Wales are unique for this country, or whether there is a general depiction of 'minoritised' nations which can be applied to other countries as well. Finally, the individuality of the guidebook author has not played a major role in the analysis. Additional research into other guidebooks written by the same author could reveal to what extent the authors figure as creative personas and leave their mark on the representations of the travel destinations.

DOI: 10.3828/mlo.v0i0.203

Yet the expression of individuality and authorial freedom appears to be decidedly restrained for guidebook authors, and it is generally expected of them to present the destination in a straightforward, uncritical manner while aiming for objectivity (cf. Dybiec 69). Although this does not mean that personal preferences are omitted altogether,[1] it does imply that subjective views countering prevailing notions about a destination are exceptional in guidebooks. The current research corroborates this, as the respective French- and German-language guidebooks present Wales in a largely unanimous manner.

CONTEXTUALISING CONTEMPORARY WALES: DEVOLUTION AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

On 18 September 1997, the people of Wales voted narrowly in favour of devolution – a decision that would fundamentally change the political structure of Wales and the UK. It resulted in the Government of Wales Act 1998 and the subsequent creation of the Welsh Assembly, which was granted legislative and executive powers on a range of domestic matters. Owing to this, the country gained significant control over managing its own affairs independently from Westminster. Although only 50.3 per cent of the population voted in favour of devolution in 1997, the more positive outcome of the 2011 referendum attests to growing Welsh support of and confidence in their National Assembly, now renamed 'Senedd Cymru', and reflects the swing to a more affirmative stance on Welsh devolution. This time, 63.5 per cent of the population supported further devolution, which instigated the extension of the Senedd's legislative authority.

These political changes not only influenced Wales and the UK on an administrative level, but arguably also contributed to a growing sense of national identity among the Welsh. It has been contended that these developments "served to emphasise the separateness of Scotland and Wales within the UK nation-state" (Harvey et al. 1) and have initiated a growing sense of Welsh identity in daily life (Johnes 427). Peter Hain, former Welsh Secretary of State, even stated in 2009 regarding Welsh devolution that "Welsh identity is flourishing as never before" (quoted in Johnes 427). Academically, the connection between devolution and Welsh identity has been the subject of a number of critical studies (e.g. Bradbury and Andrews; Curtice; Haesly). In their study on the political implications of national identities, Bradbury and Andrews point out that since devolution discourses of Welshness have become progressively visible and omnipresent, which has resulted in a growing Welsh consciousness in public life (236).

Despite the increasing prominence of Welsh identity and Welshness,[2] as well as the creation of a devolved UK in which Wales has attained a more separate position as a political entity, Wales and its distinctiveness have remained largely invisible to the wider world, as was pointed out in the introduction of this article. Evident illustrations of this are provided by research undertaken in the tourism sector, an increasingly important industry for Wales which in 2014 provided 80,000 jobs, equalling 8.7 per cent of the total Welsh workforce. Numbers of overseas tourists to Wales have been steadily rising since the early 1990s but are still seriously lagging behind visitor figures for London, the rest of England and Scotland (Visit Britain 2014: 3–4). Other research conducted by Visit Britain further corroborates these findings, indicating that half of overseas visitors go to London, whereas only 4 per cent travel further west to Wales (2010: 46). It has been suggested that these low numbers of foreign tourists can be attributed to a lack of awareness of the country as a travel destination (Botterill et al. 20–21). Annette Pritchard, director of the Welsh Centre for Tourism Research, draws the same conclusion and describes Wales as "Britain's best

1 Britta Schulze-Thulin, for instance, shows a great interest in Celtic remains and prehistoric sites which feature abundantly in her guidebooks to Wales. This can be attributed to the fact that she holds a doctorate in Welsh philology.

2 The term 'Welshness' is here taken to encompass all aspects related to Wales, its inhabitants, culture, language and national identity. It is acknowledged that these elements are not static and change over time. What is considered 'Welsh' differs per era and per geographical location in Wales. In his seminal essay "The Three Wales Model", Denis Balsom locates various kinds of Welshness in different parts of Wales, while correspondingly dividing the country in *Y Fro Gymraeg* (Welsh-speaking Wales), Welsh Wales (the South Wales Valleys; largely English-speaking but nevertheless strongly identifying with Welsh identity) and British Wales (areas which least identify with Welshness and strongest with Britishness). However, as Bradbury and Andrews point out, this division disregards more overarching banal conceptions of Welshness, such as the stereotypical depictions of the Welsh as rugby-mad beer drinkers and religious non-conformists (232). It is not the aim of this article to join this academic discussion; the term 'Welshness' is rather understood as incorporating everything that the guidebooks attribute to Welsh culture and identity.

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kept secret" (quoted in "Overseas Visitors to Wales Down 23%, Prof Annette Pritchard Says"). Whereas Ireland and Scotland are perceived as having well-established identities, studies have indicated that foreign visitors have difficulties distinguishing Wales from the rest of the UK, especially from England (Morgan and Pritchard 25). So even though Wales has become an increasingly independent country after the instigation of devolution in 1997 and Welshness has since then proliferated in the public discourse, foreign awareness of the country, its distinctive culture and identity still seems to be lacking.

Several researchers have criticised the various Welsh and British tourist organisations for failing to create and market a distinct image of the country (Botterill et al. 22; Morgan and Pritchard 25; "Wales 'Undersold' Overseas as Tourist Destination, Say MPs"). Besides the obvious economic benefits of tourism, the potential of this for enhancing the visibility of smaller, lesser-known countries and destinations is therefore recognised. However, international tourism, being both a product and producer of globalisation, is a paradoxical force when it comes to the creation of recognisable and distinctive travel destinations. On the one hand, it has arguably enabled an increasing number of people to explore places outside of their locality, consequently blurring boundaries and submerging places into global sameness (cf. Lanfant 8). On the other hand, scholars have pointed out that the rhetoric of tourism "has been stretched in its attempts to contrive geographical distinctiveness" (Hughes 18). In a globalising world where differences are waning, cultural identities portrayed through (among others) heritage, customs and symbols linked to a specific area may be used to raise awareness regarding the distinctiveness and attractiveness of a destination. International tourism can therefore help marginalised, 'minoritised' stateless areas to gain international visibility. In the early, yet still important contribution to the field of identity tourism *International Tourism: Identity and Change*, Marie-Françoise Lanfant remarks in this respect:

> Tourism is a double edged-sword. In certain cases it contributes towards repressing, marginalizing and neutralizing autonomous or resistance movements. In other cases it allows ethnic minorities that have been cut off from international decision-making to claim and assert their identities. (6)

In the case of Wales's current state of devolution and its overseas imperceptibility, tourism could thus be a key factor in raising the country's profile while asserting its prominence on an international level. This view is shared by Susan Pitchford, who argues in her Wales-focused research that tourism can help protect marginalised cultures. According to her, tourism depends on the notion of difference: it turns cultural idiosyncrasies into tourist commodities, thus making them valuable and worth preserving. Instead of pursuing a policy of cultural and linguistic standardisation, which is often to the state's advantage, tourism serves in these cases as an incentive to preserve the distinctiveness of lesser-known cultures (80–1).

THE INFLUENCE OF GUIDEBOOKS ON PLACE DISCOURSE

These insights are relevant in the case of lesser-known nations and cultures but fail to consider the widely held belief that perceptions are influenced by internal as well as external interlocutors. The previously discussed studies focus on the images that are being created by the Welsh themselves (e.g. Visit Wales, the national tourist board) while overlooking other, possibly influential mediators. In light of these facts, this article specifically examines French- and German-language guidebooks in their role as significant external forces in the process of increasing the overseas visibility of Wales.

Central to this is the argument that powerful discourses shape the way we view the world. According to the Foucauldian interpretation, discourses form systems of meaning that are socially and historically constructed; they reflect as well as create structures of power and social realities. They influence the way we think about certain topics, while consequently affecting and determining our practices and policies which shape the world around us. Therefore, discourses about place can be argued to be performative; they contribute to the creation of the matters of which they speak (cf. Jaworski and Pritchard 2; Saarinen). Although multiple and even competing discourses can exist simultaneously, powerful discourses may become dominant determiners of our worldview. Travel writing in general, and guidebooks more specifically, play an important role in the construction of these discourses and consequently our perception of the world (cf. Saarinen 167).

In her seminal work *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, Debbie Lisle examines the political aspects of travel writing and reveals how the genre is still determined by discourses of Orientalism, colonialism and empire. She argues that travel writing significantly affects the way foreign cultures and places are perceived internationally and thus "shapes and influences the way we understand the world" (11). Furthermore, as Lisle subsequently points out, travel writers are situated within their own societies, and their accounts consequently also reflect discourses prevalent in their home cultures. These texts thus provide insights into the perception of foreign cultures, while also enhancing our understanding of the home culture of the author. Another important point highlighted by Lisle is that travel writing is based on a sense of difference, which is waning due to globalisation. According to her, travel writers try to reconstruct this sense of difference by using a "discourse of nostalgia in order to cultivate a longing for the past" (25). She contends that travel writers use this "discourse of nostalgia" to justify their practice as superior Western explorers: without creating awareness of difference, their work would be superfluous. This view offers a new angle for what was said earlier about the creation of difference through tourism and how this could be beneficial for lesser-known destinations. On the one hand, it can be argued that these areas could benefit internationally from the fact that they are portrayed as significantly different, thus increasing their global visibility as distinctive entities. In line with Lisle's assertion, however, highlighting difference could also lead to the perpetuation of old power relations while strengthening the dichotomy between the hegemonic and 'minoritised' cultures.

Travel writing thus influences the perception of foreign places and cultures, but it can be argued that travel guidebooks have an even greater impact on their readers due to their wide dissemination and usage among tourists, as well as their alleged authority as informative sources. Previous research has indicated that guidebooks are consulted during various stages of the journey. They are said to affect the choice of travel destination and the pre-travel planning phase; they are consulted throughout the journey and can even serve as aide-memoires afterwards (cf. Brown; Nishimura, Waryszak and King; Tsang, Chan and Ho; Wong and Lui; Zillinger). These texts consequently shape the expectations, experiences and memories of the tourist, and, as Deborah Bhattacharyya aptly points out in her analysis of the *Lonely Planet* guide to India, provide a cognitive framework for perceiving the destination as well as for interpreting what one perceives (372). This influence is all the more significant as readers tend to regard their guidebooks as objective and accurate descriptions of places, thus often trusting their accounts (cf. Koshar 326). According to Bhattacharyya, this is primarily due to their narrative style, which presents evaluative material in a unitary and authoritative voice that is rarely contradicted by the guide's readers (375). Her research shows that guidebooks render the opinions of their authors as inherent qualities of the site or sight they are describing rather than as idiosyncratic interpretations, which often results in the acceptance of the area's portrayal as factual instead of subjective (376). Other research corroborates these findings and it has been widely recognised that guidebooks frame tourist experiences and determine the discourses which are used to express them (cf. Jacobson and Dann; McGregor 38; Young).

Although recent research has rightfully stressed that tourists should not be regarded as a homogeneous group, and that usage, interpretation and acceptance of guidebooks and their content may vary (Peel and Sørensen), these texts reflect and construct wider discourses prevailing in the culture in which they were written. The connection between guidebooks and place discourses has been explored in various studies before (e.g. Bhattacharyya; Jacobson and Dann; Laderman; Nelson). These studies have revealed that guidebooks often perpetuate discourses that are based on old and superseded dichotomies and power relations, which corroborates Lisle's assertions which were discussed above. Bhattacharyya, for example, shows how *Lonely Planet* reinforces an Orientalist view of India by representing it "through images of its past glory and present exoticism" (383). Laderman's research maintains that contemporary Western guidebooks still frame Vietnam within the dichotomy of 'bad' Communists and 'noble' Americans, while Nelson also contends that discourses dividing the world into Capitalist and Communist areas continue to dominate the representation of Slovenia in many large twenty-first-century guidebook series, such as *Lonely Planet, Rough Guide* and *Frommer's*. These studies assert that guidebooks are structured around a familiar discourse about a place in order to enable the tourist to make sense of the representations. As Velvet Nelson concisely states: "external authors draw upon existing discourses so that external audiences can make sense of the information provided about the destination; at the same time, they reproduce and reify

these discourses by presenting them to readers as objective facts" (1099). This observation then raises the question how French- and German-language guidebooks to Wales tie in with existing discourses, as it was established earlier that these seem to be non-existent. The following analyses focus on the depictions of Wales as 'devolved minority' within a globalising world. In the final section, the outcomes will be interpreted apropos wider prevalent discourses in France and Germany concerning regional diversity.

THE DEFIANT UNDERDOG AND A REFUGE FROM GLOBALISATION: GERMAN VIEWS OF WALES

Turning to contemporary German-language guidebooks to Wales, it is noteworthy that the national character of the Welsh plays a significant role in the overall depiction of the country and its identity. Moreover, as will be shown, this national character is directly connected to the country's spatial and political identity, thus significantly influencing Wales's spatialisation as a 'devolved minority' in the modern world.

Several German guidebooks depict the Welsh as rebellious and defiant. According to the guides, this national character has developed over many centuries due to English oppression which has strained the relationship between Wales and the so-called "Anglo-Saxon 'ruler-culture'" ("angelsächsischen 'Herrscher-Kultur'"; Schmidt 8). The historical and contemporary struggle of the Welsh against their purportedly malevolent neighbour who has "swallowed, spat out, usurped and exploited [them]" ("schluckte, ausspuckte, an sich riß, ausbeutete"; Fröhlich-Kretzschmar 7) becomes the chief defining feature of Welsh national identity. The reader is told that century upon century the English and their forebears have oppressed the Welsh territorially, culturally and linguistically (cf. Fröhlich-Kretzschmar 5, 10–11; Juling 34; Krücker 7; 13; Schmidt 26; Schulze-Thulin 85–7). Nevertheless, the Welsh and their culture have survived due to a strong sense of resistance, opposition and solidarity: "Aber Wales war nie ein leichtverdaulicher Bissen, und im Lauf der Jahrhunderte kristallisierte sich eine Art kämpferische Solidarität heraus, die den Walisern im Blut liegt" ("But Wales has never been an easily digestible bite, and over the centuries a kind of defiant solidarity emerged which runs in the Welsh blood"; Fröhlich-Kretzschmar 7). Another illustrative example of the alleged contrariness of the inhabitants is the following anecdotal characterisation of the people of Wales: "[W]enn man irgendwo in Wales laut 'Ja' rufen würde, gingen sofort alle Fenster auf und mindestens zehn Leute würden einem genauso laut 'Nein' entgegenschreien" ("If you were to shout 'yes' somewhere in Wales, all the windows would open immediately and at least ten people would yell 'no' in response"; Krücker 8). Welsh national identity is largely based on an attitude of headstrong solidarity, primarily directed against the English who are seen as the oppressors. Owing to this, the image of an underdog emerges and anti-Englishness becomes one of the most defining features of Welshness in the German-language guidebooks. The *Reise Know-How* guidebook provides some of the most striking examples in this respect, condensing the nation's culture to "a question of attitude toward life, the antithesis of the Anglo-Saxon dominated world" ("eine Frage der Lebenseinstellung, ein Gegenpol zur angelsächsisch dominierten Welt"; Schulze-Thulin 59), while informing the reader that the most important characteristic of the Welsh is that they are not English (89–91; 96).

This dichotomy between Wales and England and the asserted oppression of the former by the latter also dominates depictions of the political situation in Wales. The dissatisfaction within Wales concerning the British (or rather 'English') political system is highlighted repeatedly. Before devolution, the guidebooks remark that Wales exists "in the shadows of English politics" ("im Schatten der englischen Politik"; Schmidt 26), often feeling treated as the "'backyard of England'" ("'Hinterhof Englands'"; Fröhlich-Kretzschmar 56). After the referendum of 1997, the guidebooks begin to address Welsh politics in more detail, which indicates that this aspect of Wales is considered to be of interest for the reader. Details about the political structure of the Welsh National Assembly are, for instance, provided, as well as facts about the process of devolution (e.g. Krücker 15; Juling 32; Schulze-Thulin 88). Consequently, Wales is becoming politically visible. Whereas the *Marco Polo* guidebook published before devolution describes the Welsh as an "eccentric" people that opposes every form of political change (Westphal 1996: 8), most guidebooks portray the Welsh hereafter as politically engaged. However, this increasingly political view of the Welsh continues to be framed within the opposition of the

Welsh against the English. In a more recent *Marco Polo* edition published in 2000, author Uwe Westphal has omitted his description of the Welsh as averse to politics but instead ascribes the positive outcomes of the 1997 referendum to a nationalistic reaction against "das Eindringen wohlhabender Engländer, die den walisischen Traditionen mit Snobismus begegneten" ("the invasion of wealthy Englishmen who approach Welsh traditions with snobbery"; 16). This interpretation of the referendum corresponds to the image of the Welsh as a stubborn people that will oppose the English in every possible way. By describing Welsh devolution and the National Assembly within the limiting framework 'Wales against England', their significance for Wales, both nationally and internationally, is marginalised (see also: Schulze-Thulin 88). Consequently, devolution is not seen as a significant catalyst for change in Wales, but rather as one of many acts of defiance; the image of Wales as underdog persists.

In contrast to Westphal's relatively elaborate evaluation of devolution, most guidebooks summarise this process in a purely factual manner while continuing to describe Wales as "pipsqueak in the west of England" ("Winzling im Westen Englands"; Fröhlich-Kretzschmar 4), "the small country in the west of Great Britain" ("das kleine Land im Westen Großbritanniens"; Schulze-Thulin 7) or "the 'wild' land of the red dragon" ("[d]as 'wilde' Land des roten Draches"; Juling and Berger 8). Consequently, Wales is marginalised as a remote and untamed land; a 'minoritised' periphery of the English core. Devolution, though mentioned, has apparently not influenced the overall perception of Wales as an insignificant nation on the fringe of Europe and Great Britain. Resulting from this conceptualisation of Wales as being peripheral as well as having a culture of obstinacy and wildness, the country is imagined, both before and after devolution, as a destination untouched by the equalising forces of globalisation and modernity. Wales is purported to be a nation that refuses to adjust to the contemporary speed of life where the tourist can instead rediscover "slowness" ("Langsamkeit"; Juling and Berger 9). In Wales, one can allegedly flee from the hustle and bustle of modern city life into "the solitude of Wales" ("die walisische Einsamkeit"; Westphal 2000: 5), where there are no international airports and where even British Rail only dares to enter for a couple of kilometres at the southern coast. The facts that Cardiff Airport offers flights to and from overseas destinations and that the connection between Wales and central arrival points for non-UK visitors (such as Dover and London) have improved dramatically during the past twenty years go unnoticed in order to construct an image of Wales as peripheral, isolated and backward.

The supposedly defiant character of the Welsh is directly connected to this peripherality. According to the *Polyglott* guidebook, it is due to their obstinacy that the inhabitants of Wales actively resist globalising influences: "Gerade in einer Zeit, da so vieles vereinheitlicht und gleichgeschaltet wird, tut es gut zu wissen, daß im 'freien Westen' ein kleines Volk starrköpfig seine Eigenheiten verteidigt – und damit ein bißchen von der Vielfalt unserer Welt" ("Especially in an era in which so much is being standardised and synchronised, it is good to know that in the 'free West' a small people stubbornly defends its own idiosyncrasies – and thus a piece of the diversity of our world"; Krücker 7). Wales's peripherality on the borders of the modernising and globalising world is thus not depicted as merely resulting from its remote geographical location on the fringe of Europe and Great Britain, but rather as actively created and sought out by its inhabitants (see also Westphal 2000: 5). Wales, a country said to be populated by a disobedient people, is portrayed as a vigorous opponent of globalisation, willingly shrouding itself in isolation and obscurity. Corresponding to this image, the destination is labelled as an "El Dorado for 'counter-culturists'" ("Dorado für 'Alternative'"; Juling 35) where nature conservation, in contrast to other Western countries, is still taken seriously. Furthermore, it is labelled a safe haven for "fugitives from civilisation" ("Zivilisationsflüchtlinge"; Juling 33), where organic wholefood cafés, yoga groups and meditation centres serve the needs of these visitors (Juling 50; Westphal 2000: 35). Moreover, various guidebooks imagine travelling to Wales as a journey into the past where tranquillity and traditional values can still be found (e.g. Juling 13; 56; Juling and Berger 8; Schulze-Thulin 7). Within the globalising world, Wales is thus described as a storehouse of the past, a retreat from modernity where alternative (and supposedly better) ways of life can be found and are available for the tourist to explore and consume. To use Debbie Lisle's term, Wales's distinctiveness is based on a 'discourse of nostalgia'. Despite several centuries of English domination, the Welsh have managed to retain their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness by resisting Anglicisation, but consequently also globalisation and modernisation. It can thus be argued that England is implicitly constructed as a modernising core area, while Wales is regarded as its periphery. The latter is imagined as remote (both in time and space)

and is conceptualised as a backward, yet idealised area on the margins. The fact that Wales has gained relative autonomy and has consequently experienced a revival of its national identity has not changed this peripheral image of the country in the German-language guidebooks.

Despite this image of Wales as a country outside of contemporary time and space, there seems to be a completely different, modern and fashionable side to Wales as well, which the guides particularly illustrate by drawing the attention of the reader to the "Cool Cymru" phenomenon. This term was used in the late 1990s as a label to reflect the success of popular Anglo-Welsh bands, such as Catatonia, Stereophonics and Super Furry Animals, as well as fashion and films produced in Wales (cf. Harris 152; Johnes 427). For example, whereas the 2000 edition of the DuMont guidebook still describes Welsh culture as consisting of male voice choirs, opera singers and harp music, the 2013 edition has fully revised its vision on the subject and states: "Bergmannschöre? Opernsänger? Das war gestern. Die heutige walisische Musikszene ist überraschend vielfältig, überaus munter und innovativ" ("Miners' choirs? Opera singers? That was yesterday. The contemporary Welsh music scene is surprisingly diverse, very lively and innovative"; Juling and Berger 70). The earlier mentioned Anglo-Welsh bands are discussed at length and are seen as representative for a new-found modern Welsh culture which has put "this little spot on the map" ("diesen kleinen Fleck auf der Landkarte"; Westphal 2000: 18) as a tourist destination for young people.

The guides situate modern Welsh identity in the urbanised southern regions of Wales, principally in Cardiff. The capital's nightlife is praised and Cardiff Bay is seen as a shining example of modern architecture (e.g. Fröhlich-Kretzschmar 12). Wales's modernity is therefore located in the Anglicised southern part of the country, while it is simultaneously emphasised that this part of Wales is far from being the heart of Welsh culture and language, and has little connection with the rest of the country (Juling 56; Schmidt 74–6). The "real Wales" ("richtige Wales"; Schulze-Thulin 102; Westphal 2000: 31), the reader is told, can be found in the north. A telling quote that illustrates this post-devolution opposition between a forward-looking and anti-modern Wales comes from the DuMont travel guide, which states: "Seit die Waliser ihr eigenes Parlament wählen, hat das Image der Provinzialität und Rückständigkeit zumindest im dicht besiedelten urbanen Südosten ausgedient" ("Since the Welsh elect their own parliament the image of provinciality and backwardness has become outdated, at least in the densely populated urbanised areas in the south-east"; Juling and Berger 8–9). Although this does imply that devolution has brought about significant shifts towards modernisation in Wales, this is limited to only certain areas.

Overall, devolution does not seem to have dramatically changed the perception of Wales and Welshness as stuck in the past. In particular, Anglo-Welsh culture is regarded as reflecting the contemporary side of the country. Correspondingly, the only areas that are evidently perceived as modern are Cardiff and the urbanised, Anglicised southern areas of Wales. Especially in light of Cardiff's negative vote in the devolution referendum, it is noteworthy, to say the least, that the city is now the face of Wales as a modern and devolved nation. In these recent German-language guidebooks, Welshness seems to be incompatible with modernity, and it is only the Anglicised side of Wales and its culture that can represent the modern face of the country.

A VIOLENT COLONY INHABITED BY AN INNOCUOUS PEOPLE: FRENCH VIEWS OF WALES

When contrasting the German-language guidebooks to Wales with those written and published in French, it is apparent that their respective representations of Wales's socio-spatial identity differ significantly. The following analysis offers a comparative examination of the image of Wales provided in contemporary French-language guidebooks.

Compared to the quantity of German-language guidebooks to Wales, it is first of all noticeable that there are hardly any French-language travel guide series that have published single-volume guides to Wales. To my knowledge, only the *Petit futé* series has done this, while others combine England and Wales in one volume, or include a chapter on Wales in their guides to Great Britain. Even though the chapters concerning Wales are gradually expanding through the various editions (whereas Wales is covered in merely five pages in Philippe Gloaguen's 1982 *Guide du routard*, this is extended considerably to thirty-seven in 1996 and to eighty in the 2002

Modern Languages Open
DOI: 10.3828/mlo.v0i0.203

edition), it is a significant difference compared to the guidebooks available for the German-speaking market. The fact that the word "Angleterre" frequently features prominently on the covers of the guides, whereas "pays de Galles" is more or less reduced to a subtitle in noticeably smaller font size (e.g. Brisou-Nowik 2002; Manufacture française des pneumatiques Michelin 2015), also contributes to the first impression that the French-language guidebook series do not regard Wales as a notable distinct travel destination. Instead, it is seemingly treated as an integral part of Great Britain, closely connected to England, which can be visited as an excursion during a holiday to the UK. The reasons behind this pronounced difference in the German- and French-language guidebook publications to Wales can only be conjectural at this point. It might be suggested that it is not considered profitable enough for many French guidebook series to publish single volumes to Wales, even though France is one of the most vital overseas holiday markets for the country (Visit Britain 2014: 6–7).

Due to the fact that Wales is virtually always described in combination with England or the rest of the UK, the guides show an uncertainty regarding how to evaluate the relationship between the two countries and the status of Wales as a distinct nation within the UK. Wales is, for example, described as "une nation dans la nation", while at the same time being labelled "une région" (Brisou-Nowik 1994: 159). The depiction of Wales as *région* is used throughout the French guides and is a telling example of how Wales's position within the UK is perceived (e.g. Peyri 95). Even though Wales is becoming "a nation once again" (Johnes 414), the French guides still regard it as an inherent part of the UK and in some instances even use the term "Angleterre" to refer to a site located in Wales (Manufacture française des pneumatiques Michelin 1997: 58). One guide goes even further by raising the question: "Pays de Galles, terre des princes anglais ou terre des Gallois?" ("Wales, land of English princes, or land of the Welsh?"; Brisou-Nowik 2002: 14). This seems to address the issue of who is the actual 'owner' of Wales: the English, or the Welsh? The *Petit futé* guide to the UK also highlights this issue by introducing Wales as follows:

> La campagne de la campagne anglaise, c'est ici. Sauvage, le pays de Galles est l'un des plus superbes joyaux de la couronne. L'expression conviendrait plutôt flatter une colonie lointaine, exotique. Eh bien nous y sommes, au pays de Galles, loin de tout.
>
> [The countryside of the English countryside, that is here. Wild, Wales is one of the most superb jewels in the crown. This expression would be more appropriate to flatter a distant, exotic colony. But here we are, in Wales, far from everything.] (Auzias and Labourdette 2006: 448)

In this example, Wales is clearly depicted as English property while employing a strongly colonial vocabulary to describe the relationship between Wales and England. Although the expression of "un des plus superbes joyaux de la couronne" could be read purely aesthetically as referring to Wales as one of the most attractive areas in the UK, the phrase has specific imperial and colonial connotations, and is typically used to refer to India. Interpreted this way, "the crown" refers to its meaning as representation of the British monarchy, in which Wales is firmly assimilated. From this perspective it can be argued that Wales is seen as an aesthetic and exotic possession of the Queen, rather than a devolved and distinct cultural and political entity. The country is seemingly prepared to be explored and gazed at, while remaining passive as well as voiceless. Although it resembles a "distant, exotic colony", it is still nearby and easily reachable, thus offering the tourist, in Katie Gramich's words, "accessible otherness" (147).

Portrayals of Wales as a colony can be found in several French guides, although these depict it as an oppressed and ransacked country rather than a luxurious English possession. It is, for example, emphasised that the English came to Wales attracted by its rich mineral resources (Brisou-Nowik 1994: 161), and that they exploited Wales during the Industrial Revolution when it became "an inexhaustible source of wealth for Great Britain" ("une source inépuisable de richesse pour la Grande-Bretagne"; Auzias and Labourdette 2008: 33; cf. Peyri 31).

Arising from this portrayal of Wales as a colonised and plundered country, devolution is repeatedly described as the beginning of the end of English oppression, thus highlighting it as a significant catalyst for change in Wales. In the *Guides Marcus* guidebook, devolution is considered to have freed Wales and Scotland from English domination, which unfortunately still weighs heavy on Northern Ireland. The guide subsequently adds that after having been exploited by England for a long time, Wales is now slowly regaining its economic, as well as

emotional balance (Brisou-Nowik 2002: 14). Devolution is therefore seen as the end of English dominance, the beginning of Welsh freedom and the moment that the Welsh "finally start to take control of their destiny" ("commencent enfin à prendre en main leur destin"; Auzias and Labourdette, *Pays de Galles* 36). Within this perception of devolution as having 'liberated' Wales from English oppression, some guides define the period before the 1997 referendum as a time of fierce "struggle" ("lutte"; Auzias and Labourdette 2008: 38; Brisou-Nowik 1994: 161). In the *Guides mondéos*, for instance, devolution is directly linked to and interpreted as a result of violent Welsh nationalism: "Des actes terroristes viendront renforcer les revendications nationalistes. Finalement, en 1997, un référendum est organisé: 50,3% des Gallois se prononcent en faveur d'une Assemblée galloise" ("Terrorist acts strengthen nationalist claims. Finally, in 1997, a referendum is organised: 50.3 per cent of the Welsh are in favour of a Welsh Assembly"; Peyri 27). The *Guide Marcus* provides a similar image, describing the period before devolution as an era determined by the deliberate burning down of English holiday homes in Wales and the "terrible" miners' strikes of the 1980s (Brisou-Nowik 2002: 14). These acts of violence fit with the image of Wales as a subjugated colony that had to fight to regain its relative independence, which was finally achieved after 1997. Devolution thus becomes a crucial turning point in the uneven relationship between the Welsh and the English, interpreted in terms of colonial rule and violent uprisings. Comparably, the *Petit futé*'s guide to Wales describes the process of devolution within the framework of Welsh struggles against English domination, explaining the 'No' vote, that is against devolving political power from Westminster and giving Wales greater political autonomy, during the 1979 referendum as caused by the large numbers of English people in Wales who were not concerned with the survival of the Welsh language. The guide thus considers this group of English in-migrants as solely responsible for the negative outcome of the referendum in that year. According to this guide, it was the resurgence of Welsh language and culture that led to the 'Yes' vote in 1997 (Auzias and Labourdette 2008: 36). Devolution is thus strongly associated with Welshness (it is also stressed that Welsh speakers especially voted in favour of devolution) and the struggle against the English as well as against Anglicisation.

Although devolution is thus regarded as a positive development for Wales, it is also associated with violent nationalist actions. Whereas the German-language guidebooks portray the friction between the English and the Welsh as a matter of national character which contributed to Wales's charm and attractiveness as a distinct travel destination, the French guidebooks frequently associate the tension between the two nations with violence framed within a colonial discourse. However, these accounts are detached from the general characterisation of Wales and the Welsh, and thus remain isolated cases. Overall, the French guidebooks create an image of Wales as a country of abundant natural beauty inhabited by hospitable, friendly people. A telling example is the concise summary of Wales provided by the *Guide du routard*: "Mer, montagnes et châteaux: voilà ce que vous trouverez au pays de Galles" ("Sea, mountains and castles: that is what you will find in Wales"; Gloaguen 2002: 664). In contrast to the German guidebooks, Welsh identity is not constructed on the idea of rebelliousness and what was termed the mentality of the defiant underdog. Instead, the French guidebooks stereotype the Welsh as "un peuple joyeux" ("a happy people"; Peyri 104) and "conteurs, poètes, chanteurs, acteurs" ("storytellers, poets, singers, actors") who will always reply to the tourist with a smile (Gloaguen 2002: 670, 711). Music, myths and rugby are regarded as the centre of Welsh life (Gloaguen 2002: 671; Peyri 96, 103–4). In addition, the assumed hospitality of the inhabitants of Wales is praised, as well as their sense of humour and love of good food and drink (Auzias and Labourdette 2008: 25; 44; see also: Brisou-Nowik 2002: 14). Resulting from this, the Welsh are turned into innocuous and good-humoured objects of the tourist gaze and the tourist is reassured; even though the Welsh have committed acts of violence within the perceived framework of colonisation and oppression, these acts were directly aimed at the English. Rebelliousness is not part of the general characterisation of the Welsh (as is the case in the German-language guidebooks) and hence the traveller has nothing to fear.

Regarding the modern face of Wales, it can generally be argued that the French guides do not highlight this aspect of the country. Overall, they focus on the historical side of Wales; the touristically attractive castles are of particular interest here as well as its mountainous landscape, which is frequently connected to Arthurian legend (e.g. Peyri 103; Auzias and Labourdette, *Pays de Galles* 17). Although modern aspects of Wales are generally overlooked, the country is not perceived as a refuge from globalisation and modernity as is the case in the German-language guidebooks. The *Petit futé* guidebook even describes the general attitude

in Wales as pro-European Union and contends that most Welsh, unlike the English, are in favour of extending the power of Brussels. This is of course highly ironic given the fact that during the 2016 Brexit referendum, Wales voted in favour of leaving the European Union. As if commenting on these events, which still had to come to pass, and deriding the referendum outcome, the guide stresses that the Welsh economy has benefitted from modern European infrastructure, due to which foreign companies have been able to settle in Wales and provide work for the local population (Auzias and Labourdette, *Pays de Galles* 39–40). In this guide, Wales is represented as turning towards globalisation and more European collaboration, whereas England is regarded as having an isolationist attitude, opposing interference from the EU. In other words, the Welsh welcome globalisation while the English resist international collaboration, thus becoming the recluses.

Nevertheless, this interpretation of Wales remains an exception, and the only other French-language guidebook that touches upon Wales's modernity is the *Guide du routard*. In the 2002 edition, this guide expanded its description of Cardiff considerably, while highlighting the modernity of the city: "Depuis quelque temps, Cardiff s'affirme. Elle n'est plus cette ville moyenne de Grande-Bretagne, elle devient capitale d'une nation. Le changement, est visible partout; la ville est devenue jeune et attirante" ("Recently, Cardiff has been asserting itself. It is no longer that average British town, it is becoming the capital of a nation. This change is visible everywhere; the city has become young and attractive"; Gloaguen, *Angleterre, pays de Galles* 2002: 682). It can therefore be argued that recent changes in Wales, the most evident of these being devolution, are seen as the cause for Cardiff's modernising transformation into a "young and attractive" city with Cardiff Bay as the "technological and cultural showcase of Wales" ("vitrine technologique et culturelle du pays de Galles"; Gloaguen, *Angleterre, pays de Galles* 2002: 690). What is more, Cardiff is explicitly designated as Welsh: "on y est gallois et fier de l'être, on cultive ses traditions tout en s'adaptant au modernisme" ("the people here are Welsh and are proud of it, they cultivate their traditions while adapting to modernity"; Auzias and Labourdette, *Pays de Galles* 79). Cardiff, and its associated modernity, are therefore not rejected as non-Welsh – as was the case in the German guides – but are seen as a central part of the nation and its identity. It could be suggested that Cardiff's reinvention as prototypically Welsh derives from the Parisian outlook in France, which considers the capital the heart of the nation. Germany, being a federal state with sixteen capitals, does not share this view.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In a time of globalisation and internationalisation, which also applies to the guidebook market, is it still valid to talk about national perspectives? The analysis in this article has shown that it is. Despite the fact that the guidebook market is becoming increasingly international, with titles existing in several languages and English-language guidebooks with readers of different nationalities, 'national' discourses can still be discerned.[3] Current research has shown that the perceptions of Wales in contemporary French- and German-language guidebooks have some commonalities, but it also reveals some remarkable differences that can be explained by placing these texts within their national context and by reading them as part of a wider national discourse.

In both French- and German-language guides, the relationship between Wales and England remains a central aspect in the portrayal of the country, its people and culture. It appears as if Wales and Welshness can only exist in comparison to England and Englishness. The guidebooks thus fail to portray Wales as a distinct entity, able to function as a self-contained country with its own culture, language and history. Consequently, it can be argued that even in the post-devolution era, during which discourses of Welshness have become more prominent (Bradbury and Andrews), Wales continues to be perceived as a 'minoritised' nation, which can only be constructed in relation to a core from which it deviates.

The evaluation and interpretation of this relation between Wales and England is, however, remarkably different in the German and French material under examination. To summarise

3 For the current analysis, only material originally published in French and German has been used, in order to avoid the problematic issue of translated texts. These pose their own academic challenges, and deserve seperate attention. More research needs to be done into the changing textual representations of countries in translated guidebooks and travel writing in general. For a first attempt at this, see: Dijkstra.

DOI: 10.3828/mlo.v0i0.203

briefly, the German guidebooks not only 'minoritise' Wales, but also marginalise it as a refuge from modernisation and globalisation. This is purportedly the result of the defiant and stubborn nature of the Welsh, who actively pursue the isolation of their country and culture in an attempt to resist the English and Anglicisation. Within the relationship between the two nations, Wales is the defiant underdog, fighting against its hegemonic neighbour. The French guides rather explain the relationship between Wales and England within a colonial framework. The Welsh are not regarded as inherently rebellious; instead, their struggle against English domination is confined to isolated, politicalised attacks. Overall, the national character of the Welsh is described as hospitable and friendly.

The underlying reasons for these differences in representation are of course complex, but an attempt to explain them will be made here. As guidebooks are written for their home audiences, and are created within their respective discourses, their representations should be interpreted and read accordingly. It should be stressed that the concluding insights of this article are primarily meant as inspiration for future study, as much more work and in-depth research needs to be done. Even so, it could be contended that the differences in representation must be seen in light of the German and French attitudes towards the existence of regional identities. The ways in which regions with distinct cultural identities are generally valued within these countries seems to correspond to the guides' respective approaches to Wales as an ethnically and culturally distinct area within Great Britain. This argument is based on the premise outlined earlier that discourses prevalent in travel writing (including guidebooks) provide insights into the perception of foreign cultures, but also enhance our understanding of the author's home culture as they are reflections of the societies for which they were written and from which they emerged. Especially considering the general lack of awareness about Wales, it can be suggested that the guidebooks fall back on similar situations known from their home country in order to clarify and familiarise the foreign to their audience.

In Germany, a federal state, the simultaneous existence of multiple identities is generally accepted. As Maiken Umbach points out, federalism is a focal point in German national memory; it reconciles regional and national feelings of allegiance, thus allowing the existence of a plurality of identities (4–5). Having been unified relatively late in comparison to other European countries, the only way for Germany to become one state was to adopt a federal structure in which regional differences could continue to exist. Umbach subsequently mentions that the concept of federalism and its openness to regionalism were used after the Second World War and German reunification in 1990 to evoke a positive sense of German belonging which lacked connotations of nationalist totalitarianism (12). As a result, regional identities are widely acknowledged and prevalent in Germany, and many Germans will first call themselves Bavarian or Saxon, and only then German (cf. Newhouse). It could therefore be argued that, from a German perspective, regional distinctiveness does not pose a threat to national coherence, and the representation of the Welsh as a clearly distinct and anti-English (though not per se anti-British) people rather adds to the country's attractiveness as a tourist destination. In the German view, regionalism and a diversity of identities are seen as elements of cultural richness.[4]

France, on the other hand, was one of the first European states to introduce a strongly centralised government and has therefore had a long tradition of state supremacy. Wihtol de Wenden traces the French approaches to cultural diversity and maintains that ever since the Third Republic, the French state has been "an enterprise of national amalgamation blurring internal borders and … differences" (50). Even though regional identities are celebrated locally, for example on Corsica and in Brittany, and the languages of these cultures are at times recognised and taught in schools,[5] the state still denies the existence of a Corsican or Breton people. In the eyes of the state, there is only one people in France and that is the French (Wihtol de Wenden 51–2). The French ideal of 'one country, one people' and the assimilation of minority

4 It must be pointed out that this analysis focuses on the *German* attitude to regional diversity, whereas not all guidebooks that were taken into consideration were published in Germany. Schmidt's guide originates from Switzerland, and the statements concerning *German* attitudes must therefore be regarded with some caution. However, as federalisation is implemented to an even greater extent in Switzerland, where differences in regional diversity and identity are even more strongly pronounced, it can be contended that what is concluded here regarding German attitudes towards regional diversity is similarly applicable in the case of Switzerland.

5 Nevertheless, France has still not ratified the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, which was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992 to protect as well as promote lesser-used and endangered European languages. In comparison, Germany had already ratified the charter in 1998.

and regional identities into a national community, unified by shared values, continues to be prevalent. As Catherine Audard remarks: "To value diversity as such is perceived as a possible threat to national unity and to the values of equality and the neutrality of the state that, since the French Revolution, have been at the heart of what it means to be a French citizen and a democrat" (85). Although tourism is said to generate a re-appreciation of cultural diversity in France (Wihtol de Wenden 52), this distinctiveness should remain unintimidating. It can be argued that regional diversity is tolerated in France as long as it can be consumed as a touristic commodity without posing a threat to the country's national identity. This corresponds to the portrayal of Wales in the guidebooks: the dangerous side of regionalism is clearly highlighted, but it is not inherent to the Welsh character and remains isolated to certain localised incidents. As a result, French readers are reassured that they have nothing to fear from the Welsh, who are generally portrayed as an innocuous people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by Arts and Humanities Research Council [Grant Number AH/K001817/1].

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:
Dijkstra, Anna-Lou 2023 A "Devolved Minority": Contemporary German and French Guidebook Perspectives of Wales. *Modern Languages Open*, 2023(1): 27 pp. 1–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.203

Published: 13 July 2023

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