

## The geography of actualisation: mapping the restructuring of the genitive in the history of Norwegian

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English, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish show similar pathways of change with respect to the genitive. In Old Norse and Old English the genitive is clearly a case. We find both structural genitives marking possession and lexical genitives as the arguments of prepositions and verbs. Genitive NPs show agreement across their different elements, and the form of genitive marking differs across nominal elements. Nominal morphology was fusional and accordingly genitive markers differed in the singular and plural. Since then, these languages show some or all of the following:

1. genitive marking is regularised across paradigms until one marker remains: -(V)s;
2. genitive marking becomes the same in the singular and plural;
3. case agreement within the NP is lost;
4. genitive marking comes to be expressed at the end of the phrase instead of on the head noun (i.e. the -(V)s morpheme becomes a phrasal affix);
5. lexical genitives are lost so that the -(V)s morpheme is really a possessive marker rather than truly a genitive case marker.<sup>1</sup>

The coincidence of this cluster repeating in all four languages suggests causal relationships among the changes. Should one be seen as primary (actuation) and others as downstream consequence (actualisation)? Are there relationships between changes in form (1-2), distribution (3-4) and function (5)? Norde (1997) argues for Swedish that the reanalysis to phrasal affix preceded and drove many of the other changes: does this hold for Norwegian?

This paper will investigate these questions by examining the diffusion of three of these changes in a corpus of Middle Norwegian (Blaxter 2017). The changes examined are: the loss of *-ar* genitives in patronymics (*Prondarsson* > *Prondsson*); the loss of lexical genitives with the adposition *millum* ‘between’ (*beira mellom* > *them j mellom* ‘between them’); and the loss of double-marking of genitives on definite nouns (*biscopsens* > *biscopens* ‘the bishop’s’). If there are causal relationships among them, they should be ordered in the same sequence in Middle Norwegian as is known from the histories of English or Swedish. We would expect to find them following the same pathways of diffusion: if one change triggers another, or if both are caused by the same external factor, then the dialects in which the first change happens earliest should also be those in which the second happens earliest. By using a corpus of localised short texts it is possible to map the diffusion in detail, offering a new kind of evidence for our understanding of causal relationships among clusters of language changes.

## References

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1 For more on the history of the genitive in these languages, see Allen (2008), Herslund (2001), Norde (1997: 64–71), Berg (2015), Seip (1955: 307–309) and Indrebø (1951: 250–251).

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