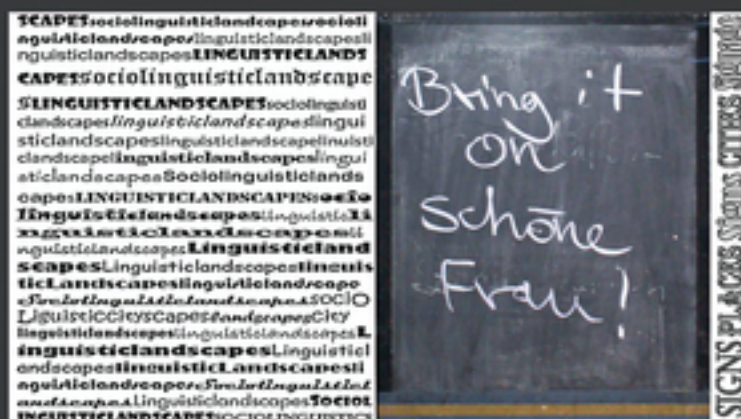Mikko Laitinen / Anastassia Zabrodskaja (eds.)

Dimensions of Sociolinguistic Landscapes in Europe

Materials and Methodological Solutions

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Dimensions and dynamics of sociolinguistic landscapes in Europe

The articles in this volume investigate sociolinguistic landscapes, language and signs displayed in space, in Europe in the early 21st century. The common denominator is the object of study as the authors analyze everyday textual material which may consist of "any display of visible written language" (Gorter 2013: 190) and other discursive modalities related to written language, such as images and nonverbal communication (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 2). The articles approach the objects of study from a range of angles and theoretical perspectives. Some of them take a linguistic landscape approach which examines multilingual signs from the standpoint of societal multilingualism by focusing on how displays of language are regulated, how hierarchies of languages could be used to understand multilingual practices in context, and how code choice and preference become meaningful indicators of societal multilingualism. Others make use of the theoretical notions presented in Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotic approach and in Jaworski and Thurlow's (2010) semiotic landscape studies in which the focus falls on analyzing emerging social meanings which are related to placement of signs and to the discourses and actions that stem from their placement (cf. also Blommaert 2013). No matter what the theoretical orientation is, the articles present not only quantitative results of the presence of various languages, but they also investigate (a) how visible semiotic materials and semiotic aggregates contribute to creating a sense of place or a location, (b) how authors and designers of signs make use of an endless pool of linguistic resources to place themselves in the sociolinguistic landscape, (c) what types of cognitive process are involved in the production, and (d) how various audiences, *viz.* residents, occasional passers-by, and language regulators interpret and understand signs to form their own understanding of space.

In addition to the object of study, the underlying theme is change and contact between speakers, cultures, ideas, and languages. We are undoubtedly living in the era of mobility and globalization of people, thoughts, ideologies, and goods. Mobility and movement influence how linguistic resources are distributed, regulated and interpreted, and sociolinguistic landscapes reflect societal change and enable mapping what (multilingual) linguistic resources are used, and how they

are used, in a range of social contexts (cf. Blommaert 2010, 2013; Hélot, Barni, Janssens and Bagna, eds. 2013). In addition to macro-level mobility and change, this volume also presents a range of approaches by scholars who are interested in approaching spatialization, i.e. the processes whereby space is represented, structured, interpreted, experienced, and contested as places around Europe. The observations presented in the articles are living records of mobility and spatialization, and they are understood as snapshots displaying written language and other semiotic signs which help understand globalization. So, in addition to the action-based approach of what is done with the linguistic resources, sociolinguistic landscape data, we feel, greatly add to comprehending sociolinguistics of globalization.

Each contributor has selected and defined their terminology in their own ways, but collectively this volume understands signs in space as sociolinguistic landscapes, because designing, manufacturing, displaying, encountering, and interpreting signs is inherently a human endeavor. Signs do not appear without humans, and they do not change, apart from wear and tear brought about by the forces of nature, without humans. This is similar to change in language which is brought about by its speakers and hearers; it is always speakers who innovate and spread change, not languages themselves (Milroy 1992: 169; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 1–2).

The concept of change is reflected in the organization of the articles (see below for a comprehensive overview): Part I focuses on places whose emergence is closely related with globalization, mobility and the use of multilingual and multimodal resources. Many of the contributions therefore discuss ways to understand the changing role and status of English in sociolinguistic landscapes around Europe but are not restricted to it. Part II is devoted to virtual and semiotic landscapes, and the authors follow Shohamy and Waksman's (2009: 328) approach in which the research object has "fluid and fuzzy borders" that includes all possible discourses emerging in changing spaces. Part III contains studies on signs in change in the former Soviet countries and territories. It is fair to say that the political turbulence in and around this vast area has brought about the fact that many of these investigations of multilingual and multimodal signs are, if possible, even more relevant in mid-2010s than what they were a few years ago.

The editors of this volume come from two distinct fields as one of us (Anastassia Zabrodskaja) is primarily interested in the role and contacts of minority languages and in particular in ethnolinguistic vitality in post-Soviet spaces, and the other one (Mikko Laitinen) is a historical corpus linguist whose research interests center around studying lexico-grammatical variability in modern and present-day English. He is also interested in testing how the methodological

insights from sociolinguistic landscape studies could be used to understand the global spread of English in more detail.

It is fair to say that the entire volume is result of contact as the editors first met in an Estonian-Finnish research workshop organized by Professor Anna Verschik at Tallinn University in 2009. Both of us had carried out linguistic data collection in the form of pictures, Anastassia Zabrodskaja more consistently and systematically as part of the "Vene-eesti ja inglise-eesti koodivahetuse ja koodikopeerimise korpuse koostamine ja haldamine" [Russian-Estonian and English-Estonian code-switching and code-copying corpora creation and management] project (2009–2013), and Mikko Laitinen as a methodological spin-off as part of his post-doctoral research. We were interested in meeting with other scholars in the field and in creating new contact points with those interested in testing and elaborating the theoretical notions and methodologies of sociolinguistic landscape studies.

This initial contact led to organizing an international symposium on the methodological dimensions of sociolinguistic landscapes and signs in space at the University of Jyväskylä in autumn 2010. The event was part of the activities at the *Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English* (VARIENG), a Centre of Excellence in Research funded by the Academy of Finland for 2006–2011. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Department of Languages and in particular to the productive Jyväskylä VARIENG group led by Professor Sirpa Leppänen for providing not only congenial and encouraging environment for research activities but also financial support for the symposium in the form of venue and administrative services. Most importantly, the unit provided academic stimulus and encouragement for a quantitatively-oriented historical linguist to dig deeper into the world of ethnography and the global spread of English.

The objective of the two-day symposium was to draw together scholars interested in exploring sociolinguistic landscapes and signs in space to discuss their research questions, to present methodological solutions, to compare material collection endeavors, and to exchange ideas related to their ongoing research. After the symposium, all the articles have undergone anonymous peer-reviews by at least two international experts. We wish to thank and express our gratitude to the scholars who sacrificed their time for peer-reviewing activities and offered their expert opinions and suggestions for the authors.

In a recent article on the developments of the field, Gorter (2013) points out that even though studies which make use of and draw from visible signs and sociolinguistic/semiotic landscapes have been around for at least over four decades, it is only during the last few years when we have witnessed a considerable

increase in publications around the key themes of the field (see our overview below). He argues that despite considerable development of the methods (quantitative, qualitative, ethnographic and experimental methods), the changes in the socio-cultural settings in the form of globalization, and the prospects offered by new technology, it is unlikely that the field would evolve to a new subdiscipline of linguistics or lead to a new theory of multilingualism. Rather, it is more likely that investigating sociolinguistic landscapes will offer an additional set of data for broader research questions and methodological tools to solve these questions (also Zabrodskaja and Milani 2014).

We as the editors share this view, and the contributions presented here are case studies of a range of topics that can be better accessed and understood when using visible written language and multimodal material in public spaces as data. Yet, at the same time, we feel that many of the contributions in this volume present theoretically interesting insights, a case in point is for instance the article by Hagen Peukert who takes an interdisciplinary approach to landscapes in various highly diverse urban neighborhoods and shopping areas in Hamburg. The contribution is informed by a set of insights from linguistics and urban sociology, and it makes use of space as an auxiliary variable in operationalizing the study of signs in urban space. In addition, theoretically-relevant notions are also developed in the articles which discuss the role of English and its displays in space (see the articles by Amei Koll-Stobbe and by Mikko Laitinen). These contributions explore the role of English in understanding the globalized linguistic marketplaces of today's Europe (cf. Bolton 2012). The objective is to steer the discussion away from the explanation that the plain visibility of English would (automatically) imply certain symbolic meanings, such as modernity and international orientations; rather, its omnipresence needs to be understood through more comprehensive theoretical orientations, including presentation of self, local power relations and as a local marker of collective identities for instance (cf. Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara and Trumper-Hecht 2006; Blommaert 2013: 41).

In addition, during the last decade a body of literature has emerged proposing that (socio)linguists should direct their attention away from the traditional focus of linguistics, i.e. language as a bounded system, towards broader semiotic resources to see what is really going on when people 'language' (Stroud 2003; Jacquemet 2005; Shohamy 2006; Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Blommaert 2010). The notion of a language becomes especially questionable in cases of multilingual computer-mediated communication. The last decade has also witnessed growing scholarly interest in language on/of the internet in general and in e-mails and postings on various internet discussion forums or message boards in particular (e.g. Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou 2003; Palfreyman

and al Khalil 2003; Hinrichs 2006; Dorleijn and Nortier 2009; Androutsopoulos 2006, 2009; Kytölä 2013). While studying language use by individuals, it is important to shift "from focus on structure to focus on function – from focus on linguistic form in isolation to linguistic form in human context" (Hymes 1974: 77). In this volume, Mia Halonen, studying language practices used by Finnish adolescents in virtual communication, makes a connection between sociolinguistic landscape approach and studies on language use and change brought about by computer-mediated communication and social media.

This volume lands to a field that has seen a growing number of publications in recent years, and the first volume of a new peer-reviewed journal, *Linguistic Landscape. An International Journal*, edited by Elana Shohamy and Eliezer Ben-Rafael, is expected in near future. The following brief overview of some of the recent publications aims not to repeat the thorough description of the field in Gorter (2013), but reviews some of the most recent publications and theoretical insights to the field. A more comprehensive list of the publications in the field can be found at a website maintained by Robert A. Troyer at https://www.zotero.org/groups/linguistic_landscape_bibliography (accessed 8 August 2014).

The articles in Shohamy and Gorter (eds. 2009) center around the core theme of "expanding the scenery", and they approach authentic language data from a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives. The contributions are divided into five parts, the first one focusing on various theoretical approaches, i.e. "historical, sociological, economic, ecological or more focally sociolinguistic" (Shohamy and Gorter 2009: 4). The ensuing three parts present case studies that range from methodological explorations covering language policy issues, identities and language awareness-related topics. The geographic contexts explored range from highly diverse urban centers to regional capitals in Africa to post-communism space in Eastern Europe. The chapters in the final section focus on exploring the future routes for linguistic landscape studies. The final chapter by Shohamy and Waksman (2009) argues for a radical expansion of the field and proposes that language in environment and semiotic signs displayed in public space are "beginning to be viewed as an integral component of what is meant by applied linguistics in a multilingual and multimodal world" (2009: 9).

The volume edited by Shohamy, Ben-Rafael and Barni (eds. 2010) sets out from Landry and Bourhis' (1997) seminal article, but the objective is to expand this approach and analyze multilingual public space using theoretical insights from a range of fields, *viz.* linguistic, social, cultural and political. Rather than understanding linguistic landscape as "a 'given' context of sociolinguistic processes" (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy and Barni 2010: xii), the volume is characterized with an agenda in which mundane objects help creating and constructing

physical settings that are socially constructed and have dynamics of their own. The articles focus on urban areas of global cities and other smaller but equally urban areas, and they approach what the editors call "ordered disorder" of linguistic variation in signs, and the notion of linguistic landscape is understood to be structured along four lines drawn primarily from sociology and social psychology: (a) power relations between various participants in public space, (b) the good reasons perspective and individual actors' interests in shaping and molding public space through designing, creating and placing semiotic signs, (c) subjective self and perceptions and reactions to signs by the crowd, i.e. sign authors and passers-by in densely populated and semiotically-rich environments, and (d) collective identities according to which actors engage in *a priori* planning that draws from given individual/group identity markers in today's globalized and multicultural urban life (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy and Barni 2010: xvii–xix).

This key theme, from space to a place, is elaborated in the long programmatic introduction for Jaworski and Thurlow (eds. 2010) and also in the majority of the articles. The theme is, in its most basic form, seen in the title in which the notion of semiotic replaces linguistic as the descriptive adjective. This change, according to the authors, stems from two factors which lead to broader implications in the field. One of them refers to the nature of data which in linguistic landscape studies mainly consist of written language, but Jaworski and Thurlow (2010: 2) argue that since "written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment", the term semiotic is more appropriate in describing space created through human intervention and meaning making. In addition, it is seen in the need to steer studies away from "predominantly survey-based, quantitative approaches" (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 14) towards highlighting ethnographically-informed, genre-specific, and contextualized analyses.

As is well known, the presence of English in public space has received plenty of attention in recent literature on sociolinguistic landscapes and signs in space. The great majority of these studies have focused on socially diverse urban areas of world cities, but some degree of attention is also being paid to rural areas (Laitinen 2014). A recent special issue of *World Englishes* (Bolton 2012) reviews some of the recent developments and publications that focus on the global spread of English. The introduction and the articles take an applied perspective in which the existing theoretical notions (cf. the publications listed above together with Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotic approach) are made use of. The studies in the special issue examine for instance bilingual landscapes of Washington DC's Chinatown, the presence of English in the primarily Francophone nation of DR of Kongo and the uses and visibility of English in online newspapers in Thailand.

A pointed out above, one productive strand in the field has explored issues related to minority languages, and they are in focus in the volume edited by Gorter, Marten and Van Mensel (2012). Their volume stems from recent research on language policy and globalization, majority–minority language choice and language preference at a community level, i.e. using public signage as evidence of the position of minority languages and their speakers (e.g. Gorter 2006; Shohamy and Gorter eds. 2009). The contributions chart how the theoretical and methodological insights from linguistic landscape studies, taking the venerable Landry and Bourhis (1997) type of approach, could be used to understand "the dynamics of minority language situation, with an explicit focus on Europe" (Marten, Van Mensel and Gorter 2012: 1). The editors acknowledge the need for a more coherent theoretical basis in the field, and point out that the contributions present a range of research in which the methods from linguistic landscape research could be made use of to make structural disadvantages of minority language speakers visible and contribute to survival of such languages. One of the theoretical insights highlighted is moving away from static signs as the object of study to that of various non-static signs (cf. the pioneering study by Sebba 2010). The contributions make use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches since, as the editors succinctly point out, both approaches are valuable in understanding the fascinating questions related to signs in space, i.e. what signs are displayed, what languages and linguistic resources are used in signs, who posted these signs, and, most thought-provokingly perhaps, why?

This question of why various signs are displayed is among the key research questions explored by Blommaert (2013) who examines signs in his own neighborhood in Antwerp. The book focuses on how the notion of sociolinguistic superdiversity could offer a theoretical and methodological toolbox to understand signs in space and contribute to establishing a firm(er) theoretical basis for the studies in the field. Blommaert's approach builds on "deep ethnographic immersion" (2013: 108) of how signs and diverse motivations behind them could be understood through the chaos and complexity theory which helps uncover social, cultural, political, and motivations of displaying them and understand their social meanings in the broader framework of mobility and globalization.

The articles in the present volume are organized so that we have aimed at presenting a range of approaches that focus on exploring the various dimensions of sociolinguistic landscapes. In the first four articles, the thematic focus is on globalization (and particularly on English as its main marker), mobility, technology, and multilingualism in various locations in Western Europe. The authors examine both urban and rural spaces by focusing on specific genres of signs (particularly shop name signs in urban environments) or by aiming to

understand space, such as city regions, shopping areas, or places of tourism. The second part discusses semiotic landscapes in virtual space and border regions, and the authors present interdisciplinary studies in which the aim is to understand the complex nature of semiotic items in socioculturally multilayered space that manifests itself in oral, written, and virtual communication forms. In the third part, the focus shifts to the former Soviet countries and territories, and the authors analyze the interconnections between sociohistorical backgrounds and contemporary language policies, current ethnolinguistic situation and reversal of language policy matters, all of which shape form and functions of language(s) used in multilingual and multimodal signs. Pavlenko (2013), in her recent overview of multilingualism in post-Soviet space, notes that the language regimes and processes in this area are still insufficiently studied, and Part III here provides a set of accounts on the formation of sociolinguistic landscapes in the post-Soviet societies.

In 'Urban linguistic landscaping: Scanning metropolitan spaces', Hagen Peukert examines linguistic diversity in city space and focuses on the neighborhood of St. Georg, a commercially-driven, multicultural environment in Hamburg. His study illustrates how "the city is a place of language contact" (Backhaus 2007: 1), and he approaches his research object interdisciplinarily, combining sociolinguistics and urban sociology to analyze quantitative correspondences between linguistic signs visible on the street level and the number of different usage functions per spatial unit of the buildings in these streets (available through official city records). The key question addressed is whether the diversity of usages corresponds with the diversity visible in signs on the street level.

In an approach that considers shop signage as a genre with a number of functions of advertising discourse, Amei Koll-Stobbe, in 'Ideofiers in the commercial city: A discursive linguistic landscape analysis of hairdressers' shop names', investigates the diversity of shop name signs in various urban areas. Her observations are collected in the inner-city Lancaster and West End in London, and she also provides supplementary data from Kiel. The results show that shop names may serve two indexical functions, a direct referential one to identify the business and its services, and an indirect discursive one to ideofy the intended hairdresser-customer relation as a symbolic commodity. She concludes that signs in service-oriented industries, such as hairdressers, are used not only as direct identifiers but shop name signs are often designed to exhibit an act of identity with the help of an ideofier, "an intended image" which is used to attract specific groups of customers.

The theme of studying shop name signs continues in "Two faces of Oslo: A comparative study of the sense of place" by Karine Stjernholm. Two urban

districts, the more affluent Majorstua in the west and the more working-class Grünerløkka in the east, are investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively. The author, drawing from iconography, not only counts what languages are visible but also analyzes their functions and meanings and makes use of the concepts of disembedding and re-embedding when analyzing qualitative differences in these two places. One of the quantitative results is that immigrant languages are not presented in either of the two locations. The qualitative analysis reveals how the sense of globalness is more prominent in Majorstua, which is dominated by chain-stores, whereas localness is stressed in the public signage in Grünerløkka.

Mikko Laitinen, in his ethnographic study 'English on the move: What's beyond modernity and internationalism?', concentrates on the global spread of English and examines its implications for future sociolinguistic landscape studies. The article focuses on uses and functions of English signs in a country in which English is used as a foreign language but in which its presence and importance has increased considerably during the past few decades as part of processes of globalization and mobility. The observations were collected from two field trips charting the presence of English in Finnish public space, with a special focus on non-urban areas. In the analysis part, he first examines the functions of one mass-produced global sign and then moves on to investigate how one regional Finnish dialect marker is sometimes used as part of locally-produced English texts. He argues that future studies need to problematize the nature of English in public signs and move beyond the widely-repeated claim that English in signs is merely an index of modernity and internationalism and instead start charting situated meanings in more detail.

In 'Social media landscapes: Tracing the uses and functions of a hybrid sign', Mia Halonen combines some of the methods in previous linguistic landscape studies together with internet-based ethnography to study how semiotic signs are used in digital space. Halonen investigates how and why the sign *siisdaa* (a hybrid sign) is employed by Finnish adolescents in the various actions in computer-mediated discourse, i.e. in naming oneself and when commenting others. *Siisdaa* has a range of meanings in social networking sites used by young adolescents, and her observations show that the sign is used by interactants to create affordances of visibility, to highlight specific epistemic positions (i.e. positioning oneself in relation to what the others could be expected to know), and as an anticipatory style marker which could be used as a specific discursive index when a person wants to dissociate him/herself from the communicative situation.

Christoph Marx and Marek Nekula's article 'Constructing a cross-border space through semiotic landscapes: A case study of a German-Czech organization' is an ethnomethodological study that investigates semiotic signs in border

areas. Borders are seen to be socially constructed entities which need to be performed in certain ways, and the article draws from the theory of language management and provides a detailed overview of the multilayered semiotic landscape of one binational and bilingual organization on the Bavarian-Bohemian border. Their data are diverse in nature and include a range of verbal and visual material, and the authors separate two notions, public communication and internal communication. Their analysis shows considerable disparities between the two: The public semiotic landscape provides a misleading image of the bilingual realities as the internal communication shows asymmetrical adaptation by the Czech employees to their German interlocutors. The article concludes that the public semiotic landscape in this case study is an idealized representation of what bilingual interaction could be.

In the article entitled 'Linguistic landscapes of a minoritized regional majority: Language ideologies among Hungarians in South-West Slovakia', Petteri Laihonen continues the discussion on the topic of borders but not so much in the geographic sense as in the majority–minority language context. He investigates sociolinguistic landscapes in two villages which have two names, one Slovakian and one Hungarian (Slovakian: Reca/Hungarian: Réte and Slovakian: Trhová Hradská/Hungarian: Vásárút). The author, making use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, carries out a comparative analysis of both mono and bilingual signage which reveals language ideologies and discourses in bilingual (even shifting to Slovak) Reca and predominantly monolingual Hungarian Vásárút. The main finding is that the notion of sociolinguistic landscape might not mirror the presence of a minoritized regional majority at all if speakers themselves consider education in their first language to be a more important issue and wish to avoid tensions with officials even in cases in which language legislation clearly permits bilingual (Slovak-Hungarian in this case) signage.

The topic of both geographic and majority–minority language borders is discussed in Sebastian Muth's article 'Ruralscapes' in post-Soviet Transnistria: Ideology and language use on the fringes of a contested space'. He focuses on ruralscapes of a state with limited recognition, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (also known as Transnistria). His observations are drawn from five small communities in Transnistria, and the objective is to establish a connection between the ongoing efforts to construct a distinctively Transnistrian political and cultural identity and to demonstrate that surveying ruralscapes can provide equally meaningful results if compared to urban sociolinguistic landscapes. His results show that despite the number of Russian, Ukrainian or Moldovan/standard Romanian speaking inhabitants, Russian firmly dominates in public signage and serves not only as a marker of pre-1992 history but also

clearly demonstrates the fact that the *lingua franca* of interethnic communication has not changed in this region. Muth concludes that Transnistria serves as a test bed for further studies in peripheral linguistic landscapes in non-urban contexts.

The question of contradictory display of the Russian and Ukrainian languages and Cyrillic *versus* Latin scripts in public space in Ukraine is observed in 'Linguistic landscapes as multimodal and multilingual phenomena' by Olga Bever. The contribution pays special attention to the distinctions between Russian and Ukrainian and their alphabets, different linguistic choices between Russian and English, and to the Cyrillic and Latin scripts detected in signs in the urban center of post-Soviet south-eastern Ukraine city of Zaporizhzhya. The author looks at fonts, sizes, colors, images, text prominence and other semiotic devices which together constitute multimodality of a multilingual sign, facilitating understanding what language tactics are used in the Ukrainian contexts in the early 21st century. Even though this article concentrates on sociolinguistic landscapes, it helps comprehending the various (linguistic) identity and language use choices among the Ukrainian population in the aftermath of the events in Crimea in 2014 and, what is more important, it illustrates some of the underlying linguistic tensions in the current confrontation between the western and eastern parts of Ukraine.

The fourth contribution in Part III is Monica Perotto's article 'The presence of the Italian language in the linguistic landscapes of Moscow'. She deals with an interesting phenomenon, namely the presence and functions of the Italian language in a multilingual and multiethnic metropolis where Russian is used as the dominant language for interethnic communication, and where the speakers of Italian constitute very marginal, almost unnoticeable, part of the total population of circa 11.5 million people. Despite these facts, the Italian language is visible throughout the city, and Perotto provides insights into how Italian and Italianized elements are used in Moscow's commercial signage. The data show that local practices shape linguistic creativity, and signs in which references are made to the Italian culture occur as a result of various interpretations of what constitutes Italy and Italianness. Her observations also clearly indicate that positive connotations are associated with the use of Italian in Moscow, and she concludes that these connotations should be made use of in fostering Italian language education and strengthening the social, cultural and economic ties between the two countries.

The majority of the observations are produced as black and white images embedded in the articles. Where necessary for the analysis, some of the observations are produced in color.

As suggested by Shohamy and Gorter (2009: 4), the field of sociolinguistic landscapes has expanded from mere documenting various signs to contextualizing observations and problematizing languages visible and audible in space. The contributions included in the volume at hand aim at broadening this vibrant field by offering not only new approaches to research on semiotics of sociolinguistic landscapes in different European contexts but also adding new methodological perspectives on data collection and interpretation techniques.

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