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Conflict and Exclusion: The Linguistic Landscape as an Arena of Contestation

Rani Rubdy

Introduction

This book is anchored within current issues and debates in the field of linguistic landscape research (Backhaus, 2006; Gorter et al., 2012; Helot et al., 2012; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010; Shohamy and Gorter, 2009; Shohamy et al., 2010) and focuses on the dynamics of the linguistic landscape as a site of conflict, exclusion and dissent often arising from mechanisms of language policy, language politics, language hierarchies and the ethnolinguistic struggles engendered by them. In light of the increasing scholarly attention linguistic landscape research has been receiving at present, and its expansion into new areas of inquiry, it is our belief that the time is ripe for a book which tackles not only how linguistic landscape represents discursive and semiotic signage that is indexical of ethnolinguistic vitality (Landry and Bourhis, 1997), but also crucially, acts as a site of identity construction and representation (Ben Said and Shegar, 2013; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Curtin, 2009; Hanauer, 2010). The primary aim of the book is therefore to conceptualize the linguistic landscape as a site for the propagation and production of particular ideologies through textual/linguistic/semiotic artifacts (Lanza and Woldemariam, 2009; Sloboda, 2009), whereby languages are marginalized and concealed, but also sometimes used as a vehicle for social contestation, thus impacting in a number of ways the local readership, community, as well as ethnolinguistic vitality of sociolinguistic groups.

It is important to note, however, that our notion of exclusion does not restrict itself to (under)representation of minority groups or ways in which the linguistic landscape ‘does or does not reflect language demographies or how they confirm or resist existing or presumed language prestige patterns and hierarchies’ (Marten et al., 2012). Exclusion as conceptualized in this book relates to an engagement with broader socio-historical, economic, political and ideological issues that go beyond language dimensions. These involve socio-political structures and processes that prevent individuals or groups from freely accessing resources, participating in society and asserting their
rights (Beall and Piron, 2004), concomitantly leading to their contestation through social action that often moves beyond linguistic minoritization, marginalization and erasure, although still significantly mediated through the use of language in the linguistic landscape. This focus on contestation and conflict brings to the fore the role of the linguistic landscape as a place of affect wherein displays of words and images often manifest the tensions between the hegemony and dominance of global capitalism and the grassroots reactions of local communities contending for visibility, social justice and economic and political survival. Our concern with this aspect of the linguistic landscape thus helps create affordances that allow us to forge links between landscape and identity, social order and power.

This concern with the topic of conflict is not new. Several scholars have addressed the issue of Linguistic Landscape as an arena of contestation and negotiation in recent years (Kasanga, 2004; Papen, 2012; Philips, 2012; Seals, 2011). Notable among them is Shohamy’s (2006) depiction of the linguistic landscape as an arena where language battles take place and where the linguistic landscape items act as mechanisms of language policy that can perpetuate ideologies that result in the centrality versus the marginality of languages in society (see also Lado, 2011). Shohamy (2008) refers also to the way public space served as an arena of contestation and struggle in the era of Hebrew revival as do Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) who, in examining the degree of visibility on private and public signs of the three major languages of Israel – Hebrew, Arabic and English – conclude that the linguistic landscape is not a true reflection of Israel’s ethnolinguistic diversity; other factors such as relations between dominant and subordinate groups come into play in terms of symbolic construction of the public space. Trumper-Hecht (2009) focuses on the legal battle for the representation of Arabic on public and private signs in mixed Arab-Hebrew towns in Israel, where the linguistic landscape became an essential tool in the establishment and preservation of national hegemony with clear prominence given to Hebrew. Another instance of openly manifested tension in the linguistic landscape is that of religious wars between different denominations of Christianity in Adis Ababa, Ethiopia (Woldemariam and Lanza, 2012). Thus linguistic landscapes can be places where linguistic diversity is displayed but also contested, given the tendency of majority languages to dominate, leaving minority languages to struggle for visibility (Marten et al., 2012).

More recently, researchers have focused on the overwhelmingly commercial nature of the material manifestation of language in the linguistic landscape to show how state and private enterprises commodify language and market it for consumption, thus turning the landscape into an ‘important ingredient in constructing consent and identity ... for the projects and desires of powerful social interests’ (Mitchell, 2000, p. 100). For instance, Leeman and Modan’s (2009, 2010) analysis of the newly gentrified Chinatown in Washington DC demonstrates the way urban development
initiatives stipulating the use of minority languages (in this case, Chinese) are little more than artifacts of current ethnic commodification favoring corporate development and consumerism rather than promoting the goals of language revitalization, multilingualism and empowerment of language minorities. And Papen’s (2012) study of the changing graphic environment of Prenzlauer Berg depicts how despite the strong influence of such commercial projects and discourses, the public space remains an area of contestation and subversiveness between civil society, private businesses and the state. Indeed, the need for compiling a theme-based volume that expressly addresses power struggles in the linguistic landscape in a sustained and systematic way was inspired by such seminal studies on this very theme of conflict, no less than by its immediate relevance to the contemporary world we live in. The case studies in this book aim to build on such current and ongoing illuminating scholarship and extend it in new directions.

**Contextualizing conflict and exclusion**

In an era marked by globalization, transcultural flows and technological advances which accentuate the importance of linguistic diversity, and where multilingualism is increasingly omnipresent in the ethnolinguistic ecology of most countries, it is intriguing that under the guise of such linguistic diversity are camouflaged both explicit and implicit forms of language exclusion. Linguistic exclusion can range from processes of backgrounding, demoting, or ‘sanitizing’ (Villa, 2002) languages to more radical situations involving language suppression altogether. A variety of factors may be at the source of linguistic exclusion in the linguistic landscape. Exclusion may be the consequence of a top-down policy which assigns prestige or stigma to particular varieties; it may also be enacted on the basis of language purity/verbal hygiene. It may be the outcome of in-group gate keeping practices (Trumper-Hecht, 2009) and feelings of linguistic insecurity vis-à-vis other dominant ideologies (Hicks, 2002), languages, or coercive socio-political practices. Finally, it may be the product of a lack of coordination between advocated language policies and the actual implementations of these policies (Ben Said, 2010). A crucial dimension of the notion of exclusion projected in this book also refers to the way lack of visibility of languages on street signs disfavors language/ethnic minorities. This orientation to language-based exclusion in the studies reported in the book raises both interesting and daunting questions for traditional approaches in sociolinguistics, multilingualism and language policy, and engages with contemporary and critical issues in the field of linguistic landscape research.

Another key dimension of our engagement with conflict and exclusion is one that concerns signs as a form of political activism indexing contestation and dissent in situations of social and ideological conflict, as in the case of studies on the Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring movements. These
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studies focus on types of multimodal representational genres in mass protest demonstrations that constitute a response to a range of social and economic struggles. Of particular interest to these studies is the way in which the linguistic landscape is used through this form of political activism as a mechanism to reach audiences of many different cultures and backgrounds in expressing both individual voices and collective group identity. The linguistic landscape becomes in such instances a powerful means of generating the active participation of passers-by in the symbolic creation of the meanings and messages of dissent. Such participatory forms of linguistic landscape can then facilitate symbolic re-appropriation and, to that extent, help counter erasure and combat repression.

These studies affirm the intimate connection that holds between the notion of public space and that of the public sphere which it draws from, a concept that Habermas (1989) is most strongly associated with. Among the different formulations of this notion offered by Habermas, is one where, as stated by Ben-Rafael (2009), he saw ‘the public sphere as a buffer in modern societies between the state and private life, where civil society crystallizes as a driving force of the wider public’ (p. 40). For Habermas, the public sphere is a constitutive element of a democratic society, where debate and discussion can occur unimpeded. Without it, citizens would not have a space in which to develop and articulate ‘public will’, and no means to influence political decision making. This understanding of the public sphere links well with the point made by Leeman and Modan (2009) that landscapes do not only privilege powerful or majority languages over minority ones. Rather, as used in cultural geography, ‘landscapes are characterized as representation of spaces that privilege subject positions and points of view’ (p. 337). Following Cosgrove (1985), Leeman and Modan further argue that representation which is inherent in the concept of landscape both reflects and promotes not just particular perspectives, but also material interests.

In this case the focus is less on the language itself and more on the actions it is used to take, leading to the heightening of agency and empowerment. ‘Power is associated with the way different actors make use of public space’ (Papen, 2012, p. 59). It follows then, as Jones (2010) points out, that signs, genres or discursive practices when used strategically by social actors ‘can potentially change the world on two levels: first, on the level of the immediate interaction, by shifting the relationships of power among participants, creatively reframing the activity that is taking place, or otherwise creating possibilities for social action that did not exist at the outset of the interaction, and second, on the level of society or culture, by contesting conventional orders of discourse and opening up possibilities for the imagining of new kinds of social identities and new ways of seeing the world’ (p. 473).

This raises the interesting question of how actors in a given landscape might attempt to shape the landscape itself. Hence, ‘linguistic landscape research not only studies the signs, but it investigates as well who initiates, creates, places and reads them’ (Marten et al., 2012). The contributions to
this volume are therefore concerned not only with the ways in which conflict and exclusion come to be represented in the linguistic landscape, but also on how signs manifesting them are initiated, created, manipulated and interpreted by the people it impacts. While it is generally true that hegemonic forces – be they state and institutional mandates, commercial interests and discourses, or entrenched political regimes – tend to dominate the public space, as some studies in this volume demonstrate, there are other voices too, some articulating alternatives or even opposition to dominant mainstream ideologies.

The linguistic landscape – a developing construct

This section discusses the fundamental question, ‘What can be considered linguistic landscape?’ (Shohamy and Waksman, 2009, p. 313) and traces key developments that have led to the broadening of this construct. Much linguistic landscape research is premised on a straightforward understanding of the concept of linguistic landscape, as epitomized in Landry and Bourhis’ (1997, p. 23) landmark article: ‘the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region.’ Thus linguistic landscape typically refers to the use of language in its written form in the public space and has focused on how ‘the language of public road signs, advertising, billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration’ (p. 25). This use of the term has been found not to be sufficient for capturing the complexities of the sociolinguistic reality that exists in contemporary societies. Hence the concept has been extended to include ‘verbal texts, images, objects, placement in time and space as well as human beings’ (Shohamy and Waksman, 2009, p. 314). This extended sense of the term encompasses the cyberspace, blurring the dichotomies between private-public and real-virtual, as well as diverse multimodal resources such as graffiti and street art (Hanauer, 2011; Papen, 2012; Pennycook, 2009, 2010; Rozenholc, 2010).

Several alternative terms have been used by different authors to refer to the linguistic landscape. These include ‘the linguistic items found in the public space’ (Shohamy, 2006, p. 110), ‘environmental print’ (Huebner, 2006, p. 31), ‘linguistic cityscape’ (Coulmas, 2009, p. 14; Spolsky, 2009, p. 25, italics added) and ‘multilingual cityscape’ (Gorter, 2013, p.191, italics added), the last two signifying interest in the use of more than one language, generally in the context of urban settings. Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) visual grammar and Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) geosemiotic approach have added considerable insight and theoretical grounding to linguistic landscape scholarship. Scollon and Scollon, for instance, offer a detailed classification of discourse in urban places as (1) signs produced by official organs (municipal regulatory and infrastructural discourses); (2) commercial
discourses (for example, shop signs); and (3) transgressive discourses (that is, signs that violate the conventional semiotics expected, for example, graffiti).

More recently, Jaworski and Thurlow (2010), following Scollon and Scollon, have adopted the term ‘semiotic landscape’ instead of ‘linguistic’, to emphasize ‘the way written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, non-verbal communication, architecture and the built environment’ (p. 2), and the use of space as a semiotic resource in its own right, thus broadening our understanding of what constitutes a landscape beyond physical signs, towards symbolic practices.

It is now recognized that a key to analyzing how people use language in the linguistic landscape is to understand the ways in which space is made into (particular) place, that is, ‘how space and place are configured and represented, and the different interactions and identities that are possible in those spaces’ (Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009, p. 364). In this respect, Lefebvre’s (1991) ideas about space as not a given container, but as constructed through linguistic and social practice, and Tuan’s (1977) distinction between space and place have added an important dimension to our understanding of the linguistic landscape. According to Tuan, “[s]pace” is more abstract than “place.” What often begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value’ (p. 6). As Papen notes, language undoubtedly plays a role in this, but it is not just words that have the power to turn a space into place (Lou, 2007). ‘[L]inguistic tokens such as billboards and banners are not added on to a given physical space, but are part of what makes and shapes this space, giving it cultural meaning and thereby turning it into “place.” Linguistic landscape research therefore is concerned with what one could call the discursive construction of spaces’ (Papen, 2012, p. 59, citing Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010).

Initial focus of linguistic landscape research rested on its two main functions, as defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997): informational and symbolic. The linguistic landscape is informational when it provides details about the sociolinguistic composition of language groups in a certain area and the language(s) used to communicate in a community, indicating its language diversity or lack thereof. The linguistic landscape is symbolic when it reflects the power, prestige and status of the language, that is, whether dominant or subordinate, or symbolizes the strength or weakness of different groups (Lado, 2011, p. 136). Studies on linguistic landscape that investigated which languages are used in specific areas and domains (for example, in top-down versus bottom-up signs), and the power relationships between the different languages used in these settings focused mainly on the informational and symbolic functions of the signs. The current surge of interest in the field has opened up new areas of investigation that characterize the ways in which the linguistic landscape indexes the construction of new, multiple, emerging and/or imagined group identities (Curtin, 2009; Gade, 2003; Kasanga, 2010) as well as reflecting ideological debates (Moriarty, 2012). A fairly
recent development in the study of the graphic environment is the analysis of printed materials that are a part of everyday consumption, such as labels, pamphlets, flyers and leaflets, handbills, stamps, tickets, bills (Sebba, 2010, 2013), banknotes (Hawkins, 2010; Sebba, 2013), menus (Kasanga, 2012), and mobile, often transitory, signage that includes handheld signs, posters, placards, banners and flags, carried and displayed by protesters at political demonstrations (Hanauer, 2011; Kasanga and Ben Said, 2012). In the last case, signs are not just indexical or symbolic but politically and ideologically motivated.

Theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches utilized in the book

The authors in this book approach the linguistic landscape from a variety of theoretical perspectives and with various methodologies. The interpretive frameworks utilized range from sociolinguistic to discourse analytic to ethnographic, demographic, social semiotic, language policy and language ideological perspectives, while encompassing verbal, visual, multimodal and mediated approaches.

While a large number of studies in this volume continue to use Landry and Bourhis’ definition of the linguistic landscape they also treat it as a point of departure in further extending the boundaries of landscape research to include, for instance, people and buildings and the cyberspace. A number of studies represent recent interest in mobile landscapes of protest demonstrations, highlighting the significance of their dialogic and participatory nature. While the analytical apparatus employed by most contributors can be characterized as discourse-analytic, that is, one that primarily grounds landscape analysis as the discursive construction of space (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010), the thrust towards a semiotically-informed and broadened understanding of linguistic landscapes is combined with other approaches for a more systematic and in-depth delineation of the linguistic landscape.

For instance, while the degree of visibility of languages in the linguistic landscape is connected to insights from language policy theory and discourse analysis in some of the studies, they further draw on Scollon and Scollon’s framework of nexus analysis (Thislewaite and Sebba, this volume), geosemiotics (Tan and Ben Said, this volume), and an ethnographic orientation (Muth, Troyer, Cáceda and Giménez Eguíbar, this volume) in providing illuminating analyses of landscape data. An ethnographic approach also informs the analysis of the genres and functions of protest signs in some of the studies (Hanauer, Seals, this volume), and is used in conjunction with discourse analysis of protest demonstrations in others (Shiri, this volume). Ethnographic and discourse analytic research provide valuable insights into the multi-indexical functions of particular landscape practices relating to identity and inclusion (Curtin, this volume). Other contributors (Wee, this
volume) bring together insights from studies of language ideological debates and verbal hygiene to enrich our understanding of the impact of the digital affordances of the linguistic cyberscape. The book also contains a handful of studies (Muth, Messekher, this volume) that incorporate a historical dimension in their analysis to help illuminate past and ongoing social processes that impact the relative power and status of different language groups in a specific context, bearing out Pavlenko’s (2010, p. 133) observation that ‘the linguistic landscape is not a static but a diachronic process’. Kress and Leeuven’s framework of ‘visual grammar’ and the Scollons’ perspective on geosemiotics are applied in a multimodal interpretive analysis of graffiti expressing anti-terrorism messages (Rubdy, this volume).

The data collection techniques utilized in this volume are largely those typified by the linguistic landscape method of collecting photographic data with the help of digital technology and drawing upon a fund of available methods in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. However, in contrast to much earlier work on the linguistic landscape, which makes use of systematic quantitative sampling as a basis for making comparisons of the distribution of languages on the signs and different patterns of multilingualism (Coluzzi, 2009; Lado, 2011; Lai, 2012; Muth, 2012), the methodological approach employed in many of the case studies reported in the volume are either qualitative and interpretive in orientation or employ a mixed-methods approach that combines a quantitative survey of the linguistic landscape with a qualitative component exemplified by interviews with resident participants. The studies by Thistletwaite and Sebba and Troyer, Cáceda and Giménez Eguíbar (this volume), for instance, can be understood within the larger framework of minority/ethnic language issues of identity using such mixed methods. Both studies begin with an analysis of quantitative data on the number and types of displays of language that are visible in public places, followed by a qualitative analysis of interview data conducted with shop owners and resident participants in the linguistic landscape.

The use of interviews has helped provide an extra layer of interpretation in several of the studies, allowing the perspectives of the social actors to be included, and incorporating the voices of the people studied as an essential part of the interpretation of the linguistic landscape, not just privileging the analyst’s interpretation. This suggests that without the interviews valuable information would be lost, impoverishing the research findings. Interview data plays a central role in Tupas’ (this volume) study, which explores the complex dialogic dynamics of a linguistic landscape practice that largely remains invisible – because it is interiorized – and unearths insights into his informant’s struggle to make sense of her life as a business student in a foreign country through her interaction with the academic space she inhabits. Interviews are combined with ethnographic fieldwork in supplementing photographic data at the protest demonstration sites in the research conducted by Curtin and also Seals (this volume) to incorporate
voices other than the researcher's, thus enriching the interpretive value of their research. The adoption of a discourse-ethnographic approach by these authors in triangulating their analysis answers the call of recent linguistic landscape scholars (Blommaert, 2013; Malinowski, 2009) for more qualitative approaches that can more adequately describe the roles played by competing languages.

**Expanding the boundaries of linguistic landscape research**

This section briefly highlights ways in which the contributions to this book have sought to expand the boundaries of linguistic landscape research in terms of its scope, and the areas of interest and interdisciplinary approaches adopted.

Linguistic landscape research has in general covered a wide range of topics and issues related to multilingualism, literacy, multimodality, language policy, linguistic diversity and minority languages, among others (Gorter et al., 2012, p. 190). Yet other studies have shown how linguistic landscape research can be harnessed to gain insights into much broader issues relating to social change, urban renewal, gentrification and its concomitant class tensions (Leeman and Modan, 2009, 2010; Papen, 2012). However, in a great deal of this work the focus of attention has been on the examination of urban centers (Backhaus, 2007; Shohamy et al., 2010). Far fewer studies have been conducted on small town and rural areas (notable exceptions being Bhatia, 2000; Kotze and Du Plessis, 2010; Moore and Varantola, 2005). The studies by Thistletwaite and Sebba on Irish language use, and Troyer, Cáceda and Giménez Eguíbar on Spanish in the US in the present volume address this lacuna by deliberately choosing small towns as the focus of their investigation.

While these studies continue in the tradition of offering insights into the discrepancy between language policy and the realities of practice in relation to minority languages in the linguistic landscape, there are studies that tackle certain unexplored aspects of language exclusion. Kasanga's study (this volume) on safety instructions and Tan and Ben Said's analysis (this volume) of disaster signage show how disregard for languages other than the majority language of the region, and the dominance of English as a language of global communication, can render non-inclusive certain specific types of dissemination of information crucial to the survival of the general public.

It has been argued that the linguistic landscapes, like other landscapes, are subjective representations rather than objective physical environment (Leeman and Modan 2009), implying that greater attention needs to be given to them. Such engagement with the subjective and affective aspects of landscape interactions is found in both Tupas' (this volume) investigation of an undergraduate student's reflections on her interaction with semiotic phenomena in making sense of the ideological aspects of academia in her
struggle to learn English and Wee’s (this volume) analysis of how digital media can be deployed for the mobilization of affect in cyberspace. In these studies the subjective reactions of the social actor such as the participants’ perceptions, attitudes and points of view are thus privileged and brought to the fore.

Similarly, indicating directions for moving forward the research traditions in the field, Gorter (2013, p. 205) suggests that ‘a future challenge will be to use empirical studies to test theoretical ideas rather than provide descriptive and analytical accounts that more or less illustrate theoretical ideas’. Multimodal graffiti analysis (Rubdy, this volume) is found to offer a particularly suitable mode for this kind of investigation in that it requires the researcher to invest more thought into what signs mean, what they do and how they influence the use of semiotic resources in people's lives, in addition to considering the sign producers’ intentions in putting across their messages.

The broadening of scope and focus is reflected, in particular, by the inclusion of studies covering socio-political upheavals such as the Occupy Wall Street movements in the USA and Canada (Hanauer, Seals, this volume), the Arab Spring movement in the Middle East (Shiri, this volume) and the ambiguous status of languages in post-Soviet Union settings (Muth, this volume). A distinctive feature of these studies is that they move away from the earlier preoccupation of linguistic landscape research with quantitative methods of analysis and favor a more ethnographic and qualitative discourse-analytic approach to linguistic landscape research over a merely descriptive or even predominantly semiotic one.

**Extending the geographical reach covered by linguistic landscape research**

Some of the most stimulating studies of Linguistic Landscape so far have been those that impinge on multilingualism, variation, and the conflict and contact of languages (Gorter, 2013). In much of this research, however, European and West-based settings have tended to be over-represented, in all probability as a logical consequence of much of this scholarship having emanated from the Centre. The book attempts to redress this imbalance by providing a more global coverage, encompassing a diversified set of contexts and situations and also through the inclusion of more local/rural language communities. In terms of geographical reach, the book includes chapters that explore the linguistic landscape of regions as diverse and distant as North America, Canada, Ireland, Nagorno-Karabakh, (a region in the former territory of the USSR), Algeria, Tunisia, Bahrain, the Congo, Singapore, India, Taiwan, Japan, New Zealand and even the virtual spaces of the digital/cyber world.
We hope that the eclectic mix of research environments covered in the book and the discursive slant adopted by many of the authors in it will contribute to an understanding of how conflict and exclusion may be confirmed or contested, and sometimes even transformed by forces working from the bottom up, especially when individuals and groups come together to work in collective solidarity for a common cause.

Overview of the book

The book has two parts. **Part 1: Conflict and Exclusion** consists of case studies that engage with conflict and exclusion primarily in relation to the language dimensions of the linguistic landscape, that examine meanings, representations and interpretations within political, economical, socio-historical and language policy contexts. Unlike the studies in Part 2, signs in these studies are examined less in terms of their specific content, and more with regard to what languages are used, and what this tells us about the relationship between different languages and their speakers. The case studies in **Part 2: Dissent and Protest** examine the linguistic landscape of socio-political contestation in terms of overt protest signs mediated through linguistic, semiotic and multimodal resources mainly at mass demonstration sites.

**Thistlethwaite and Sebba** (Chapter 2) describe a study they conducted in Ennis, a medium-sized Irish town where the apparent pervasiveness of bilingual texts containing Irish alongside English on all official signs is in stark contradiction to the scarcity of Irish language presence in non-official, private signs in the linguistic landscape. The authors view this phenomenon as the product of a culmination of ideologies leading to the ‘passive exclusion’ of the Irish language among (L1) English-speaking Irish society. Adopting a nexus analysis approach (Scollon and Scollon, 2004) and a discourse-ethnographic stance they examined the signage displayed on 220 buildings on the four busiest streets in the city centre in attempting to make sense of the underrepresentation of Irish. Categorizing Irish language texts as either ‘language policy-driven’ or ‘individual use’ to measure the extent to which instances of Irish language use by businesses were truly ‘self-motivated’, the authors further identified fourteen social actors who apparently chose to display Irish language signs on the exterior of their businesses as subjects for interviews. Their findings reveal that texts involving self-motivated use of Irish were in the minority; in most cases, the Irish units were actually driven (and often funded) by a language promotion scheme, creating the illusion that Irish is thriving in certain sections of society. They argue that the presence of Irish in official signage feeds into the public discourses of an Irish language revival perpetuated by the government, media and revivalists, thus actually masking the very problem it was partly intended to solve: the social exclusion of Irish within society. So what we see on the linguistic landscape
of Ennis is the playing out of a conflict, not between opposing ideologies of language, but between public policies and private practice.

Troyer, Cáceda and Giménez Eguíbar (Chapter 3) choose for their investigation a small town in Oregon that is unique for having a very high per capita percentage (35 per cent) of Latino/Hispanic residents to specifically address the role of Spanish in the US. Their study explores how the emplacement of Spanish in the linguistic landscape creates sites of engagement (Norris and Jones, 2005; Scollon, 2001) that have multiple layers of meaning that can be differentially interpreted depending on the participants and their social and ethnic identities. A quantitative analysis of the signage along the length of the two main streets and shopping areas of the town revealed that only 11 per cent of the visible tokens displayed Spanish, and this was almost entirely in the limited domains of restaurants, convenience stores and general goods. Furthermore, in terms of authorship, businesses were more likely to display Spanish than individuals, organizations and government agencies. This was followed by an ethnographic study comprising eight interviews with representatives of city government, Hispanic business owners and Anglo-American business owners who either did or did not display Spanish. Themes that emerged from the interviews included lingering conflict surrounding the public use of Spanish, a general unawareness of the significance of language choice in the linguistic landscape and Hispanics’ reluctance to speak out in any form using Spanish in public. Thus through a triangulation of these quantitative and qualitative methods, the authors explain how it is that even in a small town in which one-third of the residents actually use Spanish as their preferred home language, this language is relatively inconspicuous in the linguistic landscape.

Muth’s (Chapter 4) analysis of the functional domains of the languages visible in Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, illustrates the reorganization and the restructuring of space and the formation of a distinctively local identity in a post-Soviet nationalizing regime after the fall of Communism. Based on data drawn from a corpus of 500 signs, the study is contextualized against the backdrop of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which resulted in major demographic shifts and the drawing of new boundaries in a once physically borderless region. A disastrous outcome of the Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988–1994), fought between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in Soviet Azerbaijan, had been the removal of the Azeri population from the area. Muth sets out to trace remnants of an Azeri linguistic landscape in abandoned settlements throughout Nagorno-Karabakh to document patterns of language use in rural parts of the territory. His findings reveal that the cultural and linguistic landscapes of Nagorno-Karabakh reflect legacies of Soviet nation building, language policy and collapse, but also provide insights into the dynamics of interethnic relations, linguistic practices and the role of Russian as a language of wider communication, prestige and social mobility,
contributing to Armenian-Russian bilingualism in Nagorno-Karabakh. Evident also are efforts to both physically and metaphorically construct local identity within the wider context of promoting Armenianness as the founding element of Nagorno-Karabakh. He concludes that the collective memories of the struggle of the Armenian people and the images of resilience and commitment to the homeland that characterize many of its key sites have evolved into an Armenian narrative of Nagorno-Karabakh and speak of specific visions of national identity within the context of post-Soviet nation-building.

Curtin (Chapter 5) investigates ways in which the linguistic landscape constitutes an important arena in negotiating ‘boundaries of in/exclusion’ for both the Taiwanese peoples and the island itself at local, (trans)national and global levels. She analyzes a range of practices involving ethnolinguistic, sociocultural, (geo)political and cosmopolitan belonging, in exploring a number of key ideas: (i) domains and scales of in/exclusion; (ii) degrees of in/exclusion; and (iii) motivations for in/exclusion. Her study focuses on how the symbolic power of language in Taiwan is particularly evident in the linguistic landscape of Taipei, where both the referential content combined with the visuality of language and script choice play prominent roles in indexing different identities and allegiances, including those that manifest themselves in the econopolitical complexities in particular struggles over ‘social inclusion’, such as that which surfaced during the early 2014 Sunflower Movement protests. Her detailed analysis soundly demonstrates that any model of social inclusion must not only allow for highly fluid boundaries of difference and belonging; it must also incorporate the relational dynamic between inclusion and exclusion, acknowledging that any bid for inclusion inevitably entails constituting ‘boundaries of difference’. She concludes that although a complex and fuzzy concept, social inclusion is a useful tool in understanding the relationship between language practices and differential belonging (Piller and Takahashi, 2011).

Kasanga’s (Chapter 6) study sets out to examine an eclectic sample of signs displayed specifically for their functional, general-informational, cautionary, symbolic or commercial-promotional intent in the linguistic landscape of three geographical spaces as diverse and distant as Bahrain, D R Congo and Singapore in mapping out instances of social exclusion. Combining a textual analysis of signage with qualitative content analysis as a useful method in identifying the meanings associated with the content and intent of the messages displayed, he demonstrates how in the case of signs that are mainly read for information, the mechanisms of language hierarchy and code selection, either unknowingly or by design, exclude segments, and sometimes even the majority, of the target audience. Although D R Congo, Bahrain, and Singapore belong to geographically and culturally diverse regions and have different colonial histories, Kasanga found a sizeable number of strikingly exclusive signs common to them which
belied the language policy and/or the multilingual practices actually evident in these countries. This is a situation that has derived mainly from an undue prominence given to monolingualism in English, an anomaly arising from the prestige and power accorded to English globally even though a disproportionate number of people are English-knowing in the three countries investigated. Through a fine-grained discourse analysis of the linguistic resources displayed, their context of display, and their target audience, he shows that choice or imposition of one single language in the linguistic landscape often leads to insidious marginalization.

Taking a similar approach and drawing on Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) framework of geosemiotics, Tan and Ben Said (Chapter 7) examine the trends of emergency information dissemination in Japan with reference to their exclusion of the non-Japanese speaking audience, with potentially disastrous consequences. Despite the Japanese government’s adoption of a policy of multiculturalism to attract more tourists and professional skilled labor, the study demonstrates that at present, access to emergency-related linguistic landscape in Japan is still unequal. More specifically, their analysis of Japan’s emergency linguistic landscape at Matsushima Kaigan Station, a section of the Miyagi Prefecture badly affected in the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake, reveals that information regarding evacuation routes in the event of emergencies are still predominantly monolingual. Although translations in English are at times stipulated, because for more than 60 per cent of the foreign-born population English is not the mother tongue, and a large number are possibly not literate in languages other than their mother tongues, it is found that the disaster-related material fails to cater to their needs. Owing to the lack of uniformity in disaster-related signage and the shortage of directional signs leading potential evacuees to evacuation locations, Tan and Ben Said argue that when emergencies like earthquakes and tsunamis strike, non-Japanese speaking persons might find themselves in the unenviable position of being unable to obtain information necessary to their safety and even survival.

Tupas’ study (Chapter 8) answers to Gorter’s (2013) call for investigating ‘semi-public institutional contexts such as government buildings, libraries, hospitals and schools’ as providing ‘a promising direction in linguistic landscape research’, particularly with reference to ‘questions about the functions of signs, multilingual literacy or multilingual competence’ (pp. 203–204). He analyses the (introspective) interactions of an undergraduate student with the main building of her school, not merely as a physical structure but a productive academic space that influences the way she projects herself as a business student in a foreign country in her struggle to acquire competence in standard English – the achievement of which alone, she soon discovers, does not ensure the dismantling of exclusionary practices in school. The study, conducted from the point of view of an individual’s subjective construal of the environment, is an attempt to probe into the ‘ideological
landscaping’ of this student whose life history as a student is intertwined with her daily interactions with the textual spaces around her. Tupas problematizes two basic assumptions underlying linguistic landscape studies: first, that multilingualism is textualized; and second, that the analyst’s interpretation is privileged. Thus while recognizing the potential of textual phenomena in generating meanings, ideologies and social practices, his concern is to explore another layer of landscaping – an ideologized, interiorized landscaping which people as meaning-makers deploy to make sense of the more overt and visible linguistic landscape around them. This, he argues, requires a different framing of the linguistic landscape through (1) an understanding of ‘language’ and ‘landscape’ as productive social processes; (2) an extended notion of Linguistic Landscape as constituting all texts, discourses and people; and (3) a notion of space where life histories are both created and contested. In other words, he suggests, there is more to Linguistic Landscape than the visible and textual environment we see around us; what it means to us is mediated by our own life stories and ideologies.

Cyberspace is often delineated as a ‘new public space’ offering opportunities for extensive civil society-based deliberation, and Wee’s study (Chapter 9) moves the discussion into this domain. Focusing his analysis on the R-Word campaign (R-word.org), originally initiated by the Special Olympics community with the aim of eliminating the use of the word ‘retarded’ and its morphological variants, Wee argues that the campaign makes for an especially interesting case study because its use of digital media provides us with insight into how such media may be deployed for the mobilization of affect in the cyber-linguistic landscape. This emerges with particular clarity when the campaign’s use of digital media and that of its detractors are compared. In this regard, Wee notes, the R-word campaign represents a case of linguistic exclusion on two levels. On one level, the word ‘retarded’ itself is being targeted for exclusion, on the grounds that its use is hurtful and offensive. On another level, those who oppose the campaign are also excluded from any meaningful form of debate about the rationale behind the campaign. He explicates how their expressions of concern – that the campaign has a dampening effect on the ability to have a meaningful public discussion about the nature of intellectual disability, that it violates freedom of expression – are effectively rendered irrelevant because the campaign has already moved into the mobilization of affect phase. The analysis combines insights from studies of language ideological debates (Blommaert, 1999) and verbal hygiene (Allan and Burridge, 2006; Cameron, 1995) to highlight how it is that some discourse practices come to be authoritatively entextualized over others, particularly in an age when a significant amount of public discussion tends to take place in cyberspace.

Part 2 of the book contains chapters that mainly focus on signage drawn from sites of mass demonstrations – subversive genres and discourses utilized by people protesting against overwhelming social, economic and
political injustices in the co-construction of dissent. As such, they exemplify the way landscapes can be ‘contested and appropriated in symbolic ways and invested with meanings as sites of resistance and struggle’ (Philip and Mercer, 2002, p. 1587). Another factor distinguishing these studies is that while such demonstrations are frequently sparked by situations of crisis they are also for this reason usually ephemeral and transient. Nevertheless, they offer an unprecedented and unique opportunity for understanding the goals and aspirations of the movements themselves, the protesters who enact them, as well as their patterns of language practice.

Two crucially significant global protest movements that caught the imagination of the world in recent years are: (i) the Occupy Wall Street movement, an essentially grassroots bottom-up movement which achieved global visibility far beyond its locus of origin; and (ii) the Arab Spring movement, which inspired and galvanized people across North Africa and the Middle East into overthrowing entrenched despotic regimes to ring in historic changes for a more modern, democratic and populist style of governance. In Chapters 10 and 11 respectively, Hanauer and Seals present studies of the Occupy movements while Shiri and Messekher, in Chapters 12 and 13 respectively, explore the forms and functions of the linguistic landscapes of the protest movements in the Middle East and North Africa.

Hanauer (Chapter 10) focuses on the Occupy Baltimore demonstration, a satellite manifestation of the broader Occupy Wall Street movement that arose in the US in 2011 in response to a range of social and economic policies and realities. Utilizing comprehensive photographic documentation, the study examines the types of multimodal representational genres present at this form of political demonstration and the political role/function of each of these genres. The overall objective of this demonstration was to give voice and visibility to the 99 per cent of the population who from the perspective of the Occupy Baltimore protesters were unjustly treated within the political and economic system in the US resulting from the control of the wealthiest 1 per cent. In relation to the content of this social movement the analysis of these multimodal genres aimed to explicate the types of political messages advanced through this form of political action. The results reveal several different representational genres: handmade signs, banners, clothing, flags, tents and leaflets. Dramatic interjection, provision of information and statements of affiliation and identification were found to be the functions of this linguistic landscape as political discourse. Of particular interest to the study is the way in which the linguistic landscape was used to generate and mark active participation by passers-by in the creation of the statements displayed. Hanauer argues that the participatory form of linguistic landscape in this case is a form of legitimized (although still illegal) graffiti, and fulfills similar expressive and psychological functions.

Seals’ study (Chapter 11) concerns the utilization of multimodal discourses in the linguistic landscape of mass-scale demonstrations specifically
as a means to overcome erasure and gain visibility in the public space. Combining textual and visual analysis and drawing upon Bakhtin’s (1992) notions of *dialogism, polyphony* and *heteroglossia* to interpret her data, Seals maintains that in a protest demonstration it is not so much the message per se as much as keeping the dialogic discourses going that is most crucial for success. The data for her research come from two foci of interest: (i) the National Immigration Reform March that took place in Washington, DC in March 2010; and (ii) the two satellite Occupy movements internationally – the Occupy Montreal and Occupy Auckland in 2011, which foregrounded the nexus between corporate greed and political imprudence. Seals argues that the dialogic nature of texts in the linguistic landscape of such mass-scale protests helped empower individuals to reclaim and reinterpret space from the bottom-up, allowing them to overcome erasure. She ascribes the power and lasting impact of the protests to their ability to disrupt the ritual social cleansing (enacted by official governmental/political regulation) of the linguistic landscape, thereby reclaiming visibility and making subversive discourses more salient. A clear illustration of this is the way major city areas, symbolizing hegemonic order and norms, were reappropriated by activists, with signs and protesters literally becoming a part of the new landscape, turning the Occupy camps in these city centers into symbols of subversiveness itself. Most significantly, she suggests, the *Occupy* movement used its increased level of visibility to change the conversation itself, that is, the way we talk about things, by encouraging sustained polyphonic and dialogic discourses, and the creation of an inner-dialogism, as against one central discourse.

Drawing on data consisting of photos and videos posted on social media sites and Arab and international media outlets, Shiri (Chapter 12) investigates protest signs of mass demonstrations in Tunisia during the four weeks preceding the ouster of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. She examines the themes addressed and discourse strategies employed in the collective construction of dissent that gave rise to the protest movement which set in motion a fundamental democratization process in Tunisia and sparked what became known as ‘the Arab Spring’ in the region. Her analysis of the chronological appearance of languages in the protest demonstrations revealed a clear shift from monolingual signage in Arabic, that initially complied with the official language policy of the state, to signage that drew on Tunisians’ full multilingual linguistic repertoire, including English and French, in the later stages of the demonstrations. Tracing the manner in which the signs evolved in accordance with the evolving goals of the protesters through these critical weeks in terms of the languages used in them – Arabic, French, English or bilingual – she notes how each language seemed to serve different functions in the protests, representing the protesters’ concerns, goals and aspirations in different ways. She draws on the conceptual frameworks of interpellation (Althusser, 1970), intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980) and dialogism.
(Bakhtin, 1992) to show how signs dialogically engaged with the evolving socio-political issues at play, transforming ultimately into demands for the president to step down; how they intertextually referenced other struggles and discourses including those associated with the West while interpellating both local and distant audiences (including the President himself in asking him to quit) through messages in these different languages. The use of French and English, in addition to mobilizing the powerful tool of social media to subvert the government’s monopoly of communicational access, also allowed the voices of Tunisian protesters to reach distant international audiences.

Unlike the Tunisian protest movement which called for regime change, Messekher’s (Chapter 13) study reveals that in the case of Algeria, it was political instability and frustration with changing socio-economic living conditions that were critical factors in shaping the current social discontent and unrest in that country. Notably, the transition after independence from a controlled economy and a one-party system to a liberal economy and a multi-party system had resulted in a state destabilized by institutionalized corruption, bureaucracy, social injustice and social exclusion, all leading to a growing distrust in the state and its institutions among the Algerian people. The linguistic landscape explored in this study is characterized by the socio-political demonstrations that took place in Algiers in 2011 and early 2012 against this backdrop. Following Hanauer’s (1999, 2004, 2012) approach to multimodal literacy contestation in the public sphere, Messekher examines the language(s) used and the functions they performed in the signage of the transitory linguistic landscape at three demonstration sites: a demonstration by retirees, a sit-in by the families of missing persons since the Black Decade, and another by workers in the ‘pre-employment’ program. The results show that despite the stigma of French as the language of the colonial oppressor and the promotion of Modern Standard Arabic as the country’s official language, resulting in the marginalization of local languages and discernible shifts in the use of Algerian Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, Tamazight and French in public domains, the transitory linguistic landscape of all three demonstrations had a strong presence of Tamazight and French. Messekher makes the point that the linguistic landscape in this case reflects a dissonance between overt language policy and covert language practices and, in this sense, may be seen to represent a power struggle between speakers of different languages.

A form of transient and transgressive signage that has begun to receive growing attention involves the use of graffiti (Hanauer, 2011; Nwoye, 1993; Papen, 2012; Pennycook, 2009, 2010), and the final chapter by Rubdy turns to this fairly significant semiotic resource. The context is the first anniversary of the Mumbai terrorist attacks. The data comprise graffiti honoring the victims killed in those attacks. Of particular interest to the study is the emplacement of the graffiti on the walls of the Bada Kabrastan, Mumbai’s largest Muslim graveyard, and the fact that they were initiated by a group associated with the Hindu nationalist party, known for its fundamentalist
and strong anti-Muslim leanings. This and the knowledge that the terrorists, with their deadly Jihadist agenda, had hailed from Pakistan, India’s ‘arch enemy’, would have sufficed to create a huge backlash of denunciation to be expressed in the graffiti. Yet the multimodal analysis of the graffiti conducted by Rubdy, drawing on Kress and van Leeuven (1996) and Scollon and Scollon (2003), reveals this particular manifestation of (anti-terrorist) protest to have taken quite a different twist: far from conjuring revenge or retribution against the perpetrators of terror, the signs and discourses represented in the graffiti largely index messages of peace, unity, resilience and hope – in effect, the very antithesis of the senseless violence that only a year earlier had catapulted the city of Mumbai into a discursive space of global terror, drawing comparisons with the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York. The author employs Pennycook’s (2009) notion of graffiti as transformative and Chouliaraki’s (2002) conceptualization of suffering in terms of sentiment, denunciation and the sublime in concluding that the graffiti on the walls of the Bada Kabrastan, which emphasize rebuilding, resilience and renewal, project a broader perspective on urban terror, reinterpreting and redefining space in ways that sublimate sentiment and denunciation, thus elevating the protest discourse to a whole new plane.

Concluding remarks

We live in a most remarkable age of turmoil and turbulence. Several countries are internally convulsed and peace is immensely challenged. The short span of time covering the crafting of this introductory chapter alone has borne witness to the unfolding of several conflicts and crises in the world outside: the killing of thousands of civilians, including women and children, by Israeli airstrikes on Gaza in retaliation to Hamas’ indiscriminate rocket attacks; Russia’s use of military force in annexing Crimea and its support of pro-Russian separatist activities in the Ukraine, the downing of flight MH17 by rebel forces being one of the chilling casualties of such military ambitions; the fleeing of thousands of refugees fearing for their lives in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon under the onslaught of the ruthless and brutal terrorist attacks of ISIS; and unprecedented student protests in Hong Kong’s Occupy Central, demanding democratic electoral reforms that raised disquieting echoes of the civil disobedience in China’s Tiananmen Square, to name just a few. Many young people whose futures are at risk as they face poverty, unemployment and deprivation are increasingly vulnerable to becoming grist for extremist ideologies. Radicalization thrives on injustices, discrimination and marginalization, precipitating conflict. What the world needs today therefore is a concerted effort to push for justice, dignity, opportunity and hope.

The case studies in this book show that linguistic landscape research can be a useful tool for deconstructing structures of discursive power and generating processes through which ‘voices’ of the powerless can be represented even
as they provide insights into understanding how and why it is that minority languages are marginalized, erased and silenced and social inequities continue to prevail. By delving into contemporary issues that relate to the use of space, place, and their interplay with verbal, visual and other semiotic artifacts as sites of exclusion and conflict, the contributions in this book feature an interesting array of scholarship that illuminates the way language use in signs is deeply tied to the marginalization of audiences and the creation and maintenance of ideologies of erasure, but also on a more positive level, the generation of global movements of protest and dissent that contest the development of such unjust and unacceptable practices.

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