**Christine Hélot, Monica Barni, Rudi Janssens and Carla Bagna (eds): Linguistic Landscapes, Multilingualism and Social Change**

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This book contributes to the expanding body of research dealing with the analysis of language in public spaces. It addresses this from five perspectives — language policy, dissent, linguistics, literacy, and multilingualism — and, as such, collates some of the most far-reaching academic interests currently associated with the linguistic landscape (LL). The section on language policy opens with a diachronic study of public signs in Rome and Prato, in which Barni and Vedovelli provide a useful insight as to how the LL can reflect political reform and social change, after which Janssens discusses language management in the Brussels periphery. Belgium is also the site of Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael’s examination of the public space as a ‘buffer zone’ between the State and private spheres, and Dunlevy extends the focus on minority languages by discussing the relationship between Galician and Castilian in contemporary north-western Spain. Whereas for Dunlevy and Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael, the LL is a passive representation of the language situation (or ‘chaos’, p. 69) in a given space, the section concludes with Lüdi’s alternative perspective, which considers the LL beyond this descriptive sense, and explores its role as an instrument and instigator of language management. His methodology is contextualised in the LLs of three regional sites of two multinational companies, a particular strength of which is the analysis of language policy from the three perspectives of the companies, their regional centres, and the legislation of the nation-state under which each branch operates.

Section two considers the LL of political protests, which, according to Seals, provide a unique opportunity for an ‘erased’ minority community to become visible (p. 128). Social marginalisation is also central in Shohamy and Waksman’s chapter, which, discussing the relative effectiveness of public signage according to size, emplacement and target audience, illustrates that monopoly in the LL is dependent on the economic wherewithal to produce larger and more visible signs. These chapters present interesting discussions on authorship, with Hanauer (p. 145) even suggesting that public demonstrations are the forum in which varying ideologies become a unified political force. According to Mor-Sommerfeld and Johnston, however, the LL may also evince the linguistic and semiotic inconsistencies between sign writers and, according to Woldemariam and Lanza, the divide between opposing religious ideologies. An interesting feature of these chapters is that they assess the LL not only from the perspective of the researcher, but also according to the varying interpretations of those who read and write it.

The strongest section of the book is arguably part three, which focuses on the linguistic aspects of LL research. Seargeant rejects the Saussurian outlook that the presentation of language is less important than the language itself (p. 188), and goes on to provide germane examples of how linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and national identities may transcend language. He also makes the particularly valuable observation that the use of foreign languages is often subject to the linguistic and cultural norms of the locale (p. 197). The interest in semiotics is sustained by Bagna and Machetti, who explore the iconic use of ‘pseudo-Italian’ in diverse spaces. Mettewie, Lamarre and Van Mensel demonstrate the value of syntactic analysis by examining the covert transgression of official legislation in Montréal and Brussels, where ambiguous bilingual ‘winks’ are used to obscure the boundaries of multilingualism.

Section four comprises some of the most adventurous research directions in the field to date. Here, Juffermans and Coppoolse’s engaging study of the interpretation of signs by readers of varying literacy levels is well complimented by the following two chapters by Hancock, and then Clemente, Andrade and Martins, which explore the role of the LL in education. One of the most interesting (and understated) features of this section is that it considers the LL not only an abstract barometer of social change, but also a tool for the promotion of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and (inter)national tolerance.

Section five comprises three chapters outlining contemporary developments in traditional LL research areas. Marten, Lazdiņa, Pošeiko, and Murinska focus on English and Russian in several cities in the Baltic States, demonstrating how both languages are benefiting from their increased use in tourism, business, and post-Soviet social movement. Sáez Rivera and Lluch also explore the links between the LL and social demographics, and offer an interesting insight into how immigration has prompted the emergence of different varieties of Spanish in Madrid. The section concludes with Bogatto and Bothorel-Witz’s consideration of commercialism and globalisation, in which they propose a compelling distinction between the ‘vertical’ LL, where the roles of linguistic varieties are examined, and the ‘horizontal’ LL, which looks at how these roles construct the physical space.

This volume presents an informative overview of the status of the LL, and provides interesting contributions to the growth and expansion of the discipline. However, only limited attention is given to the shortfalls in contemporary methodologies, and it is arguably problematic that many of the chapters draw links between social realities and the LL based on unsubstantiated supposition, rather than raw data or relevant sociological theories. It is unclear, for example, on what basis Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael label an area as ‘Asian’, ‘Turkish’ or ‘sub-Saharan African’ (p. 78-9), or by what values Janssens measures the ‘Flemish character’ of a given area (p. 39). Moreover, Dunlevy’s definition of a ‘rural’ LL is unconvincing, given that the survey area, Praza da Constitución, is chosen based on its economic and social importance at the centre of Cee (p. 58). Since LL is a study of urban multilingualism (Backhaus, 2007; Shohamy, Ben-Rafael and Barni, 2010), the notion of a rural LL appears a contradiction in terms. Furthermore, the surprisingly frequent editing irregularities (inconsistent capitalisation; inaccurate translation between French and English summaries – p. 69; incorrect spelling of ‘choise’ [sic] – pp. 54-67, for example) detract from the impact of what is otherwise a well-structured volume. Moreover, though the thematic reach of the book is impressive, a disadvantage of the diversity of topics is that the editors’ categorisation into five sections at times appears forced. Nonetheless, the volume offers an encouraging insight to the possible impact of LL in numerous contexts, places, and academic disciplines, as well as in public administration and social and political management.

**References**

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