

Language, Space, Power: Reflections on Linguistic and Spatial Turns in Urban Research

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Seeking to locate the case studies of Language, Space and Power: Urban Entanglements in the context of recent academic history, this introductory article explores the manifestations and legacies of the so-called linguistic and spatial turns in urban research. With regard to the linguistic turn, we first illustrate approaches characteristic of structuralism-inspired urban semiotics and poststructuralism-affected discussions of the postmodern urban condition. In these research fronts, that were extremely fashionable in the late twentieth century, language was adopted as a pivotal metaphorical model to conceptualise the power-embeddedness of urban spaces, processes and identities. More recently, however, the ramifications of the linguistic turn across urban research have proliferated as a result of approaches in which specific place-bound language practices and language-based representations about cities have been scrutinised. Sharing an understanding of the linguistic realm as a category that is analytically distinct from the social and material realms, we identify methodological orientations (from discourse analytic to speech act theoretical frameworks), social scientific theories (from Laclau to Lefebvre) and thematic interests (from place naming to interactional uses of spoken language) that have been significant channels in re-directing urban scholars' attention to the concrete workings of language. As regards the spatial turn, we highlight the relevance of the connectivity-, territoriality-, attachment- and entanglement-focused conceptualisations of space for the study of language-related power issues in urban settings. Finally, we introduce the volume's empirical articles.

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Introduction

This volume opens up new vistas of research into the power-related workings of language in cities: the roles of narratives, advertising texts, translations, place names and street signage as the “agents” of planning and governance, of place promotion and branding, of heritage production and museum exhibitions, of politically-aware fiction and of urban transformation at large. Broadly speaking, traces of two turns experienced in the social sciences and humanities during the last few decades unite the following seven case studies: first, the *linguistic turn*, an endemic current of analysing socio-cultural phenomena as language-like constructions; and second, a less pervasive (but still highly influential) *spatial turn* that has sensitised scholars to all kinds of spatio-temporal distances, flows, territorialisations, identities and entanglements. Importantly, both of these academic “mass movements” have been profoundly interdisciplinary by nature. Sweeping across disciplinary boundaries, the linguistic and spatial turns have brought formerly disjointed schools of thought into dialogue. One of the aims of this volume is to showcase how the studies of what we call language-space interfaces have enriched urban research.

One might at present argue that the original enthusiasm associated with the more long-lived linguistic turn – a term initially promulgated by the philosopher Richard Rorty as early as the mid-1960s (Spiegel 2009; see also Rorty 1992; Shapiro 1984) – has recently been on the wane. As a backlash against the unprecedented mushrooming of constructionist and deconstructionist approaches and associated textual metaphors in the academic vocabulary, it may even be argued that the current academic fashion is to deplore its legacy. While the linguistic turn has always had critics in both human-oriented and natural sciences (e.g. Palmer 1990; Sokal 1996; Ray & Sayer 1999; Flyvbjerg 2001; Hamnett 2001), recent years have witnessed a surge of new paradigms in which the concepts of materiality, practice, performativity, affect, cognition, consciousness and even “non-representationalism” have been suggested as remedies for the “culturalist” excesses it arguably generated (e.g. Latour 1993; Philo 2000; Miller 2001; Peltonen 2004; Ankersmit 2005; Biernacki 2005; Thrift 2008). That said, the sweeping generalisations about a wholesale withering of academic interest in language seem to us far too simplistic. As also evinced by this volume, one extremely important and enduring legacy of the linguistic turn has been the sensitisation of researchers in the humanities and social scientists to cultural otherness and ethnicity- and gender- -related identity politics. For critical scholarship that was previously preoccupied with “fixed” ideological antagonisms, class hierarchies and socio-economic structures, the widespread recognition of the importance of language as the object of politics paved the way for the pluralisation of the theories of power (e.g. Hall 1992, 83–84). As we contend that the actual inheritance of the linguistic

turn is much more nuanced than its critics typically allow, a central leitmotif in this introduction is to trace sustainable aspects in its legacy for urban research.

By contrast, the cross-disciplinary interest in spatiality has not as yet shown signs of slackening but has rather gained momentum. In Anglophone social sciences, catchphrases like “the difference that space makes” and “geography matters” began to proliferate in the 1980s in research on the dialectic of society and space by theorists like Doreen Massey, Anthony Giddens and John Urry (see e.g. Gregory & Urry 1985; Gregory 1994, 106–124). As the focus of attention subsequently shifted from these social scientific conceptualisations towards the more culture- and difference-attuned understandings of spatiality, earlier works by Walter Benjamin (e.g. 1999), Henri Lefebvre (1991), Michel Foucault (e.g. 1980) and Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari 1987), among many other cultural theorists, were also acknowledged as forerunners to the spatial turn (e.g. Soja 1989; 1996; Gregory 1994; Massey 1995a; Crang & Thrift 2000; Withers 2009). Since then and until now, language-entangled spatial power issues have formed a part of a wide interdisciplinary interest in the spatiality of societal and cultural phenomena. Although the spatial and linguistic turns cannot be collapsed into one other, our argument is that this enhanced sensitivity towards language as the object of politics has, in itself, enduringly contributed to the broadening of conceptions of spatiality (see e.g. Desforges & Jones 2001; Scott 2004; Auer & Schmidt 2010; Jänicke & Lenehan 2010; Mark *et al.* 2011). The present volume is not alone in instantiating such a tendency. Among recent anthologies, for instance, *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation* (Auer & Schmidt 2010) highlights a recently diversified interest in spatial issues within the discipline of linguistics, whereas *Language and the Moulding of Space: An Interdisciplinary Discussion* (Jänicke & Lenehan 2010) brings together literary scholars, architects, sociologists and geographers to discuss the effects of changing spatial realities to language, the roles of language in articulating the meanings of geographical space as well as abstract and fictional spaces that exist only or predominantly in language.

During the conference “Urban Symbolic Landscapes: Power, Language, Memory”, held in Helsinki in May 2011, it became increasingly apparent to us that urban research is currently a field in which ideas and approaches linked with the linguistic and spatial turns are currently applied, cross-fertilised and elaborated by exponents across the humanities and social sciences. While a selection of papers presented in that conference forms the backbone of the present volume, this introduction seeks to contextualise the conceptual and methodological underpinnings of the following case studies in the light of recent academic history. Given that the majority of the volume’s articles represent analyses of concrete place-bound language practices rather than the elaborations of spatial theory, we have opted to put more emphasis on the offerings of the linguistic turn to urban research conducted over the last few decades. Firstly, we illuminate examples of

structuralism- and poststructuralism -inspired approaches in which language has been treated as “metaphorical” shorthand for investigating urban landscapes and processes. Secondly, we note a recent shift from these metaphorising approaches towards the “literal” analyses of urban language practices and language-based representations about cities. In this connection, we identify important but hitherto rarely acknowledged methodological, theoretical and thematic channels through which this gradual transformation seems to have occurred. Rather than pursuing recent trajectories in spatial theory-formation as has been done elsewhere (e.g. Gregory 1994; Crang & Thrift 2000; Hubbard *et al.* 2004; Massey 2005; Jessop *et al.* 2008; Warf & Arias 2009), in the penultimate section we elucidate language-related ramifications of the spatial turn, and in particular, the relevance of the connectivity-, territoriality-, (de)attachment- and entanglement-focused conceptualisations of space for the study of linguistic power issues in urban contexts. Finally, we introduce the volume’s case studies with an eye to conceptual and methodological themes discussed in this introduction.

Language Metaphors and the City

While any synoptic recounting of the history of the linguistic turn is beyond the scope of this article, a common denominator among influential structuralist and poststructuralist theorisations behind this scholarly transformation was engagement with language in a very wide sense. In this context, effectively all kinds of representational systems and social practices were seen as “language-like” phenomena (e.g. Jameson 1974; see also Rorty 1992, 369).¹ In structuralism, the Saussurean model of enclosed sign systems was applied to all sorts of cultural and societal phenomena, whereas poststructuralists favoured the conception that all forms of signification are based on discursive-epistemic exclusions and thus characterised by fundamental indeterminacy. In this section, we will concentrate on the applications of semiotic theory to the study of cities, as well as the discussions of the postmodern urban condition, two prominent research fronts in which these types of language-based metaphorisations flourished especially during the final decades of the twentieth century.

1 In addition, a plethora of fields linked with the philosophy of language (e.g. Austin 1962; Wittgenstein 1968), pragmatism (e.g. Peircean semiotics), social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Hacking 1999), literary criticism (from Bakhtin to Said), versions of Marxism (from Benjamin to Gramsci), feminism (Butler 1997), postcolonial theory (Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994), and debates over the crisis of representation (e.g. White 1978; Clifford & Marcus 1986) have also been counted among the discussions related to the linguistic turn. Given this complexity, it is not surprising that the linguistic turn has had a number of partially overlapping labels in recent decades. Alongside “linguistic turn”, the appellations *cultural turn* (predominantly in the social sciences), *discursive turn* (a slightly more common term in the humanities) and *postmodern turn* (a largely outmoded catchphrase of the late 20th century) have at times been used interchangeably.

A now-classic metaphorical approach to the language-space interface is urban semiotics, a field of research that was initiated by Roland Barthes and other structuralism-inspired continental European scholars in the 1960s and that became salient in Anglo-American social science some twenty years later (e.g. Choay 1986; orig. 1965; Barthes 1986; orig. 1970–1971; Gottdiener & Lagopoulos 1986; see also Blonsky 1985). By and large, the partisans of this field distanced their approach from the study of speech and the written word as the signs of the so-called natural languages. Instead, urban semioticians tended to blur the distinction between the linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects of the city by taking language as an overarching trope for reading the denotative and connotative messages of interior architecture, façade styles, urban fashions, car-body designs, pedestrian flows, and the like. Apart from a shared understanding of the concept of the sign as foundation of the field, however, no theoretically uniform school of thought emerged. In a version of urban socio-semiotics promulgated by Mark Gottdiener and Alexandros Lagopoulos, for instance, urban space was conceived of as a “pseudo-text” produced both by semiotic and non-semiotic (i.e. material and social) processes. Writing as editors of *The City and the Sign*, Gottdiener and Lagopoulos (1986) were deeply sceptical of the “idealist” tenets of deconstructionism (ibid., 15). Meanwhile, they also pitted their approach against the cognitively-focused Lynchian view in which the urban environment was reduced to the city-dwellers’ perceptual knowledge of the physical form (see Lynch 1960), and further, denounced design-focused studies in architectural semiotics in which “finance capitalists, real estate developers, the working class, and teenage graffiti sprayers” were clustered together and the social stratification of signification of urban space was typically ignored (ibid., 13). Accordingly, Gottdiener’s (1986) analysis of American suburban shopping malls discovered a structuring principle in which “instrumental rationality” was disguised as “social communication” and the “eroticism of urban encounters” (Barthes 1986) was harnessed to attract well-to-do shoppers to the commodified landscape incarnations of decentralised post-industrial urbanism.

Gottdiener and Lagopoulos’ (1986) theoretical stance contends that the metaphorisation of the city in semiotic terms does not necessarily lead to insensitivity to the power hierarchies of the social and material world. A similar awareness of the socially stratified (some would say dichotomist) nature of urban sign systems was also inherent to Michel de Certeau’s (e.g. 1984) hugely influential writings on cities. While de Certeau’s erudite, essentially poetic, works are not usually coupled with urban semiotics in the strictest sense, its language-centred echoes are obvious in his writings (Blonsky 1985; de Certeau 1985; see critically: Thrift 2008, 77–78), along with an undertow of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Foucauldian analyses of modern panopticism, speech act theory and Wittgenstein’s critique of the expert languages. Witness how de Certeau (1985), after having likened the Manhattan skyline to “the tallest letters in the world” and a view down from the 107th floor of the World Trade Center to “a god’s regard... that transforms the city’s

complexity into readability and that freezes its opaque mobility into a crystal-clear text”, metaphorises the street-level city of common practitioners as a labyrinthine world of enunciative speech-acts that evade top-down rationalistic and ideological domination:

It is below – ‘down’ – on the threshold where visibility ends that the city’s common practitioners dwell. The raw material of this experiment are the walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the cursives and strokes of an urban ‘text’ they write without reading. [...] Everything happens as though some blindness were the hallmark of the processes by which the inhabited city is organized. The networks of these forward-moving, intercrossed writings form a multiple history, are without creator or spectator, made up of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces; with regard to representations, it remains daily, indefinitely, something other. (ibid., 124, italics in the original)

In urban research, the wide application of de Certeau’s views about both sides of the power hierarchy at issue – the strategic “textualisations” of the city by planners, politicians and other powerful actors, and tactical everyday “enunciations” by ordinary urbanites – is indicative of a much more general dissemination of linguistically-inflected vocabulary beyond the field of urban semiotics per se. This notion has held true as much for urban sociology and literary research as for architectural theory and human geography. In the 1990s, in particular, spectacular edifices tended to be read “as communicative texts, which like advertisements are culturally encoded with popular meanings” (Crilley 1993, 237), and whole urban landscapes likewise as textual expressions of hegemonic ethnic-cultural ideologies and oppositional political or identity-based standpoints (e.g. Duncan 1990; Gregory 1994, 133–203).

An especially noteworthy interdisciplinary research focus, often characterised by the dense use of language (and spatial) metaphors in the fashion of poststructuralism, has concerned itself with the impasses of modern(ist) urban and cultural development. That is, indeterminacy-focused vocabulary of the demise of grand narratives provided both the critics and advocates of postmodernism with a conceptual-rhetorical repertoire to address the alleged novelties and excesses of the ongoing urban transformation. In his book *Architectures of Excess*, for instance, the media scholar Jim Collins (1995) asserted that the “Big Picture” of Los Angeles – a path-breaking “hyperreal” metropolis for many postmodernists (e.g. Baudrillard 1988; Soja 1989) – was unattainable “from any single vantage point because the city as lived environment is that cacophony of voices formed by the private narratives of its inhabitants and the popular films, rap songs and television images that circulate in, around and through those personal narratives” (Collins 1995, 41). For critics, too, the metaphors of uncontrollable instability and multiplicity have often played an important rhetorical role in their portrayals of the postmodern urban condition. In Jameson’s (1991) gloomy diagnosis, for instance, the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles served as an emblem of

how “we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space” have not kept pace with the endless, commodified intertextualities of recent cultural evolution (ibid., 38–44). Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman’s (1996, 51) apocalyptic portrayal of postmodern life as one “lived in a city in which traffic is daily re-routed and street names are liable to be changed without notice”, was hardly intended to be read as a literal description of contemporary urban occurrences, but rather as a metaphoric dramatisation en route to his more serious theoretical considerations of the ethical challenges of our times.

Above kinds of structuralist and poststructuralist impulses have contributed to the introduction of new theoretical perspectives into the purview of urban studies in the course of the last few decades and continue to figure in present-day academic discussions in a multitude of mutated guises. Especially when reading more or less purely poststructuralist writings about cities (e.g. Feher & Kwinter 1987; Clarke 2003), however, it is difficult to avoid an impression of their limitations in tackling material and social urban realities (see Shields 1996 on the problems of applying Derridean deconstructionism in theorising about cities). Clearly, cities as spatio-historical formations are not only constituted of and conditioned by endless differences, multiple voices, ceaseless flows and the intertextual chains of signification, but also by hierarchically “structured” material constellations, spatial practices, cultural conventions and associated subject positions (e.g. Wolff 1992). Seen from this broadly “materialist” perspective, it is hardly surprising that the poststructuralist and postmodernist theorisations of cities as “simulations of simulations” (Baudrillard 1988) or spaces where there exists “no outside-text” (Derrida 1994, 158) have been waning in recent years.

Language Practices in Urban Research

As decades have passed, the metaphorically textual treatments of the city as described above have increasingly moved away from the forefront of scholarly debates. In their stead, the recent diversification of language-inflected urban studies has been caused mainly by the proliferation of analyses of urban language practices in the more literal sense. Thus, contrary to conceptions of language as the model of the urban, in these latter approaches the pivotal subject matter is the investment of material and social spaces of and within cities with language-mediated meanings.

Indeed, questions on how specific written and spoken language practices and forms – related to urban planning and governance; place marketing and branding; translated signage; the representations of space in literary fiction; reproduction of urban identities through time-honoured place names; discursive staging of the past in museum exhibitions and sports arenas et cetera – simultaneously reflect and shape urban realities also figure prominently in this volume’s case studies. While it

is beyond the scope of this introductory article to examine motifs and justifications behind the strengthened fascination with such topics, part of their explanation may be related to protracted criticisms of the structuralist and poststructuralist “tendency to tame the spatial into the textual” (Massey 2005, 54; Lefebvre 1991, 5–17). Be that as it may, specific methodological, theoretical and thematic “channels” clearly have existed through which the interdisciplinary interest in concrete urban language-uses has progressed in the course of recent decades, and on which we shall concentrate in this section.

Firstly, the prolonged popularity of certain methodologies associated with the linguistic turn cannot be dismissed when seeking explanations for the enhanced status of study of specific urban language practices. Interpretative frameworks with a propensity to address the mutually constitutive relationship between the linguistic and the material realms have played key roles in this regard. Among such methodologies have been the discourse analytic and speech act theoretical frameworks. As regards the former, the broadened notion of discourse – understood in the Foucauldian lineage as an epistemic formation that not only establishes “the limits of what is ‘sayable’” (Laclau 2006, 114) but that also shapes subjectivities and material arrangements (e.g. Foucault 1972; 1980)² – has yielded myriad applications, extensions and elaborations in urban research. Although there are often incommensurable differences between variants of discourse analyses (e.g. Fairclough 1992; Blommaert 2005; Laclau 2005; Glynos & Howarth 2007), in broad academic terms the concept of discursivity has formed an important bridge between the humanities (for which, broadly, linguistic issues focusing on the corpora of written and spoken language from archives to fictional texts and inspections of linguistic-textual detail have always been pivotal concerns) and the social sciences (conventionally preoccupied with extra-linguistic societal, political and urban processes).

Currently, the same can be said of the spatial and urban applications of speech act theory in grasping the mediation between language and the material and social realms. Since Austin’s seminal works (1962) and the critical elaborations by Judith Butler (1990: 1997) and other theorists of performativity (e.g. Sullivan 2011), the analyses of how different types of “utterances” persuade their audiences and prompt actions have proliferated and facilitated dialogues across disciplinary boundaries. To give a specific urban example: the official re-naming of a street may go unnoticed or provoke protests depending on the absence or presence of social and ideological tensions among local people (cf. Rose-Redwood 2008).

² Critical of the Derridean version of poststructuralism for its reduction of discursive practices to textual traces only (Eribon 1992, 119–121), Michel Foucault (e.g. 1972; 1974) more specifically defined a discursive formation as a canonised set of rules and practices that “systematically form the objects of which they speak”, and equally crucially, made other ways of speaking and thinking about these objects irrelevant if not impossible (Foucault 1972, 49).

By the same token, a publicly displayed warning: “24 hour CCTV recording in operation” is likely to influence the visible aspects of on-site crowd behaviour by discouraging unlawful activity, but it also may replace and worsen (perceived) problems elsewhere (see also Bencherki’s article in this volume on actions by a civic organisation to alter the city authorities’ way of dealing with an acute housing problem). Indeed, speech act theory’s potential to interrogate the effectiveness and limitations of the power of specific language practices to trigger social and material consequences and often unintended chain-reactions seem far from exhausted in urban research.

Secondly, and quite comprehensibly given the overall academic saliency of language matters in the course of recent decades, a pronounced “linguistic awareness” has characterised many recent social scientific theorisations with no primary focus on language and textuality as such. Let us begin with an example that concomitantly also illustrates the enduring impact of poststructuralist conceptualisations in current political theory. Ernesto Laclau (2005) has stressed the capital importance of names (incorporating not only brand names and common names such as Coca-Cola or Americanness, but also the names of youth subcultures and trade unions), as in themselves “empty signifiers”, crystallising popular identities and discourses that otherwise comprise of essentially diffuse symbolic elements (see also Selg & Ventsel 2008). Further, Dean MacCannell’s (1976) now classic theory of site sacralisation can be mentioned as a structuralism-affected framework that explicated (alongside the physical production of spatial attractions) important functions of names, signage, narratives, textual reproduction and other language practices in tourism and heritage production. Influenced by speech act theoretical views on how language-based classifications and words veritably “do things”, Pierre Bourdieu’s insights into the power of state-centred linguistic “monopolies” in imposing the official visions of the social world as well as the sociological consequences of language-created “phantasms, fears, and phobias, or simply false representations” have likewise catalysed much subsequent research (Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu 1998: 19–20; see also Bourdieu & Eagleton 1992: 116).

As our final instance of the indirect influence of the linguistic turn on a number of prominent theorists, the considerations of language by the Marxist-humanist philosopher Henri Lefebvre are of particular relevance here. In his works written during the zenith of structuralism and poststructuralism, Lefebvre (e.g. 1991, 7) attacked theorists like Derrida, Barthes and Kristeva for lacking “any sense of limitations” to their language-enclosed meta-theoretical underpinnings. His hugely influential *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991; orig. 1974), in particular, was decidedly suspicious of the then fashionable efforts to theorise social space in general and cities in particular from deconstructionist and semiotic perspectives. Despite his denouncement of “the-priority-of-language thesis” (ibid.,16), however,

Lefebvre's own conceptualisations of space and critical accounts of everyday life perceptively addressed a range of acute linguistic phenomena, from the forms and functions of texts in societal subsystems like fashion markets and tourism to the circulation of self-referential "talk about talk" as a widespread tendency in modern art forms and commodified mass culture (Lefebvre 1971).

Although scattered across a variety of academic fields, our argument is that the theoretical insights and commentaries like those of MacCannell, Bourdieu and Lefebvre have formed a kind of persistent sub-text of the linguistic turn that has for its part facilitated research on specific aspects of the interface between language and space. Another key point here is that social scientific conceptualisations such as those discussed above have essentially differed from more "purely" semiotic and poststructuralist theories in the sense that they have treated the linguistic realm as an intricately entangled yet analytically distinct category from the social and the material. Speaking specifically about the power-embedded practices of place and street naming, this is exactly what Vuolteenaho and Berg (2009, 11) have recently underscored:

[N]aming strategies almost invariably operate inextricably in tandem with other material and discursive processes equally fundamental for the operation of power. In complex ways, *extra-linguistic* (e.g. spatio-temporally routinized practices, ceremonial rituals, boundary-markings and -fencings, cartographic and other representational delineations) and *linguistic* (not only place naming as such, but also coding places through numbering them, calling places by classificatory common nouns, oral and written discourses on places, and so on) *measures of placemaking* intertwine and support each other. [italics as in the original]

This brings us to the third significant way in which the studies of urban language issues have become increasingly salient; namely, the upsurge of interdisciplinary domains of research in which a specific type of language practice has been adopted as the crux of empirical and theoretical discussions. An apposite example is provided by newer critical place-name research itself, a field that has challenged commonly held lay and academic views about the apparent political innocence of place names, and instead tackled the mediating role of these spatial inscriptions in the (re)production of ideologically-charged spatial knowledges and place-bound identities (e.g. Palonen 1993; Palonen 2008; Berg & Vuolteenaho 2009; Rose-Redwood & Alderman 2012: also see the articles by Scott and Vuolteenaho & Kolamo below). Intriguingly, one of the key conceptualisations in this scholarship has been to approach urban nomenclatures as "city-texts"; yet as Maoz Azaryahu (1996, 324) explains, this is not to be understood as an analogy or metaphor but as "a manifest and specific semiotic feature of the city" (see also Rose-Redwood 2008, 882). A related branch of research that also figures in this volume is linguistic landscape research (see especially Koskinen's article below). In this research field, language choices and related power issues in authoritative and commercial texts in

the public space are brought under scrutiny in different types of multilingual urban settings (e.g. Shohamy & Gorter 2009).

Last but not least, the detailed analyses of spoken language, its uses in different types of interactional settings and the associated negotiations of identity and otherness cannot be left unmentioned as a growing linguistically-focused field of urban research (in this volume, see Porsché's article). In this connection, innovative research agendas have been facilitated by a set of widespread methodologies (pertinent versions of discourse analysis, conversation analysis, speech act theory etc.) and topical research questions of how wider societal and urban processes (pertaining to glocalisation, commodification, the mass media and multimodal uses of technological novelties like portable ICTs) interpenetrate people's talk (Laurier 1998; Myers 2006; Johnstone 2010). Importantly, the study of everyday communicational situations has been one of the main channels for the rapprochement between the discipline of linguistics – a field traditionally accused of an introverted and formal approach to language (e.g. Bakhtin 1984, 181–183; Downes 1984, 7) – with a number of other disciplines that nowadays share an interest in concrete language practises and their ideological entanglements (see e.g. Pred 1990; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004; Gal 2006; Paunonen *et al.* 2009; Coupland 2010; Johnstone 2010; Eckert 2012). While this situation stands in contrast to the early phases of the linguistic turn when its research foci tended to have “less and less to do with the details of work in linguistics” (Rorty 1992, 362; see also Ng 1998), it is also a further indication of the renewability of research on language, space and power.

Whilst the list of recent approaches to language-related topics and power issues could be continued, the above illuminations are sufficient to underscore the plurality of ramifications of the linguistic turn across urban research. In the light of the above examples, it is indeed difficult to accept claims that sensitivity to language amounts to scholarly imprisonment in the theoretical labyrinths of cultural constructions, representations and textuality alone (e.g. Latour 1993, 90; Thrift 2003). That said, the distinction we have drawn between the metaphorical and literal treatments of the language-space interface is not intended to imply that the former approaches are necessarily of lesser relevance. In research questions that concern, for instance, schisms between the strategic textualisations of the city by powerful actors and the tactical practices, lived meanings and often unheard voices of unprivileged groups (cf. de Certeau 1984), metaphorisations of the city as a language-like construction have undiminished relevance. Even so, it currently seems that the most sustained inheritance of the linguistic turn in urban research concerns attuning researchers to specific language-related practices and their workings as part of wider power relations and spatial transformations.

Conceptualising Space in Language-sensitised Urban Research

We have already noted that the linguistic and spatial turns cannot be equated with each other. Even so, recent academic history has witnessed considerable convergences between them: spatial metaphors abound in language-oriented research and vice versa, many leading exponents of the linguistic turn have played a kind of double role in the reconciliation of broadly linguistic and spatial perspectives, and so on. What, then, about the spatial turn itself? What theoretical contributions does it have to offer to the study of the interrelationship between language and space in urban settings? Of course, conceptualisations of space are not an academic novelty as such, but a prolonged feature in physics, mathematics, economic theory and continental philosophy (e.g. in phenomenology, see Bachelard 1994; orig. 1958). Around a quarter century ago, however, the term “spatial turn” came to denote, in the Anglo-American social sciences, a breakaway from abstractions in which societal processes had been approached as if taking place “on the head of a pin, in a spaceless, geographically undifferentiated world” (Massey & Allen 1984, 4). Soon, the spatial turn also became associated with cultural and poststructuralist theories on identity politics. From the 1990s onwards, a “veritable flood of spatial discourses proliferating across the disciplines” also came to matter in entirely new ways in the humanities (Friedman 2005, 192). In literary studies, postcolonialist and feminist scholars, in particular (e.g. Said 1978; Gilbert & Gubar 1980; Ashcroft *et al.* 1989), became increasingly interested in questions of spatial conceptualisations, and engaged with theoretical frameworks from sociology and geography. There was also an upsurge of frameworks for analysing trajectories, thresholds, spatial nodes, and other elements of literary space, as well as the extra-literary relations of these with the urban space in the “actual” world (e.g. Moretti 1998; 2005; Ette 2005; Dannenberg 2007; Bridgeman 2007, 55). In the humanities and social sciences in general, the heightened interest in spatiality simultaneously implied a turn away from objectivist views of space as an “empty backdrop”,³ instead conceiving it as a dynamic configuration. Meanwhile, it became increasingly commonplace to acknowledge that the understandings of space – whether lay or professional, implicit or explicit – in themselves are not power-neutral, but generative of effects and inequities that traverse through the functioning of the global economy to the cultural processes of meaning-giving (e.g. Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996).

3 As a sophisticated example of the often implicit conceptualisations of space as a “void” where things happen, let us refer to what was termed “Geographical Linguistics” in Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1959, 191–211) classic lectures. In these lectures, the category of space was addressed through methodological questions related to the diversity of official languages and dialects spoken in particular geographical areas as well as the spatio-temporal diffusion of linguistic waves. Yet, as de Saussure (*ibid.*, 21) himself put it, “everything that relates to the geographical spreading of languages and dialectal splitting belongs to external linguistics [as these] do not actually affect the inner organism of an idiom”.

Despite ambitious attempts towards comprehensive theoretical accounts of spatiality by social and cultural theorists, the concept of space has remained as a sort of “Babel of conflicting interpretations” (Crang & Thrift 2000, 2) – a notion that also holds true in recent language-attuned spatial and urban research. Neither have the transfers of specific spatial theories between different disciplinary frameworks always occurred without friction. One source of mismatches can be found in the problematic conceptual exchanges between, on the one hand, disciplines that have conventionally concentrated on “earth-bound” spatial phenomena (such as geography) and on the other hand, disciplines (such as literary research) that investigate cultural and imaginary emanations (see e.g. Smith & Katz 1993; Gil 2011, 74; more generally on “travelling” concepts, see Said 1983; Bal 2002). Given the very malleability of the concept, it indeed seems essential to acknowledge, as the geographer David Harvey (1973, 13–14, 197) and the sociolinguist Barbara Johnstone (2010) have done, that different research questions call for different conceptions of spatiality. With this notion in mind, it is reasonable to assume that for the investigations of language-space interfaces, too, some theoretical approaches to space are more germane than others. Accordingly, in the rest of this section we will concentrate on the conceptualisations of four specific dimensions of space – aspects of spatiality related to connectivity, territoriality, (de)attachments and entanglements⁴ – and identify acute challenges related to each within language- and power -attuned urban research.

Fuelled above all by intensified globalisation, the connectivity aspect of spatiality has been the key pillar in discussions on a range of present-day transformations. In the mainstream debates on globalisation, shrinking travel times and high-speed telecommunications networks that enable immediate communication on a planetary scale have been pervasive themes. From a critical angle, however, Massey (2005, 81–89) has accused many academic accounts of globalisation for subscribing uncritically to the visions of “unfettered mobility” in ways that reiterate the abstract conceptualisations of space-economy, both within economics and among the elites of global capitalism. Indeed, as soon as one re-considers the much-hyped overcoming of distances vis-à-vis today’s socio-spatially uneven “power geometries” (Massey 1991; 2005) in general, and the persistence of more conventional, typically smaller-scale and less-hyped communicational forms in particular, the traditional subject of language contacts can be recast from angles such as new core-periphery arrangements and the onward march of English and other “world languages” (Coupland 2010, 67). An array of timely research horizons opens up: through what kinds of discourses and language practices do the business and political elites of

4 While these four spatialities seem especially relevant from the perspective of the study of interrelationship between language and space, it must be noted that they differ, for instance, from the specific conceptualisations of space – related to territory, place, scale and networks – that Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008) see as being of particular importance for the theoretical understanding of contemporary political-economic restructuring.

today exert their power, and how do the mantras and narratives of “free unbounded space” affect the fates of localities in different parts of the world (Massey 2005, 81; see also Marazzi 2008)?⁵ How is the privileged status of so-called world-cities, for instance, accentuated if not constructed, by linguistic means? Are the globally connected “non-places” like airport terminals and technoparks characterised by linguistic homogenisation and enfeeblement, as Marc Augé (1995) has maintained? In contrast, what are the language-related manifestations of decline and seclusion in less-favoured urban pockets bypassed by new networked communication infrastructures (Graham & Marvin 2001, 15; Atkinson 2009, 299, 306)? Given that “the local” has contemporarily acquired *positive* values, as an antidote to culturally levelling and all-too-familiar manifestations of “the global” (Coupland 2010, 74), in what linguistic ways has this counter-tendency been actualised in different types of urban contexts? The questions above illustrate some of the largely uncharted spatio-linguistic tendencies and contradictions pertaining to the (dis)connectivity aspect of spatiality.

Secondly, the resilience of *territoriality* as an organising aspect of socio-spatial processes and power constellations poses an exact antithesis to the notion of “the end of geography” (O’Brien 1992) endorsed in the sweeping representations of globalisation as a borderless and difference-annihilating process. As Paasi (2003, 475) has put it, people’s awareness of being part of the global space of flows seems to have rather generated “efforts to strengthen old boundaries and to create new ones”. Here, one branch of research questions emanates from the inherited status of the modern nation-states as the central agents of “linguistic territoriality”, a status that has been achieved through the centralised practices of language standardisation, schooling, the suppression of minority tongues, language proficiency tests, canonised literary works et cetera (e.g. Bourdieu 1991; Gal & Irvine 1995; Vuolteenaho & Ainiola 2010). As Lieven Ameel demonstrates in this volume, this territorial-linguistic fix has also been challenged through different language practices, such as satirical fiction. In which ways are the linguistic hegemonies of nation-states over their territories slackening due to the rise of the local and deterritorialising processes related to worldwide spatial commodification (cf. Vuolteenaho and Kolamo’s article below)? Or do the state-controlled bureaucratic-linguistic conventions still turn a blind eye to actual multiculturalisation, as Koskinen’s study on the linguistic landscape of a Finnish suburb in this volume seems to suggest?

Another territoriality-related research frontier concerns the complicity of language practices in the internal polarisation of contemporary cities. Currently,

5 In Christian Marazzi’s (2008) otherwise critical speech act theory-influenced analysis of today’s information- and finance led “new economy”, a somewhat curious absence is the scant attention paid to spatio-linguistic power hierarchies emanating from the status of English as a globally hegemonic business language (cf. Vuolteenaho & Kolamo on Finnish high tech landscapes in this volume).

spectacular consumption citadels, luxurious officescapes and gentrified industrial estates strive, in different ways, to stand out from the rest of the cityscape. The critics of neoliberal urbanism, in particular, have emphasised that these revamped and CCTV-monitored enclaves – not to speak of elite developments that are gated in the literal sense – simultaneously reflect a widespread upper-class contempt for the cultural otherness of the unprivileged groups, a contempt often disguised as a discourse about the apparent dangers of urban life (Smith 1996; Ellin 1997). Concomitantly, the stigmatisation of declining urban areas has further entrenched the perceptions of the city as a patchwork of starkly antithetical environments (see e.g. Wacquant 2008; Caldeira 2009). In connection with these bipolar transformations, language practices seeking to revamp or stigmatise specific urban territories, or to strengthen or challenge discursive social spatialisations about them (Shields 1991), are a prevalent but often unnoticed phenomenon (e.g. Gilbert 2007; Vuolteenaho & Ainiala 2009; Brighenti 2010). From media discourses to promotional narratives, statutory bans, warnings (“24 hour CCTV recording in operation”), protest banners, wall inscriptions and other “markers of the spatiality of power relationships embedded in the landscape” (Myers 1996, 237), language forms a quintessential part of the ongoing de- and re-territorialisation processes within cities.

In our third conceptual “species of spatiality” (cf. Perec 2008) of relevance for the study of urban language practices, people’s attachments to and detachments from place are brought to the fore. In the lead of more or less explicitly poststructuralism-inspired thinkers in cultural and postcolonial studies and postmodern sociology, much emphasis has been put on the fluidity rather than rootedness of spatial identities. In this conceptualisation, spatial and ambulatory metaphors (see e.g. Pratt 1992) like “exileness”, “in-betweenness” and “nomadism” have abounded in re-conceptualising the complex co-ordinates and mobilities of people’s lives, and in turn, re-examining the status of cities and urban places as the contested stages of identity politics. Undoubtedly, the members of ethnic groups in diaspora, as Stuart Hall writes, quite literally tend to “belong to more than one world, speak more than one language (*literally and metaphorically*), inhabit more than one identity, have more than one home [and] have learned to negotiate and translate between cultures” (1995, 206, italics added). In Bauman’s (e.g. 1998) sweeping view, even the privileged Western urbanites base their “touristic” identities on the variegated symbolic resources of global media and consumer culture. In general, the above kinds of indeterminacy-focused views have afforded valuable insights into the dis-embeddedness of people’s identities in any unilaterally place-bound sense – and importantly also evinced language’s mediating role in the identities’ embeddedness in complex power relations and cultural-linguistic tensions, operative on a global scale.

In this connection, however, two characteristic caveats in the poststructuralist and -modernist conceptualisations of spatial identity politics must be emphasised.

First of all, the above kinds of theorisations often seem to imply, problematically, the diminishing of the importance of the local contexts and materiality of everyday life as the anchor points of identity-building. In the light of theoretical and empirical engagements with the subject of spatial attachment in the alternative traditions of phenomenology (e.g. Relph 1976; Tuan 1991; Light & Smith 1998), environmental psychology (e.g. Altman & Low 1992; Lewicka 2008), research on spoken language and interactional situations (e.g. Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004; Myers 2006), and not least in critical studies on marginalised groups' struggles for their right to the city (e.g. Mitchell 2003), the demise of the *local* clearly does not hold true. Meanings and memories accumulated bodily, biographically and intersubjectively across "proximate" encounters still self-evidently matter in the shaping of people's identities alongside their more "distant" attachments (e.g. Ameen & Tani 2012). Indeed, it ought to be above all an empirical task to investigate the links between spatial attachments and the language-based processes of identity-formation, and how these differ along the lines of social class, gender and ethnicity. Further, it should not be taken at face value that the realm of spatial attachments is detached from the realms of societal structures or strategic calculations by powerful actors (cf. de Certeau 1984). Inasmuch as media- and language-based spatial socialisation programs have been central to the building of nation-states and other types of "imagined communities" in the course of modernisation (Anderson 1991), so too have present-day marketing professionals begun to commercially harness people's positive emotions of belonging as a socially consolidating resource for place branding (e.g. Anholt 2005, 117; see critically, Mayes 2008).

Finally, it is not accidental that our fourth and broadest conceptual lens for examining space – the entanglement dimension of spatiality – is present in this volume's title. In this conceptualisation, spatiality is understood as a relational outcome of historical and geographical interconnections: the intertwining of the chains of production and consumption, co-presence of and clashes between different ideological and scientific discourses, ascending and descending planning models and design fashions, encounters between natives and newcomers, tensions between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, and not least, the communicational forms through which the human and non-human elements of space are signified and enter the realm of dialogues and re-negotiations. In Massey's influential theory (e.g. 1991), for instance, places are understood as particular points of intersection: "their 'local uniqueness' is always already a product of wider contacts; the local is always already a product in part of 'global' forces, where global in this context refers not necessarily to the planetary scale, but to the geographical beyond, the world beyond the place itself" (Massey 1995b, 183). An equally relevant definition in terms of this volume's aim to investigate the entanglements of language within the extra-linguistic processes of the production of space is provided by Lefebvre (1991; see also Shields 1999, 144–146), according to whom the form of social space, as is most pronouncedly manifested by cities, is

encounter, assembly, simultaneity [of] everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols... (Lefebvre 1991, 101)

While social space in general and cities in particular are self-evidently about much more than just linguistic relationships and language practices, Lefebvre makes explicit the idea that signs and symbols and their variegated usages are an indispensable aspect of the production of space. At the level of people's everyday interactions, the simultaneously innate and cultural medium of language is a pivotal means by which people give meaning to their lives and surroundings as well as more or less successfully exert their "spatial competence" (Lefebvre 1991). Via speaking, listening, reading and writing and other mundane language-embedded acts the urbanites – from business(wo)men and socialites to graffiti-painters and the homeless – linguistically *perform* the city as a practiced space, make things happen (or at least try to do so) and occasionally even manage to challenge its power configurations. Similarly, words are deeds as part of institutionally sanctioned or otherwise powerful representations of and discourses on space as in planning laws and regulations, marketing strategies, street plans or party platforms. Less assuredly, the theoretical views and emancipatory utopias of critical scholarship (say, the conceptualisations of the city as a readable text, a disorientating labyrinth or a democratic agora) as well as the imaginative forms of writing (as in poetry or satirical fiction) may also find their entry to broader discourses and visions about better life, inspire museum exhibitions, stir politically weighty protests and even alter the fates of cities and their residents. In this latter sense, too, cities are not finished products or texts, but continually evolving assemblages of ideational, social and material processes. In the last instance, as a non-autonomous force, language is caught up in a range of urban processes and simultaneously endowed with a potential capacity to alter them.

From their specific perspectives, the articles in this volume shed light on different types of language-space interfaces and their entanglements with urban power issues.

Introducing the Articles

The legacies of the linguistic and spatial turns are echoed throughout this volume in a variety of ways. Between the following case studies by scholars from sociology, linguistics, translation studies, media and communication research, urban geography and literary research, there are remarkable overlaps as regards theoretical discussions and methodological approaches, many of them highlighted

above. In addition, concerns with institutional language practices, the language-mediated meanings of places for different urban actors, commodification and branding of space, and heritage production as a part of today's marketing aspirations are themes that surface again and again in this theme issue. Comprising seven independent empirical articles in addition to this introduction, there are two major issues that *Language, Space and Power: Urban Entanglements* aims to address as a whole: the relevance of both metaphorical and literal approaches to language in urban research, and the intertwining of different types of language practices with the wider material and social processes in the power-related production of urban space.

The volume begins with Nicolas Bencherki's fascinating analysis of a dispute over the unhealthy living conditions of immigrant tenants of a residential building in Montréal, Québec, Canada. As bedbug, mildew and water leakage problems became evident, a local tenants' association took measures to convince the city officials about their presence and that the building's deplorable condition required more than just cosmetic actions. Bencherki documents ethnographically how this "translational" endeavour aimed at making the mildew-infested physical artefact "speak" for itself with an argumentative emphasis on "objective" moisture measurements and thermal photographs. In conceptual terms, the article combines innovatively the viewpoints of "materialist" actor-network theory, "linguistic" speech act theory and poststructuralist thinkers, and exemplifies a contemporary academic tendency in which the very materiality of spatial surroundings has been brought to the fore in the study of the language-space interface.

By invoking Foucault's concept of heterotopia, Yannick Porsché introduces at the beginning of his paper a specific type of interactional space, the museum, as an "effectively enacted utopia in which... all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1986, 24). In the rest of this methodologically-focused article, Porsché outlines ideas related to the analysis of the production and reception of an exhibition in three museums in Paris (the *Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration*) and Berlin (the *Deutsches Historisches Museum and the Kreuzbergmuseum*). Echoing complex ongoing cross-cultural negotiations in Europe, the analysed exhibition project addressed the representations of immigrants in the public sphere in France and in Germany from 1871 until the present day. While drawing from sociological, sociolinguistic and ethnomethodological literature, and combining interaction and discourse analytical frameworks, Porsché discusses issues of memory, knowledge production and relationship between the discursive and the material in the museums as the spaces of de- and recontextualisation, and sheds light on multimodal interactional practices in museums through two conversation-analytic research examples.

While in Bencherki's article, *translation* is a metaphor for something that occurs between the material and discursive realms, in Kaisa Koskinen's case study the concept denotes the communication of texts between different languages that people actually speak. By bringing together perspectives of translation theory and linguistic landscape studies, Koskinen charts the literal textuality of the streetscape in the suburb of Hervanta in Tampere, Finland, on the basis of a sample of translated signage in Finnish, Swedish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic and English. In addition to tackling a number of other translation-related identity political issues, the article also provides an illuminating example of how the everyday symbolism of urban places is still influenced not only by cultural globalisation, but also by nation-states' persisting linguistic hegemonies within their territories. Much to the author's surprise, the relatively multilingual (yet non-tourist) neighbourhood was characterised by a scarceness of publicly visible non-Finnish signage. While some local shopkeepers and religious communities had opted to address the neighbourhood's residents with persuasive translated signage, municipal or state institutions present in the area had rather adopted a minimalistic translation policy in this regard.

In their piece on Bradford's Lister Park, and its recently constructed Mughal Garden, Charles Husband and Yunis Alam analyse the historically and ethnically multi-layered semiotic environment of the inner-city area of Manningham. The article provides a street-level exploration of how the legacy of nineteenth-century civic planning in Britain – heavily influenced by idealised images of imperialism, as is still readable from many of the area's street names – has been re-imagined and re-contextualised in the latter part of the twentieth century. During this period, de-industrialisation and demographic changes (over 70% of Manningham's population now adhere to Islam, as a result of successive generations of immigrants, notably from the Indian sub-continent) contributed to stigmatising representations of the area as a "problematic" suburb. In the national media, Manningham has been even marked linguistically as one of the "ghettoes" in contemporary Britain – a territorial stereotype that stands in marked contrast with the mundane streetscape of Manningham. In this context, the development of Lister Park was conceived as one means of reviving the locale. By analysing the local street and commercial signage, as well as built environment and policy documents, Husband and Alam show how history was adapted to suit the needs of the present: the original imperial context of the park was re-imagined as a means of developing a sense of regeneration and ethnic-social inclusivity.

Maggie Scott's article "Capitalising on the City: Edinburgh's Linguistic Identities" considers the range of names of the Scottish capital, and examines the literary, cultural and commercial contexts of their use and dissemination. The name *Edinburgh* itself is an etymological hybrid of Celtic and Germanic elements, and as the best-known name for the city, it tends to predominate in a variety of discourses. However, Edinburgh is also known as *Dùn Èideann* in modern Scottish

Gaelic, and its Scots names span a variety of registers from the more ‘literary’ *Auld Reekie* to the more ‘vernacular’ *Embra* or *Embro*. The author argues that the histories of these names are intrinsic to the ways in which they are interpreted and reinterpreted, resonating with cultural meaning which continues to evolve with the changing societal and urban circumstances in which they are articulated. The analysed aliases, resonating with the historically-grounded meanings of Scotland’s capital and the languages of Scots, Scottish Gaelic and Scottish English, continue to contribute to the city’s place identity. As such, these aliases exemplify the functioning of place names as linguistic-cultural icons that frequently play a significant role in the identity of politically and commercially motivated representations of space.

Against the grain of fashionable nonrepresentational theories (e.g. Smith 2003; Thrift 2008), Jani Vuolteenaho and Sami Kolamo’s article takes its cue from Guy Debord’s (1995) provocative statement that in the media-saturated “societies of the spectacle” representations reign supreme over all aspects of human life. In particular, the authors experiment with an idea that the spectacular logic – the use of superlatives, evocations of different sorts of earthly paradises, eulogist narratives and slogans and other forms of “big talk” – characterises the language of today’s place marketing and branding strategies. Empirically, Vuolteenaho and Kolamo compare naming and other language practices across newly-built leisure- and technoscapes in Finland and major football stadiums in England. The case studies suggest that the boosterist language practices in the two national contexts share certain unquestionably spectacular characteristics, yet also differ with regard to the favouring of either culturally escapist (an increasingly common focus across Finnish namescapes) or historically grounded (a prevalent focus across the otherwise hypercommodified English soccer-scapes) motifs in the signification of landscapes. The authors argue that the enhanced role of the market-led “language-imagining” as exemplified in the article should be seen as a specific cultural manifestation of the ongoing neoliberal urban transformation.

In the volume’s final article, an absorbing perspective on fictional space is investigated. Here, Lieven Ameel examines how shape is given, in the novel *Henkien taistelu* (“The Battle of the Spirits”, 1933, by the Finnish author Joel Lehtonen), to the imaginary Helsinki suburb of Krokkelby. This specific literary space is constructed as a radical, satirical reversal of earlier canonised artistic representations of national-romantic landscapes in the Finnish context. Informed by the cultural pessimism of the interwar period, the deformed suburb of Krokkelby appears as an *imago mundi*, an image of the world, evoking the diseases at the heart of society. The distorted character of Lehtonen’s “Crippled City” is not only visible in the ways in which the physical landscape, buildings and characters are described, but also through the use of the satirical literary genre in the novel. The result is a disturbing literary landscape that can be read as a critical artistic representation of what Lefebvre (1991) terms “abstract space”, the dominant form of space in

capitalist societies, characterised by the homogenisation and commodification of identities and differences – a view of urban space that also figures explicitly and implicitly in many of the preceding articles of *Language, Space and Power: Urban Entanglements*.

Overall, our hope is that the volume's case studies illustrate the relevance of the study of different facets of the interrelationship between language and space across disciplines, and will inspire research on similar topics in cities in different parts of the world, as well as spur reflections on the partly intertwining trajectories of the linguistic and spatial turns as signposted in this introduction.

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