CONSTRUCTION OF PRIVATE
SPACE IN AN URBAN SEMIOSCAPE:
A CASE STUDY IN THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS
OF GLOBALISATION[1]

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Abstract: Across the world urban semioscapes emerge from multiple and mutually interlocking social activities of the members of sociocultural groups and are established through the deployment of layered configurations of semiotic resources and discourses which index patterns of these activities as well as the underlying norms and values of these groups. A particularly conspicuous semiotic practice which has established itself as a distinct semiotic layer in Slovakia's urban semioscape is one through which social agents declare certain segments of space as *private*. By erecting 'private property' signs they impose a certain 'power regime' on a physical territory but also imprint upon that space a particular ideological meaning. This practice is particularly salient in Slovakia's geopolitical environment in which the notion of 'privateness' was excluded from official ideology under socialism. As language is a principal semiotic mode for the construction of the *practice of constructing private space,* the practice can also be looked upon as a sociolinguistic phenomenon indexing the post-1989 political and economic transformation processes in Slovakia; that is, the re-establishment of 'private ownership' within the larger processes of 'rectification' which post-socialist societies underwent in the transformation period. My argument is that the practice is a manifestation of geocultural globalisation on a local scale-level which leads to the emergence of new forms of locality. In the paper I employ Blommaert's (2010) innovative conceptual toolbox of the sociolinguistics of globalisation' along with the analytical practices and procedures of *geosemiotics* and *linguistic landscape*, and apply them to the corpus of signs which I believe index this practice and establish the topography of private space' in the urban semioscape examined.

Key words: construction of private space; geosemiotics; linguistic landscape; social semiotics; sociolinguistics of globalisation; space as social practice; privatisation.

Introduction

As semioscapes, the world's urban environments are established by the unique layering of semiotic resources within semiotic spaces whereby members of sociocultural groups carry out their individual and collective practices. As these social practices occur simultaneously

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in time and space, they are imbued with historicity and evaluativity, since they always occur in relation to the established systems of norms and values which become so deeply ingrained in public consciousness that they become 'invisible' (cf. *sedimented discourse*; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Major societal shifts, such as the post-1989 transformation period in Central and Eastern European societies following the collapse of socialist regimes are also accompanied by major shifts in norms and ideologies. Largely construed through language as a major system of representation these ideologies find their way into discourses displayed in public spaces as *linguistic landscapes*. Some social scientists (e.g. Lefebvre, 1991) view public spaces not merely as stages for the performance of events but as socially constructed entities given meaning by the practices carried out in them. Pertinent for the present study are practices resulting in a gradual loss of public space across European urban landscapes in favour of private spaces which some authors (e.g. Patterson, 2011) perceive as the end of public space. A casual inspection of the linguistic landscape of the centre of the Slovak city of Prešov reveals that there is a particularly salient practice for marking certain segments of its space as 'private' by erecting signs with *Súkromný pozemok* [Private Property] on them. By resorting to the notion of 'privateness' as a reason for controlling access to adjacent spaces (car parks, gateways, lanes, streets or entire residential areas) the authors of the signs are imposing a certain power regime over spaces which are perceived by default as 'public'. This semiotic practice is far from ideologically innocent in a socio-political environment in which the notion of *private property*[2] was not officially recognised for four decades and which excluded the concept of *privateness* from the official discourse.[3] Hence the ubiquitous practice of erecting private property signs in Prešov's urban semiosphere which I call the *practice of constructing private space*. Its pragmatic force as a directive evokes strong political and ideological sentiments among certain sections of the population. By combining methodologies from the transdisciplinary approaches of the *sociolinguistics of globalisation*, *geosemiotics* and *linguistic landscape* I present my understanding of the practice and suggest that it can be understood by approaching it as a practice sustained by the processes of globalisation and manifested in a localised setting in which it adheres to the local sociocultural norms.

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[2] In the communism-building era (1949-1989) in Czechoslovakia, the principal forms of 'societal ownership' were 'state', 'cooperative' and 'personal'. Officially, 'private ownership' did not exist and the word/concept 'private' (*súkromný*) was removed from official discourse. Also, land ceased to be a commodity (Pavlenda, 1965, p. 290).

[3] Gal (2005) maintains that in communist Eastern Europe the notions of public/private were not entirely abandoned but were personified as active cultural categories and understood in terms of the oppositions of state vs. society, system vs. individual, centrally planned vs. market-oriented. By contrast, in the US the notions are spatialised, i.e. "are most often grasped through the metaphors of space: spheres, realms, and places" (p. 24). It is possible that the construction of public space indexes there is a post-1989 shift from personification to spatialisation of the public/private distinction within the newly emerging ideological regime which reinstalls *private property* as "a defining feature of a capitalist economy" (p. 26).

Public space as a social construct and practice

Linguistic landscape research focuses on the dynamics of social life as indexed by the deployment of linguistic objects in public space which includes "every space in the community or the society that is not private propriety, such as streets, parks or public institutions" (Ben-Rafael, 2009, p. 41) and which is "exposed to the public eye" (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy & Barni, 2010, p. xiv). As a symbolically constructed "decorum of public space" (Ben-Rafael, 2009), linguistic landscapes are a relatively autonomous part of local semioscapes across the world. Since the rise of capitalism, public space has been drawn into the processes of commercialisation, and, over the last few decades it has been intensely globalised, i.e. incorporated into the flow of cultural patterns across the globe. Pennycook (2010) claims that the 'relocalisation' of global cultural patterns in local settings has caused public spaces in many niches of the world to look increasingly similar visually, linguistically and ideologically since they are becoming sites where power relations between social actors are played out. I suggest that the practice of constructing public space, which represents a distinct semiotic layer within the *lived space* (Lefebvre, 1991) is deployed as the major symbolic resource for the social construction of public space and indexes a certain power struggle through which sections of urban space largely perceived as public have been effectively 'privatised'.

Socially constructed uses of space arise through practices, i.e. recurring patterns of human action. It has been suggested that practices as "ways in which human activity is organized around shared practical understandings" (Schatzki, 2001; cited in Pennycook, 2010, p. 22) can replace (abstract) concepts of systems, structures and discourses to account for how social reality is established. In our case, the establishment of the factuality of the privateness of space' can be seen as a result of people acting upon the pragmatic meaning of signage used in the practice of constructing private spaces. Of the four principles suggested to explain the structuration of linguistic landscapes (Ben-Rafael, 2009), namely the *presentation-of-self, good-reasons, collective-identity* and *power-relation*, the last is pertinent to the present analysis. The principle is manifested through "acts of power aimed at controlling people by controlling an area [which may result] in social and territorial exclusion [which] finds its culmination in the aggressive enclosure, privatization and territorialization of urban spaces represented by gated communities'" (Jaworski & Yeung, 2010, p. 154). This is especially visible in the residential zones of the urban environment being investigated in which the practice of creating enclosures is particularly aggressive given that most of the space in these areas is privately owned anyway.

Globalisation as a sociolinguistic issue

There are numerous perspectives from which to approach globalisation. Steger (2005) sees globalisation as "the unprecedented compression of time and space […] a result of political, economic, and cultural change, as well as powerful technological innovations" (Steger, 2005, p. 13). Post-communist societies in Eastern Europe attempting to restore pre-communist economic and societal models (cf. the process of *rectification*; Hampl et al., 1996) were encouraged to adopt a particular ideological version of globalisation which

"advocated the deregulation of markets, the liberalization of trade, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the dissemination of 'American values', and, after 9/11, the support of the global War on Terror under US leadership" (p. 14). According to Gajdoš (2009), rectification processes included 1. returning to the principles of a market economy and the abolition of central planning, 2. privatisation, reprivatisation and restitution, and 3. a return to the land and property market. The changes in the spatial organisation of environments attributable to globalisation involve the commercialisation of urban centres, the separation of services and production, and the separation of zones (the emergence of enclaves, ghettos, 'citadels', and ethnic and racial segregation (Marcuse & van Kempen, 2000; in Gajdoš, 2009). After 1989 the situation in Central Europe was also affected by the fact that towns and cities had to undergo a *double transformation* (Gajdoš, 2009), which on the one hand meant a return to 'natural trends' in developing populated areas disrupted by socialist-era industrial urbanisation and, on the other hand, involved joining the EU and adopting general globalisation trends.

As globalisation involves the realm of language, it can also be approached as a socio-linguistic phenomenon. However, Blommaert (2010) claims that the conceptual and analytic apparatus of the traditional *sociolinguistics of distribution* is no longer adequate in the era of globalisation and outlines a *sociolinguistics of mobility* as a new sociolinguistic paradigm which focuses on mobile resources deployed on particular scale-levels rather than entire languages being distributed across horizontal space. Blommaert views social processes as occurring and moving along a continuum of local, intermediary and global scale-levels which are connected indexically: every act of communication occurring in a socially constructed space at a lower scale-level immediately points to common meanings, norms and expectations located at a higher scale-level. Moving across these scale levels, or *scale-jumping*, involves the invocation of social order and, because it is imbued with power, it is also used as a means of control: certain discursive resources are accessible at certain scale levels and to certain users only. In the discussion section below I will apply Blommaert's (2010) three conceptual tools, namely, *scales, orders of indexicality* and *pluricentricity* to my practice of constructing private spaces data.

Data and methodology

In my empirical analysis of the original corpus of the practice of constructing private space signage, I combine quantitative (collection and categorisation of data) and qualitative (semiotic and socio-pragmatic analysis) methods. In order to account for the local production of meaning I borrow the concepts of *types of discourse*, *types of semiotic space* and *semiotic aggregate* from *geosemiotics*. In line with the thesis "that exactly where on earth an action takes place is an important part of its meaning" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 19), I view private property signs as being embedded within their *semiotic aggregates* (immediate semiotic environments) and as emerging from the operation of centripetal and centrifugal forces. The practice of constructing private spaces can be seen as emerging from one of the centripetal (inward-flowing) forces that co-build a composite semiotic aggregate at the local scale and as a semiotic practice which is itself shaped by the centrifugal forces flowing outward from the centres at a global scale. Since the practice of constructing private spaces
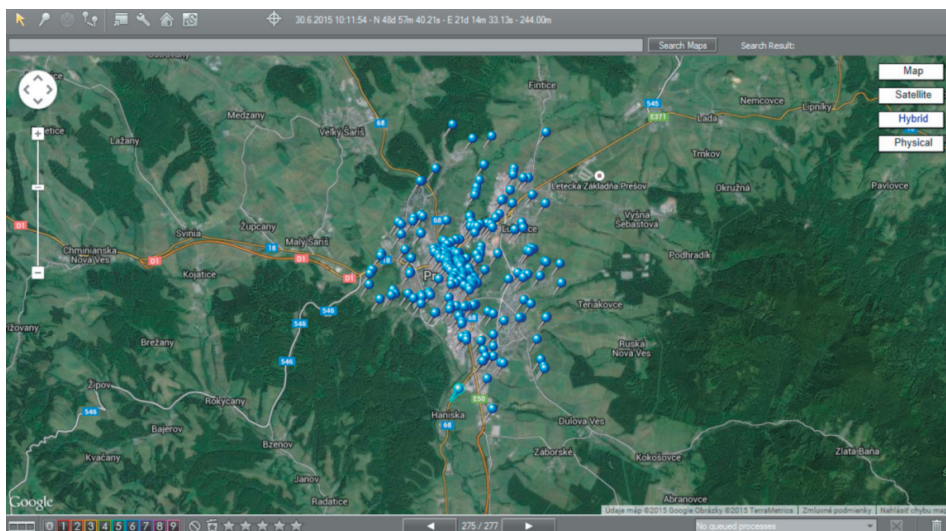
Figure 1. The 'topography of private space' in Prešov (Source: Google)

is carried out to demarcate *special use spaces* (e.g. car parks), it represents a *regulatory discourse* designed to regulate the flow of vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic along urban traffic corridors. However, since the practice of constructing private spaces is undertaken by private agents (local businesses and inhabitants), the public notices through which it materialises creates a non-official, or bottom-up' regulatory discourse. Since it is not regulated by a central authority (the municipality), the practice of constructing private spaces is characterised by the rather disparate array of resources used.

The photographic database indexing the practice of constructing private spaces analysed here and manifesting as the 'topography of private space' in the Prešov semioscape was assembled over a period of two months (May-June 2015) when 277 signs were collected (Table 1). Photographs of private property signs were taken with a GPS-equipped digital camera throughout *Prešov*, i.e. in its central business district and its commercial, industrial and residential areas (Figure 1). The principal criterion for a sign to be included in the database was the visual presence of a S*ÚKROMNÝ POZEMOK* (glossed as 'private land') inscription which I regard as the chief linguistic semiotic resource of the practice of constructing private spaces. Over three years in which I have studied the Prešov semioscape I have been able to follow the way in which the practice of constructing private spaces has changed 'on-line', such as the addition, removal and handling of private property signs, which testifies to the practice being very much alive.

I set the following research questions:
1. In which areas of Prešov is the practice of constructing private spaces carried out? What types of socially constructed space does it regulate access to? 2. What are the patterns

of deploying semiotic resources for the practice of constructing private spaces? 3. To what extent do the socio-pragmatic aspects of the practice of constructing private spaces correspond to overall societal/group interaction norms?

Analysis: a quantitative view of the practice of constructing private spaces

In order to distinguish between different types of urban land use, I employ and expand the hybrid land use model[4] which recognises four zones: *centre*, *industrial/manufacturing*, *commercial* and *residential*. To these I have added the category of *recreational* land use, and within commercial land use I further differentiate between the *inner* (central business district, i.e. Prešov's *Hlavná ulica* [Main Street] and the streets adjacent to it) and the *outer* zones (i.e. those situated along the city's transportation axes).

Table 1. The practice of constructing private spaces across Prešov's urban land uses

	Types of Urban Land Use						
	Commercial		**Industrial/Manufacturing**		**Residential**	**Recreational**	**Total**
	inner	outer	business/corporate	individual			
N	46	112	32	10			
	158		42		68	9	277
%	16.6	40.4	11.5	3.6	24.5	3.2	100
	57.0		15.3				

The quantitative data in Table 1 suggest that the two principal types of land use in which the practice of constructing private spaces is carried out most extensively are, first, those in which economic, primarily commercial (158 signs/57.0%) activities are located and, second, those performed in the residential areas (68 signs/24.5%). Since both may be seen as indexing privatisation/corporatisation and continuing social stratification (through constructing restricted residential areas, gated quarters and 'citadels', cf. Gajdoš, 2009), it may be claimed that both domains of urban land use can be related to the economic and social aspects of globalisation which are projected onto the Prešov semioscape as a distinct semiotic layer. I also suggest that, through the practice of 'privatise your space'[5], the owners of commercial enterprises construct themselves as agents who have access and financial, legal and symbolic resources for restructuring public space and who thereby "*perform* the symbolic work of introducing a new common sense vision of the social world" (Yurchak, 2000, p. 414). The single most salient domain of the practice of constructing private spaces is the city's

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[4] Hybrid Land Use representation; available at http://people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch6en/conc6en/hybridlu.html

[5] This is a paraphrase of the title of Yurchak's (2000) penetrating study of the naming practices of Russian businesses during the post-1991 period following the collapse of the Soviet state.

Figure 1. A semiotic aggregate

peripheral commercial zones whose rich topography of private space contains well over one third of all private property signs (112 signs/40.4%). These areas also document the most extensive social use of space regulated by the practice of constructing private spaces, i.e. car parking: 122 (44.0%) signs explicitly specify this restriction. Land use designed for parking thus appears to be the most salient semiotic resource for managing access to space within the Prešov semioscape. The sign *Parkovanie zakázané* (glossed as 'parking prohibited'), along with the sign *Zákaz vjazdu* (glossed as 'entry prohibited to vehicles') index the intensity of car traffic in the city but also establish, through the *participatory framework* of the practice of constructing private spaces (Goffman, 1981), drivers as addressees. In combination with the *Zákaz vstupu* (glossed as 'Entry prohibited to pedestrians'), where pedestrians are the addresses, these three types of regulatory (prohibitory) signs represent over 90% of all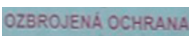 the practice of constructing private space signage. A noticeable yet rather marginal pattern of regulatory signs is the deployment of a 'minimal' private property sign (Figure 2), i.e. one that does not further specify the type of land use restriction, which leaves the illocutionary meaning indeterminate. Finally, the generic term used in the categorisation of space almost exclusively throughout the practice of constructing private spaces is *pozemok* [land], which far outnumbers other denominations, such as *majetok* [property] or *cesta* [road], with the latter being used solely in residential areas.

Table 2. Practice of constructing public space signs: structural components, illocution types and semiotic codes

Pragmatics			Semiotics		
Sign components	Illocution		Semiotic codes		
			linguistic	non-linguistic	
	type	(in)directness		mono-modal	multimodal
Head act	directive	direct	ZÁKAZ VJAZDU / ZAKAZ PARKOVAŤ! / ZAKAZ VSTUPU.		
Support	Representative	conventionally indirect	SÚKROMNÝ POZEMOK	–	
Retribution	commissive	direct	BUDETE ODTIAHNUTÍ!		
		conventionally indirect	OZBROJENÁ OCHRANA		–

A qualitative view of the practice of constructing private spaces: semiotic analysis

Given the extent of conventionalisation, the practice of constructing private spaces is established through the participants deploying the signs from a limited inventory of multimodal semiotic resources. Although, as a rule, signs are used either individually or in combination in the practice of constructing private spaces, they may overlap with other practices and discourses in often elaborate semiotic aggregates (Figure 1).

The emblematic resource of the practice of constructing private spaces is the written/ printed inscription *Súkromný pozemok* [private land] which has no conventionalised counterpart in other visual semiotic modes. The 'minimal private property' signs are a rare occurrence (Figure 2); signs relating to the practice of constructing private spaces consist of multiple signs built up of several messages (illocutions). A prototypical practice of constructing private spaces sign contains three canonical structural components (cf.
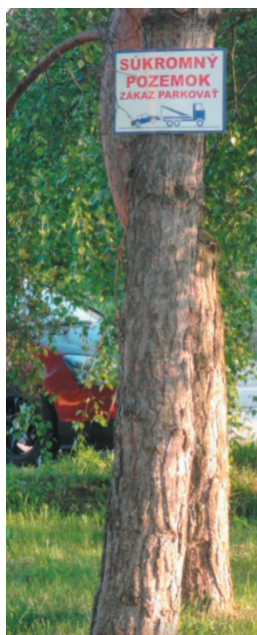
Figure 2   **Figure 3**   **Figure 4**

Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Culpeper & Haugh, 2014) with hierarchically arranged illocutions (Table 2): 1. head act realising the regulatory illocution, normatively *zákaz* [prohibition]; 2. support providing grounds for performing the requested action; in practice of constructing private spaces signage it is the private property sign; 3. retribution stating sanctions when the *target* (the addressee) does not perform the requested act. The visual composition of signs designed in the top-to-bottom direction actually follows this hierarchy by giving visual prominence to the more essential illocutions, esp. the head and the support (e.g. Figure 3).

Depending on the relationship between the illocution and the code used, we can distinguish between complementary signs in which different illocutions are rendered in different codes, and duplicating signs in which the same illocutions are presented in different codes, which intensifies the illocutionary force of the act. Using Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of visual design we identify two main structuration designs for arranging the sign's components and assigning them different degrees of prominence. In the predominant *top-bottom* design greater prominence is given to the components placed in the upper parts of the sign, and it is left to the author's discretion to decide which components are given a higher priority. The private property inscription is thus placed in the upper, more salient part of the sign while the lower areas are reserved for additional message(s) (Figure 3). In the *centre-margin* design the private property inscription is placed into the centre; in this way, as *supporting* private property it is given a greater sense of authority since it employs the (translocal) semiotics of the official traffic code (Figure 4).

A qualitative view of the practice of constructing private spaces: a socio-pragmatic analysis

In order to explain the use of patterns in the practice of constructing private spaces, the social meaning of the visual signage needs to be considered. As a regulatory speech act, requesting is particularly sensitive to interpersonal relationships in that it imposes constraints on others' behaviour. Using the notion of 'negative face' as a key concept in traditional politeness theory[6] which is a metaphor for the individual's freedom from others' imposition, directives, including requests and prohibitions, are interpersonally potentially damaging, or 'face-threatening'. To offset their adverse impact, and to decrease tension and conflict, sociocultural groups develop politeness strategies, such as the use of indirectness which is conventionally signalled by a recognisable mismatch between the (syntactic) form and (illocutionary) function of an utterance. Thus, the negative infinitive form of the standard regulatory illocution *Neparkovať* (glossed as 'No parking') qualifies it as a direct or 'bald on-record'; hence in theory it can be categorised as impolite. Whether it is actually perceived as impolite in this particular socio-cultural context has to be established via appropriate methods (interviewing); yet it is reasonable to expect that many cultural insiders would evaluate it as normal, neutral, hence non-polite, because through its conventionalisation[7] it has been embedded in their experience so firmly that they pay little conscious attention to it. The same degree of objectification also applies to the prototypical PCPS inscription *Zákaz* … [Prohibition of …], despite the fact that it is, in the classic pragmatic conceptualisation of indirectness, an indirect illocution: it is technically an announcement and its directive force is to be established by pragmatic inference. However, it is difficult to evaluate it as more polite since *Zákaz* … [Prohibition of …] has become perceived as a behavioural standard, a politeness-neutral (non-polite) form, a societal politeness norm in public regulatory discourse (cf. *politic behaviour*; cf. Watts, 2003).

When used without the head act as a support, the emblematic practice of constructing private spaces inscription *Súkromný pozemok* [Private property] is a conventionally indirect illocution and invites the inference that a request is being performed (Figure 2). One could suggest that in this use the sign indexes a trans-local scale of globalisation which is particularly succinct in at least two ways: first, in its semantic content, i.e. the reinstatement of the 'privateness of ownership' in a societal system of values which is used to justify the restriction, and second, in its pragmatic indirectness, which is, when compared to the dominant 'prohibition-order paradigm' of the regulatory discourse of society at large (cf.

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[6] Using politeness theory to approach visual linguistic landscape signage is a feasible way of explaining the processes of negotiating the interpersonal relationships involved in semiosis. While the 'classic' approach by Brown and Levinson (1987) can still be used to account for 'static' linguistic landscape signs from the user's perspective, Kádár & Haugh's (2013) more recent conceptualisation of politeness as a form of social practice is better equipped to deal with the multiple understandings of politeness present in any given social encounter.

[7] Conventionalisation is "the process through which a form recurs until what it is taken to mean becomes accepted as its default meaning" (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, p. 264). I suggest that the practice of constructing public spaces is one such conventionalised practice which has emerged as a response to changing societal values.

Ferenčík, 2014), a partial contribution to the restructuring of the current societal public politeness ethos.

Discussion

The practice of constructing public spaces as a (sociolinguistic) index of globalisation

Finally, my contention is that the practice of constructing public spaces can also be interpreted using Blommaert's (2010) framework of the sociolinguistics of globalisation and its three conceptual tools: indexicality, pluricentricity and scale. First, indexicality as a relationship between pointing from semiotic means to social practices is a source of two types of orderliness: indexical order and order of indexicality. Indexical order patterns of the resources used are seen to point to 'types' which involve people's specific roles and identities and recognisable registers. The practice of constructing public spaces represents one such *register* with an inventory of resources and a fairly recent history of emergence, spread and stabilisation. Despite the restricted inventory it demonstrates variability and flexibility as to the types of physical support used, types of auxiliary messages and areas of deployment. I thus maintain that the practice of constructing public spaces represents a recognisable indexical order, a semiotic 'emblem' of globalisation and a distinct semiotic layer within the city's *ecological arena* (Shohamy & Waksman, 2009).

The notion of order of indexicality comprises the idea that indexical orders are hierarchically structured in societies. Some are more valuable than others and all are "subject to rules of access and regulations as to circulation" (Blommaert, 2010, p. 38). Hence, order of indexicality can be used as a means of control, inclusion and exclusion, of granting and denying access. The practice of constructing public spaces can be seen as indexing a distinct order of indexicality within the socio-cultural group in that it is suggestive of which norms and values encapsulated in the societal *Moral Order* (Kádár & Haugh, 2013) are treasured. In the practice of constructing public spaces these norms are evaluated and contested, as is evident in the fact that private property signs are maintained, updated but also damaged or neglected.

Blommaert (2010) further maintains that order of indexicality indexes power and inequality in the field of semiosis which emanates from *centres*, i.e. evaluative authorities with regard to which indexical semiotic trajectories are projected and which can be real or imagined, material (personal individual or collective) or immaterial, abstract entities or ideals. It can thus be suggested that the practice of constructing public spaces embodies the ideal of 'privateness of property' and particular norms of appropriateness (i.e. indirectness) as two 'centres' of translocal authority. This may support Blommaert´s claim of polycentricity as a property of our interactional environment.

Finally, Blommaert (2010) views social processes as occurring on (local, intermediary and global) scale-levels and as being connected indexically. While individual social acts always occur locally, they invoke trans-local, higher scale-level meanings. As this *scale-jumping* also invokes social order and power, it can be used as a means of control since discursive resources tend to be accessible to certain users only on a given scale. Accordingly, by placing private property signs the authors can be seen as performing *outscaling* as

Figure 5   **Figure 6**   **Figure 7**

a means of power control over the area whereby they index a social order in which private property is a norm (this is manifestly present in residential areas where entire streets or neighbourhoods are declared 'private'; Figure 2). Thus scale-levels are also power-levels and index a hierarchically ordered society in which discursive resources are used as *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu, 1977) to demarcate boundaries in space and which carry with them their own expectations and sources of normativity. Each private property sign can thus be seen as indexing this trans-local scale-level, and whenever interpreters approach it, they participate in an *upscaling* from lower to higher scale level. Hence, private property is deployed as a display of trans-locally invested power which may be boosted through the authoritative use of iconic resources (red circle; Figure 4), languages (English as a *lingua franca*; Figure 5)[8] or by attaching additional retributive messages (Figure 6). The assemblage of the resources for the practice of constructing public spaces thus indexes a normative order, a particular 'power regime' in the demarcated territory.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that the practice of constructing public spaces is an emblem of the *double transformation* (Gajdoš, 2009) Slovak cities have had to undergo since 1989. The first transformation led to state-controlled networks of relations within urban settlements being replaced by market-oriented ones and, through restitution, privatisation and the ensuing commodification of land and space, which resulted in the emergence of commercial agents

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[8] It is probable that the communicative value of English (as a *lingua franca*) here is secondary to its symbolical use to connote prestige, sophistication and global values and give it an 'international aura' (cf. Pavlenko's (2009) discussion of the roles of English use in the post-Soviet space).

who have had a noticeable impact on the urban semioscape. These changes can be seen as part of the post-1989 economic transformation at the heart of which was the implementation of a free market economy and the reinstatement of private ownership, which has led to the 'restratification' of society and to the deepening of social differentiation within a previously homogeneous society (cf. Bunčák et al., 2011). The 'return to Europe' and the globalisation nourished by the ideology of globalism have intensified these changes in our urban environments and have led to increased social stratification and polarisation, suburbanisation, emergence and the widening of the gap between political-economic elites and the lower classes.

The effects of globalisation upon the local urban semiosphere are not to be seen so much in the languages used (apart from the ubiquitous presence of English as a global lingua franca[9]) but rather in the patterns of semiotic resources underlying practices which are global yet produced locally and which yield a particular local idiom of practice (cf. *vernacular globalisation*; Appadurai, 1996). Hence, the practice of constructing public spaces can be seen as a fusion of globalised pragmatics ('Anglo-indirectness' as a token of positively viewed cultural values of distance and autonomy in Anglo-cultures; cf. Wierzbicka, 2003), state-level language policy (standard Slovak is proscribed by Slovak legislation throughout the country; (cf. Ondrejovič, 2013), and local vernacular forms (non-professional design, handwriting, and ad hoc non-durable physical support; Figure 7).

The photographic data collected in Prešov's central business district suggest that the practice of constructing public spaces has established itself firmly as a practice employed primarily by local commercial agents, which may be indicative of a continuing corporatisation of public space in the infrastructural areas of the city. The data collected in the industrial and residential zones suggest that this practice may have been extended from the centre to the residential quarters where the inhabitants have become agents who shape the semiospheres of their neighbourhoods. It is the task of future sociolinguistic research to establish the extent to which this practice is a trans-national phenomenon and to examine how it is perceived by different sociocultural members. Finally, it is to be hoped that the analysis of the socio-pragmatic aspects of interaction in the public space will encourage Slovak researchers to devote attention to linguistic landscape issues in their research.[10]

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[9] The status of English as a *lingua franca* as a pre-existing language in the age of globalisation has been problematised which means that something being 'in English', especially in commercial discourse, is of little value. Instead, it has been suggested that global 'English' is "constantly brought into being in each context of communication" (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 91; Pennycook, 2010, p. 85). As a product of a local social action, *Lingua Franca English* has not been distributed from a centre' but in fact it "has always been local" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 84).

[10] Slovakia's linguistic landscape has only been studied sparingly so far. The few existing studies attempt to trace the remains of the capital's multilingualism (Satinská, 2013), focus on commercial (Laihonen, 2015a) and private (Laihonen, 2015b) signage in the mixed Slovak-Hungarian language area of south-west Slovakia, and look at the projection of state ideology onto Slovakia's post-communist linguistic landscape (Sloboda, 2009).

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