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### Review Essay



### Bericht

Ingo H. Warnke

# Making Place through Urban Epigraphy – Berlin Prenzlauer Berg and the Grammar of Linguistic Landscapes[1]

**Zusammenfassung:** Urbane Diskurse sind komplexe Aussagenzusammenhänge, die räumliche Dimensionen der Stadt, Praktiken des städtischen Lebens sowie individuelle und kollektive Repräsentationen der Stadt verhandeln. Der Beitrag untersucht aus linguistischer Perspektive die entsprechende diskursive Produktion von Orten in der Stadt mit einem Fokus auf Schriftlichkeit im öffentlichen Raum, auf die so genannte Linguistic Landscape. Am Beispiel des Gentrifizierungsdiskurses werden dazu Verfahren der linguistischen Feldforschung, der Grounded Theory und der Ethnography als Zugänge zu diskursiven Schichten im Raum der Stadt vorgestellt. Unter Rückgriff auf Epigraphie und Epigrammatik kann am Beispiel des diskursiv aufgeladenen Berliner Ortsteils Prenzlauer Berg gezeigt werden, dass die grammatische Analyse von Schriftoberflächen der Stadt diskursive Konstellationen und Positionierungen freilegt, die in der agonalen Produktion von Orten wirkungsvoll sind.

Schlagwörter: Diskurslinguistik, Stadt, Urbanität, Linguistic Landscape, Ortsherstellung, Ethnographie, Epigrammatik, Negation

**Abstract:** Urban discourses are complex formations of utterances that negotiate spatial dimensions of the city, practices of city life, and individual and collective representations of the city. From a linguistic point of view, this paper examines the discursive production of places in the city with an emphasis on modes of writing in public space, i.e., linguistic landscapes. Using the example of gentrification discourses, the paper presents methods of linguistic field work, grounded theory and ethnography as ways of analyzing discursive strata in city space. With reference to a theory of epigrammar, a case study taken from a larger research project of the Berlin locality of Prenzlauer Berg – a place highly charged with discursive values – shows that a grammatical analysis of graphemic representations in the city exposes discursive constellations and positionings which have a strong impact on the antagonistic production of urban places.

Keywords: Discourse Linguistics, City, Urbanity, Linguistic Landscape, Place-Making, Ethnography, Epigrammar, Negation

1 A shared place called academia; my special thanks to Dr. Carsten Junker. My great thanks also to Prof. Dr. Beatrix Busse for inspiring collaboration and engaging discussions.

## 1. Perspectives of Urban Discourse Linguistics

### 1.1 Discourse about and in Urban Space

Discourses are not merely communicative practices and sign-based contexts of utterances; they are first and foremost materialized effects of power, certainties, and routines. A discourse becomes a discourse where it is materially discernible. Examining urban discourses throughout the paper thus raises the question as to where and in what kinds of formats these discourses manifest themselves materially. Where and how do discourses about the city emerge and become visible, where can the phenomena »of things actually said« (Foucault 1969/2002, p. 143) be found? What may clarify these questions is an initial phenomenological differentiation between, on the one hand, the manifestation of urban discourses in the city itself – materialized in city space, inscribed in the spatial conduct of its inhabitants, readable on its surfaces, et cetera – and in formats that are not bound to the city itself – for instance, newspapers, books, films, et cetera – on the other hand. What is of interest here are urban discourses of the first type that make reference to cities but materialize in the space of the city itself, thus shaping the material form of the city: discourses *in* urban space that are also discourses *about* urban space.

This study thus takes up a tenet of urban linguistics: the assumption that discourses take place in space and can be located in certain places. Scollon/Scollon (2003, p. 2) already stress »the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world.« They are concerned with »›in place‹ meanings of signs and discourses and the meanings of our actions in and among those discourses in place« (Scollon/Scollon 2003, p. 1). Discourse analysis in space-bound contexts, in urban space in particular, can thus be characterized as a specific kind of research that pays special attention to the material manifestations of utterances in discourse. Following Scollon/Scollon (2003), one could speak of an ›in place‹ discourse analysis. In the following I will focus on ›in place‹ discourses in which the city is addressed, reflected, commented on and evaluated in the context of discourses of gentrification.

In principle, cities may not only be considered as pre-existing constellations of space; rather, they are produced in interdependent discursive processes. In *La production de l'espace*, Lefebvre (1974, pp. 48-49) has already shown from a Marxist point of view that the production of space can be described by taking into account three dimensions, namely, *pratique spatiale (l'espace perçu)*, *représentations de l'espace (l'espace conçu)*, and *espaces de représentation (l'espace vécu)*; the production of space is constituted through the interaction of these three dimensions. In the widespread English translation of this text, this interdependence is introduced as a »perceived–conceived–lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational space)« (Lefebvre 1991, p. 40). In Warnke (2013, pp. 192-194), I suggest reformulating these aspects of the production of space for discourse analysis and modifying them by differentiating three modes of urbanity: a) *dimension*, b) *action*, and c) *representation*. These modes show that urbanity should always be understood as resulting from an interplay between

a) spatial dimensions in developed and open space
b) animation and action – what McIlvenny/Broth/Haddington (2009, p. 1879) call »lived experience, interaction and use of space by its inhabitants«
c) representations in individual cognition and socially negotiated sign systems.

Cities are thus more than developed spaces. They are always constituted by what happens in them and what people know or believe to know about them; and by a symbolic order made up of, for instance, interpersonal communication, books, photographs, films, music, everyday things. The city becomes urban space through the interdependence of *dimension*, *action*, and *representation*. Discourses about the city are contexts of utterances that involve the nexus of these modes or produce this very nexus. They do not simply appear ›in place‹ but produce specific places in the city by materializing in the discursive networks created in the three modes of urbanity.

References to place-making processes play a central role in discussions of urban studies that describe the distinction of space and place. While space can be considered as a context-free formation of spatial dimensions, place is always a specified sort of space, a space of identity, of recollection, with specific historical attributes. With reference to Cresswell (2004), Friedmann develops (2010, p. 154) a suitable definition of place:

> »[A] place can be defined as a small, three-dimensional urban space that is cherished by the people who inhabit it. To the characteristics of urban places identified by Cresswell […] – reiterative social practices, inclusiveness, performability, dynamic quality – we can now add three more: the place must be small, inhabited, and come to be cherished or valued by its resident population for all that it represents or means to them.«

While Hultmann/Hall (2012, p. 549) understand place as »[i]ntersecting mobilities, relations and practices,« Friedmann's (2010) definition is more useful for discourse analysis because it can be linked to the three modes of urbanity mentioned above. It includes the representational aspect that is crucial for linguistic approaches. Urban place is also a »small, three-dimensional urban space« (dimension), it is constituted through »social practices« (action), and it is bound to what »it represents or means« (representation). Place is a function of these three modes of urbanity.

What follows from conceptualizing urban space as a dimensional continuum is the location of urban place in it; urban place exists in intersections of dimension, action, and representation. This can be visualized by the following figure.

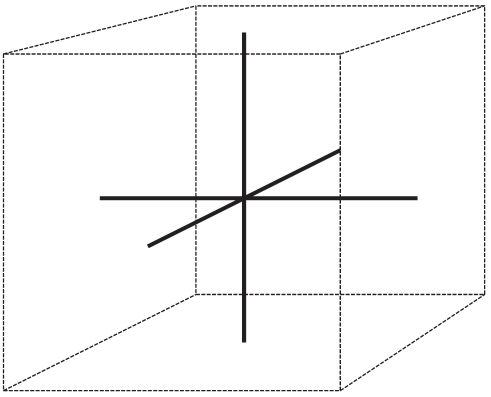

Fig. 1: Place as function of the modes of urbanity (dimension, action, and representation)

This illustration is a simplified model since in reality we are not dealing with space as a self-contained cube consisting of straight lines; rather, the city is a complex and contradictory universe of functions (cf. Venturi 1966). At the same time, fig.1 shows that any shift in the modes of urbanity produces utterly different places structurally; this can be illustrated through the following figure.

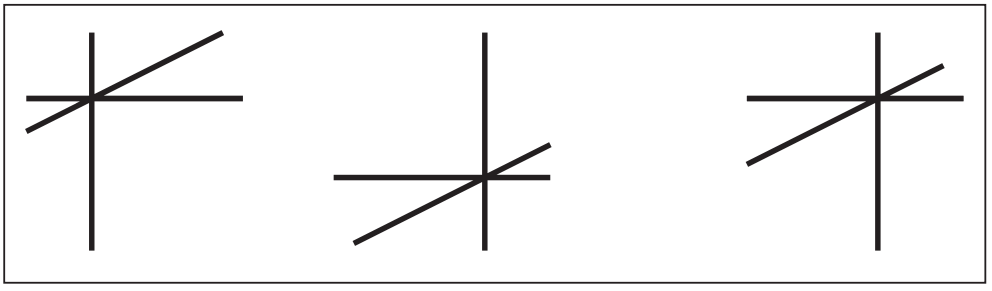

Fig. 2: Different places as different intersections of dimension, action, and representation

Of course, these are merely schematic illustrations. In a discourse analysis of urban space, we are concerned with processes of the production of this function, that is, with what we call place-*making*. Place-making does not only refer to the dimensional creation of places – through architecture, city and landscape planning, for instance – but also to the intersection of dimensional formation, use of space, and sign-based representation. This paper addresses place-making in this sense, examining discourses in and about the city as means of place-making; in this context, the place of discourse is conceptualized as a specific space-bound, materialized function.

## 1.2 Linguistic Analysis of Urban Space and Urban Places

An entry point for the linguistic analysis of space is the question of which phenomena have a share in place-making and how these can be analyzed in an adequate way. Before I pursue this inquiry, using the example of the Berlin locality of Prenzlauer Berg (cf. 2. and 3.), I will make some further clarifying remarks. First, it will be crucial to decide whether a) spoken language, b) written language, or c) spoken and written language should be analyzed. As desirable as it would be to take into consideration both speaking *and* writing in urban discourses, the focus here shall lie on the latter. I will provide an explanation for this restriction and show the added value provided by an analysis of writing-based place-making processes. This will also involve a critical discussion of the scholarship in sociolinguistics.

The conventional way of conceptualizing the relation between space and language in linguistics can be described with the help of the so-called *dependency model*. This model is based in variational linguistics and conforms to the structuralist notion of the so-called ›diasystem‹ (Weinreich 1954, p. 390). Berruto (2004, p. 193)[2] sees *time*, *space*, *class* and *socio-communicative situation* as parameters of variation. According to him, these parameters result in large classes of linguistic varieties: *diachronic varieties* (*historical varieties of a language*), *diatopic* (*geographic manifestations of language such as dialects*), *diastratic* (*social varieties*), *diaphasic* (*situational, functional-contextual subsystems*) and *media varieties* (Berruto 2004, p. 193). In this model, language is dependent on these parameters of variation. For a long time, the linguistic interest in space in general and in the city in particular has been anchored in the variationist model; this is also reflected in the linguistic studies that address the urban language of Berlin. Spatial parameters determine specific forms of linguistic features, which comprise pronunciation, lexis, and certain syntactic patterns, features of dialect. Lasch's early history of Berlin language (1928/1967) is already committed to this model. More recent scholarship additionally connects the analysis of diatopic variation with diastratic parameters, or it focuses on these parameters; spatial variation is also analyzed against the backdrop of social belonging[3]. The dependency model remains the guiding principle in this scholarship: extra-linguistic factors are taken into consideration as parameters of manifold manifestations of linguistic variation. Urban space is granted the status of an extra-linguistic parameter that indeed has an impact on language, but which is not determined by it.

A concept of language-bound place-making is based on the assumption of an inverse effect; and this is crucially new about my approach. In comparison to the dependency model, discursive place-making is about language as a determinant of space. Thus I consider written language not as dependent on spatial structures but as constitutive for places. To put it more simply: there are not merely certain forms of language in Berlin,

2 English translations of the original German quotes from Berruto, IHW. They are marked in italics.

3 Cf. Dittmar/Schlobinski/Wachs (1986); Schlobinski (1987); Dittmar/Schlobinski/Arndt-Thoms (1988); Schlobinski (1993); Johnson (1995); Dittmar/Bredel (1999); Schönfeld (2001); Eksner (2006); Wiese (2012).

but Berlin is what it is as a consequence of certain language forms *in* and *about* the city. This analytical focus thus reverses the traditional scholarly interest in language in the city. Such a reversal from the dependency model allows for linguistic analyses that, on the one hand, make models of the discursive production of place relevant for linguistics and, on the other, situate linguistics as a discipline in the interdisciplinary field of urban studies. Hence, my focus lies on the writing-based interplay of the modes of urbanity in a determinacy model as a factor of discursive place-making.

A commitment to writing-based discursive place-making is anchored in a sociolinguistic paradigm that has garnered broad international attention as *linguistic landscape research* in recent years. Linguistic landscapes refer to the manifestation of modes of writing in all conceivable forms in (public) (city) space. A recurring definition of linguistic landscapes is provided by Landry & Bourhis (1997, p. 25): »The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.« Linguistic landscapes are constituted by written utterances in different formats in public space, especially in urban settings. Linguistic landscape research thus covers areas of multilingualism, linguistic diversity, and language minorities.[4] This research context also examines modes of writing in public space as a phenomenon in multilingual spaces,[5] language politics, and language planning,[6] as well as covering these issues with special reference to the city.[7] Up to this point, monolingual linguistic landscapes have not been researched extensively; when they have been studied, the focus has been on the international manifestations of English, particularly on so-called World Englishes.[8] However, a study conducted by Coupland/Garrett (2010) on Welsh language and culture shows that we are not merely dealing with international varieties of English in monolingual or dominantly monolingual spaces. Apart from these

4 Precursors of research on linguistic landscapes are studies of advertisement in urban space that are of little relevance for our discussion. An overview of recent linguistic landscape research can be found in the anthologies by Shohamy/Gorter (2009) and Shohamy/Ben-Rafael/Barni (2010). The emphasis here lies on theoretical considerations and methodological surveys of sociolinguistic concepts as well as on topics such as multilingualism, multiculturalism, language politics, and linguistic identities. The concept of linguistic landscapes has recently been expanded to include further dimensions of signs in the study of semiotic landscapes (cf. Jaworski/Thurlow 2010). See also, Cenoz/Gorter (2006), Extra/Barni (2008), Hornsby (2008), Bracalenti et al. (2009), Pietikäinen et al (2011), Coupland (2012).

5 Cf. in general Gorter (2006); for a recent study on New Zealand, see Macalister (2010).

6 Cf. in general Androutsopoulos (2008) and Blackwood (2011); Daveluy/Ferguson (2009) work on linguistic landscapes in Canada, Pavlenko (2009) works on language change and conflict in post-Soviet linguistic landscapes, Sloboda et al. (2010) analyze bilingualism in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Wales, Du Plessis (2011) works on South Africa, Lado (2011) has published a study on ideological conflict in the Valencian community, Macalister (2012) on Timor-Leste.

7 Relevant here are the studies on Tokyo by Backhaus (2005, 2006, 2007) and on Israel by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006). Of further relevance are, among numerous studies, analyses of Bangkok (Huebner 2006), the Italian cities of Milan and Udine by Coluzzi (2009), and Hong Kong (Hutton 2011).

8 Studies by Bruyèl-Olmedo/Juan-Garau (2009) on English as a lingua franca in Tourism in Spain and by Lawrence (2012) on English in Korea deserve mention here.

central studies, there are some scattered contributions that use the paradigm of linguistic landscape research as a source for analyzing, for example, second language acquisition (cf. Cenoz/Gorter 2008), language attitudes (cf. Dailey/Giles/Jansma 2005), or graphemic representations in interior space (cf. Hanauer 2010).

While my interest in public writing in the city makes reference to the scholarship on linguistic landscapes mentioned above, it is furthermore directed toward an additional aspect that is also the focus of an analysis of commodified spaces in Chinatown (Washington, DC) by Leeman/Modan (2009); cities as »ideologically charged constructions« (Leeman/Modan 2009, p. 332). »Instances of written language in the landscape are not only artifacts of negotiations over space, but they are also productive signs: they have important economic and social consequences, and can affect those who would visit, work, or live in a given neighborhood« (Leeman/Modan 2009, p. 332). I am also interested here in the ways in which language or modes of writing in public space operate as »productive signs.«

Linguistic landscapes are not only illustrations of public space and can be interpreted as such, but they also produce and negotiate places. It is precisely this aspect of urban discourse that I am concerned with here: discursive place-making through urban inscriptions.

## 1.3 Urban Place-Making and Discourses on Gentrification

My operationalization of the theory of urban place-making shall now be illustrated with reference to the specific and controversial phenomena of social change and social displacement in the city that are often conceptualized through the term *gentrification* (cf. Warnke 2013). For decades, *gentrification* has been considered to be one of the major problems in cities. *Gentrification* generally refers to changes brought about in residential areas, in which socially disadvantaged areas transform into upscale quarters of the (upper) middle class. This global process of change is connected with a range of different actors such as, among others, investors, tenants, owner-occupants, and city administrations. Gentrification therefore has clearly been marked as a field of urban protest in which contrary positions in urban development are negotiated. This provides an argument for the relevance of the topic for discourse analysis.

The English word ›gentrification‹ is a loanword from the French word ›genterise, gentile‹ (of honorable birth); the English term ›gentle‹, as in ›gentleman‹, shares this etymology. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED 2013), ›gentrification‹ refers to a »process by which an (urban) area is rendered middle-class.« The verb ›gentrify‹ means to »renovate or convert (housing, esp. in an inner-city area) so that it conforms to middle-class taste; to render (an area) middle-class.« Gentrification is mainly a term from urban sociology that was coined in particular by Ruth Glass (1964):

> »One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes – upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages […] have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive resi-

> dences. […] The current social status and value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their size, and in any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. Once this process of ›gentrification‹ starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed.« (Glass 1964, p. xviii-xix)

This quote shows that the supposedly descriptive term ›gentrification‹ has served urban sociology predominantly as a term of critique from as early as the 1960s onwards. As a consequence, we often find texts about gentrification that use metaphors of invasion or threat in a critical way; the term is thus primarily used to authorize the critique of social changes in larger cities through academic argumentation. As Lees (2008) underlines, ›gentrification‹ has recently been used in more positive ways in urban policy instead; however, this is a notion that Lees contradicts:

> »Nevertheless, despite fierce academic debate about whether or not gentrification leads to displacement, segregation and social polarisation, it is increasingly promoted in policy circles both in Europe and North America on the assumption that it will lead to less segregated and more sustainable communities. Yet there is a poor evidence base for this policy of ›positive gentrification‹ – for, as the gentrification literature tells us, despite the new middle classes' desire for diversity and difference they tend to self-segregate and, far from being tolerant, gentrification is part of an aggressive, revanchist ideology designed to retake the inner city for the middle classes.« (Lees 2008, p. 2449)

Lees provides an argument that can also be used in the context of gentrified areas in Berlin as ideological spaces of ›self-segregation‹. In addition, we can observe that the term ›gentrification‹ has become what one might call a catchword, a contested term that sometimes appears to be no more than a buzzword. Semantic struggles (cf. Felder 2006) are waged around it. Here, too, ›gentrification‹ becomes an instrument of critique and contestation, of discursive positioning, and as such it also condenses communication of urban protest. We thus witness a growing interest in the topic in mass-media discourses and a tendency towards alignment by a larger public against the displacement of socially disadvantaged inhabitants through the middle classes (cf. Warnke 2013, p. 197–201). From a linguistic point of view, these aspects can be framed as a topic to be dealt with by sociolinguists with a special focus on discursive formations of space and place. As we can see, gentrification, then, no longer only denotes a change of social environment and urban dimensions, but also – and above all – a discursive event and effect, a concept negotiated in language-based communication.

I shall now bring into focus negotiations of gentrification in the linguistic landscapes of Berlin and in this context describe the function of discursive place-making, addressing the methodological premises of such an analysis and providing an argument for the grammatical discourse analysis of linguistic landscapes in urban space by way of an exemplary analysis.

## 2. Empiricism of Discursive Place-Making

### 2.1 Methodological Framework

My analysis applies methodologies of linguistic fieldwork, grounded theory, and ethnography. Its process of collecting data is guided by the principle of interdisciplinary use, validated as a general principle in linguistic fieldwork research: »If we take the broader project of linguistic fieldwork to be a deeper understanding of human knowledge systems and societies, then it makes sense that we create material from our own research in forms that colleagues from other disciplines can use« (Thieberger 2012, p. 3). Accordingly, one should use data of urban development and city planning as the basis for a spatial analysis such as ours. For Berlin, data provided by the Statistical Office for Berlin-Brandenburg provide a useful basis for a collection of data in urban space (cf. LOR 2008). A systematic division of the area to be analyzed can take place on the basis of these data (cf. fig. 3).

In a next step, the area is photographed according to defined criteria of inclusion and exclusion. The photographs thus produced make up individual sets of data for analysis that are then coded according to features of urban planning to allow for later interdisciplinary usage. The subsequent analysis of the data is guided by the general principle of analysis derived from grounded theory, more specifically a) the principle of »field observations converted into field notes« (Strauss 1987, p. 3) – which in our case the photographs provide – and b) the abductive axiom, »*[a]nalysis* is synonymous with *interpretation* of data« (Strauss 1987, p. 4). This theory-oriented method aims at gaining data-oriented insights into writing-based procedures of place-making, at »formulat[ing] a conceptually dense and carefully ordered theory« (Strauss 1987, p. 11).

When it comes to choosing from comprehensively collected data for analysis, ethnographical principles should be taken into consideration. The rule-governed modes of analysis conventionally applied in linguistics are not valid here; rather, what is more useful for choosing relevant data is an approach which considers that phenomena

a) »are studied in everyday contexts,«
b) »[d]ata are gathered from a range of sources,«
c) »[data] collection is, for the most part, relatively ›unstructured‹,«
d) the »focus is […] small-scale,« and
e) the »analysis of data involves interpretations of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local […] contexts.« (Atkinson/Hammersley 2007, p. 3)[9]

The methodological frame is thus a setting from linguistic fieldwork that combines systematic structuring of space with documentation, ordering, and interpretation of data, anchored methodologically in grounded theory and ethnography. It should be noted, however, that the discourse-linguistic study of place-making is neither wholly derived

9 Also cf. approaches to ethnographic conversational analysis in German linguistics such as Deppermann (2000, pp. 103-104).

from one nor the other theoretical tradition but operates as a procedure that draws on mixed methods.

## 2.2 Gridding Places and Mobile Acquisition of Data

A generalizable method for the study of space does not exist in linguistics or in discourse analysis; it thus seems useful to provide some general methodological guidelines for collecting data of a linguistic landscape, using the Berlin locality of Prenzlauer Berg as a case study.

I am referring here to a comprehensive study that I am currently undertaking, from which an example is given under point 3. In this project, data are attributed to *areas*, *sub-areas*, and *habitats*. These spatial units function as analytical categories. The definition of *life-world oriented spaces in the regional framework of the State of Berlin* (*Lebensweltlich orientierte Räume im Regionalen Bezugssystem des Landes Berlin*) (LOR 2008) provides a precise indexing of the city into boroughs and smaller spatial units that were adopted for analysis. This frame of reference divides the twelve boroughs of Berlin into 60 so-called prognostic spaces, 134 borough areas and 447 spaces of urban planning. The larger borough of Pankow is divided into seven prognostic spaces, the locality of Prenzlauer Berg includes the prognostic spaces of Southern Prenzlauer Berg and Northern Prenzlauer Berg, that is, two larger *areas*. These two *areas* in return are divided into six *sub-areas* and divide into 15 spaces of urban planning; by calling the latter *habitats* I refer to their place-making functions as units of living. Habitats are the smallest units of space in my analysis; this is where one lives and feels at home. There is a distinct sense of belonging here: space is coded symbolically and can be experienced as place. The field of my research can thus be divided according to life-world oriented spaces which are assigned numbers, as can be seen in the following.

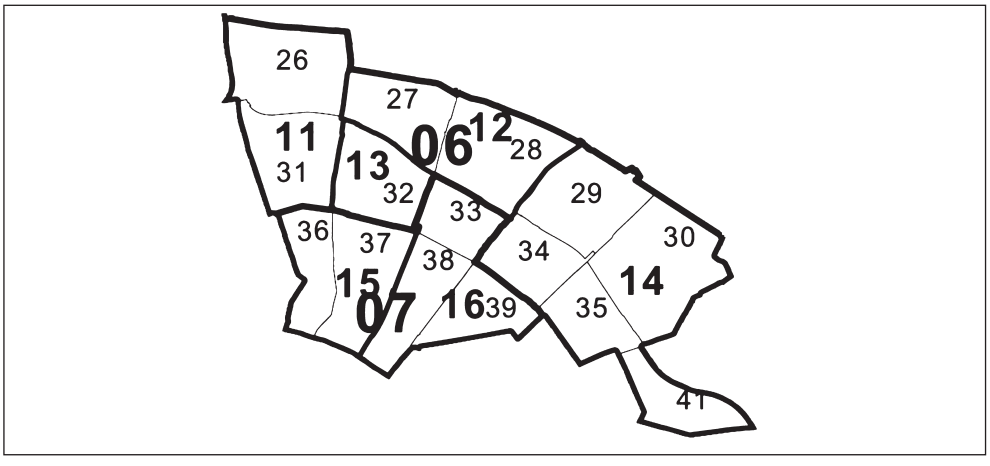


Fig. 3: Space structure of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg according to
© Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg

For the actual realization of the project, the following simplified and schematized grid is proposed.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arnimplatz | Humannplatz | Erich-Weinert-Straße | Greifswalder Straße | Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg | |
| Falkplatz | Helmholtzplatz | Thälmannpark | Anton-Saefkow-Park | Conrad-Blenkle-Straße | Eldenaer Straße |
| Teutoburger Platz | Kollwitzplatz | Winsstraße | Bötzowstraße | | |

Fig. 4: Grid of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg

The current project is based on a complete documentation of the field in order to comply with the demand of mobile recordings made by the paradigm of mobility; data collection is understood as a process of footwork, that is, as »local motion, specifically walking« (Hall 2009, p. 583). What is called for here is a collection of all written surfaces of the city in the publicly accessible space of Prenzlauer Berg: 118 kilometers of walking. The study intends to register a more or less comprehensive set of data at a specific moment in time – particularly of boards, signs, panels, logos, stickers, slips of paper, notes – that documents writing in a variety of forms and materials. Public writing in the city cannot be compared to a forest of traffic signs along a highway. Much rather, city space is coded in binary ways, along the major axes which are centuries-old (cf. Grosinski 2008, pp. 17-18) and shape the Prenzlauer Berg of today, as well as within the habitats. In general, two different types of spatial formation have to be differentiated with respect to the ways in which they generate place: the large roads as axes and boundaries of habitats (fig. 5) and the habitats themselves as islands on the inside of these boundaries (fig. 6).

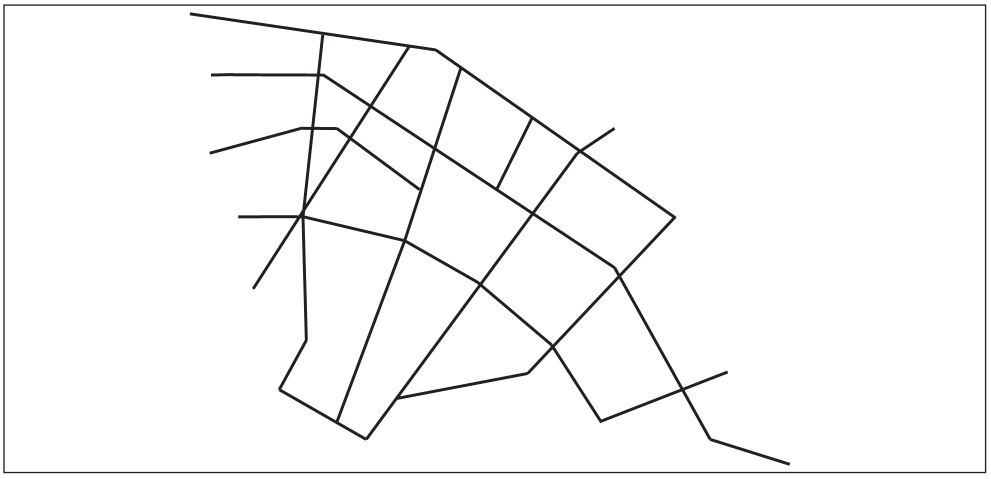

Fig. 5: Structure of axes of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg © IHW

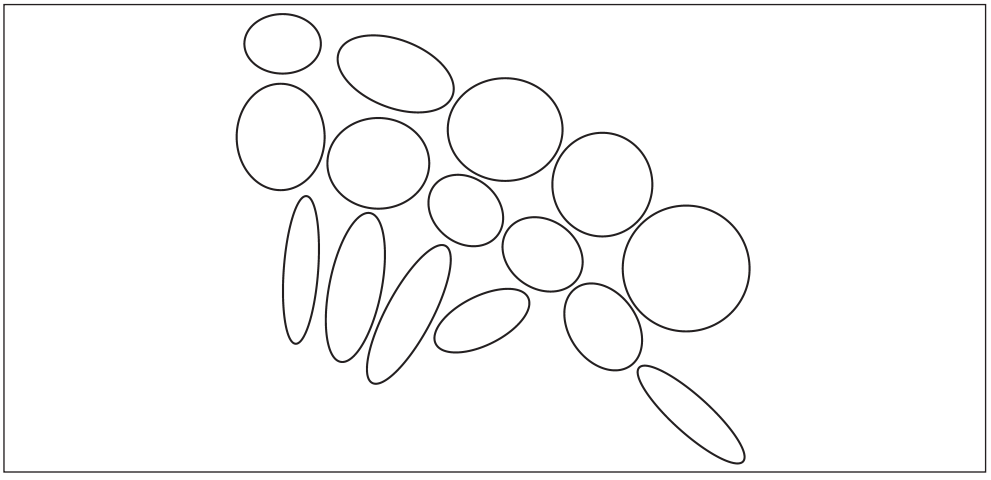

Fig. 6: Structure of habitats of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg © IHW

## 2.3 Focus on Epigraphy and Epigrammar

Linguistic landscape research is part of a tradition that is easily overlooked but indispensable for deriving aspects relevant to discourse linguistics. Inscriptions of public space are by no means a phenomenon of modern cities and their multilingual, heterogeneous and clearly defined, ›self-segregated‹ (Lees 2008, p. 2449), or gated areas and habitats. Inscriptions are part of the tradition of epigrams (ἐπίγραμμα [epigramma]) in the sense of inscriptions[10] resp. epigraphy. Taking up the meaning of ›epigraphy‹ as a referent for a coll-

10 According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the meaning of epigram ›inscription, usually in verse‹ is no longer in use, but it is precisely this meaning that is taken up and updated here. The OED

ective noun – which would also be suggested by the term ›linguistic landscape‹ as a collective noun/term –, I argue that the phenomena of linguistic landscape and epigraphy are largely analogous in character, form, and function, although epigraphy is conventionally equated with ancient manifestations of writing. Even the multiple forms of a linguistic landscape correspond to the multiplicity of ancient epigraphy: »The term epigraphy can cover various forms of writing on a wide range of permanent media, from inscriptions on stone, scratches on *ostraka*, to graffiti on walls« (Cooper 2008, p. 2). We can thus regard or define the linguistic landscape of a city as urban epigraphy. The term ›epigraphy‹ refers more clearly to aspects of materiality than the metaphorical term ›linguistic *landscape*‹. Moreover, the reference to ancient epigrammar allows for a complex definition of genre, particularly when taking into consideration the poetics of the literary genre of the epigram that derives from ancient inscriptions.

Looking at the theory of the epigram resp. epigraphy allows us to sharpen a methodology for describing the grammatical dimensions of linguistic landscape research in a discourse analysis framework. It is these grammatical dimensions in discourse that have not yet been well researched. Of great interest in this respect is the *Traitté de l'epigramme* by Guillaume Colletet from 1658, a text that provides the following definition of the epigram:

> »La premiere comprend toutes les inscriptions des personnes et des choses, d'où l'Epigramme a tiré son nom et sa premiere origine. L'autre comprend la loange, ou le blasme des actions, et des personnes. Et la derniere, les advantures fortuites, et les succés admirables et surprenans, ou effectivement arrivez, ou seulemenet imaginez par le Poëte.« (Colletet 1658/1965, p. 67)[11]

In the following passage, the differentiation between three classes of epigrams seems particularly relevant for us; they are in fact definitions of three features of the epigram (cf. Hess 1989: 67):

> »Tout Poëme succinct, qui désigne et qui marque naïfvement, ou une personne, ou une action, ou une parole notable ; ou qui infere agreablement une chose surprenante de quelque proposition advancée, soit extraordinaire, ou commune.« (Colletet 1658/1965: 31)[12]

gives as evidence, for instance, a quote by Edward Collins from the year 1876 which corresponds well to our current understanding of linguistic landscapes: »What the Greeks meant by an epigram was simply an inscription, [...].« (OED 2013)

11 »The first comprises all inscriptions of human beings and things; this is where the epigram takes its name and has its first origins. The other comprises the praise or blame of actions and of people. And the last the coincidental adventures, and the admirable and surprising successes that either actually happen or are merely imagined by the poet.« (Trans. IHW)

12 »Every short poem is extraordinary and commonplace that names and depicts in a simple manner a person or action or a noteworthy utterance, or that deduces a surprising set of facts from an outstanding utterance.« (Trans. IHW)

In a poetological sense, we are here dealing with,
a) inscriptions
b) evaluations of actions and persons
c) narratives of events.

I take up Colletet here in order to transfer the poetics of the epigram directly to the study of linguistic landscapes resp. urban epigraphy. For a grammar of linguistic landscapes, which I will call an *epigrammar of inscription* (EOI), I proceed from exactly these three features, and reformulate them as three grammatical features of inscription:
a) materiality
b) functionality
c) contextuality.

EOI deals with a) grammatical phenomena of graphemic representations in public space, in the etymological sense of ›epi-‹ as a prefix that refers to something being placed on something. Epigrammar is connected to material cultures. Moreover, EOI can be conceptualized b) as a functional grammar, since it examines the evaluation of places in spatial relations by examining functions of grammatical phenomena such as indefiniteness, negation, modality, and others. Concerning point c), EOI always deals with the discursive contexts of grammatical phenomena in materialized utterances. This specification of linguistically relevant inquiry makes the three grammatical features of inscription precise instruments for urban discourse-linguistics research.

To sum up my theoretical and methodological considerations: the linguistic interest in discourses about and in the city focuses on place-making processes through linguistic landscapes in the gentrification discourse of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. The chosen approach draws on linguistic fieldwork, grounded theory, and ethnography; gridding of places and mobile recordings establish the conditions for collection data. Three grammatical features of inscription serve as qualitative points of orientation, which I determine as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| a) | materiality | as graphemic representations in public urban spacesof Berlin Prenzlauer Berg |
| b) | functionality | as place-making |
| c) | contextuality | as gentrification. |

## 3. Case Study: Discursively Making Place in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg

My guiding discourse-linguistic questions now are: which grammatical phenomena are materialized in the inscriptions of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg; which functions does this grammar have; and how does it relate to the process of gentrification? It is the sum of these three questions that makes up the epigrammar of inscriptions.

## 3.1 Contested Places and Negation

The Berlin locality of Prenzlauer Berg is a discursive place par excellence. Since German reunification, few cities or localities like Prenzlauer Berg have been covered as widely and been subjected to such an extent to rumors and speculation by national or international media as Prenzlauer Berg. Mass media stereotypes abound with a range of so-called characteristics such as Prenzlauer Berg as an area of mothers and children, as the home of the latte macchiato or of Swabians who supposedly exert a destructive influence on Berlin life. Papen's (2012, p. 57) study on linguistic landscapes sees Prenzlauer Berg as an index of urban development. She sketches the general discursive image of the locality as follows: »since 1990 Prenzlauer Berg has reinvented itself from a primarily working-class area to a fashionable neighborhood, desired by property investors and tourists and popular amongst families with children.«

A closer look not only at discourses *about* Prenzlauer Berg but also at discourses that materialize *on site* provides a more complex picture. We encounter a place of places, a heterogeneous multilayered materialized formation of discourses. The analysis of its linguistic landscape resp. urban epigraphy can be considered a procedure of exposing these layers.

In order to show the process and results of an analysis of EOI, I suggest providing one example but underline that this means merely singling out one phenomenon out of a comprehensive set of data. My emphasis on this singular phenomenon corresponds to the ethnographically anchored interest in place-making processes that can be observed small-scale and in local contexts (cf. Atkinson/Hammersley 2007, p. 3). In this respect, my focus does not lie on the content of propositions but instead on the grammatical features of urban epigraphy.

My case study is about a sign attached to a fence around a playground on a private open space in Arnimkiez, the north-western habitat of Prenzlauer Berg, photographed in 2012.


Fig. 7: Linguistic landscape in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg, Arnimplatz © IHW

This is typical data of ethnographically relevant graphemic representation in urban space. Fleeting, bound to space in a specific way, in a singular context, ordinary. A nominal group in the public sphere of Berlin, an elliptical declarative proposition. Attached to a fence at a corner plot in a typical Berlin environment, a neighborhood of old Berlin buildings. There is a *private* playground on this fenced-off plot, and the sign we see here declares it as *public*. However, it is precisely such ordinary signs that are instruments of place-making, even if their everydayness has resulted in overlooking such data in discourse analysis as well as in linguistics for a long time. Let us take a closer look at the contexts of this place by analyzing its grammar in an exemplary fashion.

The fact that this is a private playground provides a first clue as to the interaction that has taken place. We not only notice that someone has attached this sign to the fence, but we can also detect that a linguistic intervention took place. At first sight, what seems unusual is the use of the indefinite article ›ein‹ in ›ein öffentlicher Spielplatz‹ (›a public playground‹). Moreover, the first line is decentered and, importantly, we see traces of glue in front of the first word. Originally, the utterance was not affirmative but negative: ›{K}/{k}ein öffentlicher Spielplatz‹ (›no public playground‹). This is thus a private playground declared by a linguistic landscapes sign as part of the complex epigraphy of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg, an unusual occurrence for Berlin, since playgrounds are usually public places. Even if writing-oriented linguistics generally examines static products, we are here faced with an interaction that attracts interest in discourses about and in the city.

The intervention of detaching the grapheme {K}/{k} and thereby creatively producing a new word with a new meaning and function is an interaction that results in a declaration and deontic proposition, a phenomenon interesting for discourse analysis:[13]

| | |
|---|---|
| a.1 *K/kein öffentlicher Spielplatz* (›no public playground‹) | ¬P (T) |
| ↓ | |
| a.2 (*K/k)ein öffentlicher Spielplatz* (›a public playground‹) | P (F) / elimination of negation |
| ↓ | |
| a.3 *soll ein öffentlicher* Spielplatz sein (›should be a public playground‹) | ❒P / proposition with deontic content |

The original negation of the proposition ›no public playground‹ (a.1), noticeable only by glue marks, is TRUE because the plot indeed is no public playground. The elimination of the negation results in an affirmative propostion (a.2) that is FALSE since the removal of the grapheme does not turn private into public property. The intervention in the graphic surface of the city, however, marks a deontic content in the sense of ›should be a public playground‹ (a.3). What is being negotiated here – no matter if playfully or combatively

13 (P) means proposition, (¬) is the symbol for negation, (❒) is the symbol for deontic content. (T) means the truth function true and (F) the truth function false.

– are alternative possibilities of using space, a negotiation between the poles of possibilitv and necessity. This is a classical matter of deontic logic and modal grammar.

We can interpret the removal of grapheme {K} resp. {k} – it cannot clearly be established which letter was removed here, capitalized or small case – as an interaction in a language-based contest about and in the city. We are dealing with patterns of antagonistic positioning in urban discourses; facts are fixed (cf. Felder 2006, pp. 14-16) in a linguistic landscape. What is being negotiated here is the highly controversial question of who owns the city (cf. WGDS 2013).[14] This question is relevant to all larger cities, in Germany primarily in Berlin and Hamburg, and in these cities predominantly in certain localities. Linguistic landscapes are of particular interest in these localities. The question of who owns the city is also the crucial question posed by the discourse of gentrification. The context of this singular data is thus a complex discourse of demarcation, displacement, appropriation that we can call – referring to Lees (2008, p. 2449) – ›self-segregation‹. Our small signpost is part of gentrification discourse; more precisely, of family gentrification and the question of private and public use of space for children in a ›self-segregated‹ middle-class environment. Nothing could express ›self-segregation‹ better than a sign that declares open space for children a private place: a little gated community of middle-class parents and their talented middle-class children. Some are in, some are out.

What exactly is the EOI aspect of this sign, the grammatical content, the dimension that is of interest in an epigrammar of inscription and thus providing an example of place-making through urban epigraphy? We see traces of an interaction between two parties of discourse actors who, on one end of the spectrum, put up a sign post with a negative nominal group, and who, on the other end, rewrite the proposition on the post by detaching the grapheme {K}/{k}. These actors have utterly different ideas about the use of open city space. From a linguistic perspective, we can also read the detachment of grapheme {K}/{k} as an act of double negation. What we see, then, is place as a truth-functional referent, a playground in open city space of Berlin, private property. There are expectations about its use. Children want to play here but the original signpost counters this use. The privacy of private property is rendered questionable in a pragmatic sense through the negation of negation:

| | |
|---|---|
| b.1 *K/kein öffentlicher Spielplatz* (›no public playground‹) | ¬P (T) |
| ↓ | |
| b.2 *(K/k)ein öffentlicher Spielplatz* (›a public playground‹) | ¬¬P (F) / metalinguistic negation |
| ↓ | |
| b.3 *soll ein öffentlicher* Spielplatz sein (›should be a public playground‹) | ❒P / proposition with deontic content |

14 For a German website addressing this question, see, for instance, www.wemgehoertdiestadt.net (accessed 14.2.2013).

This interaction can also be read in the sense that the negated and true proposition (b.1) is negated through the removal of grapheme {K}/{k} in (b.2), thus operating as a double negation (›this is not no public playground‹). Here too, the resulting reading would result in (b.3), that is, a proposition with deontic content. In this interaction about spatial relations, three places are being negated: the real place (as a truth-functional referent), the declared place (in the negation of public use), and the claimed place (following the negation of negation), with the claimed place overwriting the real place through logical operation resp. interaction.

From a grammatical perspective, more precisely, an EOI perspective that focuses on material, functional, and contextual aspects of grammar, we examine patterns of metalinguistic negation. According to Horn (1989, p. 363), a metalinguistic negation »is not a truth-functional or semantic operator on propositions, but rather […] a device for objecting to a previous utterance on any grounds whatever, including the conventional or conversational implicata it potentially induces, its morphology, its style or register, or its phonetic realization.«

By detaching the grapheme, an objection is raised against a prohibition in an interactional way. This does not concern the truth-functional question of whether this is in fact a playground. What is rather at stake is objecting to a previous utterance. The original signpost makes use of descriptive negation. Its proposition is truth-functional and declarative. The metalinguistic negation, in contrast, is external to the real place as propositional referent; it is non-truth-functional. It is a comment on a previous utterance. Precisely this is a further crucial definition of metalinguistic negation; Miestamo (2009, p. 221) notes: »In opposition to the unmarked descriptive negation, which is internal and truth-functional, the marked metalinguistic negation is external and non-truth-functional.« In our context of discourse analysis, we can interpret this metalinguistic negation as a pattern of interaction of ethnographically relevant graphemic representations in urban space.

The singular signpost shown in fig. 7 is relevant for urban discourse linguistics a) because of its materiality – its connectedness to material cultures in city space and urban places, b) because of its functionality – of its place-making function, and c) because of its contextuality – its situatedness in the discourse of gentrification.

## 3.2 Short Discussion

As I have shown, discourses *about* the city are also discourses *in* the city, with the materiality of discourses being analytically relevant. Starting from a general interest in linguistic landscapes, which derives from the larger framework of a study with systematic gridding and a broad collection of photographic data, I have chosen a set of phenomena that shows the ways in which materiality is a crucial aspect of discourse-grammatical analysis. In the sense of an epigrammar of inscription (EOI), I have examined the phenomenon of an interactional negation by analyzing a) materiality as graphemic representations with traces of glue in public urban spaces of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg, b) functionality as place-making in antagonistic positioning, and c) contextuality in the discourse of gentrification.

In terms of methodology, my case study shows that discourse analyses of the city in general and of gentrification in particular cannot be conducted solely by collecting data about its theme in the mass media. It is moreover necessary to move through a field in person to examine markers of places as part of a discourse. Up to now, such an approach has not been made sufficiently productive in linguistics.

With respect to recent linguistic landscape research, it should be noted that monolingual signs in a majority language have by no means featured as irrelevant facts. Particularly in gentrified areas, monolingualism plays a central role. ›Self-segregation‹ by acts of negation, by deontic propositions and modal constructions should be considered effective instruments of place-making.

Ultimately, an epigrammar of inscription and its focus on material, functional, and contextual features of grammar (cf. Hennig 2010) is concerned with analyzing implicit, shared bodies of knowledge. I thus suggest for future analyses of discourses in and about the city to incorporate a triangulation of corpus data and data of ethnographically relevant modes of writing. Our example has focused on aspects of a grammatical analysis of singular data in urban epigraphy. Linking this grammatical analysis to an analysis of a much more widespread gentrification discourse would be a further step in urban discourse analysis.

## 4. Conclusion

Ethnographically-oriented discourse linguistics deals with singular utterances. Discourses about the city in particular, which are always already discourses in the city, can be studied through such singular data. As I have shown, an ›in-place‹ discourse analysis proves particularly productive here because such an approach assumes that urbanity results from an intersection of dimension, action, and representation. I consider this intersection a process of place-making. Place, in contrast to space, serves as a function of these three modes of urbanity. It has become clear that language does not merely depend on space, but that language also determines space – especially in the form of public writing in city space. In this regard, linguistic landscapes can be considered a productive form of place-making in gentrified areas. My methodological framework uses mixed methods from linguistic fieldwork, grounded theory, and ethnography. On the basis of gridding places and mobile data acquisition, I have shown that a grammatical focus on linguistic landscapes prompts a linguistic analysis of urban epigraphy in EOI. Taking the example of the Berlin locality of Prenzlauer Berg and metalinguistic negation as a strategy of antagonistic place-making, this paper has demonstrated that the materiality, functionality, and contextuality of data should be taken into equal consideration for a discourse analysis of the city. Further studies should aim to show the ways in which such an analysis may deepen our understanding of the city as a place of places with »things actually said« (Foucault 1969/2002, p. 143).

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