



Re-writing Galicia: Spelling and the construction of social space¹

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This paper addresses societal power relations and the way they are reflected in the public space of Galicia (Spain). It reflects on the struggles concerning the presence, contestation, and erasure of language(s) within the city of A Coruña, one of the main Galician cities. The three different spellings for the city name symbolize the struggle between social agents with different backgrounds, ideologies, and aims: linguistic conflict is thus homologous with the social conflict. Each spelling indexes different glottopolitical stances and traces different boundaries for different imagined spaces and communities. I focus on the ‘war of spelling’ and its impact on the linguistic landscape, highlighting the importance of diacritics in indexing identities. In the light of these two points, I address the tensions that can be detected in the production of the new city logo, which constitutes an attempt to erase the linguistic and social conflict.

Este artículo trata de cómo las relaciones de poder se reflejan en el espacio público de Galicia (España), y reflexiona sobre las luchas que conciernen la presencia, contestación, y cancelación de las lenguas en la ciudad de A Coruña. La existencia de tres variantes gráficas para el nombre de la ciudad (*A Coruña*, *La Coruña*, y *A Corunha*) simboliza la existencia de una lucha entre agentes sociales con afiliaciones, procedencias, ideologías y objetivos diferentes. Por lo tanto, el conflicto lingüístico es una homología del conflicto social. En este sentido, cada una de las tres variantes indexa posiciones políticas y glotopolíticas diferentes, y traza fronteras distintas para cada una de las diferentes comunidades imaginadas que se colocan dentro o fuera de los distintos espacios concebidos y representados. Me centraré pues sobre esta ‘guerra de grafías’ que se combate en el paisaje lingüístico, subrayando la importancia de los diacríticos en la indexación de las identidades y la definición de los espacios. A la luz de estos dos puntos, discutiré las tensiones que pueden detectarse en la producción del nuevo logotipo de la ciudad, que constituye un intento por cancelar el conflicto lingüístico y social. [Spanish]

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INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE IN SPACE, LANGUAGE AND SPACE

The present paper is a sociolinguistic study of *language in space*, a sociological and historical inquiry into what minimal linguistic features say about the space wherein they occur, the speakers using them, the social structure, and the tensions that find expression within and across named languages. In particular focusing on the interaction between language and space, I treat how spellings contribute to the construction of social space (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). In his seminal book, Lefebvre considered the mere *reading* of space as a code as insufficient (ibid.: 7): certain ways of analyzing space – ways that can be considered as mere inventories of what exists in a given space – are only ways of *reading* space, which exclude the histories of space and the social practices that occur within it; while, even if space can be read, it has certainly been somehow imagined and constructed by someone at a certain point. In addition, since *reading* the language displayed in public spaces as a code is insufficient, this study claims that language and space have to be analyzed together, bringing at the surface their complex relationships (Scollon and Scollon 2003). The multilevel analysis of linguistic facts (orthography, phonetics, and pragmatics) as social practice, i.e. the examination of who produces and displays what language, how, where, and for what purposes, goes in hand with the analysis of who produces the space where language is displayed, how, and for what purposes. Again following the authors mentioned above, this study also addresses the materiality of space and language as essential: because space and the language signs in it are experienced through the bodies of the people going through it, deconstructing or reconstructing it. But since space is also conceptualized, and represented, I also deal with how the space is imagined and signified, and how these situated social practices impact the use of language. The interaction between space and language allows assimilating the Lefebvrian concept of representational function of the space to Anderson's imagination (1983). This enables spatial and linguistic practices to be studied in light of nation-building processes. The resulting tenet is that *the organization of space and language is constitutive of a nationalist discourse*.

In the following lines, I will inquire into the ways in which physicality and imagination enter a complex relationship where the deployment of language in public spaces refers to different representations of space. In particular, I will analyze how in a situation of languages in *conflictual* contact, as in Galicia, the display of certain orthographic features – constructing and indexing a certain national identity and excluding others – affects the representation of spaces, allowing the (re)drawing of different national boundaries for different imagined

communities. The abstract space of the imagined community of the nation has of course a tangible translation, because in Lefebvre's reflection, which is influenced by Marx's analysis of commodities, space is a 'concrete abstraction', i.e. an abstract idea that concretely drives social life (Stanek 2008: 67–68).

Thus, working both on language and space, this paper adds to the reading of language in/and space a reflection on how space is constructed, experienced, and represented (or imagined) by the people living in it. Therefore, I will analyze the language of the texts that constitute my small corpus, as well as the very nature of the places where they were displayed (highways, auto-routes, and roundabouts), and how and for what purpose they were constructed, conceptualized, named, and administered as they were. Furthermore, building on Augé's (1992) reflection on *non-lieux* (non-places), like highways, malls, airports, stations, and all the other spaces where people go through and whose interaction, if any, is characterized by fleetingness, I will discuss how people experience the texts as well as the spaces, and the way their bodies enter into contact with these texts.

A short digression is necessary here on the difference existing, if any, between the terms *space* and *place*. According to Cresswell, place is a space made meaningful by people; furthermore, relating space with im/mobility, he goes on to say that space is related to movement, while place to pause, and that between places one can find spaces (Cresswell 2004: 7–8). This position matches Augé's idea that non-places are spaces where people are fleeting. Cresswell also explains the relationship of these two concepts in Lefebvre, stating that 'the idea of social space – or of socially produced space – [...] in many ways plays the same role of place' (2004: 10). Thanks to the flexibility of the concept of social space, Lefebvre's theory of the construction of social space has been considered as particularly suitable for a multidisciplinary (historical, political, and sociological) analysis of the urban spaces (Stanek 2007: 464). This position is shared by Cresswell, who considers place as a way for understanding the world, hence as a legitimate epistemological interest and methodological tool for analyzing social phenomena.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL SPACE: DIALECTIC, NATURALIZATION, HEGEMONY, AND RESISTANCE

A central idea of the present paper is that capital and capitalism influence space (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 9 ff.). This means that language(s) and space are at stake in the struggle between different classes, whatever this term might mean today (see Block 2014). As Lefebvre shows, space is used by powerful people to establish their power and exert control. Classes in power spread their ideological discourse veiled under the form of everyday, repetitive, and banal messages that, by going unnoticed, end up being interiorized as given, thus becoming hegemonic (Gramsci 1971). The critique of this everydayness is one of the main points of Lefebvre's reflection (Shields 1999: ch. 6). Nevertheless,

Lefebvre also stresses the dialectic character of codes employed in relation to space (1991 [1974]: 18), so the existence of domination and hegemony exerted by one class gives birth to antagonism, resistance, and counter-hegemonic discourses and practices (see also Pennycook 2010; Petrucci 1999; Scollon and Scollon 2003: ch. 8). As for the case I am dealing with here, the two texts displayed in *non-lieux* as highways and roundabouts (see Figure 2 below) are messages that people mostly passively undergo without chances of contesting them, since readers only pass by them, largely with no time to reflect on them or no physical possibility to dispute them. Actually in order to challenge these texts one should stop the car in quite dangerous places, where parking is not permitted, cross crowded highways, and materially try to modify the official texts, but without the technical means available for hegemonic power: i.e. with DIY means, like spray or paintbrush paintings. Nevertheless, antagonist groups still exist that physically contest the texts in the space and hence change the space, reconstructing it according to a new representation and a counter-discourse.

Furthermore, Lefebvre explains that the idea of centrality, which is the base of contemporary capitalistic state rationality, is challenged by more or less violent, transgressive, and subversive forces (1991 [1974]: 23), which is exactly the case at issue here, where the centralist perspective of the official language and the official construction of space is challenged by alternative groups with different perspectives, that imagine and represent different spaces.

As we have seen, Lefebvre propounds that the ruling classes make efforts to naturalize their situated, hence arbitrary, production of space. Something very similar occurs with the production of language. Since the naturalization of arbitrariness applies both to space and language, it deserves some further reflection.

According to Bourdieu, power is always arbitrary (in the sense of 'autocratic') and 'tends to produce [...] the naturalization of its own arbitrariness' in order to make itself more acceptable (1977: 164). Language allows the naturalization of power. As Marx and Engels (1845) stated in *The German Ideology*:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. [...] The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.

We could paraphrase Marx's statement about ruling ideas by stating that ruling languages, which build and spread those ideas (Voloshinov 1973), are always the languages of the ruling classes. Insisting on this idea, Houben (1996: 190) states that this notion of naturalization can be fruitfully applied to attempts to justify the arbitrariness (in the sense of 'randomness') of linguistic

signs (De Saussure 1967 [1916]: 100 ff.). Actually, as Kress (1997) has shown, challenging the alleged arbitrariness through the notion of 'interest', there is nothing arbitrary in language. Even if naturalization can be interpreted as a process of 'erasure', as posited by Gal and Irvine (1995: 974) – the process by which ideology makes invisible some persons, activities, or languages – erasure seems to be just a particular case of how to naturalize domination. Naturalization seems to be more strictly and directly linked to the concept of common sense given by Gramsci (1971: 323–326, 422, 424) and the related notion of hegemony: powerful speakers, thanks to their cultural hegemony, get to naturalize in the common sense their domination, making it unnoticeable and acceptable. From this perspective, the convergence between Gramscian reflections on hegemony and the Bourdieusian definition of naturalization allows language and space to be studied in light of the struggles that take place between groups with opposed social aims for the physical and symbolic imposition of their 'principles of vision and division of the social world' (Bourdieu 1985: 731).

The analysis of the linguistic landscape – i.e. the public space and the language(s) displayed in it – as the terrain where symbolic struggles between social agents with different backgrounds, ideologies, aims, and interests find their expression is not new. If Petrucci already indicated the existence of contestations of the official epigraphy since the Latin era (Chartier and Hébrard 1999; Petrucci 1999), in more recent years other scholars have shown how the public space is a privileged terrain for displaying, contesting and/or erasing language(s) (Ben Rafael et al. 2006; Jaworski and Thurlow 2010; Rubdy 2015; Rubdy and Ben Said 2015; Trumper-Hecht 2009, 2010: 237–238). Within the linguistic landscape thus hegemonic discourses are challenged by alternative or counter-hegemonic ones. This is especially evident in those places characterized by social tensions between groups speaking different languages or varieties, as is the case of Spain, which has been widely analyzed (see Cenoz and Gorter 2006 on the Basque landscape; and on Galician, Herrero-Valeiro 1993, 2000, 2009, 2011, and, more recently, Rodríguez-Barcia and Ramallo 2015).

PAVING THE GROUND FOR THE DISCUSSION: SPAIN AND GALICIA

Spain is divided into 17 regions with different degrees of administrative autonomy; the regions with major devolution are the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia, the region situated at the very northwest corner of the Spanish state on the border with Portugal (Figure 1). The Spanish sociolinguistic situation is very complex: without going into too much detail, one can find an official language at the state level, Spanish, also called Castilian,² and three languages which are co-official with Spanish at regional level: Basque, Catalan, and Galician in the respective regions.



Figure 1: Galicia on the Spanish map

Put simply, Galician, the romance language spoken in Galicia, constitutes in structural terms a linguistic diasystem that should be more properly defined as Galician-Portuguese, since Galician and Portuguese are diatopical varieties of the same language: they are different manners – based on the speaker's geographical origin – of speaking the same language. Although these considerations are themselves disputable and disputed, as far as we are concerned here, we can accept them without seeming too superficial.

Galician has been used since the Middle Ages, but once the Spanish house of Bourbon established its power in the early eighteenth century in Castile, Galicia, like other regions of the kingdom, underwent a process of castilianization that proceeded with shifting outcomes. The process is still ongoing with Spanishist (or centralist) forces trying to castilianize Galicia. In this area in turn, there are processes of resistance to castilianization, together with movements of galicianization, which raise their own resistance processes.

In the recent history of castilianization, one can distinguish some key periods: the two military dictatorships of Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) and Francisco Franco (1939–1975), during which time Galician was not allowed and repressed; and the two democratic periods – the Second Republic (1931–1939) and the representative monarchy (1978 onward), during which time Galician was allowed as co-official.

The period after the arrival of democracy deserves a separate discourse. To try to solve the tension between centralist and peripheralist forces, the emerging democratic forces and the rest of the previous Francoist regime negotiated, with many difficulties, that the new Spanish Constitution (1978) would establish a political frame to increase administrative autonomy and the devolution of political and administrative competencies. An important part of the agreement at both state and regional level concerned language. The Spanish Constitution therefore recognized the co-officialdom of some peripheral languages, while establishing the preponderance of Spanish.

In 1981 the regional parliament declared Galician the co-official language of the region. The legal frame for the official use of the Galician language is set out in Article 3 of the Spanish Constitution (December 1978), Article 5 of the Estatuto de Autonomía de Galicia (April 1981), and the Law for Linguistic Normalization (June 1983) (Monteagudo 1990). This declaration entailed the need to adopt a standard orthography to be used within the administrative bureaucracy in the dialogue between citizens and administration, in the schools, etc. (Ramallo and Rei-Doval 2015). The establishment of the spelling norm was not an easy task, and the long and still ongoing process was defined by Herrero-Valeiro as a 'war of spelling' (1993, 2000).

GALICIAN SPELLINGS AS TERRAIN OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUGGLES

Basically, spelling became a homology of the political tensions existing within the Galician society between Spanishist and Galicianist forces. For historical reasons that we cannot address here, Spanishism roughly matches with a right-wing political ideology, tending to political and administrative centralism, and the linguistic primacy of Castilian (De Santiago-Guervós, 1996), while Galicianism matches a more left-wing ideology, aiming at political and administrative peripheralism or federalism, and the recognition and revitalization of Galician in terms of language choice. Although these are simplifications, these categories can be accepted for the aims of the present work.³

Now, it is important to consider who the actors that drove the process of decentralization were. The political-administrative elites in power during the transition from Francoism to democracy belonged with the right-wing party Alianza Popular, later renamed Partido Popular (PP). This party was founded by an important figure in the earlier Francoist regime, the three-time minister Manuel Fraga, and his main ideological features were centralism, Catholicism, and Castilianism. Both Francisco Franco and Manuel Fraga were Galician and, since its existence as an autonomous region (since 1981), Galicia has been ruled by the right, except for two short hiatuses in 1987–1990 and 2005–2009. I refer here only to the highest council, the regional parliament, in charge of deciding on linguistic policies, even though municipal councils,

which are at a lower hierarchical level, still have some power in enacting the linguistic policies decided by the regional parliament. During the process of normalization and standardization, at the moment of defining the spelling norm, the Hispanophone and Spanishist elites in power chose a Spanishist style, with orthographic features that index Spanishness. Nevertheless, this official norm was not the only existing spelling, and people kept using, or developed, other spellings. The resulting situation is so complex that Herrero-Valeiro defines it as a 'labyrinth' (2009). At present one can witness within the Galician linguistic landscape many different, more or less consistent spellings that can be situated at some point on a continuum whose poles are Portuguese and Spanish ones (Álvarez-Cáccamo and Herrero-Valeiro 1996). Besides the two poles, one can easily distinguish at least two Galician (groups of) spellings: one called Reintegrationist, propounded by the intellectuals gathered in the Associação Galega da Língua, aimed at reintegrating Galician in the Galician-Portuguese diasystem, by making Galician look the most like Portuguese; the other one, propounded by Real Academia Galega (RAG) and Instituto da Língua Galega (ILG), two institutions controlled by regional government, called Officialist, aimed at isolating Galician from both Portuguese and Spanish (Álvarez-Cáccamo 1999). This last one is the one chosen by the regional administration. The supposed equidistance from Spanish and Portuguese has been contested because, as a consequence of the symbolical and material appropriation by political and intellectual elites during the process of normalization, the Officialist Galician has become a 're-galicianized Galician', constructed as Galician, but tending toward Spanish (Álvarez-Cáccamo 1993, 1996: 248, 2003). This closeness to Spanish is rooted into the philologist Carvalho-Calero's claim that 'Galician language either is Portuguese-Galician or is Spanish-Galician' (1981: 20, my translation).

So, in the Galician landscape, besides Spanish one can see the Officialist Galician, which looks like Spanish, and the Reintegrationist Galician, which looks like Portuguese. Each of the three spellings expresses a linguistic ideology (Woolard 1992; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994) or a glottopolitical stance (Guespin and Marcellesi 1986): i.e. ways of seeing the languages, the speakers, their relationship, the world, and how speakers and institutions should speak, behave, and act. Each spelling also draws different spaces and boundaries.

If spelling has become a field of struggle, it is for the indexical ability of (visual features of) language to represent different social identities, determine groups' relationships, and underscore social actors' political agendas (Jaffe 1996, 2000; Jaffe et al. 2012; Johnson 2005; Sebba 2009). In the following pages, I will address a very particular case that in itself summarizes the entire 'spelling war', its history, its actors, and the interests at stake. The analysis of the examples will show how the Galician linguistic landscape reflects societal power relations, and how the space is constructed physically and through language(s) in representational terms.

A CITY WITH THREE NAMES

In Galicia, there is a city whose name can be written and actually appears written in at least three different ways: La Coruña, A Coruña, A Corunha (Figure 2). In this city, as in the rest of Galicia, Spanish coexists not too peacefully with Reintegrationist and Officialist Galician.

In the first picture, one can see the previous text <LA CORUÑA> being changed firstly to <A CORUÑA> by erasing the <L> with grey paint and secondly to <A CORUNHA> by erasing the tilde from <Ñ> with white paint and adding a handwritten <HA>. The second picture features a flowerbed creating the word <La Coruña> with a huge tilde on the <ñ>.

Since speakers can choose one code amongst different options, each spelling indexes a certain linguistic ideology, expresses a political-ideological stance, and draws boundaries between imagined administrative and linguistic spaces. This can be summarized as shown in Table 1.

So using Spanish (La Coruña) means imagining Galicia within a Hispanophone linguistic space and a Spanish administrative space; using Reintegrationist Galician (A Corunha) means imagining Galicia outside the Hispanophone linguistic space, hence outside the Spanish administrative space, and within the Lusophone space (Álvarez-Cáccamo 2003: 12). Finally, using Officialist Galician (A Coruña), means imagining Galicia as a Galicianophone space, which is linguistically and administratively autonomous from Portugal through the ‘political isoglosses of the states’,

Table 1: The link between linguistic choice, linguistic and political ideology, the imagined spaces, and the linguistic space

	La Coruña	A Coruña	[A] Corunha
Code chosen	Spanish	Officialist Galician ‘Re-Galicianized-Galician’	Reintegrationist Galician ‘Re-portuguesized Galician’
Linguistic ideology	Castilianism (Castilian)	Galicianism (Castilian-based Galician)	Portuguesism (Portuguese-based Galician)
Political stance	Right-wing; center	Right-wing; center; left-wing	Left-wing; radical left-wing
Imagined space	Galicia as Spain Galicia within Hispanophone space	Galicia as autonomous region within Spain Galicia as Galicianophone within Hispanophone space	Galicia as independent Galicia within Lusophone space (?)
Linguistic space	Hispanophony	Galicianophony	Lusophony

(a)



(b)



Figure 2: Contested public texts. Above: road sign (August 2013, © Google Street View). Below: flowerbed (22 August 1995, © Xosé Castro, courtesy of *La Voz de Galicia*); the photographer named the picture as follows: ‘Gardeners restoring the “L” of the flowerbed in Alfonso Molina Avenue’ (my translation)



Figure 3: The road sign at the roundabout as it appears at present, after the latest restoration (March 2018, author's picture)

hence within the Spanish administrative space (Álvarez-Cáccamo 2003: 21, my translation).

Now, in order to show how the theoretical framework articulated above works by intersecting the analysis of linguistic facts with the construction of social space, I will discuss the emplacement of the texts.

As one can see (Figure 2), the road sign and the flowerbed are in public streets, but we need to look in more detail at how and by whom the space has been constructed where these public texts are displayed. The road sign is on a roundabout in Culleredo (Figure 3), in close proximity to the city airport: when coming from the airport and going toward the city, the road called Nacional 550 (abbreviated to N-550) was until very recently (March 2015) the only one connecting the airport to the city, so it was the very first indication of the city and was under the gaze of almost everyone who landed at A Coruña airport and were directed to A Coruña.

Given its visibility, this signage is highly relevant for those moving along the space, be they from A Coruña or not.

The second text too acquires its relevance thanks to its emplacement: it is displayed at the very point where the N-550 enters into the city, so that at that point the road becomes the AC-11, although it is better known as Avenida del Alcalde Alfonso Molina, a former Francoist mayor of the city (May 1947–November 1958). The point where the flowerbed is situated marks the crossing of the imagined administrative boundary of the city, letting passengers know that they are getting to the city.

Together with emplacement we ought also consider materiality: the first text is a public traffic sign, industrially produced, with the technical infrastructure necessary for making it up, officially bought and installed by the administration, following a series of well-established legal and administrative procedures; it has been placed on a state property, on a state road (N-550), and following the state laws. The second text, for its part, is made up of flowers: they are bought by the city council, and planted and cared for by professional gardeners paid by the city council, in line with the administrative regulations.

This point shows the material and procedural differences between these official discourses (discourses *on* the space and construction of space *as* discourse) and the social practices enacted by contesting discourses.

Coming back to the emplacement, the road N-550 is not only the main way to access the city and indubitably the most crowded one; it is mostly part of the network of state roads, and by its signage, the state itself is speaking in that particular place; and the state speaks with its monoglossic voice (del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2002). This monoglossia enacts its centralist ideology (see Lefebvre's point above), and its right-wing political stance. The roads called 'nacionales', 'autovías', and 'autopistas' fall under the denomination of Red de Carreteras del Estado (National Road System), and are regulated and administered by the state through the Ministry of Public Works and Transportations.

By analyzing how the roads were named and organized, we will see the intersections between language and space, i.e. how language contributes to constructing and representing the space, how the construction of space is in itself a discourse, and how arbitrary the conceptualization of space is.

The very name of the road is set up in relation to the state center – Madrid. According to the road name code, established under Francoism in 1940 by the engineer Victorià Muñoz Oms, <N> means 'national'; the first number (5) is based on the position of the road in relation to the radial highways from Madrid that reach other directions; the second number (5) indicates the distance from Madrid where the road begins (between 500 and 599 kilometers); the third number (0) refers to whether the road is directed toward Madrid (odd number) or not (even number); the 0 then indicates that the road is not directed toward Madrid (Dirección General de Tráfico 2003). Moreover, everything, from the roads' names, to the size, shape, and features of the public signage displayed along them, is strictly regulated by state laws. This is a social spatial practice that constructs the space; as Lefebvre states, resonating Foucauldian *performativity*, 'the spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it' (1991 [1974]: 38).

As indicated above, the road N-550 receives the name of AC-11 at the entrance of the city. Please note that this second name AC-11 was defined in 2003 by a state law (BOE 2003), and is based on the name <A Coruña>, which

at the time was the official toponym, in Officialist Galician. It is worthy to note that when the name was changed, the Minister of Transportation and Public Works was Francisco Álvarez-Cascos (PP). As for the relationship between the PP and Officialist Galician, one should bear in mind that there are two laws establishing <A Coruña> as the only official toponym to be used by regional and national administration, respectively: (1) the Ley de Normalización Lingüística, approved in the regional parliament in 1983, then ruled by PP; and (2) the Ley 2/1998, approved in national parliament, then ruled by PP. Thus, it is reasonable to think that if a Spanishist and right-wing party like the PP has had so few problems in endorsing Officialist Galician, it is because it threatens Spanishism little or not at all.

The national road names as well as the road signs are thus representations of how urban planners conceptualize space. Naming is not a trivial process from the perspective of the construction of social space, for by naming space one makes sense of it and converts it into a place (Cresswell 2004: 9; see also Gal 2010: 46).

Thanks to their placement, the two texts enjoy huge visibility, and despite the apparent banality that makes them go unnoticed, or just thanks to it, they are crucial to the official discourse. This point could seem contradictory, but it actually is not. The two texts are banal, since they are part of a banal nationalist discourse (Billig 1995), i.e. the constant repetition of symbols that re-state nation, performatively constructing it. Moreover, they are displayed on highways, and the action of driving along highways can be considered as 'habitual' and 'everyday', and 'everydayness' allows the naturalization of hegemonic discourse in the common sense (Cresswell 2004: 5–7; Shields 1999: ch. 6).

Nevertheless, these texts are also highly significant, and this is for two reasons. Firstly, their being at the beginning of the road to the city, and at the entrance of the city, shows that for the people that conceptualized and constructed the space, those linguistic statements were necessary to construct the space itself, and of course to construct it as part of centralized and Spanishist space. But secondly these texts are significant also in the eyes of activists that make them salient and thus deconstruct their meanings and aims. It is the counter-hegemonic discourse that reveals their salience, by unveiling their arbitrariness and then disputing it: the text on the road sign has been erased and re-written, and the <L> of the flowerbed has repeatedly been trampled, with flowers being repeatedly replanted and re-trampled (Figure 2).

Coming back to the space representation, the points of space whose names are written and rewritten are the points where boundaries (be they linguistic, political, administrative, physical, imagined, or representational) are drawn and redrawn, asserted and contested. Actually, beyond the construction of material space, there is also a construction of representational space, which, as mentioned above, I have related to the imagined community (Anderson 1983). It is not by chance that these imaginary boundaries and borders are created

and narrated by words, by language (Anderson 1983; Augé 1992; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]); and this is exactly what makes a sociolinguistic analysis of the language in public spaces so revealing of societal issues. From this perspective, each spelling of the city name draws imagined boundaries and divides spaces in material terms; this is possible because imagined communities are concrete abstractions, semiotic signs performatively becoming real; abstract ideas becoming real-world phenomena, such as tolls, frontiers, customs, administrative laws applying within certain territories, requiring changes in (linguistic) behavior, and so on.

If one looks carefully at the three spellings, actually the differences are very small: <L> vs. <A> and <ñ> vs. <nh>. Nevertheless, these small visual and graphic differences are particularly significant, in that they index and distinguish the code employed, construct different identities, and draw spaces and borders. In the following, I am going to recall the diacritic value of such graphs.

DIACRITICS FOR INDEXING IDENTITY

Over many years, contestations took place between Spanishists, Reintegrationists, and Officialists about how to spell the city name. In particular, disputes in the streets, on the media, and in courts concerned the presence/absence of the letter <L>: <La Coruña> vs. <A Coruña>. These struggles were evident through the erasure, correction, or overwriting of road signs and posters. Officialists erased the <L> from public signage, claiming the enforcement of law, which stipulates that the only official toponym is <A Coruña>; associations or institutions appealed judges' decisions on the official toponym to be used; when in office, the mayor of the city, Francisco *Paco Vázquez* of Partido Socialista de Galicia (PSdG, slightly left-wing), continued using the Spanish toponym <La Coruña>. Disputes were widely reported by the media. A clear example of this is the flowerbed of Figure 2, where the <L> was continuously erased and then added again (ABC 2012; Gutiérrez 2015; *La Voz de Galicia* 2004).

Reintegrationists also intervened in the struggle, not only by erasing the <L>, but especially by substituting the <ñ> with the digraph <nh> (see Figure 2). At this point I would argue that the really distinctive graph is the <ñ>. Although also used in other languages, <ñ> is the graph that most indexes Spanishness. This is a consequence of the three processes discussed by Sebba (2015): *attribution*, *iconization* – originally developed by Gal and Irvine (1995) – and *branding*. Reintegrationists *attribute* Spanishness to the <ñ>, they consider it iconizes Spanishism, i.e. it *visually* represents Spanishism, and for this reason they contest and reject it. But this attribution has also been made by Spanishists themselves, as prove the praises that the Spanish Nobel prize writer Camilo José Cela (a Galician!), among others, dedicated to this graph (Frühbeck Moreno 2015: 42–43). As a consequence of attribution and

iconization, the <ñ> has ended up becoming a brand: *branding* is used here in both the narrow and the broad senses indicated by Sebba, i.e. the well-known 'strategic use of orthography for commercial purposes', and:

[The] process whereby a specific visual/graphical element of written language such as an alphabetic character becomes emblematic of a group of people who use that element in their writing practices. Branding necessarily involves selection of a salient element from the relatively large repertoire of visual signs which are used in a script or orthography; this element then comes to be emblematic of the group who use it. Branding may be done by the users themselves, who establish the item in question as their 'brand', or it may be done by an outgroup. (Sebba 2015: 213)

As an example of the result of these three processes, one can see the logo of the Instituto Cervantes, a Spanish central governmental institution, under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, created on 21 March 1991 for spreading Spanish in the world (Figure 4). In an interview, Enric Satué, the designer of the logo that the Institute has used since its inception, stated that the idea of using the <ñ> in the logo was 'logical and spontaneous', and that 'such a Spanish sign as <ñ>' was the most suitable to represent the Institute's aims and spirit (Bayon-Pereda 1991). As one can see, the <ñ> is iconized and branded to be used in institutional and commercial communication. I will return on this point of branding later on; here, instead, I wish to insist on the



Figure 4: The logo of Instituto Cervantes (© Instituto Cervantes)

Spanishness of <ñ>. This choice of the Instituto Cervantes has been recognized as an open glottopolitical stance:

When this organization selected the <ñ> as its symbol or logo, it opted for a letter that is characteristic of Castilian, absent from Catalan, vestigial in Basque, and polemical in Galician. This amounts to a quiet declaration that the Instituto Cervantes will privilege one Spanish culture over the others, and projects an image of Spain as a monolingual entity rather than as the multilingual mosaic it is. (Cleary-Nichols 2005: 256)

From what has been said so far, it is easy to see how relevant the <ñ> is in distinguishing Spanish from other languages.

In fact, the opposition <ñ> vs. <nh> is one of the most significant that at a graphic level distinguishes Spanish from Portuguese.

Nevertheless, since media widely covered only the dispute on the presence or absence of <L>, the real distinctive graph at stake went almost unnoticed in the wider public discourse. In reality, this last point needs some further consideration. As Álvarez-Cáccamo says (personal communication, January 2015), the <A> is not very pertinent for Reintegrationists, who generally say /ko'ruɲa/, following the Portuguese custom of dropping the article in the toponyms, like in <Porto> (but 'moro no Porto', where the article *o* is merged in the articulated preposition *no*). So for Reintegrationists the article is in itself a mark of Spanishism, and actually in Spanish the article is part of the toponym, as in Las Palmas, La Rioja, El Ejido, etc. Nevertheless, the one expecting a clear-cut oral usage, with Spanish speakers saying /lako'ruɲa/, Officialists saying /ako'ruɲa/, and Reintegrationists saying /ko'ruɲa/, would be quickly disappointed, since reality is much more complex, with Spanish and Officialists also dropping the article when speaking. This issue of the relative relevance or irrelevance of <A>, and hence its distinctiveness needs to be more deeply addressed in light of the differences between writing and orality, since some diacritic graphs are bivalent once spoken and, vice versa, some bivalent graphs become diacritics only once spoken.

DISTINCTIVENESS IN WRITING AND ORALITY

Diacritic graphs such as <ñ> and <nh> are bivalent once spoken: they are both pronounced as /ɲ/. Following Woolard (1998), I define them as bivalent in the sense that the phoneme they transcribe can work in Spanish and in Officialist Galician, as well as in Portuguese and in Reintegrationist Galician. In contrast, a graph as <L> becomes diacritic only once spoken: <A Coruña> and <A Corunha> sound similar (/ako'ruɲa/), and both sound different from <La Coruña> (/lako'ruɲa/). This would lead to the conclusion that, once spoken, it is the difference <La> vs. <A>, or better the difference /la/ vs. /a/, that works as

a diacritic of Galicianism. Nevertheless, as we have seen above, at a spoken level both /lako'rupa/ and /ako'rupa/ sound Spanishist.

So I would argue in favor of focusing on the opposition <ñ> vs. <nh> for three reasons already exposed above: (1) for the indexical value attributed to these graphs for indexing respectively Spanish and Portuguese; (2) for /l/ and /a/ are not actually pertinent, since they are mainly dropped in spoken language; and (3) for this opposition <ñ> vs <nh> has been downplayed by the public discourse produced by the media in Galicia on toponyms.

This last point is particularly important: by focusing mainly on the <L>, which has been discursively constructed as ideologically diacritic, instead of the <ñ>, Spanishist and Officialist elites in power have marginalized Reintegrationist linguistic and political positions and claims. In Foucauldian terms (Foucault 1970), we can say that by regimenting the discourse on languages, in creating the legitimate object and the legitimate speakers of the discourse on languages, and in controlling their presence on the discursive scene, the elites have regimented the reality of languages. The downgrading of the debate on the opposition <nh> vs. <ñ> in favor of that on the opposition <a> vs. <la> represents in another plan the marginalization of Reintegrationists within Galician society. But it also represents the reduction of the political, spatial, and administrative *imaginable* alternatives (see Álvarez-Cáccamo 2003: 16). By neglecting Reintegrationist options in the choice of the toponym, elites in power reduced the options only to Spanish or Officialist Galician, i.e. only to Spanish and Spanish-Galician! This marginalization of Reintegrationists has served both Spanishists and Officialists: Spanishists were able to divide the groups claiming for galicianization, and downgraded the most radical one, the group that in spatial, political, and linguistic terms detaches Galicia from Spain more than other ones, i.e. the group that imagines Galicia as further from Spain. The marginalization of Reintegrationists also served Officialists in the fight for the capital under all its forms (Bourdieu 1986) in the creation and administration of the legitimate language.

SPANISHIZING GALICIAN BEYOND WRITING AND ORALITY

Downplaying the dispute of <ñ> vs. <nh> has also permitted the <ñ> to go unnoticed, whereas it is the main graphic feature that indexes Spanishism; and this naturalization is crucial for the exercise of power, thus for restating the centralism of the state, and constructing Galicia as a space *within* Spain.

In the following I will address how this graph is employed in recent times to change the traditional scenario of the linguistic, spatial, and social conflict in the frame of the contemporary neoliberal economy.

Firstly, we shall take a step back and look again at the flowerbed in Figure 2, where the disproportionate size of the tilde <̃> compared to other graphs allows argument about the relevance of <ñ> as a visual semiotic resource for indexing Spanishism. Secondly, we shall look again at the logo of Instituto

Cervantes in Figure 4. It is worthy to note that actually only one part of the <ñ> is used, the tilde, which metonymically indicates the whole letter <ñ>. Thirdly, we shall refer to the new logo of the city (Figure 5). This new city logo features a capital <C> topped by the <^>. One might object that the tilde is ambivalent, but in reality it does not trigger any confusion with Portuguese graphs as, say, <ã>, and actually the media also considered it as clearly Spanish (ABC 2014).⁴

This logo was chosen in 2014 by the then mayor, Carlos Negreira (PP), who ran the city council from June 2011 to June 2015.⁵ Before him, the city council was run by Javier Losada (PSdG, March 2006–June 2011), and before that by Francisco *Paco* Vázquez (PSdG, May 1983–March 2006). The latter defined himself as a ‘social democrat, Catholic and Spanishist’ anti-Galicianist and defender of the co-officiality of both toponyms <La Coruña> and <A Coruña> (La Opinión 2013; see also Álvarez-Cáccamo 1996: 267, footnote 11). This last point clearly illustrates how the elites in power after the transition (PP or PSdG) were Spanishist. Actually the logo’s author, the designer and copy writer Alfonso Molinelli, claims he created it in 2005, and then proposed it as a new logo in 2008 or 2009; the municipality (PSdG) then bought it, but for various reasons did not use it until 2014.⁶ Meanwhile, the logo began to be used in 2013 in some posters advertising the popular event of San Juan (Figure 6). Interestingly enough in an interview for a newspaper, Molinelli also refers to the



Figure 5: The new city logo of the municipality of A Coruña (© Tony Le Brand)

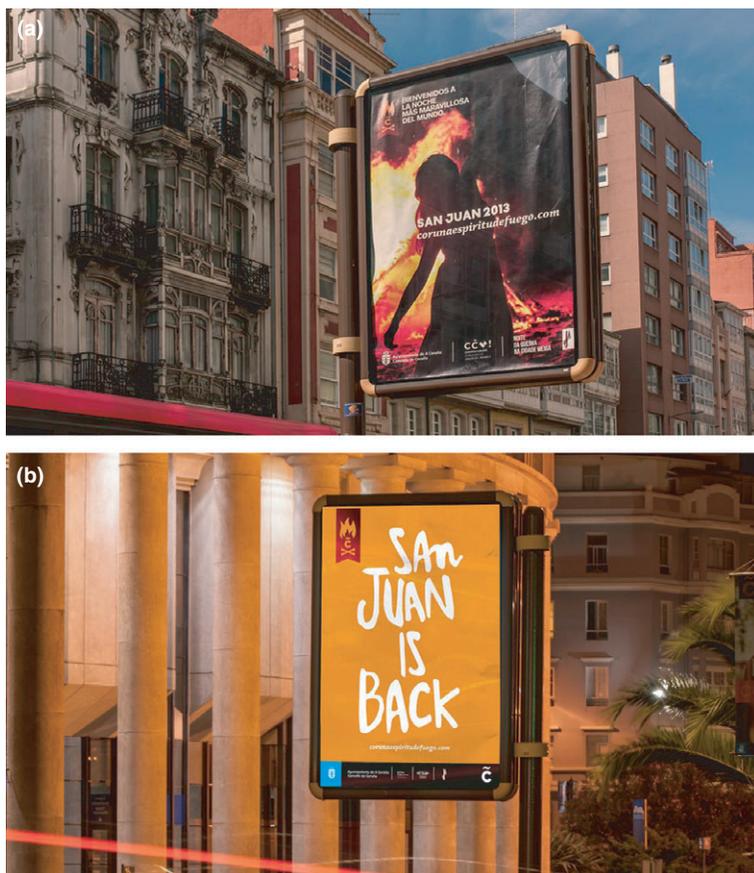


Figure 6: The posters promoting San Juan. Above: from 2013. Below: from 2014 (© Tony Le Brand). Besides the extensive use of Spanish and English, which would deserve in itself a deeper study, one can see the logo known as ‘ceñe’, i.e. the ‘ce’ (<C>) topped by the tilde (<~>) of the ‘eñe’ (<ñ>)

discussions and decisions on the official toponyms as affecting him in designing his logo (Abalar Galicia 2015).

By using the capital <C> and eliminating any reference to <A> or <La>, city institutions erase the dispute existing around these two graphs, and ‘cool down’ the linguistic and socio-political conflict. The emphasis is now put onto what <A Coruña> and <La Coruña> have in common, beside the article in Officialist Galician or in Spanish, thus blurring the lines between Spanish and Officialist Galician.

As additional evidence of this will to erase conflict, it is important to note that in 2013, the city council decided to change the flowerbed at the entrance



Figure 7: The article dropped from the city toponym. Above: screenshot from the video of the 2013 San Juan promotional campaign. Below: logo of the city tourism department (2015) (© Tony Le Brand)

to the city. It was actually changed in 2014 and, instead of the name of the city, the text ‘Torre de Hércules’ appeared. In answer to my questions, a civil servant of the city council (personal conversation, July 2015) stated that the flowerbed was changed as a consequence of the declaration of Torre de Hércules as a UNESCO world heritage site on 27 June 2009. The Hercules tower is a lighthouse reconstructed on a previous ancient Roman structure and dedicated to the mythological figure of Hercules who, according to local legend, founded the city; it is the main monument of the city, and it is featured in the city coat of arms, which still appears in the city logo (see Figure 5). Changing the flowerbed for an undisputed symbol of local identity again allows focus to be placed on what the citizens have in common.

This erasure of the linguistic conflict can also be seen in many other examples: the campaigns promoting the Fiesta de San Juan (Figure 6), the name of the mini-site created for this event (corunaespiritodefuego.com), the

hashtag of the event #corunasemueve, or the video of the event, as well as the logo of the tourism department of the municipality, developed in 2015. In all these cases, the article is systematically dropped from the name of the city (Figure 7).

Therefore, by dropping the article and featuring only the <C>, the new logo shows off the main graph shared by the three codes (Spanish, Officialist, and Reintegrationist Galician), which limits the potential sources of conflict and allows everyone to recognize themselves in it, since everyone uses the <C>.

Nevertheless, the tilde, although surreptitiously, decisively indexes the most Spanish of the graphs, the <ñ>. This move settles the linguistic and social domination and exemplifies very well the spanishization of the supposedly 'pure' but actually 'hybrid' Galician. These two adjectives, together with the respective discursive and meta-discursive practices they refer to (purification and hybridization), are to be intended in the terms posited by Bauman and Briggs (2003). In a certain sense, the more the Officialists work to purify the language, in order to make it autonomous, or in Álvarez-Cáccamo's terms (1993), the more they 're-galicianize Galician', the more they hybridize it, de facto spanishize it, and reinsert it within the Hispanophone space.

LANGUAGE AND SPACE IN NEOLIBERAL ECONOMY: DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE

We can now link what has been said so far with Lefebvre's thoughts introduced at the beginning of the paper with Sebba's analysis of branding of spellings, in the light of a wider reflection on the right to the city in contemporary neoliberal society, the economization of language and spaces, and the resistance against these processes.

The strategy of minimizing or erasing the linguistic conflict by focusing on what Spanish and Officialist names of the city share is coherent with the capitalist logic of state rationalism and centralism referred to by Lefebvre: Spanish and Officialist Galician are the languages legitimized by the laws and the administration, hence the space drawn by the usage of these two languages is the space of legality, of power, of capital under its multiple forms, the space of the neoliberal market.

The very existence of a logo indicates the construction of a marketable space: by branding the city, by using the letters of the city name as a brand, city council administrators show that they conceptualize the city as a commercial space, as a space which is marketable, and is to be managed as a company. According to this economicist ideology, social conflict is a potential hindrance to business development. Hence, conflict has to be erased. But the removal of the conflict – a conflict that resulted from the structural inequality that capitalism brings – ratifies the victory of neoliberalism.

Part and parcel of this strategy of deletion of conflict is the marginalization of Reintegrationism, which has been erased, i.e. invisibilized (Gal and Irvine



Figure 8: Radical antifascist sticker (December 2015, author's picture)

1995) from the official linguistic landscape, and from the public discourses on language. From this perspective, it is not surprising that Reintegrationist Galician is employed as the language of subversion by the most radical Galician groups (Figure 8).

As one can see, the article has been dropped from the city name, written with <nh>, proving the relative irrelevance for Reintegrationist of the article and the relevance of the <nh> vs. <ñ>. The glottopolitical stance in favor of Reintegrationism goes hand in hand with a clear indication of political stance, as shown by the international antifascist symbol in the <o> (with text in Spanish!). This last example also shows that even if some left-wing groups use Officialist Galician, the more radical the group, the more common the usage of Reintegrationist Galician (Screti 2016).

At this point, it is necessary to recall Lefebvre's observations about the importance of 'imagination' for the 'representational spaces' of those actors that defy spatial practices and representations of the space produced by state/elite (1991 [1974]: 39). For Lefebvre, the city is constructed according to, and to reinforce, capitalism and is a space where capitalism is enacted, but also resisted. So together with ways of living, conceiving, and representing space as commercial, there are alternative ways. The radical left-wing group which authored the sticker imagines a new space for Galicia and new social practices in the city. Appearing on a wall in a narrow and generally crowded street in the downtown city, this DIY small paper sticker, so different from the industrially produced and legally displayed public signage, tells us about alternative ways to imagine the city, from the bottom, from the community, and from a radical position.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SOME OPEN QUESTIONS

In this paper, I have analyzed the relationships of domination and resistance implemented into/through language and space, reflecting on the materiality of

space and its physical experience, as well as on its (re)imagination. Extensively drawing on Lefebvre's theory of social construction of space, I have shown that the texts analyzed here construct the physical space wherein they appear, as well as the social space (the social relationships going on in the space) and the representational space (the communities imagined and their boundaries): (1) by physically and materially modifying the space; and (2) through the language displayed, that in turn draws certain boundaries (language and space hence reinforce one another). These examples, with their micro-history of erasures and rewritings, condense the whole history of the linguistic and social conflict existing in Galicia; in particular, they show how spelling is a crucial social and ideologically driven practice, through which identities are indexed, allegiances constructed and contested, national boundaries traced and retraced. The analysis has shown that very small features of spellings turned out to be fundamental in that they are attributed to high social and political meanings by speakers, they iconize the speakers in the sense that they visually represent them, and they are used for branding. As for this last point, Sebba indicates that, given their salience and cultural significance, the city names increase 'the potential for distinctive characters of the orthography to act as a brand' (2015: 223).

Linking the analysis of language and of space, I have shown the moves actors implement to construct spaces. One can witness on one side the hegemonic discourse of administration materialized in the official and institutional epigraphy: industrially produced materialization of languages (signage) that construct space in both physical and representational terms. On the other side, one can see the counter-hegemonic discourse materialized in DIY sprayed texts and stickers (often superposed upon the official ones), flowers stomped from a flowerbed, etc.

The analysis deployed here has shown that language categorizes, narrates, defines, represents, and indexes space, drawing and redrawing space boundaries, and especially that both language and space are structuring, and are structured by, social forces. So language and space undergo the same historical and ideological processes of (re)appropriation: both are defined by the construction and deconstruction, the veiling and unveiling of their historicity, of their arbitrariness.

In the paper, I have tried to overcome the study of space as a mere context for language in space. Firstly, because context *is* text (Blommaert 2005), thus the place where a particular text is displayed *constitutes* the text itself (Scollon and Scollon 2003), as much as the language in the space contributes to create the space. Secondly, in order to reclaim the history and politics of linguistic and spatial facts, I have tried to highlight the situatedness of discourse in physical and ideological terms. Both language and space are at certain points in history alienated, centralized, used to serve the state and its ideology (either collectivistic or capitalistic) or groups in power. Both language and space are used to exert power and control, but also to contest them. This last point,

together with an attention to the materiality of writing in public spaces, has been shown well before this paper, and also before the emergence of the linguistic landscape as a discipline, by the study of epigraphy (Petrucci 1986 [1980], 1999).

What I have tried to do beside the study of language in place – of its physical situatedness and its material conditions not as context, but as text – has been to analyze the construction of place/space through language, at a physical and symbolic level. Basically, by somehow reversing Scollon and Scollon's approach, I have discussed how the space is constructed by language in space, and how the space is represented (socio-semiotically) in the space.

Arriving at its end, this paper seems to raise more questions than it provides answers. Besides the methodological limitations, with some oversimplifications due to space constraints, and some excessive schematization in defining the speakers' glottopolitical positions, one would perhaps need a more contextualized analysis of the recent political changes in the city council. But, relevant as it is, I must leave it for future studies. Also, further development would be advisable to pursue the research of the intersection between language and space with a deeper attention to the different modes for meaning-making, always bearing in mind the complex social, historical, and political implications of discursive practices.

Here, nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge some points of complexity. The usage of Spanish in the sticker (Figure 8) seems to contradict what has been said so far (see Table 1), and raises questions about how space and boundaries are imagined by radical left-wing groups, something resonating less with the internationalist Marxist vision than a new postmodern ideal community of local places globally interconnected (Bauman 2000; Lyotard 1984 [1979]; Wilson and Dissanayake 1996). Furthermore, Reintegrationism at large leaves open the question of whether Galicia should be imagined as an autonomous nation state or within Portugal. From this perspective, another contradiction is constituted by the role of Portuguese as a code that refers to Portugal and its history of domination and colonialism, which is in no way less terrible than that of the Spanish empire.

Another point of complexity is the value of Galician in the linguistic market (Bourdieu 1982, 2002 [1978]). Some Reintegrationists see Galician within a Lusophone linguistic market, where it can be recapitalized as one among other varieties of Portuguese. Nevertheless, in recent years, Galician has also been revalued as an asset by the PP president of the regional parliament, Alberto Núñez Feijoo (PGLingua 2009), who, recognizing the importance of Portuguese as one of the main world languages, repeatedly referred to the benefits of speaking (Officialist?) Galician for Galician companies willing to access the Lusophone market, and for Galician people as an advantageous skill in a globally competitive economy and labor market. This discursive shift, apart from showing ideological complexity (since it entails accepting Galician as part of the Lusophone space, hence as a dialect of Portuguese), is evidence of

how in contemporary neoliberal societies languages are understood in terms of their instrumental and economic value (Heller 2010).

This convergence between discourses from different speakers certainly deserves to be analyzed in more detail in order to assess the eventual changes in the relations of force of the actors in the field, in the relative value of varieties in the linguistic market, and to see how these discourses on language(s) and space(s) will eventually re-draw boundaries of imagined communities.

NOTES

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 2. Spanish is also called Castilian, since it was the oral variety of Medieval Latin spoken in the region called Castile (center of Spain).
 3. Although some right-wing speakers also use Officialist Galician (such as some PP politicians), or some left-wing speakers use both Officialist or Reintegrationist Galician (Bobillo-García et al. 1998), nevertheless it would be hardly likely that one presenting themselves as right-wing Spanishist would use Reintegrationist Galician.
 4. The fact that the right-wing Spanishist newspaper ABC refers to the tilde as indisputably Spanish is in itself a construction and an appropriation of the graph, which naturalizes it as Spanish and erases other conflicting interpretations.
 5. At the time of writing, the mayor has changed, the city government being run by the left-wing Galicianist platform Marea Azul, but the logo is still in use.
 6. Data come from a 90-minute interview Johan Jårlehed did with Molinelli in November 2015.
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