

## **Lifestyle migrants, the linguistic landscape and the politics of place**

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### **1. Introduction**

I want to begin this paper with a brief note on my own positioning as a researcher. My doctoral research has focused on the discursive construction of place-identity, which I understand in the sense of the dialectical relationships between the potentially multiple identities of places and the social identities of those who inhabit and use them. I have explored this in relation to a particular context of lifestyle migration – that of British migrants in the Algarve, Portugal. As a discourse analyst, my approach to place-identity has some underlying assumptions. Firstly, I view both individual and collective forms of identity as interconnected, fluid, shifting processes which are constructed, negotiated and changed to a large extent through discourse. Like many discourse analysts, although I focus mostly on language-in-use, I understand discourse in a broad sense as being a multi-modal social practice, therefore encompassing other semiotic systems besides language, such as visual images. Secondly, since I take a socio-cognitive approach to discourse studies (van Dijk, 2008, 2009), this means that I understand collective identities (as well as certain identities of places, such as place ‘brands’) as being shared social representations - or socio-cognitive representations (SCRs). These SCRs are established, and are also subject to change, via repeated communication and negotiation through discursive practices (Koller, 2008a, 2008b). Finally, the ‘critical’ part of doing critical discourse analysis (CDA) involves not merely identifying and describing the structures and strategies of discourse, but also to interpret and explain them in relation to the broader socio-political contexts in which they are embedded (Wodak, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This inevitably leads to questions of power and power relations.

Like the majority of empirical work on migrant identities, I have used research interviews as the major source of data in my research project, to explore how migrants

construct and negotiate place-identities, for themselves and others, in interaction. My approach to this is strongly grounded in positioning analysis. Originally proposed as a social-psychological means of investigating the identity work done in conversation (Davies & Harré, 1990; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999), positioning analysis demands an exploration of both the micro-level, text-immanent identity positions that are constructed in and through discourse and the indexical nature of these positionings, i.e. how they index broader socio-cultural and ideological values. However, this in itself assumes that positioning occurs not only *within* spoken interaction such as conversations (and research interviews), but also that speakers are *always already positioned* by wider, often hegemonic discourses. To what extent speakers take up or reject these available 'out there' subject positions is one matter. But it is also the task of discourse analysts to unpack how these positions are established through wider discourses. This means looking beyond the discourse of individual accounts towards the ways in which discourses are constructed in the public sphere.

The notion that lifestyle migrants are often, at least on the surface, positioned by their 'hosts' in many destinations as 'desirable' migrants has been noted in the literature. This happens particularly in destinations that are heavily dependent on tourism, and therefore tend to see lifestyle migration as 'residential tourism' or, quite simply, as an extension of tourism and thus economically beneficial (e.g. Nudrali & O'Reilly, 2009). This positioning as 'economically desirable' clearly helps in the construction of privileged place-identities. It also draws on and reinforces hegemonic discourses on the legitimacy (or not) of certain types of migration; discourses that are generally based on economic arguments but which may also have ethnic underpinnings (e.g. affluent, northern European migrants might be positioned differently from affluent Russians, or Chinese, and so on). The question for discourse analysts is exactly *how* such discourses are established and reproduced to the extent that they eventually become 'common sense' worldviews (ideologies) in particular geographical locations. This is, of course, an enormous task, and the scope of discourse analytical work is invariably limited to the close examination of a relatively small number of texts,<sup>1</sup> which are viewed as being representative in some way of the social

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<sup>1</sup> Texts are concrete instantiations of discourse, including written documents, bounded utterances (e.g. interviews), visual images and multi-modal units such as public signs.

world. Since representativeness cannot be claimed statistically, it is generally addressed by paying detailed attention to the context(s) in which discursive practices are embedded. As such, an overall CDA approach is interdisciplinary in that it necessarily draws upon a range of disciplinary perspectives and methodologies. What I also hope to illustrate with this paper is how discourse studies can offer a range of methodological tools which can inform other approaches, for example ethnographical approaches that are interested in accounting practices as a topic of investigation rather than simply as uncontested sources of information (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 97).

## **2. The micro-politics of place: modes of belonging and socio-spatial relations**

This paper focuses on how real estate advertising practices in a particular lifestyle migration destination impact on the politics of place. Whilst the politics of place can be understood and studied in a variety of ways, for the purposes of this paper I follow Modan (2007) in taking the politics of place to mean how versions of place are (re)produced and negotiated through discourses that construct identities for both places and people. In particular, this approach explores the way in which 'legitimate' (and, conversely, marginalised/excluded) collective identities are discursively shaped in relation to places. This therefore has a strong impact on modes of belonging in places. Although this might be thought of as the micro-level of the politics of place, the ways in which collective place-identities are constructed has material implications for the ways in which these places develop and change, and therefore has an impact on the more macro-level of politics of place.

The relationship between place-making and social identities is dialectical, since places are not only constructed *by* people, but are also constitutive *of* people. Put simply, 'who we are' is inevitably linked to where we are, as well as where we have been and where we are going (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006: 210). In fact, the idea of places being linked into networks of flows of movement (of people, objects, ideas) is fundamental to a contemporary understanding of sense of place and the way people construct modes of belonging. According to Massey (1993: 67), places emerge from "a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus." Thus,

places (and their identities) are never fixed 'products', but are best seen as dynamic processes, constantly under (re)construction by the interaction of human agency, social structures and social practices. Importantly, socio-spatial relations are produced and maintained (or negotiated and contested) by the exercise of power-relations. The idea of power geometries (Massey, 1993, 1999) encapsulates the ways in which different social groups are positioned in different ways in relation to the flows and interconnections that characterise both the globalized world and local places. What I want to suggest is that the exercise of power relations which shape power geometries in places is, to some extent, located in the discursive practices that simultaneously shape and are shaped by social identities and the identities of places.

Despite (or perhaps because of) escalating mobilities and the sense of diminishing spatial barriers in the contemporary world, it has often been noted that place-identities remain important (e.g. Harvey, 1993). Place attachments clearly feed into both individual and collective modes of belonging, which are central to the concept of identity (Jones & Krzyżanowski, 2008). Yet although attachment to place remains "remarkably obdurate" (Savage et al., 2005: 1), the attachments to places that contribute to a sense of belonging are likely to be very different in the highly mobile late modern world to what they were in the past (ibid.). For example, being 'born and bred' in a place no longer seems to be a fundamental prerequisite to belonging (or at least not always, and not for everyone). Nowadays, place attachments can arise when a *chosen* place of residence is perceived as valuable due to its congruence with one's lifestyle, life-story and life politics (Giddens, 1991, 1994), with one's repertoire of 'ideal' possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and its connections to other 'significant' places (Savage et al., 2005). In other words, contemporary modes of place-related belonging are often elective and relational, in that they are actively constructed through social practices in a process that articulates senses of spatial attachment, social positioning and networked relationships. This seems to be a fruitful way of looking at modes of belonging in relation to lifestyle migrants.

Importantly, to achieve a sense of elective belonging one must 'feel comfortable' in a place. As Savage et al. (ibid.) note, this feeling can be related to the interplay of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and fields (that is, interconnecting spaces of social and spatial positions, e.g. places of work, leisure, residence, etc).

However, Savage et al. specifically reject the idea that belonging is discursively constructed (ibid.: 12), despite the fact that their data consists of interviews with local residents. In my view, this means that they neglect an important underlying basis to feeling comfortable in a place – the construction of ‘legitimate’ modes of belonging. Without the safety-net provided by the perceived ability to stake a legitimate claim to being in a place, one remains in many senses an outsider whatever one’s affective relationship towards that place might be. In order to understand how claims to ‘legitimate’ belonging are achieved, a good starting point is to explore not only how people position themselves (and others) discursively in relation to places, but also how they are already positioned by discursive practices in the public sphere. Such discursive practices are inevitably ideological in nature,<sup>2</sup> and as such have a strong impact on the politics of place.

The highly visible advertising practices of the real estate sector in lifestyle migration destinations in many parts of the world reinforce the notion that lifestyle migration is embedded in ‘consumption spaces’ which are often characterised as being “enclosed and separated from wider social spheres, centred around leisure, consuming and simulation, regulated by disciplinary technologies of surveillance [and] gatekeeping” (Mansvelt, 2005: 59). Along with shopping malls, theme parks, heritage sites etc., the ‘integrated resorts’ or ‘urbanizations’ that are typical of the built aspects of many lifestyle migration destinations are constant reminders that not only is consumption spatially located, but also that space is produced through consumption and that places are consumed. However, it is important to remember that it is not only the material aspect of a place that shapes and is shaped by consumption practices (including those related to lifestyle migration, in particular the sale and purchase of land and property). The consumption of place also shapes and is shaped by dominant representations of places. Along with material aspects, these representations feed into what Lefebvre (1991) called ‘spaces of representation’, that is, the real and imagined geographies as lived by inhabitants and users of places.

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<sup>2</sup> Since I take a socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis, I understand ideologies to be networks of socio-cognitive representations that are deployed (typically through discourse) by different social groups to make sense of the social world and to regulate social practices.

In short, what this paper aims to address is how lifestyle migrants are collectively positioned in the discursive construction of a particular place (the so-called 'Golden Triangle' of the Algarve). To illustrate, I focus on the *in situ* discursive practices of the real estate sector; specifically, practices that structure the linguistic landscape (see section 4 below). This type of positioning in the public sphere feeds into the socio-cognitive representations which underlie collective identities and thus makes subject positions available for individual lifestyle migrants to take up if they so wish, for example to help to reinforce individual modes of elective belonging in place. On the other hand, the SCRs which legitimise the claims to belonging of certain social groups might also be seen as weakening or negating the claims of other groups, thus reinforcing unequal spatial relations.

### 3. Setting the scene: constructing the 'Golden Triangle'

My research site is located in the Algarve, the southernmost region of Portugal which has become a well-established tourism destination for northern Europeans over the last 30 years. My area of interest is the so-called 'Golden Triangle', which roughly corresponds to the *freguesia* of Almancil, an administrative division of the *Concelho* (Municipal Council) of Loulé, in the central Algarve. Geographically, the *freguesia* includes 12 km of coastline and the small town of Almancil. The last official census<sup>3</sup> put the population of the *freguesia* at just under 10,000 inhabitants. Until the 1970s, the major economic activity of this area was small-scale agriculture, with some shellfish cultivation and salt extraction in the tidal lagoon area of what is now the Ria Formosa Natural Park. However, with the arrival of tourism, the area underwent huge changes and the hitherto small village of Almancil developed into a town.<sup>4</sup> The website of the *Junta da Freguesia*<sup>5</sup> describes this change as follows [my translation]:

Until a few decades ago, the town was just a small collection of low, white-washed houses with a communal well in the main square. Over recent years, economic development has turned the town into a significant residential centre, with modern housing infrastructures, commerce and tourism support services.

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<sup>3</sup> *Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação*, 2001

<sup>4</sup> It gained official status as a *Vila* (town) in 1988, as result of its development in demographic and infra-structural terms brought about by the tourism industry.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jf-almancil.pt/index.php>, accessed 01.10.2010

Despite being a 'support' centre for the tourism developments along the coastline, the town of Almancil itself has very little to recommend it to tourists. It has no seaside (being some kilometres from the coast), no historic monuments, no picturesque streets and very little in the way of nightlife or other forms of entertainment. Even the town's restaurants are not particularly popular with tourists, who tend to prefer the restaurants with outdoor dining areas along the country roads outside the town or near the beaches. Most tourists seem to do little more in Almancil than pass through on their way to the coast, perhaps visiting a supermarket, a bank or one of the numerous real estate agencies which have flooded the town.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the area is becoming increasingly known as a destination for the growing numbers of northern European (particularly British and Irish) second-home owners and lifestyle migrants, in the town itself there are many other migrant communities including those of African origin (who began to arrive from the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, especially Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, in the 1960s), migrant workers from rural areas of central and northern Portugal as well as, more recently, migrants from Eastern European countries (especially Romania and the Ukraine), attracted by the employment opportunities offered by the construction and service industries in the area. These new social groups of incoming migrants have helped to re-populate a town which lost many of its former inhabitants through outward migration.<sup>7</sup>

The town of Almancil is thus interesting both for what it is not (an obvious centre of tourism despite its central Algarve location) and for what it is: a place where communities of different geographic, ethnic and social origins live side by side. According to figures from the Portuguese Immigration and Border Services,<sup>8</sup> 3906 foreigners were registered as living in Almancil in 2005, accounting for more than one third of the population. Around 25% of pupils in state schools in Almancil are of foreign

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<sup>6</sup> The online Directory of Businesses in Portugal (*Directório de Empresas Portuguesas*, available at <http://www.infoempresas.com.pt>) cites a staggering 334 businesses in Almancil under 'real estate activities'.

<sup>7</sup> From the beginning of the C20th, growing numbers of the local population emigrated to places as far afield as North and South America and South Africa, as well as to northern European countries (notably France, but also Switzerland, Luxemburg and Germany). The biggest migratory flux, however, was to Venezuela in the mid-C20th. Between 1945 and 1960, more than half of the town's population (of just over 4,000) emigrated to Venezuela, typically to set up bakeries and small shops (Guerreiro Norte, 2005). Many of these emigrants are now 'return migrants'.

<sup>8</sup> *Serviços de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras* (SEF)

origin, with 30 different nationalities represented (the largest groups being Cape Verdian, Romanian and Ukrainian). The fact that the town is also characterised by the relative poverty of some segments of the population is evident from the fact that that over 25% of state school pupils receive financial help from the Social Support in Schools Services,<sup>9</sup> which is much higher than the national average (Cardoso Sousa, 2007).

The immediate surrounding area, in contrast, is marked by upmarket resorts and villas, including the well-known golf and beach resorts of Vale do Lobo and Quinta do Lago. These resorts were first developed for tourism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The construction of 'luxury' resorts in such an undeveloped, rural setting by the sea led to a phenomenal increase in the value of the land, and the coining of the 'Golden Triangle' name by the (predominantly northern European) real estate agents operating in the area, since land prices rose rapidly to reputedly become among the highest per square metre in Portugal. The area is therefore becoming increasingly populated by wealthy northern Europeans. In 2005, 1143 residents from the UK, Ireland, Germany and Holland were registered as living in the *freguesia*,<sup>10</sup> whilst the private, fee-paying São Lourenço International School, located between Almancil and the coastal resort of Vale do Lobo, had over 200 northern European students enrolled, mostly of British nationality.

It is worth considering how the 'Golden Triangle' name has become part of the discursively constructed identity of the place. Place naming is one of the most basic ways that places are given identity. As the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1991: 688) has remarked, "naming is power – the creative power to call something into being, to render the invisible visible, to impart a certain character to things". The use of the adjective 'golden' calls into being a place with a character clearly associated with wealth, luxury and privilege. It also has connotations of myth, fairy tales of transformative magic (such as the golden goose and its golden eggs, King Midas and his golden touch). Furthermore, the designation 'triangle' suggests clearly defined spatial boundaries and as such may reinforce a sense of exclusivity and elitism for those privileged enough to live within those boundaries.

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<sup>9</sup> *Serviços de Acção Social Escolar*

<sup>10</sup> Source: SEF



Cresswell (2004: 98) notes that the act of naming locates places in wider cultural narratives. The cultural narrative in question here is clearly one that belongs to the northern Europeans residing in this area. Whilst they are invariably familiar with the designation 'Golden Triangle', the name appears to be restricted to the English language and is rarely 'translated' into Portuguese. On the other hand, the fact that this English name for the area has spread beyond the doors of the real estate agencies and has acquired a relatively stable, fixed status in the English-speaking community is evident in the way that it appears in the titles of local English language publications such as *Inside Almancil & the Golden Triangle* magazine and *The Golden Triangle Directory* which are distributed throughout the area. In 2010, the first 'Golden Triangle Exhibition' was held, promoting itself as "the most exclusive exhibition in the Algarve" and aiming "to introduce residents of this prestigious area to an exclusive range of products and services from a range of carefully selected companies and businesses that are appropriate to their needs and requirements".<sup>11</sup> The name is also appearing in local business advertising that is clearly aimed at wealthy northern European residents, for example the private security company that promotes itself (in English) as 'Golden Triangle Premier Security' (Figure 1).



**Figure 1**

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.algarvefair.com/golden/visitor.html> (accessed 05.10.2010). The original text is in English; no Portuguese version is available on the webpage.

Place branding is an influential means of shaping, disseminating and reinforcing particular socio-cognitive representations (SCRs) of place and, equally, the collective identities (which are also SCRs) of those who inhabit it. As a kind of branding measure, the 'Golden Triangle' name positions the place as being at once a desirable and an exclusive residential location. Although we might therefore extrapolate that this positions its residents as privileged, there are many different social groups living in the area, not all of which share the same levels of economic and symbolic capital. It is likely that many residents are not even aware of the 'Golden Triangle' name, and even if they are, do not share the same collective place-identity as their northern European neighbours. I next turn to the question of how socio-cognitive representations of place become associated with specific social groups by exploring the linguistic landscape of the Golden Triangle area and how it serves to position lifestyle migrants in a distinctive way.

#### **4. The linguistic landscape of the 'Golden Triangle'**

The linguistic landscape (LL) <sup>12</sup> comprises texts in the public sphere that are potentially visible to all; texts that can be found in city streets, shopping centres, airports and a whole host of other public places. These texts are often displayed on relatively fixed support media such as signs and advertising hoardings but also via more 'mobile' media such as leaflets and flyers, advertising on vehicles that pass through the area, free tourist maps and other publications available on counters and desks of hotels and tourist information centres and so forth.

Although the LL constitutes a major part of the scenery in which public social life takes place (Ben-Rafael, 2009), it is such a taken-for-granted part of our everyday experience that its importance as a social practice is often overlooked. Yet it could be argued that public signs are in some way symbolic markers of (collective) identity and social status, operating within semiotic systems of social positioning and power relationships through which struggles for hegemony among social groups can be traced (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Social actors shape the LL through discursive practices

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<sup>12</sup> The first studies of the LL are attributed to Spolsky and Cooper (1991) and Landry and Bourhis (1997). More recently, two edited collections on the LL (Gorter, 2006; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009) have expanded and developed this area of research.

in specific spaces. They also respond to the LL and construct their own identities in interaction with the collective identities represented in it (Ben-Rafael, 2009; Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Trumper-Hecht, 2009).

However, LL texts are not only social semiotic resources (van Leeuwen, 2005) for meaning-making but also, crucially, they are material elements of a place. These texts are physically located in the landscape of the very place they help to discursively construct. LL practices thus contribute to place-making at several levels, including the material, the functional and the symbolic. LLs take us directly to the heart of the spatiality of discourse (Pennycook, 2009); through them we can explore what Scollon and Scollon (2003) call 'geosemiotics' – the meeting of semiotics, including language, and the physical world.

The LL has primarily been studied from a multilingualism perspective with a focus on which languages (referred to by linguists as 'codes') are used on signs in the LL. The argument is that code choices or preferences in public spaces serve to index broader societal attitudes towards different languages and, ultimately, their speakers (Ben-Rafael, 2009; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Scollon & Scollon, 2003). These attitudes may reflect the language policies of a particular nation-state or region (especially in territories which are officially bilingual or multilingual) or the more localized language practices of a particular community. In a country like Portugal, officially a monolingual nation, and as such with no apparent need for explicit, state-imposed language policies, multilingual language practices therefore need to be considered in their local context.

One assumption that we can fairly safely make is that code choice in the LL is never arbitrary, whatever the function of the text might be. On the one hand, the informational functions of the LL include serving as "a distinctive marker of the geographical territory inhabited by a given language community"; thus informing ingroup and outgroup members about the "linguistic characteristics, territorial limits, and language boundaries of the region they have entered" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997: 25). In this way, the LL may be said to index the geopolitical world in which we find ourselves. However, as Scollon & Scollon (2003: 118) rightly caution, assumptions made on this basis can be deceiving. The use of 'foreign' languages, particularly on commercial signs, may have a more symbolic function: they might be symbolizing

foreign tastes, fashions or associations between particular products or types of businesses and certain cultures associated with a particular language. It might be that a 'global' language such as English, for instance, is perceived as being more modern and prestigious than local languages, particularly when these local languages are spoken by very few people in the world beyond the regional or national borders (e.g. Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). This might well be the case in Portugal, since Portuguese is spoken by few Europeans.

On the other hand, a prevalence of signs in English often marks a 'tourist space' and can thus be interpreted as serving both informational *and* symbolic functions, since there is a need to communicate with tourists via a *lingua franca* as well as to promote the image of the place as tourist-friendly and cosmopolitan. Kallen (2009: 271) notes that although tourists often appreciate signs in a foreign language since this offers "an immediate sense of transcendence from the mundane, and a token of authenticity in the new surroundings", there will naturally be communication difficulties if the language barriers are too strong. This doubtless accounts for the salience of English on many of the signs in the LL of the 'Golden Triangle': signs outside shops, menu boards outside restaurants and cafés, public information boards on the beaches, fly-posters advertising entertainment and events are but a few examples of the many tourist-oriented aspects of the LL that make ample use of English. In this respect, the place is probably no different from countless other tourist destinations around the world. Figure 2 shows a scene from the LL which is typical of tourist zones: a 'semiotic aggregate' (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) where signs produced by a variety of social actors compete for the attention of the passing driver in both the local language and English.



Figure 2

It is noticeable in Fig. 2 that the largest sign is for a company advertising “All in One Integrated Real Estate Solutions”. In fact, the most striking aspect of the LL as one moves around area outside the town of Almancil is the predominance of roadside billboards advertising land and property sales/development. As the salient language of these billboards is English, this contributes to a representation of the area as being literally ‘up for sale’ to English-speaking buyers. Clearly, this aspect of the LL goes beyond an appeal to consumption in terms of tourist practices. The following sections describe a case study of this specific feature of the LL.

##### **5. Real estate advertising in the linguistic landscape of the ‘Golden Triangle’**

There are three roads that run through the countryside from Almancil to the coast. One leads to Vale do Lobo, one to Quinta do Lago and the other goes to the coast about halfway between the two resort areas. There is a further road that runs parallel to the coast, connecting Vale do Lobo and Quinta do Lago. In total, this makes up around fifteen kilometers of road. Between June 2008 and March 2010, I collected

examples of roadside billboards by photographing them. I only selected billboards that were large enough to be plainly visible whilst driving by, and which were clearly advertisements rather than informational signs (therefore discounting road signs and other sources of information such as building licenses or placards announcing business names outside the premises).

It should be noted that I did not apply a rigorous sampling procedure, as my concern was not to choose signs that were statistically representative in any way, but rather to provide data for a case study. A further point to note is that the linguistic landscape can potentially change overnight, as signs are put up, taken down, or substituted. Therefore, any attempt to count and classify signs at a particular point in time provides a mere snapshot of the landscape. However, in order to provide some numerical evidence of the phenomenon, in March 2010 I covered all the stretches of road mentioned above, counting the billboards and noting what they were advertising. Of the 106 billboard advertisements counted, just over half were for local real estate, either advertising estate agents or sales of specific properties. Interestingly, the remaining 48% were also advertising local businesses and services, as can be seen in table 1 below. In this respect, the LL of this area is distinct from adjacent areas, in that there are no hoardings with advertisements for national or international brands, products and services. The overall effect is that this aspect of the landscape is decidedly 'local', both literally and representationally. Local emplacedness is indicated by a variety of devices: local toponyms, telephone numbers with a local dialing code, location maps, deictic symbols such as arrows or spatial orientation formulations such as 'towards', 'near', '100 metres from' and so forth. Yet this indexing of situatedness in local place is combined with global advertising discourses, and, importantly, the English language, works to construct a 'glocalised' sense of place.

**Table 1: Golden Triangle roadside billboards (March 2010)**

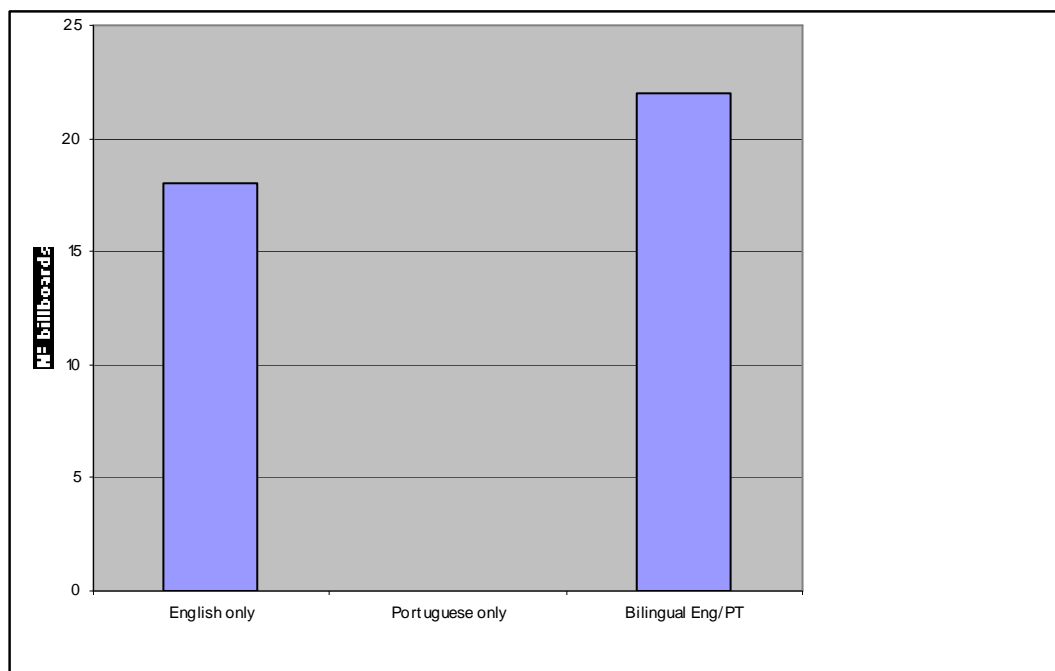
<b>Road</b>	<b>Nº Billboards (real estate)</b>	<b>Nº Billboards (other businesses)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Almancil – Quinta do Lago	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b> <i>[hotel – 1 security – 1 interior decoration – 2 wine shop – 1 restaurants – 3 local magazine (English lang.) – 2]</i>	<b>18</b>
Almancil – coast	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b> <i>[hotels – 2 security services – 2 interior design – 1 restaurant – 1]</i>	<b>18</b>
Almancil – Vale do Lobo	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b> <i>[restaurants – 15 private hospital – 1 go-karting – 1 Interior design – 1]</i>	<b>31</b>
Quinta do Lago – Vale do Lobo	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b> <i>[restaurants – 5 hotels/resorts – 4 golf course -1 private hospital – 1 florist -1 casino – 1 security services -1 garden centre – 1 management services -1]</i>	<b>39</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>106</b>

## 6. Constructing elite place-identities through language choice

The impression one gets from the real estate billboards in this area is that English is the dominant code choice. To further investigate this, I analyzed a sample of 40 billboards.<sup>13</sup> Using a classificatory system adapted from Huebner (2009), I categorised the signs according to language choice and information arrangement. As only two languages are used in the sample (Portuguese and English), I first classified the signs

<sup>13</sup> I discounted repeated advertisements as well as some whose texts were unclear due to poor quality of the photograph.

according to whether they were monolingual or bilingual (Fig. 3). As can be seen from the graph, almost half the sample (18 billboards) display texts in English only. None of the sample use Portuguese only, and 22 are bilingual.

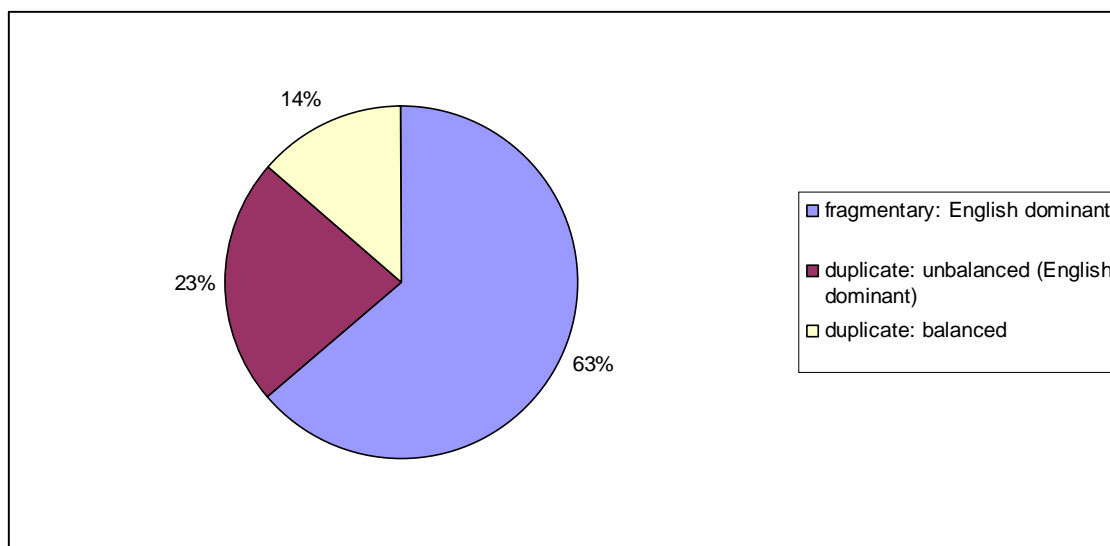


**Figure 3 : Language choice on billboards**

In the bilingual cases, I further classified the signs into '*bilingual: duplicate*' and '*bilingual: fragmentary*'. In the former case, this means that the text is equivalent in both languages in terms of the content of the message. In the latter case, one of the languages dominates as only part of the text is reproduced in the other language. A final classification, '*balanced*' or '*unbalanced*', has to do with the graphic arrangement of the texts. A '*balanced*' bilingual advertisement indicates that the producer aimed to give equal prominence to both languages, whilst '*unbalanced*' means that there is a marked difference in the graphics and/or spatial positioning of the texts, with one language being more salient in terms of size, position (e.g. above the other text), font, colour, etc. In terms of the composition of a semiotic space such as a billboard, the various elements of the sign are balanced on the basis of their "visual weight" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 198), which derives from their perceptual salience (i.e. the degree to which each element attracts the viewer's attention). Salience creates a hierarchy of importance among the elements of a sign, marking some as more worthy of attention



than others (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996: 212). For instance, salience of the English language can be achieved through a greater amount of text (i.e. not everything has been translated into Portuguese) and/or through graphic salience, e.g. larger font size, different colours, and/or positioning the English text above the Portuguese text.



**Figure 4: Information arrangement on bilingual billboards**

Figure 4 summarises the results of this analysis. Just over one-third of the sample (14 billboards) is *bilingual:fragmentary*, with more English text than Portuguese. There are eight *bilingual:duplicate* signs, of which just three are graphically balanced. The five unbalanced texts present a clear graphical bias towards the English text.

From this simple analysis, it is clear that English dominates in this aspect of the LL, despite the fact that municipal regulations do not in fact allow for this. In Portugal, Municipal Councils draw up their own sets of regulations defining the criteria for granting licences for any kind of advertising or publicity emanating from commercial activity. As far as language use is concerned, Article 14 of the Loulé municipal regulations<sup>14</sup> specifies [my translation]:

- 1- Advertising messages must be written in the Portuguese language.
- 2- The inclusion of foreign words and expressions can be authorized in the following situations:
  - a) In the case of registered brands or names of companies;
  - b) In the case of names of people appearing in the message or film, theatre, variety or sports titles or events.

<sup>14</sup> Regulamento da Actividade Publicitária na Área do Município de Loulé de 6 de Janeiro de 2005

In other words, these regulations permit bilingual or multilingual signs in some very limited circumstances, but do not allow for monolingual signs in languages other than Portuguese at all. The numerous examples of signs on which English is the only or the most salient language suggest a flagrant disregard for the local regulations. On the other hand, it also seems that the local council, by allowing these texts to remain in place (often for many months), is putting the perceived gains from encouraging 'residential tourism' higher on its political agenda than its apparent (discursive) commitment to the defence of the national language and its contribution to local identity politics.

The salience of the English language in the billboards analysed gives a clear message about the relative importance and status given to the language – and those who speak it - by the producers of the signs. It seems to be the assumption of the producers of these texts that it is primarily those belonging to this ingroup of English-speakers who will have the economic power and motivation to consider buying property in this area and therefore there is little point in advertising in Portuguese, let alone other languages which are spoken in the area.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, where Portuguese is used, it often seems to have been added as an afterthought; perhaps a token nod to the fact that this 'Golden Triangle' is at least *geographically* located in Portugal. Figure 5 is an illustration of this unbalanced positioning. The huge gold lettering of the English text is seemingly 'translated' into Portuguese at the bottom of the advertisement in small lettering, using a plain white colour. In the box on the right, with the Vale do Lobo logo, is the English only text "Exclusive living since 1962".

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<sup>15</sup> Whilst other languages associated with tourists (notably German) do appear in the LL of the Algarve, languages such as Romanian and Ukrainian are almost totally absent in public spaces .



Figure 5

In this way, the use of English is a marker of social allegiance – or “solidarity, group identity and ideology” (Hodge & Kress, 1988: 82). This implies that the producers of the signs wish to position themselves as members of this in-group. In fact, many of the estate agents appear, by their names at least, to be of English-speaking origins (e.g. John Hammond; Michael Hickey; Newlyn). Other company names employ English words, therefore also presenting an English-speaking company image (e.g. Prime Properties; Exclusive Estates; Charm Properties; Quinta Sales). The real estate agency Quinta Properties takes this a step further, by advertising its services on huge billboards throughout the Golden Triangle with images of two blonde women with strikingly northern European complexions (Figure 6 below). The strapline (in English) consists of the polysemic pun “Best Sellers”.

Besides the ‘sellers’ of the land and properties in the Golden Triangle, some of the resorts have been named in English (The Crest; Pine Hill Residences; The Savannahs; Goldra Estate). However, it is also noteworthy that the majority of the purpose-built resorts in the area have Portuguese names – including the best-known resorts of Vale do Lobo and Quinta do Lago – which may be indication of a need for local emplacedness in the midst of this global phenomenon. It might well be that potential lifestyle migrants are more than happy to resort to English-speaking services to buy a

home, but they at least want a Portuguese-sounding address that lends some kind of authenticity to one's sense of place.



Figure 6

On the other hand, it is also the case that Portuguese resort names themselves become anglicized by the local English-speaking community. I have often heard Vale do Lobo referred to as simply VDL (pronounced vee-dee-ell), whilst Quinta do Lago is generally abbreviated to just 'Quinta'. The English-speaking community in this area all know exactly what is being referred to by this abbreviation, despite the fact that this word, which in Portuguese means something like 'farm' or 'country estate', appears in countless place names. Quinta do Lago, however, is the upmarket resort *par excellence* in the area and as such a clear reference point, both geographically and symbolically.

The use of English, then, is positioning English-speaking (potential) property buyers as part of an ingroup which seemingly includes the producers of the signs themselves. Furthermore, this ingroup is discursively constructed as having a privileged positioning in the place.

## 6. 'Exclusivity Awaits You...': Discursive strategies for constructing elite identities

Although 'elite' membership status is clearly grounded in economic privilege, it is not a clear-cut, structural social category. An 'elite' identity is an ideological subject position; it is semiotically achieved and enacted through social practices, including discourse (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2006). Membership is therefore relatively open – and through the repetition and routinization of discursive practices such as the processes of symbolic differentiation (including, in this case, through the foregrounding of English rather than the local language in highly visible LL texts), elite identities are reproduced and reinforced.

However, language choice in itself is not enough to stylise elite identities. The discursive strategies used to construct identities are also of paramount importance. Promoters of lifestyle migration destinations must do their best to create representations of place that either explicitly or implicitly afford a certain type of lifestyle that they consider to be attractive to potential migrants, and at the same time differentiate the place from other possible destinations. Unsurprisingly, then, local place is often discursively constructed as being *the* fundamental factor in an imagined lifestyle. One way of differentiating resort areas is to make the resort name itself the 'essence' of the brand, that is, to ensure that the brand name automatically conjures up an SCR of place that is consistent with the perceived self-image of the targeted consumer segment. As such, brand managers appeal to consumers' values and self-images and, ultimately, to the powerful discourses which have shaped those self-same values (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998: 142). This, then, is the ideological aspect of place branding; an attempt to fix the meaning of a place as singular, yet bounded, and ultimately defined through counterposition against the Other who is outside (Massey, 1994: 168).

One of the recurrent lexical themes in the Golden Triangle real estate advertising is that of 'exclusivity'. The lexeme 'exclusive' and its derivatives appear 14 times on the billboards in my sample. The billboards advertising the Vale do Lobo resort make the promise of 'exclusivity' explicit, again always with the English text in an unmistakably salient position. Through the use of the nominalization 'exclusivity' as

actor in the metaphorical grammatical process “exclusivity awaits you” (Figure 7), exclusivity becomes something almost tangible by making it synonymous with the place itself.



Figure 7

This is reiterated through the new resort slogan “Exclusive living since 1962” (Figure 7, top right), which echoes an earlier marketing campaign where the place itself is directly positioned as being synonymous with a privileged, leisure-based elitist lifestyle through the strapline “VALE DO LOBO an exclusive way of living” (Figure 8).



Figure 8

Texts such as these are clearly designed to activate SCRs of the place as a symbolically bounded space. The very concept of 'exclusivity' implies both inclusion (the privileged ingroup who live within this bounded place) and exclusion (both people and places that are on the 'outside'). The accompanying images (Fig. 8) are clearly intended to activate mental models of lifestyle affordances to superimpose on the 'exclusive' identity of the place. The message is also that the place does not simply offer tourism amenities that are typical of numerous resorts, but that the tourism experience can be extended to a way of life in this place.

Further examples of discursive strategies that are effectively stylizing an elite place-identity include ample use of hyperbolic evaluative words such as 'luxury'; 'stylish'; 'prestigious'; 'superb'; 'exceptional'. The lexical choices to describe the 'properties' on sale all have lifestyle connotative meanings arising from social attitudes that are established through discourse (Myers, 1994): 'villa', 'apartment', 'townhouse', 'manor house'.

Some slogans suggest the meshing of economic investment and other forms of symbolic capital (e.g. "*Taking property investment to the level of a fine art*") or reiterate the symbolic space of 'exclusivity' in which economic investment takes place ("*Welcome to a world of exclusive real estate investment opportunities*"). Others put the emphasis on a combination of economic and affective investment - that is, the nexus of an imagined lifestyle and making a home ("*Live like a king*"; "*Homes for true luxury living*"; "*Dream homes are only a few steps away*").

## **7. The semiotics of 'glocal' place-identity**

As noted in section 5 above, the spatial orientation of the majority of the texts in the sample is towards a strong sense of local emplacedness. The combination of this with the dominant code choice (English) and the use of global advertising discourses serves to construct a 'glocal' place-identity. An example of this is shown in Figure 9.





**Figure 9**

The reference, in English, to a “world of expertise” gives a global character to the message by emphasizing the most global of spatial dimensions – a ‘world’ - in combination with a reference to the ‘expertise’ of the company, which resonates with what Van Leeuwen (2005: 154) calls one of the ‘rules’ of lifestyle discourses – the rule of the role model and the expert. This is further illustrated in a range of other devices in the data sample, including the graphically reproduced ‘signatures’ to represent celebrity endorsements and references to ‘awards’ that businesses or resorts have won. Returning to Figure 9, the glocal character of the message is further emphasized by the combination of Portuguese and English in the company name (see above for the specifically local connotations of the word ‘Quinta’). Local emplacedness is signified by the aerial shot of Quinta do Lago and the directions on how to reach the sales office (bottom right). In fact, one needs some local knowledge to understand these directions, particularly the reference to the ‘Q’ roundabout (which in fact is at the entrance to Quinta do Lago: a huge, rotating letter Q stands in the centre of the roundabout).



The discursive construction of an elite, glocal identity is realized through the texts of these billboards in conjunction with the images employed. In Figure 10, readers are urged to 'live the difference'.



Figure 10

Like much advertising discourse, the connotations of this strapline are perhaps intentionally ambiguous, leaving the receiver of the message to work out what the 'difference' is and how it should be 'lived'. However, the images of a leisure-based lifestyle and a luxurious villa, besides being intertextual references from typical tourism promotional media, also activate connotative cultural schemata that suggest the difference is based on social class. These types of 'lifestyle' images are persistent in this genre of advertising: luxurious homes with swimming pools, swathes of verdant green golf courses, beaches at sunset. The people displayed in the adverts are generally engaged in the types of activities associated with these leisured-lifestyle signifiers – playing golf, relaxing by the pool, strolling hand-in-hand through gentle surf. These are all 'global' images in that they have apparently 'placeless' settings which could be one of any number of tourist destinations around the world. Machin (2004) has noted that the culture of branding has caused a shift from photography as witness to photography as a symbolic system. Products are graphically represented through their meanings and values rather than through the products themselves. Therefore, we find more and more 'generic images', of the type found in image banks, in all fields of the media. The curious thing about the images on these billboards is that

although they have the 'feel' of generic images, they mostly *do* denote the product itself – i.e. they are genuine images of particular villas for sale, specifically local resort developments or golf courses or beaches. As already noted, it is the meshing of these global discourse strategies with a sense of local emplacedness that lends a 'glocal' feel to the place – something that is being increasingly common in branding practices (Koller, 2007).

## 8. Conclusions

One of the most striking features of the specific linguistic landscape I have described is the dominance of the English language. It may be argued that the language choice here reflects the economic importance of English in a globalised business world that is underpinned by economic concepts such as markets, production and consumption (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009). By using English as a means of communication, real estate businesses are simply aiming to increase sales in an area that is, after all, an established tourism destination where English is the *lingua franca*. In that case, the language choice has to be seen as a functional part of the LL. However, I am suggesting that something more is going on here.

Firstly, within the political economy of language, some languages emerge as having the kind of symbolic value that produces a 'profit of distinction' (Bourdieu, 1981) in social exchanges which reflects the power of social groups it indexes (Gal, 1989). Secondly, and importantly in the context of my research into place-identity, language choice in the public arena not only *reflects* the power of groups, but also plays an active role in the *construction* of identities, which has a direct impact on the politics of place. In the case under study, besides language choice in the local LL, various discourse strategies can be identified which together reinforce the construction of an elitist place-identity based on privilege, difference and 'exclusivity'. Thus, the LL functions as a kind of interface between between place, identity and power relations. As part of the material and symbolic process of place-making, the LL texts I have examined reinforce an ideological position that those who can stake a claim to the place through economic investment and property ownership are 'legitimate' migrants. Moreover, such migrants are positioned and actively stylized as members of the 'super-elite' (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2006). In other words, the power

geometries of the place are, in part, constructed through the geosemiotics of the linguistic landscape. Spatial practices (including discourses in and about local places) can contribute to change the dominant ideas of how to behave in that place (Modan, 2007). These spatial practices may then remain uncontested, and power relations, however symbolic they might appear to be, remain unbalanced.

The advertising practices I have described here are not simply functioning as an attempt to lure potential second home owners, 'residential tourists' or lifestyle migrants. They are also, by their constant and highly visible presence in the LL, engaged in the overall branding of the place. The identity of the 'Golden Triangle' is being consistently reproduced as a place where affluent, English-speaking people have their homes: a sense of place with boundaries (symbolic rather than material) is being constructed based on an ideology that equates 'home' with private land or property ownership. Thus, such practices are also reinforcing an available collective subject position for lifestyle migrants who already live in the place. For these 'outsiders' who may have no real sense of physical, cultural or ancestral ties with the place they have chosen as home, a sense of place and feelings of elective belonging are induced which are simultaneously both integrating (through ingroup membership) and exclusionary, since a 'frontier' of difference is constructed leading to a powerful sense of distinctive social identity.

In my own research, this type of empirical investigation into how discourses surrounding place and migrant identities are constructed in the public sphere has helped me to understand how the subject positions that are made available to British lifestyle migrants impact on their own constructions of migrant identities, and, ultimately, their behaviour in place. Although my interview data show that this 'elite' self-positioning is not often explicitly taken up in talk about their experiences, and in fact is more likely to be used to construct identities for *other* lifestyle migrants, by starting from the basis that the positioning is 'out there', an analysis of interview data must necessarily account for how such identity positions may be more implicitly taken up. This has helped me in understanding some of the issues that invariably arise in the study of this type of lifestyle migration; for example, the general apathy towards learning the local language and the overall lack of integration into the 'host' society, neither of which seem to be contested or even much discussed in discourse emanating

from the host society itself. Whilst this appears, on the surface at least, to indicate an unproblematic and even mutually beneficial relationship between lifestyle migrants in the Algarve and their hosts, as Benson and O'Reilly (2009) note, this does not mean that such relationships are necessarily symmetrical, since shifts in power and capital tend to consolidate differences among the various social groups who are, in one way or another, stakeholders in place.

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