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Visualising language(s) in a contemporary Croatian city: A linguistic landscape of Rijeka

Abstract

This study examines Rijeka's linguistic landscape with a focus on signs or texts visible in public spaces. We distinguish five different categories: public/state/municipal regulatory signs/texts; public/state/municipal infrastructure signs/texts; commercial/business texts; texts/signs of 'community' or 'not-for-profit' associations and transgressive signs/texts. In addition, we examine any of the above categories of signs/texts for features that index Rijeka's local identity. Analysis reveals the following trends: official signs on public buildings are in standard Croatian and uniform in font, colour, and structure. Italian appears only where permitted by local regulation, mainly at educational institutions, and always with equal visual status to Croatian. Road signs follow similar national conventions, while street signs, typically in Croatian and sometimes Italian, sometimes include biographical details of individuals they commemorate, giving them both informational and educational functions. Some include visual effects, while a small number even feature gender-inclusive language and imagery. Commercial signage generally follows language regulations but displays greater creativity, including Anglicisms, hybrid Croatian-English forms, and regional expressions. Community and non-profit signs exhibit the widest visual diversity, occasionally using Glagolitic script for aesthetic effect, transgressive texts, typically in the form of graffiti predominantly use Croatian. Across these domains, Croatian, regional dialects and to a much lesser extent, Italian, index Rijeka's local identity. Examination of signs and texts goes beyond description and an interpretation and contextualisation of all features to provide findings relevant to the use of language in Croatian public life specifically, and to linguistic landscape research in general.

Key words: linguistic landscapes, sociolinguistics, urban semiotics, geosemiotics

1. Introduction

Linguistic landscape studies represent an approach to research the way language is used in a particular locality, often with a focus on the use of more than one language. The term 'landscape', in a basic sense, refers to the visible features of an area. That area can be in its 'natural' state or it can be an area that has been clearly shaped by humans. The term 'linguistic' refers to anything to do with language, so the designation 'linguistic landscape' refers to any recognisable presence of linguistic forms in an area, whether urban or rural.

The term 'linguistic landscape' was used for the first time by Landry and Bourhis (1997) in regard to the language of public signs located across different provinces of Canada. The activity that this designation refers to - namely the study of language(s) used in public areas - pre-dates 1997, and there are many studies from before this time that can be retrospectively encompassed within the term 'linguistic landscape', e.g. Rosenbaum et al. (1977), Tulp (1978) or Wenzel (1996). While Landry and Bourhis's focus was across both urban and rural areas, in practice, most studies on linguistic landscape have focused on urban areas, e.g. Paris (Calvet, 1994), Rome (Griffin, 2004) or Bangkok (Huebner, 2006). As conglomerations of human activity, cities are linguistically rich localities. Sociolinguistically-based studies of speakers in cities, such as those by Labov (1972) for New York and Milroy (1980) for Belfast, informed much of the earlier work on linguistic landscapes in the 1980s and 1990s, and frameworks used in urban dialectology and variationist sociolinguistics have been instrumental in providing a theoretical and methodological basis for studying public signs and other, publicly visible written texts in urban areas.

This paper focuses on an urban area in Croatia, namely the city of Rijeka. In this paper we examine a variety of signs or messages visible in public places across the city, including texts relating to regulatory, infrastructure, commercial or community/'not-for-profit' signage. We examine also texts that are transgressive in nature and lastly focus on texts from any of these afore-mentioned categories (or beyond) to look at signs, messages or texts that index Rijeka's local identity which primarily address the city's inhabitants.

2. Theoretical background

An important consideration relating to our understanding of linguistic landscapes as a comparatively young sub-discipline of linguistics is the notion of 'sign'. Early frameworks of semiotic theory in the tradition of Ferdinand de Saussure put forward a bilateral relationship between a 'signifier' in its material form, and a 'signified' as its conceptual content (de Saussure, 1916: 65-70). An extended definition of what a sign is comes from Peirce, (1902/2015: 20–21) who propounds a triadic interaction that adds a third entity to the object and signifying element, namely an 'interpretant'. An interpretant is a reader or hearer whose process of interpretation or translation enables the matching of signifier with signified (Atkin, 2013). We are informed by the notion that human engagement with a sign rests on the process of *how* we interpret it, as well as the other two factors.

Much of the early research on linguistic landscapes focused on cities that were bi- or multi-lingual, e.g. Brussels (Wenzel, 1996), Montreal (CLF, 2000) or Jerusalem (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). These studies typically quantified signs, billboards, and other types of visual announcements according to the language that they were written in and matched these to guidelines regulating the use of official languages (where these existed) and/or to the estimated number of speakers of each of the languages residing in the city. While these studies record quantitative data, they are also informed by areas such as social geography or demographics, language policy and research on multilingualism (i.e. di- and poly-glossia).

One thing that characterises most items included in linguistic landscape data samples of the first wave of studies from the late 1990s to 2010 is that they are examples of written not spoken language. The objects of research in these earlier studies included road signs, names of sites, streets, buildings, places and institutions, as well as commercial shopfront signage and advertising billboards. In

distinguishing the 'authors', 'owners' or those 'responsible' for signs visible in public places, Scollon and Scollon (2003: 175-189) propose a four-way distinction of: (1) municipal regulatory discourses; (2) municipal infrastructural discourses; (3) commercial discourses; (4) transgressive discourses. The first two discourses are clearly top-down ones, particularly if we include higher levels of government such as regional, state or national within the hypernym 'municipal'. Category (3) is likely to be shaped by both top-down and bottom-up influences. Category (4) above is clearly bottom-up and texts expressing social protest, citizens' petitions or examples of anti-gentrification street art (Papen, 2012) can be classified in this category. Category (4) also encompasses discourses that are not necessarily transgressive, but still unexpected or quite personalised, such as hand-written notices of a missing pet stuck on a street light pole or appeals written on cardboard signs used by beggars.

Another aspect of the form of signs is their placement. This feature is identified by Scollon and Scollon (2003: 2) who employ the term geosemiotics, within which they use the label "place semiotics". What this means is that in the analysis of signs, things such as the code(s) used, order of textual content, font size etc., are taken into consideration, along with things such as the apparent longevity or durability of the material that the sign is made of. Another related aspect is *where* the sign is located, and which of its surroundings it indexes in an immediate or relayed way.

A further thing that characterises linguistic landscape data is that most signs, like written texts in general, are written in a *standard* version of a language. This may be an unsurprising observation if the public signs examined are ones erected by a national or other official authority where laws or regulations require the use of a designated language (almost inevitably a standard version thereof) for such signs. This also means that when the use of regional languages is permitted, it is a *standard* version of the regional language that is employed, not any version of it, as Cenoz and Gorter (2006) report for the Dutch Frisian city of Ljouwert/Leeuwarden. But visible texts such as the signs on commercial premises, advertising hoardings or real estate boards are not usually bound by legal or other regulations to use a standard variety and yet they almost always do, even if most of those viewing them do not use that standard variety very often. For example, the most widely spoken language in Trieste is Triestino, an urban vernacular belonging to the larger linguistic region of *Veneto* in north-east Italy. Despite Triestino being the most used vernacular there, over 99% of the 9,628 signs recorded across the city are in standard Italian (alongside some signs in standard Slovenian), with only 0.23% (n = 22) in Triestino. Those signs in Triestino index characteristics specific to Trieste, that is, content that is locally specific. For example, one sign in Triestino advertises an audio-book of dialect poems with the following: *Trieste zità de veci?... No, de zente vissuda!* ('Trieste, a city of old people? No, of people who have lived life to the full!') (Blackwood, 2015: 88).

2.1 *Research on Croatian linguistic landscapes*

Research on and description of the signs that surround us have been a topic in Croatian linguistics for around twenty years and as such, studies on linguistic landscapes belong to one of the 'younger' sub-fields of sociolinguistic and pragmatics research in Croatia. Amongst the terms used by Croatian linguists working in this field are *jezični krajolik* ('language landscape') which occurs alongside the terms *jezični krajobraz* ('language landscape/scenery'), *lingvistički krajobraz* ('linguistic landscape/scenery') and *jezični okoliš* ('language environment'), where it also appears clear that the last two terms are used less often.

Looking back at when the first studies on linguistic landscapes began to appear, we see that at the start of the new millennium, Ćosić and Mahnić-Ćosić (2001) published a book that investigated the names of commercial businesses in Zadar County and the use of onomastic forms including those that are not of Croatian origin. They record contraventions to the Croatian law that pertains to commercial businesses or more specifically the regulation that "the name of a firm that is a commercial business must be in Croatian". The authors describe the degree to which this regulation is contravened and the consequences of this using vivid language, stating that "on the basis of the extent of it and also the intensity of its spread, it resembles a grass fire that is spreading unstoppably" (Ćosić & Mahnić-Ćosić, 2001, foreword).

Osijek is a city that several studies focus on and we draw on two studies published in 2014. Both employ the term *jezični krajobraz* ('language landscape/scenery'). The first study undertakes an analysis of Osijek's linguistic landscape in terms of its sociolinguistic features, matching the city's landscape with urban culture and seeking to address the question: "To what extent is Osijek's linguistic landscape reflective of the influence of American culture and [the English] language?" (Gradečak-Erdeljić & Zlomislić 2014: 37). The authors distinguish a number of factors in answering this question, "such as geographic distribution, power relations, prestige, symbolic values, questions of identity, tourism, linguistic vitality and literacy" (Gradečak-Erdeljić & Zlomislić 2014: 37). Based on a large number of signs, the authors conclude that English is gradually taking on the role of preferred language and, in this way, Anglo-American cultural values are finding their way into Croatian everyday culture.

The other study on Osijek's linguistic landscape from the same year, that of Kordić et al. (2014), presents a contemporary description of the city together with a description of the role that German has had in the city's development since the beginning of the eighteenth century (Petrović, 2001; Binder, 2006). Statistical data based on signs recorded around the city show that most are in Croatian only, followed by Croatian-English bilingual signs, then by signs that are monolingual English ones, while those signs in German are now so infrequent that they are grouped in the 'other' category. At the same time, when we examine that part of the sample that is based on the busiest or most frequented part of the city (namely, *Županijska Street* together with *Ante Starčević Square*) the percentage of signs in Italian is as high as 11%. What this shows us is how much the linguistic image of a city can change over time.

Looking beyond Croatia's major urban centres, it is of note that as early as 2006, a study was conducted of the linguistic landscape of a relatively small town in central Croatia, Gospić (Vrcić-Mataija & Grahovac-Pražić, 2006). Gospić is the administrative centre of the Lika-Senj County and is a town which one may not readily expect to be the subject of linguistic landscape research as the town, at first glance, appears to be largely monolingual. Vrcić-Mataija and Grahovac-Pražić's comprehensive study investigated language use, awareness and attitudes or, in the words of the authors, "the maintenance of the town's identity and the correct use of language in public spaces" (Vrcić-Mataija & Grahovac-Pražić, 2006: 178). With a focus on public buildings and places, the study examined public signage as well as advertising signs. In terms of the grammatical and lexical features of the language used on these signs, at times these conformed to standard Croatian, but at others they contained non-standard forms, with a significant number of English-origin borrowings also recorded. This finding was confirmed in a further study on signage in Gospić by Klobučar (2009). English-

language signage, alongside or even *in place of* signage in the national or domestic language, is now a common feature in all towns and cities in Croatia, and not only in Croatia.

Istria presents itself as a region of particular interest due to the fact that it is situated in an area that has for centuries been a meeting place of Slavic, Latin and Germanic cultures. Two studies have been conducted on this region: Scotti Jurić's (2007) in relation to identity; and that of Šamo and Pliško (2018) on the Brijuni National Park, a protected area that encompasses fourteen small islands off the south-west coast of Istria, and which is also an exclusive holiday and recreation destination. The latter study features much documented material that, as would be expected, reported the widespread use of Croatian and Italian, but also English and German, and to a lesser extent, Latin, Russian and French. Of note is the fact that the authors record multilingual signs that feature not only two or three languages, as is the case elsewhere in many places in Croatia, but also a considerable number that feature four or five languages.

Istria's multicultural character and the presence of multiple languages in the region is the subject of a PhD dissertation by Jernej Pulić (2016), whose perspective was that of ethnology and anthropology rather than linguistics. Alongside multilingualism, which is described as a key feature of Istria, the study examines the maintenance of minority languages. More specifically, it focuses on Albanians in the cities of Pula and Rovinj and about language being a symbol of group or ethnic affiliation. This approach accords with an increased interest in minority languages in research on linguistic landscapes in general (Cenoz & Gorter 2006; Szabó Gillinger, Sloboda, Šimičić & Vigers 2012).

More recently, and closer to the focus of this paper, an examination of Rijeka's linguistic landscape was undertaken by Rončević (2019) whose descriptive study has as its starting point Rijeka's recent history over the last 150 years with a focus on political, demographic and socio-economic changes. Text-based records (e.g. newspapers and other publications), visual records (e.g. postcards, posters), public and commercial signage (e.g. public signs, shopfront advertising) document the presence and status of respective linguistic codes and speech communities that reflect the above-mentioned changes.

A more contemporary overview of Rijeka's linguistic landscape is provided by Stolac and Hlavač (2021) on the basis of a corpus of nearly 300 images of signs and texts located in Rijeka and its immediate surrounds. The overview encompasses both different genres of texts and signs, e.g. public and commercial ones, as well as signage associated with two major events that had considerable effect of the urban landscape of the city: Rijeka's status as a European Capital of Culture for 2020 and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 which continued into 2021 and beyond. As a linguist, applied researcher and long-time resident of the city, this overview represents a continuation of Stolac's research interest in the linguistic features of Rijeka (Stolac, 1996, 2018).

In countries proximate to Croatia there are sizeable numbers of Croatian-speakers. For example, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatian is one of the co-official languages. In Mostar, the largest city in the southern part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croats now constitute the relative majority of the population. Grbavac's (2013) study of Mostar's linguistic landscape examines the use of official, domestic languages – Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian – as well as that of English as a global *lingua franca* followed by others such as Italian, German, French and Turkish. Reflecting population movements and demographic changes that occurred during the war from 1992 to 1995, the language of signage strongly correlates with the ethnic composition of the city, with Croatian signage pre-dominating in the western part of the city where Croats make up an absolute majority of the population and Bosnian

in the eastern part where Bosniaks are in the majority. Use of English is shown to be universally high across the whole city, with other languages such as Italian and German recording much lower levels of frequency (Grbavac, 2013: 507).

Of particular interest is a study that examines the linguistic landscape of Subotica, a city in northern Serbia that, due to its substantial Croatian minority, has Croatian as an officially recognised minority language, alongside Hungarian as a regionally recognised language and Serbian as the official language at national level. In the city itself, Hungarians make up a relative majority of the population, followed numerically by Serbs, then Croats. Although Croats have lived in the city and its surrounds for centuries, official recognition of Croatian as a minority language did not occur until 2002. In this context, Vuković (2012) provides an overview of the use of Cyrillic-script Serbian alongside Hungarian and Croatian in state and local government signs. In contrast, for commercial and other, non-official signs, the language choice tends to be monolingual Serbian written in the Roman script, and to a lesser extent Roman-script Serbian together with Hungarian. In Vuković's (2012: 168) corpus of 94 selected signs, there are only three that are trilingual featuring Croatian alongside Serbian and Hungarian.

Elsewhere within the field of Croatian sociolinguistics we see that some studies may have a particular thematic focus that can be (re-)interpreted from a linguistic landscape perspective. For example, research papers on advertising and linguistic landscapes have been published by Kuna and Kostanjevac (2011), Stolac and Vlastelić (2014) and by Stolac (2018). These studies examine advertising signs that feature multiple languages or one foreign language (usually English) and show that advertising is an important area that can reveal both linguistic and cultural influences. Stolac's (2018) study reveals some of the manipulative mechanisms employed in advertising found in public places.

2.2 *A brief overview of Rijeka and its languages*

Rijeka is situated in the Kvarner Gulf at the confluence of the Rječina River into the Adriatic Sea. Urban settlement in the area that is now known as the City of Rijeka dates back over 2,000 years. Its name during the time of Ancient Rome was *Tarsatica* (or *Tarsatika* in Ancient Greek). Tarsatica as an urban settlement disappeared after the Avars and Slavs arrived in the area in the sixth and seventh centuries. The Slavs who arrived in this area established a settlement not in Tarsatica but further south, on a hillside on the eastern shores of the Rječina River. A record from the ninth century contains the place name *apud Tharsaticam*, meaning 'near Tarsatica'. In time, this locality came to be known as *Trsat* in Croatian.

In 1281, we locate the first instance of the town being identified by a Latin name of more recent vintage *Flumen*. However, this is but one of the names used as other designations are found that often include the name of the town's patron saint, e.g. the full Latin name as *Flumen sancti Viti* ('Flumen of Saint Vitus'), the Venetian name *Fiume*, the German name *Sent Veyt am Pflaum* (or later spelt as *Sankt Veit am Pflaum*) meaning 'Saint Vitus on the Pflaum River'. Its Hungarian name was *Fiume Város* 'Fiume Town', and in Croatian, it was known as *Reka* or *Rika* (both meaning 'River'), according to whether speakers used Ekavian or Ikavian pronunciation.

The thirteenth century saw the first clear territorial boundary drawn between Rijeka and Trsat. Trsat belonged to the Kingdom of Croatia at the time when it was in personal union with the Kingdom of

Hungary and, as stated, was located on the eastern side of the Rječina River. Rijeka, situated on the river's western side, was part of the Holy Roman Empire, and later on fell under Austrian Habsburg rule from 1465 onwards. This was not the last time in history that both towns were divided by a national border. After World War I, the Rječina River was the boundary line specified in the Treaty of Rome from 1924 that awarded Rijeka to Italy while Trsat, which by this time had been subsumed into a larger urban area known as the town of Sušak was located on the eastern side of the river and became part of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Thus, Rijeka has seen many different rulers over time and apart from Croatian, the language of civil administration over the years has been Latin, German, Italian, Hungarian and even French during the time Napoleon occupied the town. These many changes have left their trace on the city's linguistic landscape with perhaps the most visible evidence of this being frequent changes to street names.

Some streets record names that go back centuries. These are some of the oldest names that were given to narrow laneways known as *kale* or wider streets where locals would stroll up and down known as *kontrade*:

> *Kontrada sv. Marije* ('St. Mary's Promenade') or *Užarska kontrada* ('Ropemakers Promenade') > *Užarska ulica* ('Ropemakers Street')
>
> *Kala sv. Sebastijana* ('St. Sebastian's Lane') > *Kontrada sv. Sebastijana* ('St. Sebastian's Promenade') > *Ulica Marka Marulića* ('Marko Marulić Street').

Below is a list of other streets that have been re-named multiple times over the past 100 years:

> *Strada del Governo* ('Government Road') > *Via Carducci* ('Carducci Road') > *Kapucinska ulica* ('Capuchin Street') > *Ulica Đure Đakovića* ('Djuro Djaković Street') > *Ciottina ulica* ('Ciottina Street')
>
> *Corsia Déak* (Cro. *Korzo Déak*, Eng. 'Déak Corso') > *Ulica Borisa Kidriča* ('Boris Kidrič Street') > *Ulica Petra Krešimira Četvrtoga / Trg kralja Tomislava* ('King Peter Krešimir IV Street') / ('King Tomislav Square')
>
> *Tvornička ulica* ('Factory Street') > *Ulica Đure Ružića* ('Đure Ružić Street') > *Ulica braće Šupak* ('Šupak Brothers Street') > *Ružićeva ulica* ('Ružić Street')
>
> *Trg Na Mostu* ('Bridge Square') > *Jelačićev trg* ('Viceroy Jelačić Square') > *Titov trg* ('Tito Square').

We re-state our understanding of visual semiotics by drawing on Scollon and Scollon's (2003: 8) definition of this as "the ways in which pictures (signs, images, graphics, texts, photographs, paintings, and all of the other combinations of these and others) are produced as meaningful wholes for visual interpretation". Using Scollon and Scollon's four categories of visual texts as a conceptual basis, we suggest the addition of a further, fifth category - texts/signs of 'community' or 'not-for-profit' associations (e.g., sporting clubs or cultural associations) – which we label as category no. (4), with Scollon and Scollon's fourth category of transgressive texts re-numbered as no. (5). Thus, the categories we employ in this paper are: (1) public/state/municipal regulatory signs/texts; (2) public/state/municipal infrastructure signs/texts; (3) commercial/business signs/texts; (4) texts/signs of 'community' or 'not-for-profit' associations (e.g., sporting clubs or cultural associations); (5) transgressive signs/texts. Lastly, we add a further, cross-genre category that relates to any sign or text that indexes Rijeka's local identity, either in its visual form, use of language or presence of overt

references to events, people or realia known to local residents. Based on this six-way categorisation of signs, our research questions are:

1. What are the linguistic practices and the use of linguistic codes across the following five categories or levels: public/state/municipal regulatory signs/texts; public/state/municipal infrastructure texts; commercial/business texts; texts/signs of 'community' or 'not-for-profit' associations; transgressive signs/texts?
2. In relation to representations of Rijeka's local identity, which semiotic media and/or linguistic codes are employed to convey this?

3. Methodology

This paper deals with signs as visual texts with our research focusing on signs serving different functions according to the entity or person responsible for their appearance and placement. In order to address our research questions, we adopted a methodological approach of gaining images of signs by way of visual capture, i.e. photographs and digital images. Data collection was carried out from 2018 to 2021 and encompassed 27 localities across the City of Rijeka. Only signs visible in public places – usually any publicly accessible outdoor area, but also some indoor spaces such as the lobby or ground floor areas of public buildings – were photographed. A total of 293 digital images were collected. Analysis of images included its position, categorisation, identifiable entity/body/person to whom the sign could be attributed, linguistic codes contained, non-textual content such as images or pictures.

4. Data and discussion

This section is sequenced according to sub-sections, each of which corresponds to the five categories mentioned above, together with a sub-section that focuses on Rijeka's identity. Each sub-section contains a brief definition of the categorisation followed by images that exemplify this categorisation. The images are described and interpreted according to their features as well as any legislative regulations that may be relevant to their description. Features are also contextualised with those recorded in other congruent linguistic landscape studies.

4.1 *National/regional/municipal signage of public buildings*

Texts and signage in this category encompass signs that mark government-owned features or structures, whether at the local, regional or national level. Below are a number of signs, starting firstly at the national level, followed by those representing regional or local level institutions. The first sign (Figure 1) below is of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Directorate for Water Management and Marine Protection in Rijeka.

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figure 2 relates to authorities at the level of regional and local government: Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. Lord Mayor Chambers of the City of Rijeka. Another national level facility, the Institute of Adult Education 'Dante' is given below (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

Alongside the official and required features, some signs bear a trademark. The one shown above, of the Education and Training Agency. Rijeka Branch-Office stands out through its use of Croatian Glagolitic letters (Figure 4).

Figure 5.

Figure 6.

Figure 7.

Figure 8.

The above signs are of the Rijeka Kindergarten, Pre-School Education Centre *Maestral* (Figure 5) and the College *Sailor*, Centre for Training and Professional Development (Figure 6 and 7).

As stated, Italian has official recognition as a minority language in Rijeka. The names of some primary schools are sometimes provided in both languages: The *Dolac* primary school and *Belvedere* primary school (bilingual Croatian and Italian) (Figure 8). In addition, an image of the sign for the *Italian Secondary College Rijeka* is provided below (both bilingual Croatian and Italian) (Figure 9).

Figure 9.

Figure 10.

Educational institutions at the federal level also conform to national signage conventions, such as the Academy of Applied Arts of the University of Rijeka (Figure 10). But, not all university buildings bear signage that conforms to national conventions.

Figure 11.

Figure 12.

The ‘Faculty of Civil Engineering’ and the ‘Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences’, both belonging to the University of Rijeka, have their own distinct public facades (Figure 11 and 12).

Signs on public institutions and amenities, whether at the national, county or municipal level, conform to specific, pre-determined regulations. In the first place, these relate to the text on the sign itself, its shape and size, often also the typeface used and colour as well. These features also relate to the language used, i.e. Croatian. In Rijeka, the use of Italian as a minority language is permitted alongside Croatian. The official signs of two primary schools are bilingual – Croatian and Italian, as well as those of the secondary college in Rijeka, the *srednja talijanska škola / scuola media superiore italiana*, in which Italian is the language of instruction. Signs relating to universities that are educational institutions at the national level have both signage that resembles that of institutions at the regional or local level, as well as larger signage that enables them to be recognisable to viewers from afar. The predominant use of Croatian, with the presence of Italian alongside Croatian for institutions that, in a real sense, relate also to Italian-speakers as a long-standing speech community in Rijeka, is congruent to findings in other cities and towns where monolingual signage in the national language is predominant and where the incidence of bilingual signage relates to long-standing minorities residing in or living proximate to these cities or towns. Examples of this include Hebrew and Arabic in West Jerusalem (Spolsky, 2020), French and Catalan in Perpignan (Blackwood & Tufi, 2015) and Italian and Slovene in Trieste and Gorizia (Mezgec, 2016).

4.2 *Public/state/municipal infrastructure texts*

Texts that belong to this category include infrastructural discourse such as place name signs, street name signs, signs relating to vehicle or pedestrian traffic. This category also encompasses signs that relate to the maintenance of water, electricity or gas supplies throughout a city, as well as signage that relates to municipal services such as waste disposal and danger warnings. In relation to street names, buildings or public sites, this category can encompass commemorative plaques and other visual or symbolic features.

Throughout Croatia, signs denoting a locality are yellow with black lettered text. The first image (Figure 13) is an example of this. Although signs that appear on the outskirts of a city are subject to official regulations, they can often vary in their appearance. Figure 14 depicts a sign that bids farewell, i.e. *Doviđenja* to motorists as they leave the city and is distinctly different. The third picture is even more creative, containing a colourful image below the words *Grad Rijeka. Prijatelj djece* which translates roughly as **'**City of Rijeka – a child friendly city' (Figure 15).

Figure 13.

Figure 14.

Figure 15.

Rijeka's most famous street is the *Korzo* (Figure 16). It is no longer a street used by cars and is now a pedestrians-only promenade in the centre of the city. Other streets that have street name signs made of stone are *Veslarska ulica* 'Rowers' Street' (Figure 17) and *Ulica Šišmiš* 'Bat Street' (Figure 18).

Figure 16.

Figure 17.

Figure 18.

Figure 19.

Information on the origin of some street names is sometimes provided below the street's official designation. For example, *Cvetkov trg* 'Cvetko Square' (Figure 19). is named after Ivan Cvetko, a local priest who campaigned to establish schools and increase literacy rates. *Volčićev trg* reminds passers-by of the life and achievements of Jakov Volčić from the neighbouring Istrian peninsula who was an active member of the Croatian National Revival in the nineteenth century (Figure 20). A similar street sign commemorates Josip Marohnić, a leading figure amongst emigre Croats in the USA (Figure 21).

Figure 20.

Figure 21.

An even more detailed sign (Figure 22) is located on the facade of the building where the composer Ivan Zajc was born on 3 August 1832. The Croatian National Theatre in Rijeka is named after him, and the inscription on the sign states that Ivan Zajc was instrumental in formalising the teaching of music in schools and in establishing musicology as an academic discipline in Croatia. Another sign gives details of the history of the street itself. As mentioned above in Section 2.0, the name of some streets in Rijeka has changed over time. An example is *Mljekarski trg* 'Dairy Square' (Figure 23). A plaque below the street name gives a chronological list of the names that the square has been known as, going back to the mid-nineteenth century.

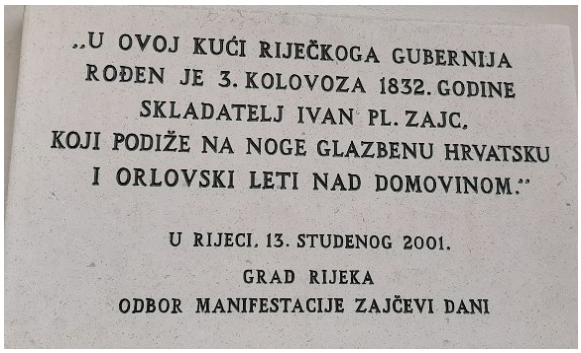

Figure 22.

Figure 23.

Along with inscriptions in Croatian, some commemorative plaques contain textual fragments in Italian as well, such as that dedicated to Ivan Kobler on the house he was born in. It commemorates him as a noteworthy lawyer, parliamentarian, writer and intellectual who was born in Rijeka and who found his final resting place there as well (Figure 24).

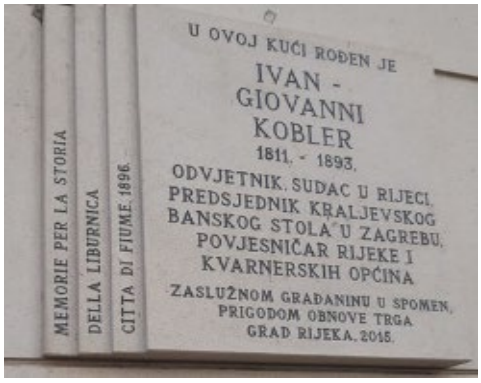

Figure 24.

Figure 25.

Many Italians have left a lasting legacy on Rijeka and there are many bilingual signs that contain details of people's contributions to the city's literary and cultural life. One such stone plaque adorns the birthplace of Irma Gramatica, a famous theatre and later film actress born on 25 November 1869. (Figure 25). Further street names that are dedicated to Italian-origin citizens of Rijeka, are *Ulica Giuseppe Duella* and *Ulica Antonio de Reno* (Figures 26 and 27).

Figure 26.

Figure 27.

One of the responsibilities of local government authorities is information relating to public infrastructure, including access to it. Most prohibitions are in Croatian only, featuring warnings in black letters and upper-case text. The following signs *Zabranjeno parkiranje izvan označenih parkirnih mjesta* 'Parking prohibited outside marked parking bays' (Figure 28) and *Osim stanara sa osiguranim parking* 'Residents with reserved parking excepted' (Figure 29) advise motorists on parking prohibitions, applying either to areas outside marked parking bays or for those who do not have an authorised parking permit.

Figure 28.

Figure 29.

Many parts of the city require motorists to pay for parking. Most signs that specify the time limits and payment amounts are in Croatian only (Figure 30). One parking pay station has the English translation *payment* accompanying the Croatian term *naplata* (Figure 31). Another sign that issues a prohibition, this time in relation to climbing a stone wall on the foreshore, is bilingual and addresses not only locals but also foreign visitors (Figure 32).

Figure 30.

Figure 31.

Figure 32.

Municipal authoritities or local tourism boards are responsible for signage of local tourist attractions. One such attraction in Rijeka is *Trsatski kaštel* 'Trsat Castle', a centuries-old walled fortress that rises above the city (Figure 33). Visitors to Trsat are provided with detailed information in six languages (Croatian, English, German, Italian, French and Spanish) about the castle itself and about one of Croatia's most famous noble families, the *Frankopan* family, with one of its prominent members buried there.

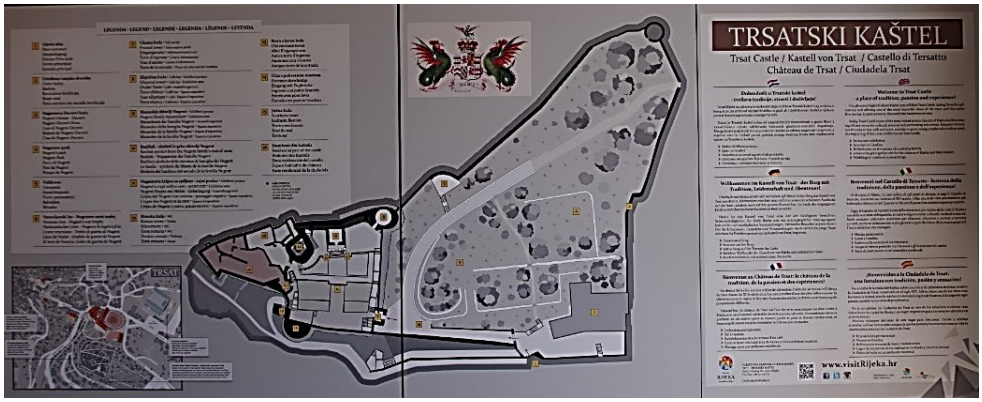

Figure 33.

Local authorities are responsible for waste disposal. Signs on rubbish bins can contain ecological messages or instructions on how waste can be separated to be disposed in an environmentally-friendly manner. These are examples of the 'educative function' that some signs in a linguistic landscape may have. In Rijeka, recyclable waste is separated from ordinary rubbish. The three pictures below are of recycling collection facilities: plastic bottles, cans and drink containers (Figure 34); cooking oil (Figure 35); and for used clothes (Figure 36). While all text is in Croatian only, the fonts, colours and imagery used are varied. This suggests that it is left up to the waste services provider as to how they wish to convey directive messages to those wishing to dispose of rubbish.

Figure 34.

Figure 35.

Figure 36.

Lastly, there are text-free visual images that are readily decipherable, such as the image of a stationary or a walking pedestrian on traffic light signals. A further message conveyed in these images is that of gender equality. In contrast to the usual depiction of a male pedestrian, these traffic light signals promote gender equality by depicting female pedestrians (Figures 37 and 38).

Figure 37.

Figure 38.

In general, the linguistic features of infrastructure signage are congruent to that described by Scollon and Scollon (2003: 185-187) and those documented by Canakis (2016) in relation to another Croatian city on the Adriatic coast, Dubrovnik. Information on name changes that streets have gone through over time is documented in other linguistic landscape studies such as those on Kyiv (Pavlenko, 2010) who also records chronological timelines as a way to convey this information.

There are parallels between the use of Italian which indexes Rijeka's historical legacy in our data and Toulouse where most signs are in French, but where Occitan sometimes occurs alongside French as a reference to the language variety used in the city in the past (Amos, 2017). The multilingual nature of signs for tourist attractions with English occupying second, or even first place is well documented in research on linguistic landscapes in localities that attract substantial numbers of tourists from abroad (Leeman & Modan, 2010; Malinowski, 2010). Lastly, the role of public signage in addressing inequalities or including groups often excluded has been touched on by Rubdy (2015) and Blackwood (2021), usually in the form of a pro-active or positive discrimination approach in favour of marginalised speech communities. Our data from Rijeka on the use of female images as pedestrians is novel in that we show that this same principle can be applied to gender-inclusive practices.

4.3 *Commercial/business texts*

Signs identified in this section relate to texts that function to publicise and inform viewers of goods or services offered by a commercial entity. Often such texts can contain visual or discourse features that are 'conspicuous' so as to attract (and maintain) the attention of viewers or readers.

One such conspicuous sign is the following: the flower shop adjacent to the city cemetery in Trsat bears the name *Ne zaboravi me* 'Don't forget me' (Figure 39). The name of the shop sends out a double message. The first one is that visitors to the cemetery should not forget to observe the local custom of marking a visit to a family member's grave by leaving flowers on it. The second one is that *Ne zaboravi me* is also the Croatian name for a flower that has an equivalent name in English, 'Forget-me-not'.

Figure 39.

Figure 40.

On the subject of humour and humorous plays on words, this is one of the features of Rijeka's linguistic landscape that all locals notice and comment on. Some business signs and hoardings have become famous due to references to current affairs or as playful asides in their own right. The café shown above is the *Caffé La Guardia* (Figure 40). The café is named after *Fiorello La Guardia*, a long-time mayor of New York in the 1930s and 1940s, who was the Consular Agent of the United States in Rijeka from 1903 to 1906. The message that attracts locals' attention is *Od sutra sve besplatno* 'As of tomorrow, everything's free of charge'.

The advertisement in Figure 41 contains a play on words. The name of the beer is *Pan*, which is just a brand name with no other meaning. The caption *Pan. Osvježi dan!*, meaning 'Pan. Refresh your day!' contains the allusion to beer as a refreshing beverage and the allusion that Pan beer refreshes your day as well.

The most popular beer in Croatia is *Ožujsko*. The sign commercial sign above contains the caption *Nećemo odustati* 'We will not give up' (Figure 42). Together with the image of players from the Croatian national football team, it plays on the image of the fortitude and tenacity of the Croatian national team in achieving great success. There is a secondary meaning to *Nećemo odustati*, which translates as 'We will not refrain from...'' and the association with beer in the advertisement suggests to the reader that the Croatian national football team will not refrain from drinking *Ožujsko* beer. By extension, use of the first-person plural form 'we' allows the reader to co-identify with the players and to share their intention not to refrain from consuming *Ožujsko* beer.

Figure 41.

Figure 42.

Some advertisements contain minor digressions from standard Croatian usually to achieve a stylistic effect. One sign displayed outside a bank asks the question *A s kim Vi bankarite?* 'And who do you bank with?'. This question sounds quite normal in English as the word *bank* can function both as a noun as well as a verb. But, in Croatian, the equivalent term *banka* 'bank' can occur as a noun only. The creation of a verb *bankirati* 'to bank' derived from the noun, *banka*, is a neologism, which not only catches people's attention as most neologisms do, it also reads like a translation of an equivalent

English sentence. In this way, the advertisement indexes the English language, and 'things to do with English or the Anglophone world' which, in turn, is indexical of contemporary trends and modern practices. This phrase has become associated with this particular bank, which is one of the biggest in Rijeka and which has used a variety of different advertising posters for marketing purposes. A neologism with the same meaning, but with slightly different spelling (*bankarenje*, a gerund form, i.e. 'banking') is found in the advertisement *George. Dobro došli u budućnost bankarenja* (Figure 43). It contains the name 'George' which refers to a Europe-wide digital banking platform that 'welcomes customers to the future of banking'.

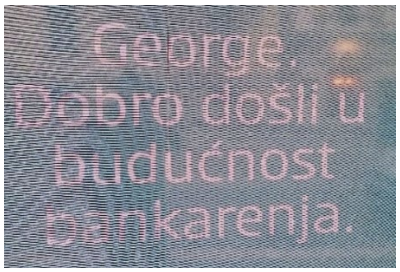

Figure 43.

Figure 44.

During the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Croatia (as well as elsewhere) the slogan *Ostanimo doma* 'Let's stay at home' was one of the instructions that the national public health response team repeated in all its public addresses from March 2020 onwards. From then on, they replaced this instruction with *Ostanimo odgovorni* 'Let's stay responsible'. Clever marketing strategists played around with this phrase with the result being a hybrid expression that may be confusing, or even slightly tongue-in-cheek due to the word-play contained in it such as in an advertisement from a bank advertising its electronic transfer services (Figure 44). The lower-case text on the advertisement is the following: *Šalji i primaj lovu. Brzo, besplatno i od doma* 'Send and receive dough. Quickly, at no cost and from home'. The phraseme *od doma* 'from home' became a commonly used one at this time.

We return now to the main text in the upper central part of the advertisement, *KEKS pay. DOMA stay* (Figure 44). This text caught on firstly due to the way it rhymes, secondly due to the way that it plays with words from two languages, and thirdly because it contains the word *keks*, which has two meanings: 'biscuit' and 'very quickly'. The marketing phrase '*KEKS pay. DOMA stay*' means something like 'You can do your transactions with us as quickly as it takes to say the word "keks" ('biscuit') and still stay home'.

Turning our attention to signs that contain text in languages other than, or alongside Croatian, we find that there is a substantial number of monolingual signs where the language used is English:

Figure 45.

Figure 46.

Figure 47.

Figure 48.

The first sign advertising cooling ventilation systems (Figure 45) appears to index English as a way of presenting this product as an internationally renowned one. While the phrase *Make me the air* may sound a bit odd, this may be part of the firm's marketing strategy to attract people's attention as even unclear or erroneous texts are likely to stay in people's minds. The second sign (Figure 46) employs another strategy to 'speak to' and attract customers, in this case during Rijeka's warm weather. The sign displays an image of refreshments containing the English words *Fresh lemonade* plus the phrase or syntagm *to go*, which now commonly appears in relation to beverages of all sorts. The third (Figure 47) and fourth signs (Figure 48) clearly target foreign tourists in an attempt to market an 'authentically Croatian' product or delicacy to them. As tourists are the main or sole addressees of these commercial outlets, this seems to account for why the text is in English, a language which foreign tourists are more likely to have proficiency in than Croatian.

Alongside signs advertising beer, cakes and lemonade, there are signs that market organic food products. Just above one health food store is its name *Greencajg* with a carrot included as part of its name (Figures 49 and 50). One could say that this name is a double-hybrid according to its visual features (combining linguistic and non-linguistic elements) and the linguistic components that make up the name (Eng. *green* and a Croatian word that has been borrowed from German *cajg*, roughly meaning 'stuff'). It's an effective *green* pun on words, as the pronunciation of *greencajg* is very similar to the Croatian word *grincajg* (an adaptation based on German *Grünzeug*) referring to 'green vegetables used in soups' and it replaces the first part of the word *grin* with a near-homophone English word, *green.* It is this combining of linguistic forms that makes this sign stand out.

Figure 49.

Figure 50.

Playing with hybrid combinations is even more evident in the first picture below through reference to the Croatian word *kolač* 'cake'. The sign has the word *KOKOLACH* and the removal of the Croatian diacritic symbol 'č' and its replacement with 'ch' at the end reflects English spelling conventions (Figure 51). The doubling of the first syllable *KO* resulting in *KOKO* is not a word in Croatian, but it's phonetically close to *kakao* 'cocoa' and *koka-kola* 'coca-cola' as well as *čokolada* 'chocolate' and therefore suggests the enjoyment of sweet-tasting beverages and refreshments. The following sign (Figure 52), completely in English, contains two different words each followed by the phraseme, *to go*. Until now, the expression *to go* has been used only in relation to beverages, e.g. *kava* ('coffee') *to go*, which can be found on the second sign, along with the message *Beer to go*.

Figure 51.

Figure 52.

Figure 53.

However, we can find some, admittedly less frequent examples of Croatian equivalents for *to go*. The last sign above (Figure 53), *KAVA ZA VAN* ('COFFEE FOR OUTSIDE') has become the corresponding form in Croatian to refer to the syntagm *to go.* Some signs contain not only English alongside Croatian text, but also texts in other languages. The following sign is an advertisement for 'extra virgin olive oil' (Figure 54). The equivalents in other languages for the Croatian term *maslinovo ulje* are: *olive oil* (Eng.), *Olivenöl* (Ger.) and *olio d'oliva* (Ital.). The Italian equivalent is not listed on the sign, and instead, another one that is semantically related is given in Italian, namely *extra vergine*, meaning 'extra virgin'. But neither the English equivalent nor the Croatian equivalent, i.e. *ekstra djevičansko* are provided. This kind of inconsistency makes it look a little confusing.

Figure 54.

Figure 55.

The second sign above (Figure 55) also has an inconsistent use of Italian. A dog grooming firm, *Wooff* offers trimming and bathing services, with an added piece of information that those dogs from lost dog homes will be bathed free of charge. But only the main description of the firm's commercial activities, *Grooming Studio*, is provided in Italian, *Salone del cane,* following the Croatian form *Studio za njegu pasa*.

If someone is located in a particular part of Rijeka, they can drop into an eatery called *McChevap* or even have their food delivered to them (Figure 56). *Chevaps,* Croatian: *čevapi* or *čevapčići* (diminutive form), are small, grilled minced meat sausages:

Figure 56.

Figure 57.

The play on words alluding to *McDonald's* is obvious. Under the writing on the delivery vehicle with the *McChevap* sign is the message *za chevap bolji* 'for a better chevap' (Figure 57). Although not so common, we can locate signs in which English and/or Italian appears first and then Croatian second, such as the ones below (Figures 58 and 59).

Figure 58.

Figure 59.

In contrast, the sign on this restaurant below (Figure 60) is in Italian only and functions as an invitation for diners to enjoy Italian cuisine. Such signage is not uncommon in predominantly Anglophone countries for restaurants that index monolingual Italian as a means to portray themselves and their food as 'authentically Italian'.

Figure 60.

The first sign below (Figure 61) is a commercial one, and contains a description of the services provided, namely legal ones: *odvjetnici – avvocati* 'lawyers'.

Figure 61.

Figure 62.

The second sign above (Figure 62) is especially interesting as it contains two parts each deserving comment. The upper part contains the neutral designation *odvjetnički ured* which means 'lawyer's office', while the lower part contains two features that when read together appear ambivalent. The first line contains the word *odvjetnica*, the Croatian term for 'lawyer' that contains the ending *-ica* marking the lawyer as female. The use of this form conveys the message that masculine forms for occupations are not generic and female forms of designations for professions should be identifiable as such. But the following line contains the internet address of the same lawyer containing the form *odvjetnik* (male) 'lawyer' followed by the female lawyer's surname. Using the masculine form *odvjetnik* only in the internet address is the traditional way of presenting occupations.

Figure 63.

Figure 64.

Many smaller poster signs feature local terms, often those of Italian origin such as *butiga* (Ital. *bottega*) meaning 'shop' or 'store', *delicija* (Ital. *delizia*) meaning 'delicacy', *pinca* (Venetian Ital. *pinza*) a type of sweet bread eaten at Easter, and *pašta* (Ital. *pasta*) as mentioned, some of which can be found on the poster on the door of a local store (Figure 63).

One of our suppositions that dialectal forms are more likely to be used for the advertising of local products is confirmed. *Mići sir* (standard Croatian: *Maleni sir*) advertises a local cheese that is sold in small, separate packages ideal for salads or for a *međuobrok*, a 'snack in between' (Figure 64).

In general, however, it is unusual for billboards and larger signs to contain local or dialect expressions. The following sign below that contains two words from the local Čakavian dialect is exceptional. The advertisement contains an interrogative phrase that functions as a statement, *Ča će ti takuin kad imaš mobitel* meaning 'Why do you need a wallet when you've got a mobile phone' (Figure 65). The words *ča* 'what' and *takuin* 'wallet' are Čakavian dialect and index the speech of the local area.

Figure 65.

Figure 66.

Figure 67.

Figure 66 relates to an advertisement for a beverage that is popular amongst young people. When the advertisement first appeared, the target audience clearly understood its English-Croatian hybridity. *OMG NOVA BOCA!* ('OMG A NEW BOTTLE'). Two Croatian words *nova boca* 'new bottle' are combined with the English acronym *OMG* ('Oh my God'), which is well known amongst young people in Croatia. Just below this, the label also contains the words *Odabrali teensi*, which means 'chosen by teenagers'. *Teensi* 'teenagers' is a lexical transfer that has been phonologically adapted and morphologically integrated into Croatian.

While *OMG* is an English-origin acronym, *JSL,* in Figure 67 is a Croatian one. The abbreviation *JSL* stands for *Jesi li..?* 'Are you..?', and consists of the copula conjugated in the second person *jesi* and the interrogative particle *li.* The pronunciation of these letters in Croatian, *J-S-L,* is itself very similar to the full interrogative form *Jesi li*. The remaining part, *za novu bocu* means 'for a new bottle', and a free translation of the message on this advertisement is, 'Do you like the new bottle [design]?'. The acronym *JSL* is characteristic of how younger generations communicate. The creator of this inventive abbreviation displays an enviable level of knowledge of sociolinguistics and pragmatics.

Based on the collected data sample – advertising in public spaces: on billboards, building signs and vehicles – we can see what the basic characteristics of the Croatian and Rijeka's linguistic landscapes are. Most advertising signs are in one language only: in standard Croatian (less so hybrid forms of various Croatian vernaculars), with only a much smaller number appearing in foreign languages.

Where this is the case, we observe that English is the language most often used. Monolingual signs in any other language are uncommon. Those advertising signs that contain text in Italian, German or French most commonly have these as part of the product brand or as part of a specific advertising slogan.

Bilingual signage most commonly occurs in the combination of Croatian with another language (e.g. English, Italian). We do not record any examples of advertisements in two foreign languages. Multilingual advertisements are uncommon, but where they do appear, Croatian and English are always amongst the languages used on them.

Comparing the linguistic characteristics of advertisements with other signs found in the public space (Stolac 2018; Stolac & Hlavač 2021) we can see that within Croatia, there is a practice of monolingual signage with the possibility of the use of two languages, in which the second language is usually English. This, of course, depends on the type of signage and also whether the sign is an official one or not so that the choice of language changes accordingly. The quantitative presence of English in Croatia's linguistic landscape is significant. The trend appears to be that both the proportion of text that is in English will increase, and that the number of spaces that English is used in will also increase. These findings are congruent to those reported by Griffin (2004) in relation to the frequency of English in Rome, as well as those of Lock (2003) in relation to Hong Kong, Backhaus (2007) for Tokyo and Nikolaou (2017) for Athens.

Examples of use of local Čakavian dialect in advertisements are, as shown above, infrequent. This is in line with other studies that recorded the low frequency of texts in recognisably local varieties, e.g. Viennese German in Vienna (ORF, 2015), Triestino in Trieste (Blackwood & Tufi, 2015) or, elsewhere in Italy, the incidence of signage in Milanese or Friulian in Milan and Udine respectively (Coluzzi, 2009).

4.4 *Texts/signs of 'community' or 'not-for-profit' associations*

Signs that belong to this category are neither official nor commercial in their content and function. Instead, these signs mark the existence or purpose of an organisation that is a 'grass-roots' or 'bottom-up' one. The types of organisations that typically belong to this category are sporting associations, educational support groups, welfare organisations and so on. An example of a sign from the second category is presented in Figure 68. It features a sign for the *Učenički dom Podmurvice* 'Primary Student Centre of Podmurvice'. As an education-focused organisation, childhood themes are evident in the visual imagery that surrounds the text.

Figure 68.

Figure 69.

Figure 69 is from the martial arts club of Rijeka. The name of the club is given in both Croatian and Italian where the Italian title contains the non-standard form *societe* rather than standard Italian *società* for 'club' or 'association'. The type of martial arts that the club trains in are provided below the logo: *karate* (as a well-known, Japanese-origin internationalism), *budokai* (as a lesser known, Japanese-origin internationalism that refers to a specific form of martial arts), *semi-full contact* (as an English-origin internationalism) and *samoobrana* referring to 'self-defence' in Croatian. The Italian equivalent *autodifesa* is not contained in the sign. But, the terms for 'training times', *treninzi* and *allenamenti*, are given in both Croatian and Italian, as well as the days of the week that the club is open and its operating hours.

In Rijeka, there is an overarching organisation that advances the interest of community, not-for-profit organisations. The most frequent word used in Croatian for such organisations is *udruge* 'associations'. As a way of drawing attention to the work of these organisations, one of their trademark messages is: *Gledaj (u)druge* (Figure 70). This is a play on words. Without the brackets, it means 'look [at] non-profit organisations'. With the brackets, it means 'look at others'. Both meanings are intentionally associated with each other via this play on words. These kinds of metalinguistic exercises can, as stated, lead to people focusing their attention on these kinds of signs longer than they would otherwise.

Figure 70.

Figure 71.

Figure 71 contains the words *Samo Rijeka* 'Only Rijeka' where the letters of these two words are shaped to form the image of a shark, under the title, *Udruga navijača* 'Association of [football] supporters'. This is an example of a particular grassroots association that supports the city's main football team, *Nogometni klub Rijeka* 'Rijeka Football Club', whose colours are sky blue and white.

Some parts of the city with a strong local identity, such as *Sušak*, feature wall murals with the name of the locality in Glagolitic script together with the logo of the local amateur football club, *Hrvatski nogometni klub Orijent* 'Croatian Football Club Orijent' as shown in Figure 72. Figure 73 celebrates *Sušačani*, which is an alternative name for the club. It's also the demonym for the locals who inhabit the Sušak district of Rijeka.


Figure 72.

Figure 73.

In general, we see that even on the basis of a small number of texts that signs or images produced by community or 'not-for-profit' organisations display a wide variety of forms, use of different alphabets as well as accompanying visual images and symbols.

4.5 *Transgressive texts*

Transgressive semiotics relate to any type of sign which violates (intentionally or accidentally) the conventional semiotics that are expected or unmarked at the place at which it is located. As such, transgressive texts are not officially sanctioned and they may surprise, confront or even challenge those that view them. The most common example of transgressive texts is graffiti. The message contained in Figure 74 alludes to life's complexities (written in a colloquial style that is often characteristic of many examples of graffiti): *A MORAŠ IĆ NAZAD DA BI IŠO NAPRIJED!* 'BUT YOU HAVE TO GO BACKWARDS IN ORDER TO MOVE FORWARD!'.

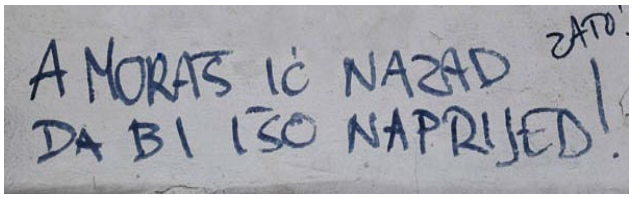

Figure 74.

Figure 75.

While Figure 74 relates to direction, Figure 75 comments on time. The original message below was *IMA VREMENA* 'THERE IS TIME'. Someone else then added the letter *N* in front of *IMA,* making it *NIMA* which means 'THERE IS NOT' (in the Čakavian Ikavian dialect spoken in areas surrounding Rijeka). The addition of the grapheme ⟨N⟩ changes the meaning of the text to something contrary, namely 'THERE IS NO TIME'.

When we remark on signs being small in size this does not mean that the message they have to convey is of any less interest. We present here four brass plates set into the pavement (Figures 76 and 77). The brass plates commemorate residents of Rijeka who were deported to concentration camps during World War II. The brass plates are part of an international project called *Stolpersteine*, a German word that literally means 'stumbling stones' or metaphorically 'stumbling blocks'. Approximately 110,000 have been set into the pavement in localities across Europe (Goethe Institut, 2026). The term *Stolperstein* is now used in English, while the Croatian term is *kamen spoticanja*, a calque based on the German original. The Stolpersteine here are set into the pavement and are in memory of Eugenio Lipschitz and his wife, Giannetta Zipszer Lipschitz, both of whom lived nearby. Two plaques are in Croatian and two are in Italian. The Stolpersteine give details of the place where they resided, the years they were born, arrested, interned and deported. The date that they were both killed in Auschwitz remains unknown. These Stolpersteine in Rijeka were the first to be installed in Croatia.

Figure 76.

Figure 77.

Signs or texts that are unexpected or not sanctioned by official or civil norms are found throughout the city. As in many other urban localities across Europe, graffiti is the most commonly occurring example of transgressive texts. There are countless examples of doodling, tagging and other instances of spray cans and textas being used to mark social spaces. We include only those examples that

contain textual messages. The two examples we present contain assertions or statements about how the authors sees themselves, their environment or things in general. In a way, we can these instances as voices of pride, rebellion and appropriation in public spaces that are otherwise dominated by official and commercial texts (Pennycook, 2008). The other example of a transgressive sign that we locate is of a socio-political nature: making overt the historical presence of Jews in Rijeka and their forced expulsion from their hometown, usually in the form of organised transport to labour or death camps.

Such texts index not only the presence and fate of Jews in those parts of Europe occupied by the Axis powers in the Second World War, they function as examples of locally sanctioned visible messages that exist in public spaces in post-independent Croatia that inform or remind passers-by of events that led to the systematic removal, deportation and murder of fellow citizens on the basis of political ideologies (Goldstein, 2001). It's possible also that the appearance of Stolpersteine in Rijeka as the first city in Croatia to have them can be seen in the context of Rijeka as a 'European city' (Rijeka was the first and only Croatian city to be declared a 'European Capital of Culture' in 2020) and as a phenomenon that Radonic (2011: 358) describes as the "Europeanization of the Holocaust": Rijeka marks events relating to the Holocaust as an example of characterising itself as a contemporary European city.

4.6 *Signs that index Rijeka's local identity*

Rijeka is a port city located on the confluence of the Rječina river into the Adriatic Sea. Water is a reference or metaphor that commonly occurs in images or sayings about Rijeka. Figure 78 represents a mural with a scene of a boat with an aqua-white sail (the colours of Rijeka's main football team) at sea with the motif *Volim grad koji teče*. This is an affectionate declaration that can be found in many places across the city. It translates as 'I love a city that flows' and references the fact that the name *Rijeka* refers to a (flowing) river. The phrase, 'city that flows', is a metaphor that conjures up positive images of a city that is in motion, dynamic and keeping up with things.

Figure 78.

Figure 79.

Not only does the city's name clearly show that it is close to water, the water source of the river Rječina is itself considered boundless and inexhaustible. This accounts for the presence of the Latin motto of the city, *indeficienter* 'unfailing', 'unceasing' that can be seen below the double-headed eagle that forms the city's coat-of-arms (Figure 79).

The designation *Fiume* has traditionally been the city's Italian name. On some road signs the name *Fiume* is given alongside *Rijeka*, and there are calls for this to be a more frequent practice. Within the city itself, *Fiume* is used as a part of the commercial name of private enterprises. In Figure 80, it appears as part of the name of a cafe while in Figure 81, it is the name of a taxi company.

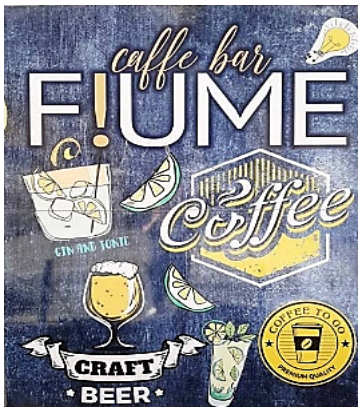

Figure 80.

Figure 81.

The battle cry *Forza Fiume*, which translates approximately as 'Go Rijeka!', is a popular chant of the fans of the city's main football club, NK Rijeka, and appears in multiple places where there is anything remotely to do with football, in this case a sports ground (Figure 82).

Figure 82.


Figure 83.

The diehard supporters of NK Rijeka are known as the *Armada*. Their insignia logo (Figure 83) is one that can be found painted in lots of public places around the city. The *Armada* fans consider all of Rijeka their own home turf. Alongside *Forza Fiume* and '*A*' for *Armada,* there are numerous other symbols and reminders of their presence to be found across their city, and these are a part of the city's linguistic landscape. One of their other trademark slogans is *Način života* 'Way of life', written in sky blue on a white background (Figure 84),


Figure 84.

In Section 4.3, we mentioned that the district of Rijeka that lies south of the Rječina river, Sušak, has a strong local identity, embodied in the strong support for the local amateur club, *Hrvatski nogometni klub Orijent* 'Croatian Football Club Orijent'. Figure 85 relating to the club is not in Glagolitic script, but in the local Croatian Čakavian dialect. It says: *Pikala se takala se bala sa Sušaka*, 'Kicked around, knocked around - the soccer ball from Sušak'.

Figure 85.

A catchphrase that is commonly associated with Rijeka's football supporters, but not just them, is the following one that sums up the mentality of people living in Rijeka: *Krepat, ma ne molat*. It is a phrase in the local dialect that translates as 'Die, but don't give up'. It can be found in many places across the city, in many different iterations (Figures 86 and 87).

Figure 86.


Figure 87.

Another phrase that is closely associated with the city is: *Šta da?* People are readily recognised as coming from Rijeka when they use this phrase elsewhere in Croatia. It roughly translates as 'Really, you don't say!' It's an everyday expression, used in many different contexts, and it has found its way onto signs found around the city, including these two businesses. Figure 88 shows *šta da?!* as the name of a Rijeka souvenir shop. Figure 89 reads *Trgovina. "Svašta nešto! Šta da?"* meaning 'Retail Store. "A bit of everything. You don't say?"'

Figure 88.

Figure 89.

Our findings from Section 4.3 showed that names on shops and service providers' businesses are usually monolingual and in Croatian only. The name on the shop Figure 90 *Primorka* means 'a woman from Primorje'. The word *Primorje* refers to an area known in English sometimes as the *Croatian Littoral* which is the northern Adriatic coastline area around Rijeka.

Figure 90.

Figure 91.

Less common are names of shops that contain words in the local Croatian Čakavian dialect. The first word in the name of the shop in Figure 91 is *Koltrina,* which is a local word meaning 'curtains'. Other shops with Čakavian names are also located around the city. In Figure 92, a clothes store bears the

name *Mirakul* ‘Miracle’, while *Šilica* shown in Figure 93 means ‘Seamstress’. In Figure 94, we see the Latin name of the city, *Flumen*, as the name of a locally produced beer. The remainder of the text is in Croatian: *Prvo riječko craft pivo* ‘Rijeka’s First Craft Beer’.

Figure 92.

Figure 93.

Figure 94.

The contraction *RI* is found on the registration plates of all vehicles registered in Rijeka and it has become an abbreviation by which Rijeka is readily recognised. It can occur on its own, as in the name of a cafe *Caffe Bar RI* (Figure 95). Or, it can occur with or even within another word, as in the name *ŠtoRiJa* (Figure 96) which is the name of a local eatery that invites you to make it *tvoja priča* ‘your story’ and which offers *Lazagne, Pizze* (‘Lasagne, Pizzas’) and *Breakfast* with *Domaći kolači* ‘Local cakes’. Figure 97 shows the sign for a repair shop, *Riperaj*. This name is a play on words based on the prefix *RI* combined with the suffix *-eraj*, which refers to a physical entity in the same way that *-ery* does in English, e.g. *eatery, bakery*. With the letter ‘p’ inserted between these two elements, the outcome is a name that sounds related to *Repair*[*-ery*] in English. This form also sounds like the verb form of a made-up Anglicism *riperati* ‘to repair’ (cf. Cro. *reparatura* ‘repair’), occurring as a 2nd person singular informal imperative, *Riperaj!* ‘Repair [it]’!

Figure 95.

Figure 96.

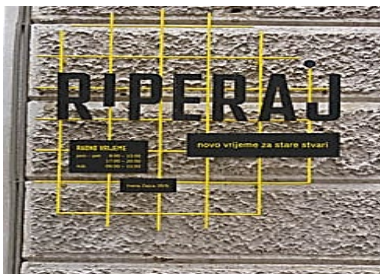

Figure 97.

Some of the signs that we identified above that index local identity contained Čakavian words. We locate other instances of whole sentences occurring in Čakavian that speak primarily to a local audience. A message on the side of a vehicle for a service provider of mobile phones reads *Ma neće meni posal uteć!* (Figure 98) meaning ‘Really no job will escape me’ suggesting that the provider is so reliable that any businessperson using their services will have no gaps in coverage. The words *posal* ‘job/work’ and the truncated form of the infinitive verb *utećiuteć* ‘escape’ are characteristic of the Rijeka vernacular.

Figure 98.

Figure 99.

We show above another image, this time a mural (Figure 99) that indexes a number of features characteristic of Rijeka, i.e. the registration number of the boat *RI 136*, an image of a fisherman and a seagull, contains two captions, both in the Čakavian dialect. Functioning as both a question as well as an assertion, the fisherman calls out to the seagull saying that the fish aren't biting with the words *Niš se ne ćapira?!* The seagull responds with the logical implication of this: *... zgljeda da će mu žena opet morat do marketa!* '… it looks like his wife will have to go to market again!'. Croatian Čakavian is not the only vernacular that indexes the local identity of Rijeka. *Fiumano*, the local variety of Italian that is spoken in Rijeka also performs this function. Due to the small number of speakers of Fiumano still living in Rijeka, examples of the use of Fiumano are hard to locate. One of the few examples that indexes local identity in this way is the name of a restaurant which bears a Fiuman name, *Molo longo*, meaning 'Long Wharf' (Figure 100).

Figure 100.

Looking back at signs, images and texts that relate specifically to Rijeka, we see that these are in standard Croatian such as *Volim grad koji teče* 'I love a city that flows', non-standard Croatian such as *Šta da* 'You don't say', in Latin such as *Indeficienter* 'Unfailing' / 'Unceasing' that can be found on the city's coat-of-arms, in Čakavian such as *Krepat ma ne molat* 'Die, but don't give up' and in Italian such as *Forza Fiume* 'Go Rijeka!'. The first phrase *Volim grad koji teče* is comprehensible to those residing elsewhere in Croatia due to the fact that it is widely known that Rijeka in Croatian means 'river' and that the Rječina river flows through the city. With the exception of the Latin motto *Indeficienter*, the other phrases are likely to be known to many people outside Rijeka as these phrases have become almost stereotypical memes in Croatian public life and popular culture that outsiders associate with the city. In this way, they appear as local 'badges of pride' that index, display and, and perhaps type-caste local identity. To 'outsiders', i.e. those living elsewhere in Croatia, these may appear as examples of people's local price. To the fellow citizens of Rijeka, i.e. to 'insiders', they may have a more performative function, i.e. 'this is how we overtly enact being citizens of Rijeka'. For some, this kind of performative act may also be a tongue-in-cheek way of displaying local identity.

Shops with names derived from the local Croatian Čakavian dialect that may not be immediately comprehensible to those outside the city or its immediate surrounds, such as *Koltrina* 'Curtains' or *Šilica* 'Seamstress', are not likely to be avoided by them as the products or services that the shops offer are usually evident due to their visual realia or their context. In a similar way, even full sentences or short dialogues in Čakavian are likely to be understood by outsiders due to visual, situational or other cues. In this way, we see that markers of local identity are usually recognised as such and that texts with local linguistic features are likely to be comprehensible to many if not most people who are not from Rijeka. Thus, we see that most texts are accessible and therefore do not exclude those from outside Rijeka. Many of them conform to, and perhaps even 'play up on' some of the stereotypical memes that outsiders have about Rijeka, e.g. *Forza Fiume* or *Šta da.* In relation to foreigners without proficiency in Croatian, the above-mentioned signs and texts are unlikely to be distinguishable from other, monolingual Croatian texts. In relation to the city's linguistic landscape, they are perhaps likely to be attuned to signage in other languages, particularly English. For them, signs identified in Section 4.3, such as *Wine Bar. Join us and taste excellent wine of top quality* or *Croatia in a box. So delicious. So Croatian* are likely to be identified as 'local' in the sense that they represent Croatian-specific products or services.

5. Conclusion

Revisiting the two research questions that we posed in Section 2, we summarise the following findings from our data sample. A characteristic of almost all signs or texts found on buildings or structures belong to public, state, or municipal authorities is that they are usually uniform in their appearance, referring here to their size, use of font, text and background colour, and use of the national, official coat-of-arms. In a legal sense, such signs and texts are required to conform to relevant legislation that relates to the linguistic code and form of signs of public buildings. The most relevant form of legislation here is contained in the Croatian constitution itself. Article 12 of the constitution specifies that the official language is "Croatian, written in the Roman-script alphabet". Thus, standard Croatian *must* be a component of all official signs that contain any text. Official signs can contain, alongside standard Croatian, text in other languages where local or regional legislation allows this. In Rijeka, the only language other than Croatian that this relates to is Italian. The instances of Italian occurring alongside Croatian in public/state/municipal signs are restricted mostly to educational institutions, i.e. those schools that provide instruction in Italian as a school subject or which have Italian as the language of instruction. Text in Italian is in the same font size and of the same appearance as text in Croatian. Here, we see the *top-down* influence of macro-level institutions in determining the appearance and form of official signs.

When looking at signs or texts relating to infrastructure, we see a greater variety of forms and appearances. Road signs that denote the name of a locality uniformly feature black text on a yellow background. Depending on the locality and its size, further place name signs can be found that have placed by local authorities that feature more visually appealing motifs as well as messages of welcome or bidding farewell. These function as examples of the way that a town or city wishes to present itself to travellers or tourists.

In relation to street signs that show the name of streets, we see that most of them, at least in the central part of the city feature black text that contrasts against a stone background. A feature of street names in Croatia that is different from the names of most streets in predominantly English-speaking

countries is that a very high proportion of them bear the name of a particular person. Details of that person, that is, the years of their birth and death, and other specific information relating to them is often provided below the street name. Thus, many street signs have not only a denotative function, but also an educational one as well. These are usually in Croatian, with some also featuring the same text in Italian alongside that in Croatian. This is, as mentioned above, in line with legal regulations in Rijeka. Signs relating to other forms of infrastructure such as no standing zones and parking are usually in Croatian only, with some containing accompanying English text in relation to charges for parking.

Further signs such as those for recycling feature visual images nearly much as they contain directions. In the Croatian language, masculine forms have traditionally been used as the generic for to apply to people in general, regardless of their gender. The same principle has been traditionally applied to human images, where masculine figures function as generic ones for all people. An eye-catching image of an image that does not conform to this practice can be found at some pedestrian signals at traffic lights that show the image of a female pedestrian instead of a male image. In this way, signs of local, regional or national bodies (e.g. Nacionalna klasifikacija zanimanja, 2010) are now starting to introduce language forms, as well as images, that are inclusive of both genders through the use of forms for each gender, e.g. *direktor* (m.) / *direktorica* (f.) for the concept of 'director', and *direktori* (m.) / *direktorice* (f.) as the plural form.

Turning to commercial/business texts and signs and texts, in principle, these signs are also supposed to conform to regulations that prescribe the use of Croatian as the national official language. Most commercial/business signs are in Croatian. Examples can be found where Anglicisms of recent vintage occur, such as the use of *bankarenje* 'banking', compound Croatian-English forms such as *Keks pay. Doma stay*, 'Pay quickly. Stay at home', hybrid forms such as *McChevap* and even English-origin acronyms, such as *OMG*. These signs index English forms not to attract international or foreign visitors but to address locals for whom reference to English is seen as a sign of efficiency, quality or international standards. Those signs that primarily address international or foreign visitors are often in English only, or in Croatian with English and/or other foreign languages, usually Italian or German. Some commercial signs of local businesses that are in both Croatian and Italian appear to address local Italian-speakers as well as those from Italy. We see some instances of gender-specific forms being used for female professions, i.e. *odvjetnica* (f.) 'lawyer' for a female legal professional. This is still a comparatively recent occurrence, but one that now reflects national and local guidelines as outlined in the previous paragraph. Instances of regionalisms can also be found, such as *butiga* 'shop' or *mići sir* 'small-size cheese', which usually refer to realia specific to the local area or particular culinary delights. Signs that contain Croatian Čakavian dialect are even rarer; where they occur, they appear to index qualities such as directness and familiarity, evident through use of the 2nd person, singular informal form *imaš* 'you have' rather than more formal *imate.*

Signs or texts from community or 'not-for-profit' organisations contain an even wider of visual and textual forms. Pictures, patterns, images and logos all feature in signs from these organisations. Examples of texts in the Glagolitic script can also be described as having a principally visual effect – it's likely that most people do not know the Glagolitic alphabet and they therefore view such as a text on the basis of its aesthetic appeal rather than on the basis of its referential meaning. The most common examples of transgressive texts are graffiti which are mostly in Croatian, sometimes containing colloquial or regional features. Few examples were found in English, and none in Italian.

Italian is present along with Croatian in the *Stolpersteine* that function as unexpected reminders of the fate of Rijeka's Jewish citizens during World War II.

Standard Croatian and non-standard, regionally-flavoured varieties, alongside the local Čakavian dialect and Italian, are the codes through with Rijeka's identity is indexed. Notwithstanding this, most examples of texts written in most of these codes are comprehensible to those from outside Rijeka and function as texts which 'perform' or 'enact' local identity rather than acting as exclusionary markers.

In sum, our study of Rijeka's linguistic landscape has sought not only to document texts and describe their features. We have endeavoured to interpret and explain how and why texts have the appearance they have. We refrain from blanket statements that bemoan the use of English and recognise the role and function of English as an undisputed lingua franca that enables messages and information to be conveyed to the many visitors who now come to Rijeka. In most cases, English does not replace Croatian: where it appears, it is much more likely to co-occur with Croatian. We have drawn attention to the occurrence of accompanying visual images that most often occur in commercial/business signs or in ones addressing primarily locals. These usually interact in a complementary way with surrounding written texts that creates an urban scenery that is rich in not only missives and messages, but also cultural references, visual aesthetics and identity markers. In this way, the multi-focus approach followed in this article advances our findings on linguistic landscapes in Croatian-speaking localities and represents a contribution to linguistic landscapes literature in general.

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Sažetak

Ova studija ispituje jezični krajolik Rijeke s naglaskom na znakove i tekstove vidljive u javnom prostoru. Razlikujemo pet kategorija: (1) javne, državne ili općinske regulatorne znakove odnosno tekstove javnih, državnih ili općinskih organa; (2) znakove odnosno tekstove koji se odnose na infrastrukturu javnih, državnih ili općinskih organa; (3) komercijalne ili poslovne tekstove; (4) znakove ili tekstove lokalnih udruga ili neprofitnih organizacija; te (5) tekstove označene kao transgresivne jer odudaraju od uobičajenih obilježja javnoga prostora. K tome dodajemo još jednu kategoriju: znakove i tekstove koji ukazuju na lokalni identitet Rijeke. Analiza otkriva sljedeće trendove: službeni znakovi na javnim zgradama napisani su na standardnom hrvatskom jeziku te su ujednačeni u pogledu fonta, boje i strukture. Talijanski se pojavljuje samo ondje gdje to dopuštaju lokalne odredbe, uglavnom u obrazovnim ustanovama, i uvijek s jednakim vizualnim statusom kao hrvatski jezik. Prometni znakovi slijede slične nacionalne konvencije, dok su natpisi koji označavaju nazive ulica na hrvatskom jeziku, ponekad i s prijevodom na talijanski. Na nekim se natpisima pojavljuju biografski detalji osoba po kojima su ulice imenovane, pri čemu takvi natpisi imaju informativnu i edukativnu funkciju. Vizualni su efekti uočljivi na dijelu prometnih znakova, dok malen broj znakova pokazuje obilježja rodno uključivog jezika. Komercijalni se tekstovi općenito pridržavaju jezičnih propisa, ali pokazuju veću kreativnost, uključujući anglicizme, hibridne hrvatsko-engleske oblike i regionalizme. Znakovi i tekstovi koje postavljaju lokalne udruge i neprofitne organizacije pokazuju najveću vizualnu raznolikost, povremeno koristeći glagoljično pismo radi estetskoga učinka, dok su transgresivni tekstovi, obično u obliku grafita, pretežno na hrvatskome. Kroz sve ove domene standardni hrvatski jezik, regionalni dijalekti i, u znatno manjoj mjeri, talijanski jezik ukazuju na lokalni identitet Rijeke. Znakovi i tekstovi prikupljeni na području grada Rijeke nisu samo predstavljeni, nego i podvrgnuti analizi kako bismo došli do interpretacije i kontekstualizacije svih vidljivih oznaka. Ova studija time predstavlja relevantne nalaze o upotrebi jezika u hrvatskom javnom prostoru i daje doprinos stručnoj literaturi o jezičnom krajoliku općenito.

Ključne riječi: jezični krajolik, sociolingvistika, urbanska semiotika, geosemiotika