

8 Superdiversity and Why It Isn't: Reflections on Terminological Innovation and Academic Branding

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In 2013, the UN announced that the number of international migrants worldwide had reached 232 million, up from 154 million in 1990. To capture the effects of this increase on the UK, Vertovec (2007) proposed a term superdiversity, which was then taken up by the sociolinguistic community (e.g. Blommaert, 2013; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). The purpose of this paper is to examine the process of sloganization by following the emergence of this term and its uptake in the field. I will show that, in contrast to terms such as 'autonomy' which have become empty slogans over time, 'superdiversity' has been conceived as a slogan from the start, in response to increasing pressure on scholars to distinguish their work via scholarly branding. The rapid and uncritical uptake of the term will be linked to the traditional roles of slogans – to rally, unite and sell.

Most of the words examined in this volume have a common trajectory – they began their lives as academic terms and then morphed into slogans. *Superdiversity* makes an interesting case study in this context as a word whose sloganization potential was apparent from the start. Coined by a scholar of migration, Vertovec (2007), to refer to the 'diversification of diversity' of migrants in the UK, the term soon expanded meaning and crossed disciplinary boundaries. In the span of five years, between 2011 and 2016, sociolinguists witnessed the appearance of two (!) books, one special issue, one conference and several research projects all bearing the same title: *Language(s) and Superdiversity(ies)*. Other titles are not far behind, sporting permutations of *superdiversity* and *linguistic* and *sociolinguistics* (Table 8.1). On the face of it, all that's conveyed by these near-identical titles is that *superdiversity* – whatever it is – is real and important for sociolinguistics. On a closer look, however, the uniformity and

Table 8.1 Language and superdiversity: Selected publications, conferences and grants, 2010–2016

Year	Selected publications	Selected conferences	Selected funded projects and research institutes
2010	Blommaert, J. (2010) <i>The Sociolinguistics of Globalization</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Creese, A. and Blackledge, A. (2010) Towards a sociolinguistics of superdiversity. <i>Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft</i> 13, 549–572 (Special Issue).		International Consortium for Language and Superdiversity (InCoLaS) formed with core members of Tilburg University, King's College London, Birmingham University, Copenhagen University, University of the Western Cape and University of Jyväskylä.
2011	Blommaert, J., Rampton, B. and Spotti, M. (eds) (2011) <i>Language and superdiversities. Diversities</i> 13 (2) and 14 (2) (Special Issue). Revised versions republished in a volume edited by Arnaut, K., Blommaert, J., Rampton, B. and Spotti, M. (2016b)		Project 'Superdiversity and Digital Language Practices' funded at the University of Hamburg (2011–2012).
2012	Mutsaers, P. and Swaneberg, J. (2012) Super-diversity at the margins? Youth language in North Brabant, The Netherlands. <i>Sociolinguistic Studies</i> 6 (1), 65–89.	Several colloquia and papers at the <i>Sociolinguistics Symposium</i> 19, Berlin, August 2012.	Academy of Finland funds 'Language and Superdiversity (Dis) identification in Social Media', a project at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland (2012–2016).
2013	Blommaert, J. (2013) <i>Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity</i> . Multilingual Matters. Duarte, J. and Gogolin, I. (eds) (2013) <i>Linguistic Superdiversity in Urban Areas</i> . John Benjamins. Møller, J. and Jørgensen, J. (2013) Organizations of language among adolescents in superdiverse Copenhagen. <i>International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education</i> 6 (1), 23–42.	<i>Language and Superdiversity: Explorations and Interrogations</i> . Conference at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, June 2013.	Institute for Research on Superdiversity (IRIS) established at the University of Birmingham, UK, with funded project 'Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities'.

(Continued)

Table 8.1 (Continued)

Year	Selected publications	Selected conferences	Selected funded projects and research institutes
2014	Androutsopoulos, J. and Juffermans, K. (2014) Digital language practices in superdiversity. <i>Discourse, Context & Media</i> 4–5 (Special Issue). Cadier, L. and Mar-Molinero, C. (2014) Negotiating networks of communication in a superdiverse environment: Urban multilingualism in the city of Southampton. <i>Multilingua</i> 33 (5–6), 505–524.	<i>Superdiversity: Theory, Method, and Practice in an Era of Change</i> . IRIS Conference at the University of Birmingham, UK, June 2014.	
2015	Goebel, Z. (2015) <i>Language and Superdiversity: Indonesians Knowledgeing at Home and Abroad</i> . Oxford University Press. Faudree, P. and Schulthies, B. (2015a) The social life of diversity talk. <i>Language & Communication</i> 44 (Special Issue). (Some of the papers.)	<i>Diversity and Superdiversity</i> . Georgetown University Round Table, March 2015.	
2016	Arnaut, K., Blommaert, J., Rampton, B. and Spotti, M. (eds) (2016b) <i>Language and Superdiversity</i> . Routledge. Toivanen, R. and Saarikivi, J. (eds) (2016) <i>Linguistic Genocide or Superdiversity?</i> Multilingual Matters. Jaspers, J. and Madsen, L. (2016a) Sociolinguistics in a languagised world. <i>Applied Linguistics Review</i> 7 (3) (Special Issue). (Some of the papers.)		

pervasiveness of the titles suggest that the launch of *superdiversity* as the 'it' word in the field is a strategic effort known as *academic branding*.

I do not question the usefulness of the word for migration studies – it is not my area of expertise and not my place to do so. Nor do I deny the reality of the so-called 'new migration'. I am a 'new migrant' as a matter of fact. Having fled the Soviet Union on the verge of its collapse, I celebrated my son's first birthday in a refugee settlement in Torvannica, Italy. And I

should have been thrilled to see that Western sociolinguists are interested in studying, 'legitimizing' and, dare I say, celebrating the experience of 'new migrants'. But instead of running out to get a badge *Je suis superdiversity*, I feel uneasy about the process that transformed a newly coined word into 'a fact on the ground' and the accompanying affective rhetoric, better suited for advertising than academia (*radical* changes, *unprecedented* increases, *hugely complex* linguistic practices). The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the reasons for this unease. I will begin with an overview of processing features that differentiate slogans from academic terms and strategies that turn slogans into academic brands. Then I will examine the meanings and functions of *superdiversity*, highlighting the referential indeterminacy of the term which renders it impervious to critique, and its use as a 'hot' brand name which adds market value and distinction to preexisting lines of research and promotes a new academic hierarchy and elite.

What's in a Name: How to Craft a Successful Slogan

In the increasingly corporatized and competitive environment of today's academia, scholars scramble to publish ever more articles in an ever-increasing number of journals to make an ever-greater 'impact on the field'. 'Modern academics', argues Billig (2013: 26), 'must be able to keep writing and publishing even when they have nothing to say'. But if all of us are busy writing, how do we achieve the desired impact? One way for senior academics to promote their approaches is to create new academic terms (or to borrow them from other fields), while junior scholars distinguish their research by adopting trendy keywords (Ahearn, 2013; Billig, 2013; Williams, 1983). But what makes some words sexier than others? The introduction to the volume *Language and Superdiversity* provides the following rationale for favoring *superdiversity* over potential competitors, such as *translocality*, *liquid modernity* and *global complexity*:

When compared with the range of other terms on offer (...) Vertovec's 'superdiversity' comes across as a primarily descriptive concept, limited in 'grand narrative' ambitions or explicit theoretical claims. (...) It spotlights the 'diversification of diversity' as a process to be investigated but it doesn't pin any particular explanation onto this. Indeed, the term 'superdiversity' is itself relatively unspectacular – 'super' implies complications and some need for rethinking, but 'diversity' aligns with a set of rather long-standing discourses. (Arnaut *et al.*, 2016a: 3–4)

The authors are being modest – the term is not *unspectacular* and there may be more thinking that went into its selection than this paragraph reveals. To probe this thinking, let us compare *superdiversity* and its competitors on features that differentiate slogans from academic terms. Studies of marketing define *slogans* as attention-grabbing and catchy words or phrases, used to distinguish a brand, a product, a cause or an

individual and create demand for the things they refer to. The key processing features of successful slogans are simplicity, memorability and emotionality (Alter, 2013; Ghanem & Selber, 2009; Strutton & Roswinanto, 2014).

Simplicity refers to the ease with which we recognize, pronounce and understand a word. Research shows that the ease of word processing (*processing fluency*) influences our attitudes towards people, objects and phenomena they name: drugs with easy-to-read names are deemed less risky; financial stocks with simple names outperform the rest; and people with easy-to-pronounce names are judged more positively and promoted faster than those whose names are long or irregularly spelled (Alter, 2013; Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009; Laham *et al.*, 2012). The words in our professional toolkit are not known for simplicity – they are often hard to articulate and even harder to understand, at least for the uninitiated (witness the cumbersome *performativity* or forbidding *entextualization*). In contrast, successful slogans are short, easy to pronounce and have transparent meanings, easily derived from their components (hence, the success of *Universal Grammar* over *generative* and *new media* over *digital*). The competitors of *superdiversity* do not rank highly on these criteria: *global complexity* is the opposite of *simplicity*, *liquid modernity* is anything but transparent, and *translocality* is neither transparent nor easy to utter due to pesky consonant clusters. *Superdiversity*, on the other hand, fits the criteria very nicely: its components are short and frequent English words with CV and CVC syllables, whose combined meaning is easily computed as ‘diversity, only bigger and better than ever before’.

Memorability describes words and phrases that can be retained after a single exposure. This criterion rarely affects the making of linguistic terms (as witnessed by anyone who ever tried to teach *epenthesis* or *subcategorization*) and it does not distinguish either *translocality* or *global complexity*. Successful slogans have to be catchy. Simplicity, transparency and ease of processing go a long way towards memorability, but to make slogans truly memorable experts often appeal to mnemonic devices, such as rhythm, alliteration, parallel constructions, word play, rhymes and jokes (e.g. *The news you can use* or Wendy’s *Where’s the beef?*) (Ghanem & Selber, 2009; Strutton & Roswinanto, 2014). A common strategy in the humanities these days is to add modifiers *new*, *super* and *big* to already familiar terms (e.g. *big data*, *new speakers*) (Reyes, 2014). The modifier *super* is particularly useful, for it is increasingly popular in the ‘real world’, where young people are *super hungry*, *super busy* and *super sad* (Ferris, 2014). Contrary to the claim we saw earlier, *super* does not imply complications and the need for rethinking – rather, it suggests that the said *diversity* exceeds the implied norm in excellence and size. What makes *superdiversity* memorable is the witty polysemy of *super* – reminiscent of Orwell’s (1949) *doubleplus* – combined with its contemporary feel and sheer novelty in sociolinguistics.

Yet we could also make new words that would be simple and memorable, so why not *glonk* or *frump*? The third criterion that distinguishes slogans is *emotionality*, i.e. the ability to trigger positive associations and a cheerful emotional response. Academic terms can become affectively loaded yet at the outset they are neither evaluative nor emotion-laden (frankly, it is hard to get excited about *loan translation* or *scalarity*). In contrast, slogans have to compel people to buy the product, support the campaign or join the movement they represent. The best way to trigger such response in the English-speaking world is by crafting a ‘positive message’, encoded in short ‘power words’ loaded with positive affect, such as *pro*, *yes* or *great* (Storey, 1997). This strategy explains the success of the labels *Pro-life* and *Pro-choice*, De Beers’ ever-lasting *A diamond is forever*, Nike’s irresistible trademark *Just Do It*, and slogans that won US presidential elections, such as Obama’s *Yes We Can* and Trump’s *Make America Great Again*.

The emphasis on bright-sidedness also made inroads in Western academia, as seen in the increased use of *new*, *super* and *big* (Reyes, 2014), the popularity of *the bilingual advantage* and *conviviality*, and the rise of the science of happiness, *positive psychology* (for an illuminating discussion of this rise, see Ehrenreich, 2009). Of course, slogans can also harness negative affect, as seen in *language endangerment*, yet it is not accidental that linguists are rallied to *save* endangered languages (for insightful analysis of the rhetoric of language endangerment, see Duchêne & Heller, 2007). *Global complexity*, *liquid modernity* and *translocality* do not convey positive messages and neither do *glonk* and *frump*, nor the prefix *hyper-*, rejected by Vertovec:

The (...) reason why hyperdiversity is an unfortunate term is that ‘hyper-’ can inherently suggest that something is overexcited, out of control and therefore generally negative or undesirable (like hyperactivity or hyperinflation). Again, ‘super-’ is our preferred modifier in order to emphasize the sense of superseding, or addressing what is ‘above and beyond’ what was previously there. (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015: 545)

In the end, *superdiversity* is superior because it is likeable (*glonk* and *frump* not so much). *Diversity* connotes a desirable (at least in academic circles) state of affairs and the superlative prefix *super-* takes the positive charge through the roof, linking *superdiversity* to other perennial favorites, from Superman to the Super Bowl. The change in affective footing – away from depressing treatments of linguistic diversity as an endangered phenomenon (e.g. Evans, 2010; Harrison, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) towards happy celebrations of increasing linguistic diversity – makes the slogan even more appealing and memorable. ‘Superdiversity’, argues Makoni (2012: 193), appeals to us because it ‘contains a powerful sense of social romanticism, creating an illusion of equality in a highly asymmetrical world, particularly in contexts characterized by a search for

homogenization'. Simple, catchy, youthful and relentlessly optimistic and bright, *superdiversity* resonates with those who look for positive messages and causes for celebration in ways *translocality*, *commodification* or *linguistic landscapes* do not.

Now I am not saying that terminological innovation is a problem – in academia, it is par for the course. Rather than an egregious culprit, simple words are a welcome development in the sea of murky jargon, replete with *enregisterment*, *semiotization* and endless *problematizing* (for a brilliant critique of academic rhetoric and long nouns that dress up banalities as profundities, see Billig, 2013). The problem arises when keywords are turned into slogans whose function is to promote academic brands. To follow this transformation, let us now turn to the strategies that made *superdiversity* a hot item in the sociolinguistic marketplace.

The Art of the Sell: How to Make an Academic Brand

Slogans have several aims: (a) to distinguish the product from competing products (e.g. *Nike's Just Do It*, *new media*); (b) to create a positive impression of the product or the individual (e.g. *Trump's Make America Great Again*, *positive psychology*); (c) to deliver a message that shapes public opinion (e.g. De Beers' *A diamond is forever*, *the bilingual advantage*); and (d) to create the need and desire for the brand, product, cause or individual they serve (all of the above). Summed up in one word, slogans have to *sell* (after all, Trump did win the election, De Beers' slogan of the century made diamond engagement rings a must, Nike's *Just Do It* campaign resulted in a larger share of the exercise gear market and *positive psychology* cornered a lucrative niche in the corporate world). Clearly, even the best-crafted slogans cannot accomplish this task on their own – they need to be integrated into promotional campaigns. *Superdiversity* allows us to examine one such campaign and to identify ten strategies behind the academic art of the sell.

As seen in Table 8.1, the trajectory of *superdiversity* follows a regular academic path: publications, conferences and grants. What is remarkable about it is its speed: left to their own devices, scholarly ideas take years or even decades to gestate before they inspire conference themes, Wiki entries and handbooks (the one on languages and *superdiversity* is on the way). *Governmentality*, for instance, took two decades to become a popular keyword (Billig, 2013). Yet there is also a way to speed up the process. Writing like academic advertisers, 'self-declared experts can commercially market big new words as big new ideas', since we 'cannot have a new approach, theory or insight, unless we have a new noun to promote' (Billig, 2013: 11). But how do we know whether the enthusiastic uptake of *superdiversity* is spontaneous or a result of an academic branding campaign? To answer this question, let us compare the rise of *superdiversity* to that of other keywords, such as *Universal Grammar* and *linguistic landscapes*.

The first step in a branding campaign is *adoption of a slogan* promoting the brand. In academia, the best brand names function as their own slogans (e.g. *positive psychology*), as is the case sometimes in the 'real world' (e.g. *Pro-life*, *Pro-choice*). *Universal Grammar* and *superdiversity* make excellent slogan-brands promoting everyone's grammar and good, no, great diversity. In contrast, *commodification* triggers negative associations, *new speakers* remind us of Newspeak, and *linguistic landscapes* fail to deliver a message or elicit an emotional response.

The second step involves *proprietary branding* which links the brand with the names of individual scholars. Such links are effortless when the individuals in question did come up with the actual idea, theory, finding or, at least, term: the *Universal Grammar* is undisputedly Noam Chomsky's baby, the *bilingual advantage* is a signature finding of Ellen Bialystok and *positive psychology* is the brainchild of Martin Seligman. *Linguistic landscapes*, on the other hand, are not linked to a single name. *Superdiversity* was coined by Vertovec, yet an imported name can be rebranded once it is attractively repackaged. The repackaging for sociolinguistics took place in the special issue of an online journal *Diversities* (2011). Then, the ownership was claimed by Blommaert (2015) who distanced himself from both Vertovec and his own co-author by stating: 'my approach to superdiversity (e.g. Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) differs quite substantially from the original formulations proposed by Steven Vertovec' (Blommaert, 2015: 86).

The third and fourth strategies involve *institutionalization* of the brand through centers, conferences, handbooks and journals, combined with *endless recycling* of the brand name in the titles of the said publications, centers, symposia and grants. The endless recycling strategy raises the visibility of the brand and enhances its acceptance, based on the cognitive effect documented in studies of marketing and truth-value judgments: frequently repeated and easy-to-recall statements are perceived as more truthful (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). The conflation of repetition with truthfulness is particularly useful in contexts where the audience is asked to accept claims as articles of faith, as is the case with *superdiversity* which – unlike *commodification* or *linguistic landscapes* – became a keyword *before* it became subject to research.

To secure such acceptance, academic branding relies on the fifth strategy, *intentionally vague language* which makes the claims exempt from critiques, and the sixth strategy, *affective rhetoric*, which frames the phenomena in question in superlative terms (*radical*, *unprecedented*, *hugely complex*, *tremendously important*). I will return to these strategies later on but first let us consider a peculiarity of the trajectory in Table 8.1 that reveals a strategy unique to academia and one that distinguishes *superdiversity* from *commodification* and *linguistic landscapes*.

Strikingly, the majority of sociolinguistic publications with *superdiversity* in the title have appeared as monographs, edited volumes or

articles in special issues, working papers and journals not known for rigorous peer-review (and, in some cases, not known at all), or simply as 'research materials' available on academic networking sites, such as Academia, and the sites of the various research centers. Missing from the record are articles in top sociolinguistic journals, such as *Language in Society* or *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. The rationale for the heavy reliance on web publishing is found on the site of Babylon, the Center for the Study of Superdiversity:

In order to lower the threshold of publishing for junior researchers, to stimulate the dialogue and debate on research materials across disciplines, and to improve and expedite the circulation of research materials, we started the electronic working papers series Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies (TPCS) in the Fall of 2011. (<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/research/institutes-and-research-groups/babylon/about-babylon/>, emphasis added)

The same strategy of, um, *lowering the threshold of publishing* is adopted by senior researchers and rationalized by Blommaert (2014) as a break-away from commercial publishers. What remains unacknowledged is the fact that the free-for-all also skips peer-review, making research articles an equivalent of academic blog posts. The haste is particularly apparent in the special issue of *Diversities* (2011), which – in an unusual move – was revised and republished five years later as an edited volume (Arnaut *et al.*, 2016b). Revisions made in the papers respond to some of the criticisms of *superdiversity* made since 2011 but now they are addressing a paradigm in existence, a fait accompli.

The strategy of uniting and rallying supporters by *lowering the threshold of publishing* for both junior and senior scholars is far from novel – in the 1960s and 1970s, Chomsky and his followers also circulated unpublished work to make Generative Grammar the dominant paradigm in linguistics (Huck & Goldsmith, 1995). Today, as then, the launch of a new paradigm requires social networking and it is often the charisma of the leaders, the sense of belonging to the in-group and the excitement of privileged access to new ideas (so new they have not been published yet!) that account for success of new academic brands. The game-changing role of the 'new' media is in 'expediting the circulation of research materials' and simplifying the access for potential consumers and prosumers. The eighth and ninth branding strategies, therefore, are *social networking* and *creation of the digital footprint* that facilitate distribution of published, semi-published and unpublished work and generate excitement and support. The tenth strategy, successfully used by Chomsky and his supporters to squash the opposition, involves ruthless ad hominem attacks on those who oppose the new paradigm. But perhaps those who launch revolutionary new paradigms have no choice but to publish rapidly, skipping reviews by their more orthodox and conservative peers?

To answer this question, we need to go beyond analyses of why *superdiversity* makes a good slogan and how it was transformed into a brand and determine what *superdiversity* is. Is it a novel finding, like *the bilingual cognitive advantage*? Or perhaps a research focus and a method, like *linguistic landscapes*? Or is it a theoretical paradigm, like *Universal Grammar*? And what are the differences between the ways in which it is treated by Vertovec and Blommaert?

What is Superdiversity?

Manufacturing of consent: Superdiversity, the diversity we can believe in

Pinning down the meaning of *superdiversity* is not an easy task. In his much-cited paper, Vertovec (2007) introduced the keyword (with a dash) as a way to describe new patterns of migration in the UK that surpassed anything the country had experienced in the past. His goal was to capture the complexity of recent sociodemographic phenomena and it still appears to be one intended meaning of the term, reconfirmed by Meissner and Vertovec (2015):

Super-diversity is a term coined to portray changing population configurations particularly arising from global migration flows over the past thirty-odd years. The changing configurations not only entail the movement of people from more varied national, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds, but also the ways that shifts concerning these categories or attributes coincide with a worldwide diversification of movement flows through specific migration channels ... (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015: 542)

The same meaning was then adopted in sociolinguistics (Blommaert, 2013; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Duarte & Gogolin, 2013), with pre-1990 migration described as follows:

Migration prior to the early 1990s was a **well-regulated phenomenon**, organized on a cross-national basis in such a way that the profiles of 'migrants' into Western European societies were rather **clearly defined and predictable**. (Blommaert, 2013: 4, emphasis added)

An expanded version of this claim can be found on the site of the eponymous conference:

During the past few decades, the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world has changed radically, producing **complexity of a different kind** than what has traditionally been captured in the notion of multiculturalism. Superdiversity manifests itself in such demographic and social changes as the **tremendous** increase in the categories of migrants, in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language and religion, and also in terms of motives, patterns and careers as migrants, processes of insertion into, settling in and interactions with the host societies. (<https://www.jpnu.fi/en/congress/superdiversity/theme>, emphasis added)

Brand name consultants often say that a great name takes reality and alters it just a little bit (Colapinto, 2011). This formula also applies to *superdiversity* in its guise as a descriptive term. The reality is incontrovertible: international migration reports reveal that between the years 1990 and 2013 the number of international migrants has increased by 50%, from 154 million to 232 million (UN DESA, 2013; WMR, 2015). What is altered is the significance of these raw numbers on the global stage. The analysis of global migration patterns by Czajka and de Haas (2014) shows that, while an absolute number of international migrants has increased, the world population grew even faster; as a consequence, the proportion of global migrants has *decreased* from 3.1% of the world population in 1960 to 2.7% in 2000. They also found that in the Americas and the Pacific the numbers have increased but the diversity of the categories has not.

These findings are echoed in recent migration reports that highlight marked differences between the developed North, where migrants constitute 10.8% of the population, and developing regions where they constitute only 1.6% and where some countries are neither an important source nor destination for migration flows. They also show that in 2013, 51% of the world's migrants were living in ten countries: USA, Russian Federation, Germany, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, UK, France, Canada, Australia and Spain (UN DESA, 2013; WMR, 2015). The concentration of migrants in a 'shrinking pool of prime destination countries' (Czajka & de Haas, 2014: 315), many of them small countries in Western Europe, led Czajka and de Haas (2014: 314) to conclude that 'the idea that immigration has become more diverse may partly reveal a Eurocentric worldview'.

The bias becomes even more apparent when we face the fact that Europe in discussions of *superdiversity* is a stand-in for Western Europe, while Eastern Europe is ignored as its bland and irrelevant periphery. Yet a closer look at Eastern European – or, for that matter, Central Asian – trends offers a salutary insight for Western European sociolinguistics: migration does not necessarily increase ethnolinguistic diversity: efforts to create ethno-nationalist states from the ruins of Yugoslavia and the USSR triggered the process Brubaker (1998) termed *ethnic unmixing*, and in-migration of the titulars. As a result, the proportion of titulars has increased in successor states of the former Yugoslavia and USSR, with the exception of the Russian Federation. In Kazakhstan, for instance, in 1959 Kazakhs constituted 30% of the population; by 2009 the proportion of Kazakhs rose to 63.1%. Even stronger homogenization can be observed in Azerbaijan, where the proportion of Azeris rose from 67.5% in 1959 to 91.6% in 2009 (CIS Statistics, 2013). A similar trend can be observed in Croatia, where between 1991 and 2011 the proportion of Croats increased from 78.1% to 90.4% and the proportion of Serbs decreased from 12.2%

to 4.4% (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). This census data may undoubtedly conceal some diversification on the ground yet it is as legitimate as the data used to 'reveal' *superdiversity*.

But if migration cannot be assumed to increase ethnolinguistic diversity, how do we know which societies are *superdiverse*? One answer to this question can be found on the website *Ethnologue*, dedicated to the study of linguistic diversity. The makers of *Ethnologue* are very open about the ambiguity of the construct of *language*, problems inherent in counting languages by their areas of origin and the difficulties of counting them at all (Lewis *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, they do offer a general assessment, based on Greenberg's (1956) *linguistic diversity index*, which computes the probability that any two people of the country, selected at random, would have different mother tongues. The highest score on this scale is 1 (no two people have the same mother tongue) and the lowest 0 (everyone has the same mother tongue). The calculation of the score – far from perfect but fully transparent – is based on population statistics.

The countries with the highest linguistic diversity score – over 0.8 – are Benin, Bhutan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, East Timor, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea (off the charts at 0.988%), Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Vanuatu and Zambia. The UK with a score of 0.15 is on the lower end of the chart. The list is consistent with the spread of the world's languages, whereby Asia, Africa and the Pacific house the majority (32.4%, 30.1% and 18.5%, respectively), while Europe is home to a measly 4% (Lewis *et al.*, 2016). These statistics are undoubtedly familiar to scholars of *superdiversity*, given the number of Africanists in their midst, yet they do not affect their research since European funders are more interested in Belgium than in Papua New Guinea.

In sum, even a very brief look at worldwide migration trends reveals a few inconvenient truths: (a) the intensity and diversity of migration have *not* increased worldwide but they have increased in Western Europe; (b) migration does *not* necessarily increase ethnolinguistic diversity, as seen in Eastern European and Central Asian census data, but it did increase it in Western Europe; (c) the rise in the number of languages spoken is particularly tangible because of the *low* linguistic diversity in Europe – the centers of *linguistic diversity* are located in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. These facts raise an uncomfortable question: Why should we look at the world through a Western European lens? An equally uncomfortable answer is that many influential sociolinguists reside in the countries affected by the new migration (for an overview of Westernizing mechanisms in sociolinguistics, see Smakman, 2015). This privileging of the local in the guise of the global reminds me of the response the namesake of American TV series *Ally McBeal* gave to the question: 'Ally, what makes your problems bigger than everyone else's?' 'They are MINE!'

But there is an even bigger problem in using *superdiversity* as a descriptor: 'diversity defies definition' (Meissner, 2015: 559). While some authors use census data to prove that their contexts are *superdiverse* and others differentiate between more and less *superdiverse* contexts, there is no heuristic that determines at what point *diversity* morphs into *superdiversity*. 'The use of "superdiverse" as a descriptive adjective', argues Deumert (2014: 116), 'is a theoretical cul-de-sac, because the complexities brought about by diversity in the social world ultimately defy numerical measurement.' Tagging on *super-* does not solve the problem but amplifies it, requiring us to accept that which cannot be defined as an article of faith.

The adepts of *superdiversity* recognize the dangers of reliance on the intangible *je ne sais quoi*. The purpose of the affective rhetoric (*radical, tremendous, unprecedented*) is to facilitate the process an American journalist Walter Lippman aptly called *the manufacture of consent*. They also have an alternative definition: a 'superdiverse society is a society in which ethnicity, culture, language and religion have no guarantees' (Juffermans *et al.*, 2014: 49). The difference between linguistically diverse and *superdiverse* societies, therefore, is one of quality, not of quantity:

Superdiversity differs from diversity or mere societal multilingualism, a characteristic of just about all African societies, in the way it reflects the unmooring of correlations between populations and languages that is then magnified through digital mediation. (McLaughlin, 2014: 36–37)

Exposing the naiveté of those who saw *superdiversity* as 'the increasing presence of "more ethnic groups"' (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015: 543), the new definitions free us from the need to define categories and calculate numbers and make *superdiversity* a feature of our age.

Truthiness: The times they are a-changin'

Echoing Bob Dylan's timeless lyrics, the work on *superdiversity* reminds us that times are a-changin' or have already changed, as seen in Blommaert's (2010) confident claim:

Now that times have changed and we are looking at a world that can no longer be neatly divided into clear and transparent categories, the theoretical paradigms need to be revised as well. (Blommaert, 2010: xiv, emphasis added)

This age of *superdiversity* can apparently be summed up in three words: mobility, complexity and unpredictability' (Blommaert, 2013: 6; see also <http://superdiversity.net/>). Historians – not surprisingly – take exception to such claims of contemporary exceptionalism and 'dismiss the entire superdiversity debate as yet more hype' (De Bock, 2015: 583). Studies of globalization history show compellingly that each historic development be it the emergence of the first cities, the invention of writing, the Roman road-building craze or the Victorian telegraph – created

unprecedented surges of mobility and connectivity, with new flows of ideas, people and goods creating ever more expanded and far-flung trans-cultural networks (e.g. Bellwood, 2013; Frankopan, 2015; Jennings, 2011). The sense of time-space compression experienced by users of today's Facebook has parallels among the recipients of Mesopotamian clay letters, the beneficiaries of the Ptolemaic postal system, and Londoners for whom the telegraph was as revolutionary as the internet is for us (Standage, 1998, 2013).

The 'diversification of existing diversity' is also far from novel, for it characterizes any sequence of migrations. Take, for instance, the USA. Prior to the 1880s, immigrants to the New World hailed primarily from Western and Northern Europe and, with the exception of the Catholic Irish, were seen as reasonably assimilable. In the period between 1880 and 1924, this diversity was diversified by almost 24 million of the 'new migrants', largely from Southern and Eastern Europe and from the lower economic strata. These new arrivals were seen as racially, morally and culturally inferior to the mainstream population and migrants of the old. They also came in much greater numbers: by 1910, 14.8% of the total US population was foreign born and so were 58% of school-age children in the nation's largest cities and 72% of the kids in New York (Weiss, 1982). This unprecedented influx raised numerous concerns about national unity and the capacity of the American society to assimilate such a large body of newcomers, not unlike the anxieties raised by the refugee flows of today. The same diversification is documented in the recent Western European past: De Bock's (2015) study of migration in Ghent in 1960–1980 shows that 'the image of post-war immigrant populations as largely undifferentiated groups of people is related to an ahistorical and static approach towards these populations' (De Bock, 2015: 585).

Historians also know that it is human nature to experience one's own era as unique, to yearn for the Golden Age when the world was, in Blommaert's (2010: xiv) unforgettable words, 'neatly divided into clear and transparent categories', and to experience the invasion of 'others' as unprecedented. Roman historian Pompeius Trogus lamented that Gaul had been turned into Greece and English chronicler William of Malmesbury complained bitterly that 'England has become a dwelling place of foreigners and a playground for lords of alien blood' (Morris, 2016: n.p.). These lines could easily invoke the refugee camps of Calais (Will Brexit rid us of the troublesome throng?) and real estate prices in London, inflated by the oil money of Arab potentates and ubiquitous new Russians, if not for the fact that they were written circa 1125. The vacuous terms *mobility, complexity* and *unpredictability* apply to human lives in any era of human history, an insight not lost on Silverstein (2015: 9), who gently reminds us that what we call the English language has existed under conditions of *superdiversity* since the end of the 8th century CE. A historian of globalization Jennings (2011: 17) warns that 'we need to be

wary of this sense of radical difference. Although every age is indeed unique, people in each age have tended to accentuate the differences with the past and downplay the similarities'. The times, they are always a-changin' and the use of slogans to trigger the sense of contemporary exceptionalism is a prime example of a rhetorical strategy the American comedian Stephen Colbert calls *truthiness*, an appeal to gut feeling without any regard for evidence, logic or facts.

Historians' concerns have been heard by the makers of *superdiversity*, prompting them to hedge their bets and argue that the spread, speed and scale of many social processes 'are at least perceived to be more elaborate today' (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015: 547) and that the difference is in ways diversity is perceived and talked about (Juffermans *et al.*, 2014: 49). In fact, treating these phenomena as 'real' may be distracting:

referring to superdiversity as a social phenomenon obscures the notion's analytic potential – that is, its potential to unveil and make accessible for study social complexity as it relates to migration but with the possibility to address issues beyond the impacts of migration alone. (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015: 547)

And here it is: just when we thought we caught its slippery tail, *superdiversity* makes a feint, sheds its old skin and reappears as an analytical lens or a symbiosis of the lens and the social context it is applied to. This approach enables scholars to have their cake and eat it too: they can 'uncover' *superdiversity* by bringing in the right tools or decide a priori that the context and participants they are interested in are *superdiverse*. It also appears that some groups are more *superdiverse* than others: in her perceptive analysis of the *superdiversity* craze, Piller (2016) points out that the locus of diversity is invariably migrants and descendants of *cer-tain* migrants, like Jews who – after residing in England for more than a millennium – are treated as *old diversity*, while the descendants of Romans, Angles, Saxons, Vikings and Normans have managed to blend in. But perhaps this is all for the greater good because calling things *super-diverse* allows us to notice and theorize new forms of multilingual behavior, right?

Where's the beef? Newspeak as the emperor's new clothes

In his book *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes*, Blommaert (2013) makes an intriguing claim: *superdiverse* environments are distinguished by new multilingual behaviors, which forced sociolinguists to develop new vocabulary:

the many new forms of multilingual communicative behavior that seem to characterize the present world, and for which scholars have developed terms such as 'languaging,' 'polylinguaging,' 'crossing,' 'metrolingu-ism,' 'transidiomatic practices' and so forth. (...) In *superdiverse*

environments (both online and offline), people appear to take any linguistic and communicative resource available to them – a broad range typically, in *superdiverse* contexts – and blend them into *highly complex* linguistic and semiotic forms. (Blommaert, 2013: 8, emphasis added)

These new behaviors, evidenced both offline and online, appear to follow the new *polylingual norm*, according to which

Language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages; this entails that the language users may know – and use – the fact that some of the features are perceived by some speakers as not belonging together. (Jørgensen *et al.*, 2011: 34)

In fact, *superdiverse* environments appear to have produced whole new languages, *supervernaculars*, the term coined and defined by Blommaert (2011) as

a descriptor for new forms of semiotic codes emerging in the context of technology-driven globalization processes. Supervernaculars are widespread codes used in communities that do not correspond to 'traditional' sociolinguistic speech communities, but as deterritorialized and transidiomatic communities that, nonetheless, appear to create a solid and normative sociolinguistic system. (Blommaert, 2011: 2)

Leaving aside facile uses of *semiotic* as an adjective that continue to puzzle scholars of semiotics (e.g. Gottdiener, 2012: 107), let's see what *the many new forms of multilingual communicative behavior* actually are. Taking a closer look at the studies listed in Table 8.1, I made a striking discovery: the new migrations made *no impact* on the languages of the host populations. Unlike the Norman conquest of the British Isles, the Muslim invasion of Spain, Sicily and Malta or colonial expansions of the modern era, the languages of new migrants do not seem to affect the repertoires of their hosts, beyond a cameo appearance in youth vernaculars – the only people who engage in the 'new' multilingual practices are immigrants themselves. Even *superdiversity* scholars who write about them do so in standard academic English: 'sociolinguists' deconstruction of languages as bounded codes', note Jaspers and Madsen (2016b: 237), 'does not seem to preclude their continuing professional commitment to this idea.'

Even more disappointingly, migrants' practices fail to deliver the promised *highly complex linguistic forms*: the dominant trends are towards homogenization and normativity (Belling & De Bres, 2014; Sharma, 2014) and creation of new enclaves of homogeneity (Juffermans *et al.*, 2014; Mutsaers & Swanenberg, 2012). Most importantly, the *new polylingual norm* and the *unprecedented unmooring* of relations between language, ethnicity and religion turn out to have numerous historic precedents, for they describe business as usual in multilingual contexts and are extensively documented in the ancient and medieval worlds (e.g. Adams, 2003; Beale-Rivaya, 2012; Bresc, 2001; Constable, 1997; Forster, 1970;

Hsy, 2013; Lóglu, 2010; Metcalfe, 2003; Mullen & James, 2012). The only reason why the claims of novelty went as far as they did is the ahistoricity of the field of sociolinguistics, firmly rooted in the present moment and resolutely divorced from its historical counterpart and sociolinguistic explorations by classicists and medievalists (for critiques of ahistoricity of the *superdiversity* approach, see also Flores & Lewis, 2016; Piller, 2016).

But if you are beginning to suspect that *crossing* and *translanguaging* are not really *new*, the makers of *superdiversity* are one step ahead of you. Effortlessly contradicting their own earlier statements, they explain that the practices are not new but the vocabulary is:

Translanguaging and crossing are different from codeswitching not **nomenclologically** but **theoretically** in that codeswitching *grosso modo* takes a structural perspective on bilingual text or talk whereas translanguaging focuses primarily on what speakers actually do and achieve by drawing on elements from their repertoires in situated contexts. A translanguaging perspective looks at people not as *having* or *using* a language or identity but as *performing* repertoires of identities by means of a range of linguistic–semiotic resources acquired over the course of one's life trajectory through membership of or participation in various communities of practice. (Juffermans *et al.*, 2014: 49, emphasis added)

The 'new ways of doing sociolinguistics' (Juffermans *et al.*, 2014: 48) enable us to 'grapple head-on with complexity' (Deumert, 2014: 118), but to do so we need to acquire Newspeak and relegate Oldspeak to the memory hole:

So although notions like 'native speaker,' 'mother tongue' and 'ethnolinguistic group' have considerable ideological force (and as such should certainly feature as *objects* of analysis), they should have no place in the sociolinguistic toolkit itself. (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011: 5)

These clarifications forced me to reread the publications listed in Table 8.1 with an eye on their contributions to sociolinguistic theory. In doing so, I made another startling discovery: some studies with *superdiversity* in the title never mention it in the text and few, if any, actually use the recommended apparatus in more than a perfunctory way. It is, in fact, shocking to see how much the new sociolinguistics depends on the Oldspeak, including the – presumably undesirable and theoretically inadequate – notion of *language*.

The list begins with Blommaert's (2013) own study of linguistic landscapes which relies – as pointed out by Hinrichs (2015) – on the very approach disparaged by the author: reifying languages as emic units, Blommaert counts the total number of languages on signs in Oud Berchem, yielding Dutch and French, plus 22 others. Other studies of *superdiversity* are equally permeated by references to *languages* and *language varieties* (e.g., Cadier & Mar-Molinero, 2014; Charalambous *et al.*, 2016; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Goebel, 2015; Maly, 2016; McLaughlin, 2014; Spotti, 2013; Varis & Wang, 2011), *lingua francas* (e.g., Belling & de Bres, 2014;

Jacquemet, 2015), *code-switching* and *code-mixing* (e.g., Belling & de Bres, 2014; Manosuthikit & De Costa, 2016; Swanwick *et al.*, 2016), *loan words* (e.g., Jørgensen *et al.*, 2011), and *heritage* and *second language speakers* (e.g., Manosuthikit & De Costa, 2016; Rampton, 2016). This lack of engagement parallels migration studies, where Meissner's (2015) meta-analysis identified four strands: (1) studies that use *superdiversity* to recognize multidimensionality (39%); (2) studies that use it to refer to increased ethnic diversity (38%); (3) studies that use it as a catch phrase, without explaining why they use it (17%); and (4) studies that employ it in their empirical analysis (6%).

One likely reason for this reluctance is the difficulty in deciding what *superdiversity* is. What started out as a modest reference to 'diversification of diversity' in the UK has expanded to global demographics (*superdiverse societies*), time (*the era of superdiversity*), people (*superdiverse participants*), language (*superdiverse practices*), media (*digital superdiversity*), and a theoretical paradigm all in one. Unlike *linguistic landscapes* and *language commodification* – both of which have a limited scope of reference – the referential indeterminacy of *superdiversity* allows its users, in a manner reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, to make it mean whatever they want it to mean.

Note, though, that while semantic excess may be a disadvantage for academic terms, it is an asset for slogans: vagueness allows them to reach the widest range of consumers (Strutton & Roswinanto, 2014). In academia, referential indeterminacy and the ever-changing definitions also have an additional plus: they make slogans impervious to critique. *Universal Grammar* is a great example of this moving target strategy: shifting the goal posts with each new reincarnation of his theory, Chomsky has managed to protect his brand for more than half a century, making linguists utterly dependent on his latest – often unpublished – manuscripts. The only things that have remained constant since the 1960s are the impenetrable writing style and reification of a metaphor as a real entity (albeit elusively out of reach).

Billig (2013) argues that impenetrable writing is an extremely useful strategy for social scientists, for it confers an aura of intellectual superiority: 'the persistently obscure writer' is, for him, 'like a bully, who tries to humiliate others into submission' (Billig, 2013: 4). Reification is equally useful but in a different way: 'by depicting the concepts as agents in the world', writers distance themselves from their own creations and succeed in making discursively constructed notions appear real ('something that has established itself') and in 'accentuating their importance, or, to use current slang, bigging them up' (Billig, 2013: 139, 141).

Now the same strategies are used by the makers of *superdiversity* who reify an abstract noun as an agent and an astroturning voice that 'questions the foundations of our knowledge' (Blommaert, 2013: 6). Blommaert's (2015) latest reincarnation of *superdiversity* rescinds all and any claims about new phenomena and fixed concepts and reintroduces *superdiversity*

as a paradigmatic project, a *tactic* in other words, not a subdiscipline – it is defined primarily by a theoretical and methodological explorative perspective rather than by a set of specifically ‘superdiverse’ phenomena or a fixed set of concepts. (...) This perspective revolves around the acceptance of *uncertainty* in sociolinguistic analysis. (Blommaert, 2015: 83)

Uncertainty is indeed the keyword here, for it captures the very purpose of the moving target strategy – to place us in a situation where meanings are uncertain and have to be defined for us by those who know best and can confidently instruct us to ‘use this, not that’. The only difference between the two slogan-brands is that *Universal Grammar* is a bona fide theory, whose reiterations are diligently applied by its adepts, while *superdiversity* is a theory look-alike.

The troubling discrepancy between the enthusiastic uptake of the keyword and the obvious reluctance (or even inability) to use it as an analytical lens suggests that *superdiversity* fails as a theoretical framework because it ‘reproduces the same normative assumptions that it purports to be critiquing’ (Flores & Lewis, 2016: 108). ‘The vocabulary may have changed’, quips Orman (2012: 350), but ‘the ultimately flawed conceptualization of what goes on during linguistic communication has not’. The very terms *translanguaging*, *polylinguaging*, *crossing* and *truncated repertoires* are anchored in the idea of languages as codes, whose idealized norms and wholes we *truncate* and whose boundaries we may or may not *cross* (Flores & Lewis, 2016; Jaspers & Madsen, 2016b; Makoni, 2012; Orman, 2012, 2013). ‘Couched in the terms of an iconoclastic formula (“the end of synchrony”)', argues Hinrichs (2015: 263), ‘this argument dresses itself as a new departure’, while, in reality, it is a sociolinguistic version of the emperor’s new clothes. Billig (2013: 51) makes similar arguments with regard to other terms whose purpose is ‘not to identify a discovery, but to cover over a lack of discovery’.

Together, these critiques provide a compelling explanation for why the devotees of *superdiversity* retain traditional theoretical commitments and methodologies, yet they fail to explain why so many studies whose research aims, methods and findings can stand perfectly well on their own add *superdiversity* to the title and the list of keywords. Perhaps the question we should have been asking all along is not what *superdiversity* is but what it *does*.

Making Sociolinguistics Great Again: Cui Bono?

In his critique of contemporary academia, Billig (2013: 133) hits the nail on the head when he states that ‘the problem is not the words themselves’ but what we do with words:

Academics also have products to promote and they will praise their own theories and approaches, recommending them to readers. They will want

to say that the product operates well – has insights, produces findings, exposes what is hidden. Anyone using the product will have these benefits and understandings. (Billig, 2013: 142)

What he doesn’t say is that benefits can be of two kinds. ‘Exposing what is hidden’ is an explicit benefit and one freely acknowledged in *superdiversity* work. Yet the adoption of certain keywords or, if you wish, paradigms, also confers other benefits, some of them less openly acknowledged. Here, a comparison with *Universal Grammar* becomes particularly instructive, as there was more to it than Chomsky’s personal charisma and the appeal of a radical new theory:

Prior to Chomsky, to be an American linguist almost obligatorily entailed one or two years of living among a minority language community and writing a grammar of their language. This was nearly a rite of passage in North American linguistics. But since Chomsky himself did no field research and apparently had learned more interesting things about language than any fieldworker, many students and incoming professors working under the influence of Chomsky’s assumptions understandably believed that the best way to do research might be to work deductively rather than inductively – from the institution rather than the village, starting with an elegant theory and predetermining where the facts best fit. (Everett, 2008: 253)

The *Universal Grammar* not only enhanced the status of linguists, making them key players in the new field of cognitive science, but it also facilitated their lives – abandoning linguistic fieldwork, they could now accrue significant benefits in the comfort of their offices through ‘theoretical modeling of fragments of well-known languages’ (Evans, 2010: 222).

Superdiversity facilitates our lives in more ways than one. Activists concerned about *language endangerment* would have sent us to far-away places, while the *new sociolinguistics* legitimizes research in our own backyard and makes ‘uncovering’ of its own traces through the office window more rewarding – in terms of academic benefits – than the decidedly unsexy documentation of indigenous languages of Australia and North America or the labor-intensive ethnography of multilingual communication in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. As a framing device, rather than a theory, *superdiversity* also makes lives easier by allowing scholars of multilingualism to retain their traditional questions, concepts and methods (this maintenance is immediately apparent when one compares studies of *superdiversity* with the earlier studies by the same authors). Most importantly, it soothes disciplinary anxiety by aligning us with the wider world. The key advantage of the slogan – proudly flagged by Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton and Spotti (2016a: 4) – is its ‘strategic purchase in the field of social policy’. A convenient euphemism, *superdiversity* hits the spot with European governing bodies concerned about the refugee crisis, the new migration and the management of ethnolinguistic

diversity. The best-hidden secret of *superdiversity* is that it does not change the way linguistic diversity operates and is researched – what it does is to improve the lives of those who signal allegiance to Newspeak.

The reward for the allegiance is the 'rising scholarly currency of the superdiversity framework' (Faudree & Schulties, 2015b: 3) and generous funding for research on languages and *superdiversity* (Table 8.1), which is exactly what Billig (2013) sees as branding success:

An approach with thousands of recruits across the world will be a successful approach. And success will bring further success. The adherents of a successful approach are likely to run regular conferences, publish their own journals, attract funding, convene postgraduate workshops, present awards to the founders and so on. (Billig, 2013: 59)

As with any popular brand, its makers may benefit more than others, as seen in Blommaert's (2013) confident statement:

Mobility, complexity, and unpredictability (...) enable me to imagine a sociolinguistics of superdiversity as organized on an entirely different footing from that which characterized the Fishmanian and Labovian sociolinguistic world. (Blommaert, 2013: 13)

This is arguably the most telling phrase in the book: all that remains is to replace the names of the 'old' founding fathers with the names savvy readers can put in the empty slots.

The benefits for migrants and refugees are less obvious. As a former refugee and interpreter in a Refugee Assistance program, I sincerely doubt that migrants derive benefits from Newspeak that relabels their linguistic practices in obscure journals (or, for that matter, in prominent ones). The only beneficiaries are Western scholars, for it is 'the powerful who celebrate the notion of diversity' as Makoni (2012: 192) reminds us: 'those of us from other parts of the world feel the idea of diversity is a careful concealment of power differences', including the power to imagine and define us (for a critique of *superdiversity* as a colonial project, see also Ndlovu, 2016).

Tellingly, the first questions 'raised by *superdiversity*' are: 'who is the Other? And who are We?' (Blommaert, 2013: 5). The answers link the Otherness to *migrants* and, even more troublingly, 'second and third generation immigrants' who still display 'immigrant accent' (Blommaert, 2013: 72, 75) and 'daughters and sons, grand-daughters and grand-sons, great-grand-daughters and great-grandsons of immigrants' (Creese & Blackledge, 2010: 550). Following this impeccable logic, my son, my grandchildren and even my great-grandchildren will still be Russian immigrants in the USA because the Other has to remain the Other to ensure the existence of the powerful We (for an insightful analysis of *diversity* rhetoric, see Pillier, 2016). It is the 'listening subjects' – 'the perceiver, the overhearer-now-reporter, the knowledge producer' (Reyes, 2014: 367) – who observe the change in the face and the soundscapes of

Western elites, who interpret signs without consulting their authors, who analyze interactions in languages they do not know and who derive benefits from the construction of difference. The Newspeak may not be many things but one thing it certainly is: the movement to make sociolinguistics great again under the banner of *superdiversity* is an exercise in rhetorical power that calls for the dismantling of boundaries, while surreptitiously erecting the Great Wall.

'Choice of keywords', notes Ahearn (2013: 7), 'has implications in terms of intellectual interactions that the author might have with other scholars' and 'repercussions in terms of the scholar's social status and job security'. In the context of such risk-benefit analysis, the uptake of the slippery slogan-brand is not surprising and the accompanying language of profit (*rising currency, strategic purchase*) not accidental. Cashing in on our anxieties, *superdiversity* enables us to repack our research as cutting edge, to receive funding from governments anxious about immigrant influx, to move up the academic ladder, and to create a new academic hierarchy, with new hegemonic orders of normativity and indexicality, and a new elite.

Yet, readers who think that this unenlightened migrant is urging the field to abandon *superdiversity* could not be more wrong. I am not a fan of banning words. Given the natural trajectory of buzzwords in academia, I have no doubt that eventually *superdiversity* will join its peers in the repository of terms that make publications look decidedly *passé*. What concerns me is the idea of *scholarly currency* and – to stay with the fiscal metaphor – the price we pay as a research community for accepting new words as substitutes for new ideas, terminological innovation as a viable stand-in for theory, slogans as means of adding value to research, and branding, marketing, selling and self-promotion as unavoidable facets of academic life.

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9 Sloganization: Yet Another Slogan?

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The term around which all the contributions in this volume are centered is *sloganization*, a noun that expresses a process of both slogan making and slogan using. Since the volume introduces this term, we would like to clarify and discuss its meanings in this concluding chapter, referring to the ways in which the authors of the individual chapters have interpreted and used it. A critical discussion of the term itself also seems necessary in light of Billig's (2013: 7) explicit warning about using 'big words' in academic writing: 'Beware of long words ending in "ization" or "ification"' (Billig, 2013: 173). This can be taken as a reminder that a term like *sloganization* is itself prone to be sloganized. Given the general critical outlook shared by all contributors to this volume, the notion of *sloganization* and its inherent slogan-potential ought to be discussed critically, too. Finally, another question arising from the study of *sloganization* will be addressed, namely, why it should be studied further and what the goals of such research could be.

Coming to Terms: Conceptualizing Sloganization

The current volume is dedicated to the exploration and investigation of *sloganization*. It arose from the concern with an increasingly sloganized use of specific terms in language education discourse, such as learner autonomy or communicative language teaching. Arguing that these terms often appear sloganized does not mean that they are slogans per se, as outlined in the introductory chapter. The intention was to capture and scrutinize the phenomenon of *sloganization* in language education discourse, which can be observed on many occasions, in academia and in other domains of knowledge production and dissemination (curricula, policy papers, universities, schools, etc.) and which are problematic for language education theory and practice.

Calling this phenomenon *sloganization* rests on the assumption that there are a number of terms in language education discourse that appear