Interlinguistic trajectories of the letter K

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Variation in orthographic conventions, especially, but not only, in the 'linguistic/semiotic landscapes' can be seen as a means for building, performing and negotiating group identities and for expressing (language) ideologies. Under this perspective the linguistic/semiotic landscape can be seen as a terrain of struggle between legitimate and 'illegitimate' speakers/writers, as a way for negotiating boundaries between dominant discourse and counter-discourse(s), as well as legitimate or 'illegitimate' forms of discourse/writing. In many romance languages where /k/ is transcribed orthographically with <c> before <a>, <o>, <u> (CAT, ESP, FRA, GAL, ITA, POR), and <ch> before <e>, <i> (ITA), or <qu> before <e>, <i> (CAT, ESP, FRA, GAL, POR), one can often observe some non-orthographic uses of <k>. In this paper I would like to trace the interlinguistic trajectories of the letter <k> in different geographical and spatial contexts in Spain, including Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia as well as in Italy, France and Portugal. The paper will trace the genealogy of this heterographic use of the letter <k> and its circulation especially, but not only, among radical leftist or anarchist grass-roots movements in an effort to uncover the ideological de/connections articulated throughout the use of the <k> in different contexts and under different conditions of productions. For example one can witness real struggles concerning the appropriation of the letter <k> between different (legitimate or 'illegitimate') users as in the case of the word <bankero> (SPA) or <banker> (CAT) which was firstly used by radical grass-roots movement, then entextualised by a bank (Bankia) in the slogan of its ad ’hazte bankero’ and finally rejected by the grass-roots movements (in the slogan ’banqueros terroristas’) as a sign which has lost its radical value after having been appropriated, commercially exploited, and then banalized by an ‘illegitimate’ user.

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