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This is a contribution from *The Sociolinguistics of Place and Belonging. Perspectives from the margins*.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Belonging through linguistic place-making in center-periphery constellations

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This volume arose from two workshops we organized at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS) in 2011 and 2013 – the latter while coordinating the NIAS theme group *The construction of local identities through language practices* –, and from a colloquium *Language, identity and community: Moving margins – Reversals and recursions in processes of placemaking* convened together with Barbara Johnstone at *Sociolinguistics Symposium 20* in Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2014. Bringing together scholars working on linguistic place-making and belonging in various, mostly European, settings, the aim of the NIAS research group and the workshops resulting from it, was to clarify how people, subject to an all-pervading centralization-peripheralization dynamics, construct place-based senses of belonging through language practices. Participants in these workshops focused on people identifying with places and areas that are seen as marginal or peripheral by those inhabiting centers of economic power and/or linguistic and cultural prestige. Presenting perspectives from the margins, the authors of this book show how the marginalized comment on, resist, and subvert dominant center-periphery orderings through language practices.

NIAS offered our research group an ideal context: working on themes that were both interdisciplinary and innovative, we were able to exchange and synthesize knowledge and insights from sociolinguistics, sociocultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology. We hope that our combined research at NIAS and this resulting volume will advance the development of sociolinguistic studies of centralization-peripheralization that take their subject matter to be the *total linguistic fact*: “an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms contextualized to situations of interested human use, mediated by the fact of cultural ideology” (Silverstein 1985: 220).

The notions of *place* and *belonging* that figure in the title of this volume have been at the core of sociolinguistics from its early beginnings. Labov's (1963) classic Martha's Vineyard study is in fact all about place (a peripheral place at that!) and belonging. Within sociolinguistics, however, the concepts of place and belonging have long remained relatively underdeveloped theoretically. Over the past few decades, Tuan's (1991) place-making perspective, conceptualizing places as socially constructed, invested with socio-cultural meaning through language practices, has had a profound influence on many sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists, an influence that is clearly visible in the contributions to this book. *Belonging* also has started to make its way into sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology but it has been used quite loosely and has not been thoroughly discussed and defined as a theoretical concept. One of the main aims of this volume is to develop 'belonging' and 'place' into concepts that help us understand the dynamics of processes of (dis)identification through language (in) use.

How can we conceptualize and operationalize these concepts and find out to what extent they can have explanatory power in contemporary sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological studies? In our view, feelings of belonging are best seen not as simply enduring through time and space, but as changing and variable across situations and stages of life. People develop feelings of belonging in social interaction by engaging with semiotic resources such as physical space, material culture (including the built-up environment), and linguistic features involved in processes of enregisterment (Agha 2006), and by referring to these in metapragmatic practices (Cornips & de Rooij 2015a, b; Youkhana 2015).

In concurrence with developing and applying concepts of place and belonging, the volume wants to bring the study of peripheries to the center of sociolinguistic research. The main reason for this is that much recent sociolinguistic research, informed by theories of globalization, shows a clear bias toward the study of metropolitan areas. Rural, as well as urbanized peripheries that are supposed to be less ethnically mixed have, until now, received relatively little attention (notable recent exceptions are Cornips et al. 2017; Cornips & de Rooij 2015b; Pietikainen & Kelly-Holmes 2013; Wang et al. 2014). Of course, people living in less 'spectacular' margins or peripheries that are not overtly recognized as mixed and hybridized are not immune to the effects of globalization and rapid technological change. They too constantly form new ensembles from linguistic and cultural resources which they invest with novel, instable, often ambiguous meanings. The erasure of purportedly unspectacular margins or peripheries from sociolinguistic research stands in the way of a full understanding of the relation between language, place and belonging. This volume wants to explore how we can pursue the study of processes of linguistic (dis)identification by starting from the assumption that people are always and everywhere caught up in a 'politics of belonging' driven by a

centralization-peripheralization dynamics. The central question then becomes: how do people position themselves toward others and how do they include or exclude those others using linguistic and cultural resources?

Center-periphery theorizing has quite a pedigree in the social sciences as Woolard's (this volume) critical and insightful appraisal demonstrates; her excellent review of major sources made us decide not to include such a review in this introduction, although we do take up some of the themes and issues discussed by Woolard. In our own research (Cornips & de Rooij 2015b; Cornips et al. 2017), we investigated the inextricably intertwined threads of language and culture (cf. Agar 1994) and how these affect the production and reproduction of social differences and power relations between different groups within centralization and peripheralization dynamics. To understand the power dimension in processes of centralization-peripheralization, one needs to address the question of how social-economic, and political and spatial understandings of the periphery (Wall 2015) give rise to (feelings of) linguistic marginalization.

Linguistic marginalization

Center and periphery are not necessarily to be conceptualized as place-based categories since they result from a complex processes of social, cultural and linguistic differentiation (Massey 1993: 67), which constantly trigger intricate linguistic and cultural reorderings. This center-periphery dynamics is all about how people position themselves toward received categories and hegemonic ideologies. As pointed out by Wang et al. (2014: 36), “[i]n many countries, one finds a deeply entrenched language ideology that is built on the unquestioned principle that a nation-state should be linguistically uniform.” In most cases, the imposed national ‘standard variety’ has been matched with the variety spoken and written in the center of political and economic power in the nation-state. This standardized national variety is perceived as neutral, not rooted in, or associated with, a particular place but rather with the national public sphere, and can thus act as the medium of the ‘view from nowhere’ (Nagel 1986; Smakman 2006: 108–112). This variety is imposed on speakers in the periphery through the school system which (re)produces the devaluation of localized, place-bound non-standard varieties.

The neutral, standard variety is often equated with ‘the highest prestige’ variety. Because of the prestige of the national standard variety, speakers in the periphery are perceived not to speak ‘the right way’ and are often negatively stereotyped as backward when they speak ‘dialect’ or a ‘minority language’. In response to this, as pointed out by Preston (2013: 177), “speakers of devalued varieties (like prejudiced-against groups in general) derive solidarity from their distinctive behaviors, in this

case, linguistic ones”. Seen in this light, linguistic and cultural differences between the perceived center and periphery are never socially neutral but constitute rich resources for social meaning making in identity work.

In most Western countries, there is one standard language which dominates politics, the media and education, and this means that other language varieties are relegated to a subordinate social and cultural status, even if they are spoken by sizeable proportions of the population. These language varieties, and the people who speak them, are often the object of heavy negative social stereotyping, and as a result, speakers of these varieties may end up feeling marginalized linguistically, politically and even economically. The perceived peripheries are routinely associated with these people speaking dialects, regional minority languages or simply non-standard. These language varieties are seen as anchoring people to specific places. However, increasing globalization has meant that dialect has become a resource for indexing intersections of gender, class, and race/ethnicity, which are often unstable and ambiguous. New media and language policies, along with the growing commodification of local languages make it increasingly common for public events such as the Dutch Limburg carnival (Cornips & de Rooij 2015b; Cornips et al. 2017; Thissen 2018) to feature both individuals and institutions (re)producing their own versions of local uniqueness and authenticity. There may be disagreements on who/what is authentic, on who has the right to speak dialect or what kind of dialect one should speak, but all the parties under scrutiny in the research reported on in this volume, wittingly or not, help to reproduce power inequalities.

Perceptions of peripheries

Places that are perceived as peripheral, and the people living there, are often, but not necessarily, associated with socio-cultural marginality, i.e. as being non-standard. This non-standardness can take on negative and positive connotations at the same time, along the lines of Baumann’s orientalizing grammar that is based on the idea that “[o]rientalism is ... not a simple binary opposition of ‘us=good’ and ‘them=bad’, but a very shrewd mirrored reversal of ‘what is good in us is [still] bad in them, but what got twisted in us [still] remains straight in them’” (Baumann 2004: 20). Limburg and its inhabitants, prominent in the chapters by Stengs and Thissen, provide an example of how this works out in practice. In the Netherlands, Limburg and its inhabitants are the object of peripheralization vis-à-vis the western part of the country. Westerners think of themselves as enlightened (‘good in us’) while Limburgers are seen as backward (‘[still] bad in them’), but at the same time Westerners also see themselves as cold and calculating (‘what got twisted in us’) and Limburgers as warm and spontaneous (what ‘[still] remains straight in

them'). This idea of Baumann also explains why the periphery-center relation is often complex and rife with ambiguities and contradictions, which provide the base for center-periphery reversals and collapses that we see in the parodic performances central in the chapters by Stengs, Petrović, and Thissen. As pointed out by Pietikainen & Holmes (2013:2), "the centre-periphery relationship is never fixed, but instead constantly renegotiated and mutually constitutive." What is meant by 'periphery' and 'center' is thus inherently ambiguous, as it depends on situated temporal framings and spatial perspectives (Wall 2015) or as Hall (2015:162) argues: "Where the periphery is depends on where you stand."

Centralization-peripheralization also involves fractal recursivity (Gal & Irvine 1995): within each periphery, a new center may be formed, and within each center a new periphery (we see this process at work in various forms in all chapters of this volume). Language 'in the periphery' may be promoted to a new standard linked with a regional 'center', which people in the region orient to revealing linguistic representations of peripheral areas as hierarchical multidialectal spaces (Cornips et al. 2016). The social oppositions produced in processes of centralization-peripheralization may lead to the emergence of multiple systems of norms and values activated within specific scalar configurations. These norms may be more fluid and situational in peripheral places than the ones linked to fairly well-established hegemonic centers (Pietikäinen & Holmes 2013:9).

The periphery may be felt as 'far away' from the perspective of the residents of the periphery itself because it is seen as such from within the center (Balibar 2004: 12). Power asymmetries in centralization and peripheralization dynamics can, but need not be 'real' in the sense that they can be measured in e.g. economic strength. More often than not, however, they are based on economic exploitation. Heller et al. (2016: 67–68) argue that "[s]tate centralization produced peripheries as potentially exploitable and explorable spaces" and that "[t]he role of the periphery is to supply the center with human and material resources as needed, and to act as a frontier for economic expansion, absorbing surplus population and providing new spaces for investment" (ibid.: 67). Whether real exploitation takes place or not, what is crucial is that people residing in the periphery or encountering peripheralization experience a difference and feel marginalized economically, politically, culturally, and linguistically by (perceived) centralization (see Cornips et al. 2017; Wang et al. 2014). Important factors contributing to feelings of being marginalized economically are limited transport infrastructure or being located at the end of transport networks, an economy based on natural resources, out-migration, and low production of high-value products and services (Hall 2015: 166–168). People in the perceived periphery are particularly aggrieved by forms of symbolic domination by the center that devalue the historical and cultural heritage on which the residents of the periphery build their regional identities (Zarycki 2007: 125–126).

Place-belongingness and politics of belonging

According to Yuval-Davis (2006: 197), any study of belonging should differentiate between two analytical dimensions of belonging. The first one is about “emotional attachment, about feeling ‘at home’” (ibid.: 197), and the second one, the politics of belonging, “comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways” (ibid.). Adopting Yuval-Davis’s analytical distinction, Antonsich (2010: 646–649) labels the first analytical dimension *place-belongingness*, “an emotional feeling of being at home” (ibid.: 647) and considers *politics of belonging* “a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion” (2010: 645).

Antonsich emphasizes the processual, dynamic character of place-belongingness as it “is built up and grows out of everyday practices” (2010: 645), and as such is bound up with or, rather, relies on place attachment. Low & Altman (1992) were the first to unpack the complex, multifaceted notion of place attachment that “involv[es] affective bonds to places across multiple geographic scales, with a variety of temporal qualities and social actors and processes contributing to the bonds” (Brown et al. 2012: 183). For most, if not all, people place-belongingness is a multi-scalar feeling: depending on one’s situatedness in time and space, it can pertain to one’s home, or nursing-home (Makkinga 2016), one’s local neighborhood, region, city (Thissen 2018), and country.

Although distinguishing between place-belongingness and the politics of belonging has analytical merit, one should not forget that both are dialectically related. The affective dimension of place-belongingness is being produced through discursive practices that make up the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). Increased mobility of people, goods, and technologies (Sheller & Urry 2006), feelings of nostalgia (Duyvendak 2011), and the perceived threat of losing one’s culture, economic security, and territory (Geschiere 2009) due to the workings of globalization, are all involved in the articulation of today’s heavily politicized idioms of belonging.

Problematizing belonging

As Jaspers (this volume) quite rightly points out, concepts like *belonging* that quickly spread across disciplinary borders and, as a result, acquire many different uses and meanings, risk losing what was initially felt to be their theoretical and analytical promise. The allure of the concept of belonging may have to do with the

growing dissatisfaction with the concept of *identity* in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, and the social sciences in general. Brubaker & Cooper (2000) and Bucholtz & Hall (2005) have offered fruitful, critical reworkings of identity, introducing “alternative analytical idioms” (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 9) that allow for dynamic, non-essentializing approaches to identity. Their analytical frameworks foreground the multidimensional and processual nature of identity, or, rather, identification but what they seem to be missing is an awareness of the importance that place-belongingness can play in processes of identification. One may well wonder whether what Brubaker & Cooper (2000: 21) call “instances of strongly binding, vehemently felt groupness” may at all be possible without at least some emotional investment in place, physical or imagined.

We would argue that belonging in both its analytical dimensions in combination with processual and multidimensional notions of identity/identification could make up a powerful conceptual toolkit to study a vast terrain of place-making through language. Such a toolkit would enable us to study how the construction of socio-cultural categories and subjectively, emotionally experienced dimensions of identity are interrelated.

Belonging through linguistic place-making

In several branches of linguistics languages are seen as anchored to specific spaces: “a given part of geographic space is assumed to be the ‘natural habitat’ of a language, and a given language is assumed to ‘have’ its own space” (Auer 2013: 4–5; see also Johnstone 2004, 2010, 2011, this volume). This conceptualization of how languages relate to spaces can only work because speakers are left out of the equation. Including speakers would, of course, show the equation to be totally wrong since “speakers use linguistic forms that are indexes of different language spaces on varying scales at the same time or in alternation, depending on which language space they wish to refer to, but independently of whether this space includes their ‘here’ in the act of speaking” (Auer 2013: 8; see also Blommaert 2010; Johnstone 2004, 2010).

The omission of the speaker’s perspective is due to the assumptions that “**speakers only speak one language** and (...) that **speakers are bound to places**, i.e. they are immobile” (Auer 2013: 5, emphasis in the original; see also Quist 2010) but also, crucially, that place is considered as an objectively given location (*place as location*) instead of conceptualizing *place as meaning* (Johnstone 2004: 68). A focus on speaker practices, in terms of their perception and construction of how languages and spaces are related helps to reveal how people produce place through linguistic place-making activities (Auer 2013; also Quist 2010; see also Thissen 2018). Place-making involves the assigning, through interaction, of

social meanings to (physical) space(s), thereby creating places that are perceived as the basis of belonging. Ribbens-Klein (2016), e.g., relates rhotic variation in Afrikaans in Houtiniquadorp in Western Cape Province, South Africa, which was declared a Colored residential area during apartheid, to how residents talk about Houtiniquadorp and how they experience themselves and others in relation to Houtiniquadorp.

Places are intersubjectively produced but also subjectively and bodily experienced when one feels in contact with a place. Places one experiences can be places that one is in direct physical contact with but they can also be places known from memory or even places that are the product of individual or collaborative imagination (Ribbens-Klein 2016: 18). These experiences of places are mediated by social factors such as class background, gender, and ethnicity. Modan (2007) finds that residents in Mt. Pleasant in Washington DC experience their neighborhood differently which she relates to residents' different place identities: women, for example, tend to experience the city as a masculine place.

Contributions to this volume follow Johnstone (2011) who convincingly argues that people have the need to re-imagine themselves locally. As Johnstone (this volume) notes, industrialization, urban revitalization and mobility have contributed to the formation of "new dialects" (see also Remlinger and Auer & Cornips, this volume). This shows that "the local should not be thought of as being 'just there', as the natural outcome of a direct connection between a certain place and the people that live there, but needs, in the words of Appadurai, 'to be produced' (1996)" (Cornips et al. 2016: 192), often by linguistic means (Cornips et al. *ibid.*; Johnstone 2013). Through processes of enregisterment (Agha 2006), linguistic resources and their imagined speakers become associated with specific places (Auer 2013; Quist 2010). A focus on belonging through linguistic place-making helps bring to light how enregistering processes produce standard and dialects, but also how, through the mediation of cultural ideology (Silverstein 1985), these become indexical of a public space versus peripheral place respectively with all possible negative and positive social connotations attached to the latter (Agha 2006; Cornips et al. 2016; Cornips et al. 2017).

The current volume

The aim of the present volume is to deepen our understanding of the role played by language and culture in processes of marginalization/peripheralization-centralization, not only on the national level, but also 'lower' levels, such as within a region, city, village, or neighborhood. To do this, the authors in this volume have examined different case studies from Southeastern Serbia (Tanja Petrović), Denmark (Malene

Monka, Pia Quist), the Netherlands (Anna Banaś, Irene Stengs, Lotte Thissen), Belgium (Peter Auer & Leonie Cornips), US (Kate Remlinger), and Papua New Guinea (Bambi Schieffelin).

We have partitioned the book into three major parts, each one introduced by an expert commentator. Grouping chapters into separate sections is always problematic, especially in this volume because all chapters touch upon many related and overlapping issues at the same time. We, nevertheless, decided to group the contributions by Bambi Schieffelin, Peter Auer & Leonie Cornips and Anna Banaś into Part I, *Interpersonal relations, place, and belonging*, commented on by Jürgen Jaspers. Kathryn Woolard's commentary introduces Part II, *Parodic performances from the margins*, with contributions by Lotte Thissen, Irene Stengs, and Tanja Petrović that analyze the role of parodic practices in place-making and belonging. The Chapters in Part III, *Agency in linguistic place-making*, by Malena Monka, Pia Quist and Kate Remlinger are oriented towards the dynamics of agentive place-making and commented on by Barbara Johnstone.

In addressing the major issues raised above, all authors problematize the notions of place and place-making. If we focus on place-making and the politics of in|exclusion as processes, it is Schieffelin's language socialization approach (in the opening chapter of the volume) that is most suited to bring out the processual character of place-making and emplacement. Drawing on diachronic ethnographic data, she is able to show how places become meaningful and how human experiences become emplaced. She also presents dramatic evidence of how language innovation, spurred by religious conversion, can cause "local senses of place and place-making [to be] forever changed." Although processes of place-making are also the focus of attention in the chapters by Auer & Cornips, and Monka, they lack diachronic first-hand ethnographic data and are challenged to work on reconstructing such processes of place-making and belonging.

All authors discuss place-making practices in relation with processes of un|belonging (the politics of exclusion|inclusion); they do not always use or address the notion of 'belonging' explicitly but it is always if not directly, then indirectly, present. Some authors emphasize the subversive in processes of place-making and belonging such as Quist in her chapter about two hip-hoppers in Copenhagen who engage in the practice of alternative place naming; Thissen's chapter about Bakhtinian carnivalesque practices centralizing a carnival celebration in a village annexed by the city of Roermond (the Netherlands), and Petrović' chapter analyzing the use of linguistic strategies employed by the author of the Facebook page *Koe ima po grad* (What's up in the town) who makes local idioms of Leskovac (Southeastern Serbia) appropriate for use on social media to be appreciated far outside Leskovac.

Other chapters show various ways to be innovative with linguistic resources. In the case of Auer & Cornips, a process of fusion and restructuring of conventional linguistic resources associated with Dutch, German and a dialect by former coal miners has taken place; whereas the case-study by Banaś of the Japanese expatriate women in their club near Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and Petrović's Serbian case study shows that the innovation primarily concerns the use of linguistic elements in new and unexpected contexts. Remlinger's chapter focusses on how specific and recognized linguistic resources have been commodified to sell the idea of a regional persona and a sense of place as pristine wilderness. Her chapter pays attention to tourism that affects the processes of enregisterment and commodification.

The case studies by Stengs about Andre Rieu's multilingual performances in Maastricht, the Netherlands, Petrović, and Thissen emphasize a center-periphery dialectics, and especially in the chapters by Stengs and Thissen scalar complexification is at work in the processes of linguistic place-making and belonging. What the chapters show is that scalarity and mobility should be discussed in tandem: it seems that in some cases the local collapses with the nation (Banaś) or with the universal community of believers (Schieffelin) or with the global (Stengs); so globalization with increasing mobility and movement causes scales (and scalar relations) to become more prominent.

Most chapters also emphasize the semiotics of material resources and the role of media in processes of place-making and belonging (Auer & Cornips, Monka, Petrović, Quist, Remlinger, Stengs). Cultural memory may be pivotal in ongoing processes of place-making and feelings/politics of belonging as particularly shown by the chapters by Auer & Cornips (history of immigration patterns due to the coal mines), Monka (recent integration of Southern Jutland in Denmark), Remlinger (immigration patterns due to the copper mines) and Thissen (recent annexation of a city as a neighbourhood into a larger city). Remlinger, in particular, focuses on how the area's past shape present ideas about what it means to be local. Finally, almost all chapters show the use of 'unexpected' languages, i.e. unexpected from the viewpoint of a Herderian monolingual ideology (see Jaspers, this volume): locally born children use linguistic features associated with German in Flanders (Auer & Cornips), people speak Japanese in the Netherlands (Banaś), a so-called performer use English in the Netherlands (Stengs), locally born children use English, Turkish and Arabic in Denmark. In peripheries like Southern Jutland and Limburg, dialect may unexpectedly be put to use (Monka), or the standard language may be overruled by dialect (Thissen) or the standard language may be absent in addressing the audience in dialect and English only (Stengs).

What the case studies in this book show is that mixed and hybridized uses of language are not exclusive to urbanized centers of economic, and political power or cultural and linguistic prestige. People living in the margins are perhaps more

than anywhere else confronted with challenges caused by globalization forcing them to reinvest the places they are emotionally attached to with meaning through what they consider as language practices of their own. Sociolinguistic research of the margins can give a voice to those who have been relatively invisible in sociolinguistics, but it also can advance sociolinguistic theorizing of place-making and belonging.

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