

Workshop

The languagecultural conceptualisation of ‘belonging’

9 & 10 June, Maastricht University, Maastricht.

Organizers: Jolien Clijsen^{1,2}, Lotte Thissen², Vincent de Rooij³ & Leonie Cornips^{1,2}

Location: Soiron Building, Grote Gracht 80-82, Room 0.001
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

While the concept of ‘belonging’ has been much theorized across other fields, in the field of (socio-)linguistics it seems to have been transplanted as one of the components or, even, substitutes of ‘social identity.’ How can we, based on empirical data, conceptualise and operationalise this notion and see to what extent it has explanatory power in modern-day sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological studies. How can we approach this concept in a rigorous manner without pre-supposing that some linguistic features are inherently linked with belonging (Cornips & Strycharz 2014)? For sociolinguists, one of the challenges is to find out whether and how linguistic features (Jorgensen et al. 2011) we are less aware of take part in the construction of belonging as well.

‘Belonging’ may be related to official, public-oriented ‘formal structure’ of membership (Antonsich 2010) but may also refer to “personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place” (ibid: 644). Belonging can thus have a political as well as a personal meaning, and can be considered to have an analytical as well as an emic dimension (Cornips & de Rooij, 2015; Thissen 2013).

During this workshop, all speakers will elucidate their own understanding and conceptualisation of ‘belonging’. More specifically, (socio-) linguists will think about what ‘belonging’ could offer in sociolinguistic studies and how it could best be conceptualized (theoretically and methodologically). Those working outside (socio-)linguistics on the topic of ‘belonging’ will share their expertise and experience with the concept in their disciplines.

There are 8 places available in the workshop room. If you would like to attend this workshop, please send an e-mail to the Secretariat of History, Literature, and Art: secr.hislk@maastrichtuniversity.nl. Do not forget to mention if you want to attend both days or only one of them. They will let you know whether it is possible to join on the basis of first incoming mails.

¹ Meertens Instituut

² Maastricht University

³ University of Amsterdam

Programme

Tuesday June 9

9.30-9.50	Coffee/Tea (arrival)
9.50-10.00	Welcome
10.00-10.45	Marco Antonsich
10.45-11.30	Marie Maegaard
11.30-11.45	Coffee/Tea Break
11.45-12.30	Malene Monka
12.30-13.15	Lies Wesseling
13.15-14.45	Lunch for presenters/Break
14.45-15.30	Lotte Thissen
15.30-16.15	Leonie Cornips & Vincent de Rooij
16.15-16.30	Coffee/Tea break
16.30-17.30	Panel by Irene Stengs & closing remarks

Wednesday June 10

8.30-8.50	Coffee/Tea (arrival)
8.50-9.00	Welcome
9.00-9.45	Markus Balkenhol
9.45-10.30	Jolien Clijsen
10.30-10.45	Coffee/Tea break
10.45-11.30	Anna Banas
11.30-12.15	Valentina Mazzucato
12.15-13.00	Panel feedback/ discussion/ Closing remark
13.00-.....	Lunch for presenters

Sponsors: Chair "Languageculture in Limburg", Maastricht University (UM); Cap. Group Literature & Arts (UM) and Meertens Institute, KNAW (Amsterdam)

How to get there?

By car, A2/E25 from the north

- Turn right at the first traffic lights following the signs for "Hasselt/Centrum".
- Cross the bridge in the direction of "Hasselt".
- follow the signs 'Vrijthof parkeergarage'.

By car, A2/E25 from the south

- Take the "Centrum, N278" exit.
- Paid parking: follow the signs 'Vrijthof parkeergarage'.

By train (for journey advice and timetables, see www.9292ov.nl)

By bus from Maastricht Central Station

- Bus lines 3 or 4, direction city.
- Exit the bus at the Vrijthof.
- From the Vrijthof, cross the square and follow the road in the right hand corner (Keizer Karelplein).
The Grote Gracht will appear after app. 50 metres.

On foot from Maastricht Central Station (app. 20 minutes)

- Follow signs for "Centrum".
 - Keep the Vrijthof on the left-hand side.
- The Grote Gracht will appear after 100 metres

Book of abstracts

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Tuesday June 9 and Wednesday June 10, 2015

Maastricht, 9-10 June, 2015.

Grote Gracht 80-82, room 0.001

While the concept of 'belonging' has been much theorized across other fields, in the field of (socio-)linguistics it seems to have been transplanted as one of the components or, even, substitutes of 'social identity.' How can we, based on empirical data, conceptualise and operationalise this notion and see to what extent it has explanatory power in modern-day sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological studies. How can we approach this concept in a rigorous manner without pre-supposing that some linguistic features are inherently linked with belonging (Cornips & Strycharz 2014)? For sociolinguists, one of the challenges is to find out whether and how linguistic features (Jørgensen et al. 2011) we are less aware of take part in the construction of belonging as well.

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References

- Antonsich, Marco (2010) Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework. *Geography Compass* 4 (6): 644- 659
- Cornips, Leonie & Vincent de Rooij (in press) Belonging through Languagecultural Practices in the Periphery. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*.
- Cornips, Leonie & Anna Strycharz (2014) The Sociolinguistics of Belonging. *NWO submission Vrije Competitie*.
- Jørgensen, Jens N., Martha S. Karrabæk, Lian M. Madsen, Janus S. Møller (2011) Polylanguaging in Superdiversity. *Diversities* 13(2): 23-37.
- Thissen, Lotte (2013) The Ambiguities of Limburgerness: Language, place, and belonging in Limburg, the Netherlands. *Etnofoor* 25(2): 119-143.

DAY 1

Tuesday June 9, 2015

'I belong here': unpacking the notion of belonging

Marco Antonsich, Loughborough University

The present paper builds on my essay on the notion of belonging (Antonsich, 2010), presenting the two major dimensions which I see at play in the notion of belonging: place-belongingness (a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place) and politics of belonging (a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion / exclusion). Using these two dimensions I reflect on the very banal, mundane affirmation of 'I belong here', unpacking it in its constitutive elements. I conclude by speculating on the notion of communities of belonging beyond communities of identity.

Marco Antonsich is a senior lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Loughborough. His work lies at the intersection between territory, power, and identity. More specifically, throughout his research career, he has explored three themes: the production of Western geopolitical discourses; the relationship between territory and identity in the age of globalization at multiple scales (local, regional, national, and European); and, more recently, how togetherness in diversity is theorized and lived within contemporary multicultural societies. Funded by various institutions (U.S. National Science Foundation; NATO and Italian National Research Council; CIMO-Finland; and the European Commission), his work has appeared in leading academic journals: Progress in Human Geography, Political Geography, European Urban and Regional Studies, European Journal of Social Theory, and Annals of the Association of American Geographers, among others. He holds a PhD in Political Geography from the University of Trieste, Italy and a PhD in Geography from the University of Colorado at Boulder, USA.

"So we are a little local" – creating Bornholmian belonging in a Copenhagen high-end restaurant

Marie Maegaard, University of Copenhagen

Copenhagen has a high number of high-end eating places, many inspired by the New Nordic Cuisine. One such restaurant, Restaurant Kofoed has meticulously made a brand out of being 'Bornholmian' referring to the small Danish island Bornholm which is situated approximately 160 km away from the capital.

In this paper, I will focus on the concept of belonging (Antonsich 2010, Yuval-Davis 2011) and discuss how we might benefit from using this concept when it comes to cultural products like a restaurant experience. In this particular case, it is the consumers' experience of the restaurant's relation to Bornholm that becomes central. For the restaurant it is crucial that this relation is recognized and acknowledged by the guests, because this is what serves to create added symbolic value and distinction (Heller & Duchêne 2012, Heller 2014).

Judging from comments in food blogs and other reviews, the restaurant has succeeded in communicating a belonging to Bornholm to its guests: "Restaurant Kofoed sells itself as – and is – a Bornholmian restaurant. No doubt that the heart of this place lies in the middle of the Baltic" (Vladimir 17-09-2007). Yet, as the restaurant is located in Copenhagen,

how and to what extent can it claim to be “real” Bornholmian? This depends on strategic – discursive and other – work. On the basis of data from recordings of restaurant interaction, I will show how this work takes place, and how the construction of belonging is a joint enterprise between waiters and guests.

Marie Maegaard is an Associate professor at the LANCHART Centre & Department of Nordic Research at the University of Copenhagen. Her primary research interest is sociolinguistics, and especially: Language variation, language ideology, language change, language and social meaning, linguistic commodification. At the moment she is working within the project “Dialect in the Periphery” which investigates young people’s use of dialect features in late modernity in three different parts of Denmark.

Creating a hybrid sense of belonging in Copenhagen – a case study on Facebook

Malene Monka, University of Copenhagen

In the paper I examine how a cultural event (tilting at the ring) traditionally associated with the periphery of Denmark is transferred to the capital of Copenhagen. This transfer was initiated by a group of mobile youngsters originally from Southern Jutland now living in Copenhagen. After the first event, a Facebook-community was set up to organize and promote succeeding events. By analyzing empirical data from Facebook I point to how the participants draw on a range of ‘languagecultural practices’ (Cornips & de Rooij in press) to re-contextualize the rural tradition to an urban setting. I discuss whether and how the two dimensions of ‘belonging’ (Antonsich 2010), i.e. place-belongingness and politics of belonging, are made relevant by the participants.

The connection to Southern Jutland is pointed to in several ways: linguistically by using dialect orthography, materially by pointing to local products and culturally by enacting the competition (Coupland 2014). Yet, I argue that the participants do not create a copy of the activity as it is played out in its original setting, rather it is ascribed a certain urban coolness, which might be a way of demonstrating hybrid senses of belonging to both Southern Jutland and Copenhagen.

Malene Monka is a socio-dialectologist. In her PhD-thesis Monka drew on humanistic geographical theories on place to explain different patterns of dialect leveling in three distinct Danish dialect areas. In her current research Monka and fellow researchers are investigating how place-effects influence and may explain language use of youngsters in urban and rural Denmark.

“O, Africa, let us help them!” Realignments of ‘family’ and ‘nation’ in Gudrun Widlok’s Adopted.

Lies Wesseling, Maastricht University

The close metaphorical alignment of ‘family’ and ‘nation’ have defined the very essence of belonging in the Western cultural imaginary. Terms such as ‘homeland’, ‘motherland’ and ‘fatherland’ reveal that Western citizens are inclined to regard the nation as an extension of the family. The effects of globalization and migration have been contesting this metaphorical alignment for decades now, as becomes evident in the fact that families are often organized

on a transnational scale these days. New empirical facts in themselves never suffice for changing a cultural imaginary, however. Since the nation is an imagined community, while the family is to a large extent the product of the cultural work of 'kinning', it stands to reason that alternative conceptions of belonging should also be achieved through the imagination and the cultural work of representation. This is exactly what the German performance artist Gudrun F. Widlok attempts to do in her art project Adopted (www.adopted.de). Adopted is a typical example of 'action art' or 'intervention art', i.e. art that does not create novelty through artefacts that may be bought and exhibited in musea and so on, but by designing new social situations, which are subsequently disseminated through aesthetic means of representation such as photography and film. Widlok's art project has created a new social situation by organizing adoption in the opposite direction: not from the Global north to the Global South, but the other way around, with Ghanaese extended family kindly accepting estranged Europeans in their midst, for whom the process of individualization has gone too far. My lecture will analyse how Adopted attempts to redefine national and familial belonging.

Prof. Lies Wesseling is director of the Centre for Gender and Diversity of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Maastricht University (www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/cgd). Her research is on cultural practices of kinning in a transnational world and on the cultural construction of childhood in fiction and science.

Belonging through unbelonging: A case of languagecultural place-making

Lotte Thissen, Maastricht University

Based on ethnographic material from a small-scale supermarket in the city of Roermond in the province of Limburg, the Netherlands, this talk clarifies how to use concepts such as politics of (un)belonging (Antonsich 2010; Yuval-Davis 2006) and place-making (Feld & Basso 1996; Lefebvre 1991; Low 2003) in our analyses of daily situations and interactions.

In the supermarket, both staff members and customers engage in hybrid language practices or 'linguaging' (Møller & Jørgensen 2009). Pennycook and Otsuji (2014) demonstrate how hybrid linguistic practices produce spatial repertoires – ways of talking emerging from a particular place, the people involved with that place, and their activities. My paper argues that it is through these spatial repertoires, that people in the supermarket construct processes of place-making that give languagecultural meaning to the places around them.

Part of these place-making processes are the politics of belonging; people's ideas about who belongs in a place – belonging – and who does not – unbelonging. I propose that people's feeling to unbelong to a particular place might result in a feeling of belonging amongst the excluded subjects, depending on the context. To exemplify this, I focus on a specific form of 'belonging through unbelonging', namely foreignness (Kremer 2015; Thissen, forthcoming). This talk will examine how foreignness is linguistically articulated within the supermarket.

Originally trained as a cultural anthropologist, Lotte Thissen combines cultural anthropological theories and methods with linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. Her PhD research focuses on the connections between language practices, places, and politics of (un)belonging. She conducted fieldwork in the Dutch province of Limburg and ethnographically investigated how people use language in daily situations to construct place and ideologies of (un)belonging. Her dissertation is planned for late 2015.

Belonging as local achievement

Leonie Cornips, Meertens Institute & Maastricht University
Vincent de Rooij, University of Amsterdam

In this talk, we want to emphasize that feelings of belonging are best seen, not as simply enduring through time and space, independent and divorced from social interaction. Instead, we will argue that feelings of belonging are variously shared experiences, punctuated in time and space and produced in social interactions by using semiotic resources and by referring to them in metapragmatic practices (Silverstein 1976). We will present a small case study from Heerlen (The Netherlands) in which we ourselves were active participants in a metapragmatic practice when by invitation, visiting the local carnival society 'de Blauw Sjuut' (the Blue Vessel) (Cornips & de Rooij 2015). In this meeting we experienced feelings of belonging (and non-belonging) that were brought about by mobilizing and referring to variously shared linguistic as well as non-linguistic knowledge and experience.

Our talk will show that interactants mobilize and negotiate indexical associations between personas, places, and linguistic features resulting in layered and overlapping feelings of belonging and unbelonging. From the case-study, it will become clear that (feelings of) belonging rely on mutual recognition and enjoyment of shared knowledge and experience.

References

- Cornips, Leonie and Vincent de Rooij. 2015. Forthcoming. Belonging through Languagecultural Practices in the Periphery. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*.
- Silverstein, Michael 1976. Shifters, linguistic categories, and cultural description. Keith H. Basso, Henry A. Selby (Eds.), *Meaning in anthropology*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp. 11–55.

Leonie Cornips is researcher Language Variation at the Meertens Institute (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) in Amsterdam and Professor „Languageculture in Limburg“ at the Maastricht University. She examines both the grammatical aspects of language, mostly syntactic variation, bilingual child acquisition and linguistic construction of local and social identities.

Vincent de Rooij is an assistant professor at the Dept of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, and a member of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research. In his recent research, he has been concerned with the question of how notions of place, class, and gender play a role in processes of social identification. He has published in various international journals on language contact phenomena, youth culture, language ideology, and language and identity. With Leonie Cornips, he is currently preparing an edited volume on the sociolinguistics of belonging.

Discussion

Irene Stengs, Meertens Institute

DAY 2

Wednesday, June 10 2015

“If we go deep you won’t understand us”. Sranantongo as a politics of belonging in the Netherlands.

Markus Balkenhol, Utrecht University and Meertens Institute/KNAW Amsterdam

On 13 July I jotted down the following fieldnotes: “We are standing outside on the balcony. Yvette is speaking Sranan, and proudly says that I [Markus], too, speak Sranan. Sheryl says that her Dutch husband also claims to speak Sranan, but it is clear that she does not entirely believe him. She tells us that he doesn’t really speak it, but that he understands the gist of conversations. Then she says that my Sranan may be better than her husband’s, “but if we really go deep you won’t understand it”. I often hear the word “deep” in conversations about Sranan. [...] “Deep” seems to be a temporal as well as a qualitative notion. A form of cultural comprehension that takes more than just the ability of speaking a language. Besides, I have the feeling that people almost welcome it when Dutch people don’t understand Sranan. The link with the past, when Sranan was a kind of code language that was inaccessible to the planters was also made on Surinameplein [during the commemoration of slavery].”

In this presentation I explore the use of Sranantongo as a politics of belonging in which “black”, “white”, “Surinamese”, “Dutch”, or hybrid identities take shape. I argue that this establishes a relation not only vis-à-vis “Dutch society”, but it also articulates a position with regards to a genealogy of language politics in Surinamese nationalist and anticolonial movements.

Markus Balkenhol is a social anthropologist working on issues of colonialism, race, citizenship, cultural heritage, and religion. His PhD thesis “Tracing Slavery. An Ethnography of Diaspora, Affect, and Cultural Heritage in Amsterdam” (2014) deals with different forms of cultural memory of slavery in Amsterdam Zuidoost. He is currently affiliated with Utrecht University and Meertens Institute as a postdoctoral research fellow.

The linguistic construction of belonging in a nursing home.

Jolien Clijisen, Maastricht University.

Despite the increasing number of bilingual speakers, there is limited attention for bilingual older people. In the research on linguistic practices of older people, the perspective prevails that language skills inevitably decline with age. This includes negative expectations in vocabulary and understanding and the assumption that bilingual older people cannot maintain all their linguistic repertoires and with time only have the ability to speak one linguistic repertoire. However, these assumptions and expectations may prove false for many older people. This study therefore explores the ways in which older people use their various linguistic repertoires as resources to achieve their goals. Older people who, through circumstances, move to nursing home have to achieve a sense of home (belonging) again which might be a painful process. Although limited research is done on the linguistic construction of belonging in a nursing home, language is usually considered as the most important cultural factor to construct belonging (Antonsich 2010). Besides that language can demarcate —Us|| from —Them||, being surrounded with people who not only understand

what you say but also what you mean can also contribute to feeling of being —at home||. My study will take place in a nursing home in Maastricht, capital of the province Limburg in Southeast Netherlands. Here, many older people speak standard Dutch and local dialect. This study will particularly focus on how older people use their bilingual capacity to construct senses of belonging. The question that rises is how people who interact with people in a nursing home deal with their bilingualism and, how people use their linguistic repertoires in their nursing home.

References:

- Antonsich, M. 2010. Searching for belonging: an analytical framework. *Geography compass*, 4(6), 644- 659.
- Johnstone, B. 2000. *Qualitative methods in sociolinguistics*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Jolien Clijzen MA is a PhD candidate at the faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Maastricht University. Her research focuses on language practices in a nursing home and the linguistic construction of belonging in a nursing home.

Us and them and all these others

Anna Strycharz-Banaś

The concept of belonging has been variously conceptualized across the fields of anthropology and sociology, and recently has also been adopted in the field of sociolinguistics. In this article I look at the way in which belonging is done in a group of Japanese expatriate women in The Netherlands, using three specific linguistic resources: personal pronouns, local and standard Japanese negation and ethnic labels. I focus on one Community of Practice they have formed and belong to, as a way of analyzing how ‘belonging’ can be done when a group of speakers is literally taken out of place and has a potential to reevaluate what it means to ‘belong’. I analyze language practices to see how group cohesion is maintained and contested, and argue that for this particular community we need to be aware of the significance of the Japanese concept of *uchi* (ingroup) and *soto* (outgroup) in performing belonging.

Transnational belonging? Reflections from transnational migration research

Valentina Mazzucato, Maastricht University

Transnationalism as an approach to scientific inquiry helps us move beyond the methodological nationalism that has characterized most social science research conducted in the 20th century. A transnational perspective calls into question the assumption that economic, social and political realms relevant for our topic of inquiry perfectly juxtapose onto a nation-state territory. It thus questions basic assumptions about space and how people’s daily experiences overlay, or not, onto a nation-state bounded territory. A transnational perspective evolved from the study of migration and the way in which migrants maintain and develop multiple engagements that span both ‘home’ and ‘host’ countries and possibly other countries as well. This presentation reflects on the ways a transnational perspective is consonant with, adds or is in opposition to the concept of belonging. It will draw from

research on transnational migrant networks conducted at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Maastricht University.

Valentina Mazzucato is Professor of Globalization and Development at Maastricht University, The Netherlands. She heads several international research projects on transnational families financed by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and NORFACE and is co-PI on a European Commission 7th Framework project on transnational migration between Africa and Europe. Prof. Mazzucato is regularly invited to speak in public fora on the effects of transnational lives for development in Africa and migrant integration in Europe. She has lived in and conducted research on numerous African countries in the past 20 years.