

The embodiment of place and belonging: *boorlinge* and *inkommers* in (in)mobility

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In the context of geographic mobility, in-migration can contribute to changing, and sometimes conflicting dynamics amongst established residents (i.e. locals) and newcomers. In this presentation, I will explore how locals and newcomers discursively construct place identities in terms of ideologies of locality and belonging. Modan (2007), and other sociolinguistic scholars such as Becker (2009), use the term *place identity* to refer to an aspect of social identity tied to locality. Furthermore, the sense of belonging to a specific place can be regarded as the *embodiment* of locality. Deumert (2014:18) states that the phenomenological notion of embodiment highlights 'the way in which material objects become part of our bodily memory' (see Bucholtz and Hall's [2016] discussion of embodied sociolinguistics). The materiality I focus on is places or localities, where the embodiment of place relates to people's lived experience, how they express being '(not) from here', as well as the kinds of freedom and restrictions that places can have on the movement and location of bodies. Embodiment therefore involves notions of *mobility* and *immobility*. As argued by Blommaert (2010), a sociolinguistics of mobility considers how the movement of people involves the movement of different semiotic resources. I argue that (im)mobility *per se* is a semiotic resource, particularly seen in the notion of being a local or established resident, versus a newcomer.

The presentation will focus on how the embodiment of place is expressed in interviews conducted in 2011 with residents from a peri-urban, Afrikaans-dominant town called Houtiniquadorp (located in South Africa's South Cape region). In

Houtiniquadorp, the residents created emic place identities that involve historic struggles to belong, resistance to 2

newcomers, and discourses of authenticity. Residents refer to themselves and others as *boorlinge* or *inkommers*. *Boorlinge* – literary “natives” – refers to established, and largely non-mobile, Houtiniquadorpers who can trace their ancestral connection to the place through several generations. The relational opposite of *boorlinge* are *inkommers* – or incomers – which include recent arrivals, and residents who might have been living in the town since a young age, but were not born there, or whose parents were not born there.

Discourse analyses of interview narratives show, among other things, that *boorlinge* expressed a sense of visually recognising *boorling* bodies, through the way they walk, talk and behave. Crime and substance abuse were linked to discourses about troubled neighbourhoods and the *inkommers* living there. Some *inkommers* also described their experiences of being silent or peripheral bodies, where *boorlinge* deny them the right to speak about local matters. The argument is made that in-migration contributed to how residents position themselves and others as authentic or marginal Houtiniquadorpers, and in the process created various embodied place identities. The discussion moves towards conceptualising (in)migration as an object of discourse, rather than a straightforward analytical concept.

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