

'Superdiversity' from underground: Linguistic and social dynamics in a Belgian mining cité

Nantke Pecht (University of Münster)

Language varieties that have emerged in the context of mining have been shown to have a “unique social ecology” (Cornips and Muysken 2019: 1) related to center-periphery dynamics and power hierarchies, but also to the “superdiverse” (Vertovec 2007) conditions under which they have developed. The concept of superdiversity, initially introduced to understand the interplay of factors related to new patterns of immigration in Britain, has been applied to various disciplines to describe processes of social transformation, and has received particular attention in sociolinguistics. This talk will focus on a particular case of a super-diverse environment in Belgian Limburg, namely the mining community of Eisden. In this former mining *cité*, a contact variety developed among locally-born children of immigrant miners in the 1930s, which its speakers call *Cité Duits* (lit. 'Mining District German'). Today, *Cité Duits* is on the verge of disappearing, with about ten speakers left, all men in their eighties. Despite the speakers' label *Duits* 'German', a linguistic analysis shows that *Cité Duits* cannot be easily characterized as a variety of German, or Dutch. Rather, there is strong evidence for a fusion of features due to intensive language contact between Belgian Dutch, the Maaslands dialect spoken in Eisden, and varieties of German (Pecht 2021). Drawing on a range of data (e.g., recordings of informal group interactions, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and written materials) from 2015/16, I will discuss the sociolinguistic dynamics that led to the emergence of this 'coal mining variety'. In addition, I will provide a bird's-eye view of the sociolinguistic dynamics of other previous mining regions, such as the Ruhr Area, where the mines have only recently closed (in 2018) and where a strong connection between the regiolect *Ruhrdeutsch* and mining language can be observed.

References

- Cornips, Leonie, und Pieter Muysken. 2019. 'Introduction: Language in the mines.' in Leonie Cornips und Pieter Muysken (eds.), *International Journal of the Sociology of Language (IJSL)* (de Gruyter: New York).
- Pecht, Nantke. 2021. *Language Contact in a Mining Community. A Study of Personal Pronouns and Progressive Aspect in Cite Duits* (LOT: Amsterdam).
- Vertovec, Steven. 2007. 'Super-diversity and its implications', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30: 1024-54.