# 10.  Conclusion and Prospects

In this book I have analyzed, discussed and theoretically underpinned how belonging is achieved in interaction in a Guatemalan highland community. To establish a theoretical understanding of how the concept of belonging is fruitful in the specific context of this case, I thoroughly discussed its relation to the concept of identity in chapter 2. I also examined how belonging is currently conceptualized in its different relations to place, social position, regimes and time. I concluded the theoretical chapter by defining belonging as encompassing both belonging *to* certain spatial, social or temporal categories, and belonging *with* a group, a place or a time. This conceptualization was further elaborated in chapter 3, in which I explore an understanding of belonging as something "done" and achieved by speakers with the means of language. This chapter also put forward that the means for achieving belonging can be similar across a group of speakers forming a community of practice. Chapter 4 then set out how to trace the linguistically achieved categories and practices of belonging in spoken data, focusing specifically on the merits of membership categorization and conversation analysis, positioning analysis and finally the analysis of narratives as a form of language practice. The chapter on data collection and data processing provided a more detailed description of the community focusing on its current organization and economic links, as well as the compilation of the spoken data corpus. As this was an ethnographically grounded data collection, chapter 5 also gave special emphasis to the relations of the researcher with the community members, my access to the field and what kinds of data were possible for me to collect at all.

The analytical chapters provided different perspectives and insights on the research questions. The first two research questions about how belonging is established in interaction, and what kind of categories and positions are made relevant are explored in chapter 6. In a workshop interaction of several women from the community with an outsider trainer, belonging is made an explicit topic and locally relevant categories emerge against the backdrop of an ethnically oriented category system. The main finding presented in this chapter is that the community women establish their belonging by means of the local adverb *aquí* 'here' and a shared origin of *nosotros* 'we' indicating temporal relations to that place. The extracts also showed how interactional positions and different claims to legitimacy can impact the *in situ* negotiation of belonging. The importance of acknowledging and listening to locally relevant concepts of belonging was another outcome of the analyses in this chapter. This chapter has shown that

the construction of social membership in ethnic categories, which is common practice in Guatemala, clashes with the women's understanding of their local belonging. Especially the relevance of spatial belonging proved to be important in the analysis of the participants stories about the community transformation that were the focus of chapter 7. The local adverb *aquí* and the personal pronoun *nosotros,* as well as verbal forms of 'we', also emerged as commonly established ways of referencing belonging in the majority of the narratives. 'We' and 'here' are connected through trajectories of time in these stories, which emphasizes a (neo-)autochthonous understanding of the speakers' belonging. A crucial result linked to the third research question focusing on narrating as a practice of belonging was the exploration of shared core elements in all thirty narratives that tell the story of community transformation. The shared knowledge about "what" to tell, and the assembling of that knowledge in certain ways of "how" to tell it, show belonging *with* the community.

The excursus in chapter 8 complemented the analysis by focusing on belonging from two further analytical perspectives. In section 8.1, an analysis of the interview corpus showed the use of the local adverb *aquí* in its overall reference to the community (and not to other places). Also, the possibility of an added meaning of *aquí* besides referencing place was discussed. Speakers use *aquí* when they talk about their birth, their origin and their attachments to the place. Thus, *aquí* is also used to articulate spatial and social belonging. The second excursus in 8.2 explored the regimes of belonging, and thereby showed the other side to the participants portrayal of the community as a "cohesive" and "homogeneous" collective. With reference to ethnographic knowledge acquired during my fieldwork stays, I demonstrated that belonging to the community and the place is not without cost, but relies on the compliance with shared norms, rules and practices. This ties in with theoretical work by Pfaff-Czarnecka (2011) and Yuval-Davis (2006). In this particular community, the regimes of belonging center on 'being born' in the community, shared suffering, and specific farming practices.

In chapter 9, I connect the results of the analytical chapters. The discussion has shown how we can make sense of the theoretical complexity of the concept of belonging in its categorical, positional and practice oriented dimensions. The achievement of belonging in interaction has been shown to have specific functions in the situational contexts of their utterance. Establishing belonging in this way allows speakers to legitimize their 'being here' and legitimize the community story and the speakers' collective project in front of others who do not form part of the group.

There are certain issues that I have only been able to touch upon and that could be made fruitful topics of further exploration in the field of language-oriented research on belonging. First, for further insight into the negotiation of belonging in interaction in this Guatemalan region, it would be beneficial to widen this case study to other communities in the highlands. They might be more prone to operate with "official" ethnic categories – as introduced by the trainer in chapter 6. How these categories are "filled" and evaluated – the "cultural stuff" (Barth, 1969) they are assigned with – should be analyzed from a local perspective. This might support a more complex concept of belonging as the ethnic categories might suggest, as has become apparent in chapter 6. Furthermore, in communities where indigenous languages such as K'iche' or Mam are spoken, the language use itself could be scrutinized as a means of assigning people to ethnic or other relevant categories.[161] Second, my research would profit from an anthropologically oriented exploration of practices beyond narrating to broaden our understanding of different ways of expressing belonging *with* the place and the community. Agricultural practices, body practices or other language practices – for instance ways of interactionally arriving at conflict resolutions – can point to locally specific ways of doing things in this community. A challenging discussion for these considerations then would be where to draw the boundary of the "local", and how to recognize practices as community-specific, regional or even as language-induced activities. Third, there are certain limits to the data collection, and hence to the composition of the corpus this book is based on. As a participant observer in the field, I only had access to data recorded in my presence and the presence of other outsiders.[162] With an interest in interactive achievements of belonging, however, this limitation can be turned into an advantage. As we have seen in chapter 6, belonging often only becomes an interactional "problem" (Hausendorf, 2000, 99.f) that needs to be dealt with in differentiation to other category systems (in the workshop interaction), or

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161   In her study on identification and belonging of Georgian Greeks, Höfler (forth-coming) shows how language competence is not necessarily the main identification category for belonging to a group with strong links to that language.

162   Of course there are other means of erasing the observer from the scene, such as leaving the recording device alone with the participants. I did leave it repeatedly in the houses of the participants asking them to just keep it on during dinner with the family etc. These data can be interesting for other research foci, e.g. language variation, interactional categories and positionings in the realm of the family household. However, belonging to the place or the community unsurprisingly did not become relevant in these contexts.

in explicit presentations of the collective and the self (as in the interview nar-
ratives and the historical sessions for tourists). Belonging is a concept that is
emphasized and foregrounded in contact with the "other" or the outsider. How-
ever, a thorough analysis of belonging in exclusive in-group interactions could
indicate whether there are possible differences in the relevancies speakers put on
categories and positions towards outsiders or members of their own group. The
ethnographically grounded excursus in section 8.2 is a first step in this direction.

The contribution of this book to current research on belonging and language
use is threefold. First, this book offers an analysis of belonging with a corpus
comprising spoken data from diverse interactions and informed by ethnographic
knowledge. The interactions share the characteristic of having one or more in-
terlocutors from outside, with one or more interlocutors from the community.
They are, however, varied in their setting and interactive goals. The analysis of
categories and positions of belonging that emerge in these different interactional
contexts validate their local relevance not only across different speakers, but also
across interactions with different interlocutors.

Second, I suggest a theoretical approach to belonging that encompasses spa-
tial, social and temporal categories and positions (belonging *to*), as well as shared
practices (belonging *with*) established in interaction. This theoretical approach
is empirically grounded in the data and validated by them. I contribute to a view
on belonging and language use in which deictics are crucial in speakers' estab-
lishment of belonging. The categorical components of belonging are hitherto
often envisioned in the sense of Tajfel (1974) as membership to social groups.
As we have seen in the analysis, it is not only the social group, but also the rela-
tions between spatial, social and temporal dimensions that are central to the way
speakers establish their belonging. Spatial and temporal categories have recently
gained more prominence and analytical recognition in their relation to the social
(c.f. Meinhof and Galasiński 2005; Housley and Smith 2011; Gerst 2016; Höfler
forthcoming). This book contributes to this line of thought and proposes that
the theoretical concept of belonging is especially apt for interlinking all three
of these ontological categories. Besides speakers' attributing belonging *to* the
categories, belonging *with* a group is a second component of the concept. Pfaff-
Czarnecka (2011) speaks of "commonality" and "mutuality" in thinking about
belonging *with* a group, and points to mutual expectations, norms and values.
Whereas these terms are rather vague for an interactional approach to belonging
as achieved with linguistic means, I conceptualize commonality and mutuality as
forms of shared (linguistic) practices, specifically the shared practice of narrating
the community story. Narratives, especially biographic or founding narratives,

are a promising locus for interactively establishing categories of belonging and positions across different speakers, as the studies of Linde (2009), Meinhof & Galasiński (2005), De Fina (2003) and my own have shown. Furthermore, a close examination of shared elements in these stories and a participation in their telling without possessing firsthand experiences (in the case of re-narrated stories, see section 7.5) point to shared knowledge on what to tell and how to tell it. This consolidates a homogenous and cohesive image of the community. For a holistic comprehension of belonging and language use, therefore, the proposed combination of analyzing categories of belonging and practices of belonging in various interactional contexts has proven to be fruitful.

Finally, my contribution lies in its emphasis on *local* relevancies and ways of establishing belonging. Especially the workshop interaction in chapter 6 has shown that sensitivity to local category systems and practices in research about belonging and identification is pivotal. Context-sensitivity is one of the main premises when it comes to interaction-oriented analysis of categories and positions. It takes into account who speaks with whom, when and where, about what and in what sequentiality. Moreover however, to understand the categories of belonging categories and positions of our participants more fully, we also have to contextualize them in relation to their history, and possible global categories they align with or deviate from. In the case of this study, a more holistic understanding of the locally relevant categories of belonging categories was achieved through ethnographic engagement in the community, which led to my "being there" when categories were openly and explicitly discussed. Thus, I would encourage research that is involved in our participants life worlds to better capture what matters from their local perspective, especially when it is considered in connection with topics as socially and politically relevant as belonging.