This paper uses critical discourse analysis to investigate the way Suffolk and its encompassing eastern regions are constructed and indexed on BBC regional radio, with the aim of elucidating how the media participate in place branding. Suffolk is an eastern, historically agricultural county that has lost farm and factory jobs and needs to compete with other regions for investment and tourism. The local BBC station, along with the countywide daily newspaper, is a powerful circulator of discourse about what Suffolk is or should be, and what defines typical and marginal Suffolk people and activities (Modan 2007). Other authoritative voices in this dialogue range from a frequently invoked rural ethnographer (Ewart Evans 1956) to marketing campaigns from local officials and trade groups using the latest slogan ‘The Curious County.’ The data include a constructed week of broadcasts from long-serving morning and afternoon radio hosts, covering about 35 hours of radio time. The morning host, a male Suffolk native, uses relatively few local references and invokes national discourse about aspiration and competitiveness through his ‘big conversations,’ while his afternoon counterpart, female and born in adjoining Norfolk, takes the role of explorer of local heritage and talks extensively about details of place. Both presenters index place through regional feature such as the glottal stop. Competing place formulations (Myers 2006, Myers and Lampropoulou 2013) such as town, county, East Anglia, and East of England, and propositions about them in monologues and interviews are analysed qualitatively to sketch out the current conception of regionalism and regional values (Bourdieu 1991), as well as the symbiosis between regional performance or indexing and BBC local radio organisation (Johnstone 2010, Scannell 1996). The analysis is triangulated with interviews with local informants of different backgrounds who comment on excerpts of recordings.

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