'I have her image of bringing me cherries as an offer': exploring belonging and trust in cross-border business collaboration through storytelling

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of narratives as resources for enacting group membership and community building in the case of one company, a Greek-Turkish partnership, SforSteel. We pay special attention to the function of iterative stories and specifically one that indexes the origin of the partnership. The analysis shows that the story, and its episodes, act as significant interactional resources for partners to claim a shared regional identity, that of people coming from the area of Trabzon in the Black Sea region. By negotiating a common origin, the partners simultaneously strengthen their long-term relationship and continuously reconnect the past to the present. The strong long-term relationship has a symbolic status and constitutes a condition for being accepted in this community.Through the analysis of this story our discussion addresses the importance of iterativity and the foundational relationship between community and trust.

Key Words: narratives as resources, iterativity, trustworthiness, trust, historicity, shared group membership, interactional histories

Introduction

Teams that have worked together for a long time have established relationships between them and have developed their own local resources for doing business (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003); narratives are one of them (Declercq and Jacobs, 2018; Van De Mieroop, 2018). With this as a starting point, our paper explores the role of narratives as resources for negotiating group membership in the context of a specific case-study. It draws on data from a completed project concerned with the construction of trust in a Greco-Turkish business partnership and discusses four reiterations of one story which tap into critical moments of partners' shared past.

Our approach draws on interactional sociolinguistic principles which are in line with the Social Interactional Approach (SIA) to narratives as proposed by De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008). In this context, narratives are understood as talk-in-interaction (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998) and social practice. De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008) acknowledge the importance of studying narratives from a micro-perspective as embedded in the local contexts and stress the need to also link the here-and-now of story-telling activities with broader macro-processes. This line of work has studied smaller units/groups of people often seen as communities of practice (CofP), defined as groups of people who come together under a shared concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Lave and Wenger, 1991). CofP are defined along three dimensions: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). In such communities people share language and social practices and norms as well as shared understandings of them. In this context, then, narratives, understood as specific typologies/ways of telling stories, are turned into a shared repertoire of the CofP (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008) and form an integral part of the community's shared culture, playing an important role in re-generating it (Georgakopoulou, 2006). At the same time, narratives act as interactional resources for group

members to achieve social actions, such as claiming identities, reaffirming roles, sharing goals, and building relations (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). Or, in other words, they become shared resources for group members' identity work. In line with this literature, we explore the functions of one iterative story which has emerged as an integral part of the SforSteel culture and shared repertoire of the community members. We are interested in the actions that partners achieve through mobilising this story and we aim to address the gap in existing narrative literature regarding iterativity. We discuss this below.

Iterativity in Storytelling practices

Stories, when elevated to shared repertoire for community members, serve multiple functions. For example, a recent study from Lee (2020), which focuses on every-day workplace interactions between Filipino workers and a Korean-German co-worker in a nursing home in Hawai, demonstrates how recycled stories mobilised during lunch-break talk acted as interactional resources for employees to establish and maintain social relations and negotiate belonging/inclusion. Similarly, Declercq and Jacobs (2018) investigated the role of two dominant narratives of vicarious experience that were repeated multiple times across their dataset collected in a pharmaceutical company. Their analysis shows that these stories contributed to building the corporate identity, while they were used as a shared resource by employees who strategically drew on them to claim professional identities for themselves and to assemble a common past, contributing to community building. Stories that tap in the interactional histories of bonded groups and are well-known to their members can significantly affect rapport and shared group membership. Norrick (1998: 92) studied the retelling of stories in spontaneous conversation for the same and different audiences and suggests that stories retold in close-knit groups, such as families, apart from their obvious function to amuse, also

remind members of shared values and enhance group membership. This is very relevant to our context and we will show the same function in the light of our data.

Despite the acknowledgment that retold stories constitute a natural testing site for analysing narrative (Norrick, 1998: 75), iterativity in storytelling practices remains an underexplored area of study (Georgakopoulou, 2013). Most linguistic studies focus on one-off tellings and there is little empirical research on how recurring stories used as shared templates are brought up in different settings and how they enhance sense-making (Stapleton and Wilson, 2017). Georgakopoulou (2013) studies positioning processes in narratives and proposes a practice-based approach that puts emphasis on iterativity. She focuses on ways of telling, sites and tellers and explores these through the prism of iterativity, suggesting that a focus on iterativity can shed light on repeated enactments of social roles and thus to more stable aspects of storyteller's identities. Our paper aims to contribute to studies on iterativity by drawing on interactional sociolinguistics, which is well aligned with the principles discussed here.

Our analysis shows that the recurring story with its episodes act as significant interactional resources for partners to claim a shared regional identity of people coming from the Black Sea region, re-affirm their close interpersonal relationship and negotiate belonging to the specific community. The sharedness of this regional identity is considered significant and consequential for the partners' relationship, given the strained and fragile Turkish-Greek relations. The two countries' relations have been characterised by long standing disputes dating from the early twentieth century, with the most significant historical event for the case under discussion being the Greco-Turkish war of 1919, which ended with a disproportionate population exchange against Greece under the terms of the Lausanne Convention of 1923 (Yıldırım, 2006). The population exchange involved almost 1.5 million people (including populations from Pontos, the Black Sea region in modern Turkey), caused a humanitarian crisis at the time and affected the development of the two nations for many decades (Hirschon, 2003).

Research on refugees with a Pontic background in Greece (see Zografou and Pipyrou, 2011) shows that the specific group of relocated refugees, preserved their refugee identity over the years and hold fond idealized memories of their fatherland, Pontos. By re-telling the story, partners perpetuate the significance of the symbols that make up their CofP and claim membership of it. At the same time, through the story they construct discourses of trust which, in their turn, become ideals for community members to draw upon for business practice. Stories become sense-making devices for community members; they draw on the past to define future relationships and set up expectations about behaviours that can be legitimized thanks to bonds of trust. This is central in developing shared ways of managing business uncertainty and risk which are at the heart of business practice (Efthymiadou and Angouri, in prep). We turn to trust next.

Trust and trustworthiness

We understand trust to be a relational phenomenon which depends on attitudes and beliefs about others (Pelsmaekers, Jacobs and Rollo, 2014) and entails vulnerability and risk (Gambetta, 1988). According to Luhmann (1988), trust depends on risk as it emerges only in situations where a person has to choose a course of action in preference to others despite the possibility that he/she might be disappointed by the behaviour of others. The decision to be vulnerable to others' behaviours depends on perceptions of other people's credibility or reliability, i.e., their trustworthiness (Candlin and Crichton, 2013).

Interpersonal relationships play an important role regarding perceptions of trustworthiness. The closeness of the parties' relationship affects the development of trust and shared group membership plays an important role in this respect. Identification with a social group is a central factor that affects the construction of social identities. According to classic

identity theories, such as the Social Identity Theory, the social identity of an individual derives from his/her accepted status of belonging to a certain social group or category and from the value and emotional significance that result from this group membership (Tajfel, 1972). Members of the same group tend to foreground their similarities and downplay their differences, as well as compare their group to other groups favourably (Tajfel, 1972). In this way, their membership acquires emotional significance. Being part of a common group is associated with feelings of liking and affect and has been argued to provide the means for the development of trust between in-group members (Loh et al., 2010). Following insights from previous studies, we too argue that shared group membership serves for "defining the boundaries of low risk interpersonal trust that bypass the need for personal knowledge" (Brewer, 1981: 356). This is based on the presupposition that in-group members share common features and attribute positive characteristics to fellow group members, such as honesty, cooperativeness and trustworthiness (Brewer, 1996), which contributes to building a safe personal network for group members and leads to a depersonalised type of trust between them (Kramer and Lewicki, 2010). In a similar vein, according to Mayer's et al. (1995) influential theory of trust, a person would trust another if he/she thinks that the latter adheres to some principles which the former considers to be acceptable and in line with their perception of the moral order. Being part of a group facilitates establishing common perceptions of morality and negotiation of shared meanings regarding appropriate behaviour between in-group members.

Our paper shows the importance of storytelling practices for shared group membership and shared discourses of trust that circulate and are visible in a community. This expands the underlying assumption that trust is a discursive achievement, something people do when they interact with each other (Candlin and Crichton, 2013) and shows the ways in which historicity of relationships is re-enacted in the situated moment. This position is well illustrated in Pelsmaekers, Jacobs and Rollo's (2014:7) words: "whether we trust others has a lot to do with

what they say (including what they do not say), and with how they say it, as well as with what we tell them and how we do that". We add to this, "how long and how we got to know them". The origin and historicity of the relationship, which pre-dates the interactional moment, is a strong factor in negotiating trust. Historicity has been studied in business relationships and evidence (Rousseau et al., 1998; Kramer, 1999) shows that in the case where a common past provides a safety net, participants are ready to take higher risk. Insights from Pesämaa and Hair's (2007) work on personal relationships and trust indicate that long-term friendship facilitates the development of loyalty and commitment, which are vital components of trust and discourage opportunistic behaviours between partners (see also Zaheer et al., 1998). In a similar vein, Rousseau et al. (1998: 40) argue that after "repeated cycles of exchange, risk taking and successful fulfilment of expectations" the trusting parties become more willing to expand the resources brought into the exchange and rely upon each other more heavily. Longevity of partners' relationship acquires symbolic significance within the SforSteel CofP; partners often narrate stories of their shared past to stress their long-term friendship.

We next turn to our methodology and analytical approach, before discussing our data and general conclusion of our work.

Data and Methods

The paper draws on a completed PhD project on trustworthiness as understood, warranted and performed by partners involved in cross-border collaboration (understood as collaboration between companies in different countries), more specifically in the Turkish-Greek context (see Efthymiadou, 2018). The data discussed are drawn from a company given the pseudonym SforSteel, which constitutes a partnership between a Greek and 4 Turkish men who co-own a

factory in Turkey, the activities of which belong to the broader construction sector. The SforSteel data set comprises 44 hours of recorded interviews, meetings and every-day talk that took place between partners at formal and informal meals/dinners. A multi-methods approach to data collection has been chosen to explore the relationship between narratives as local sense-making devices and the relevant and significant discourses of the broader CofP (Georgakopoulou, 2013). We are interested in this paper in the ways in which membership is enacted and particularly in relation to regional identity which is symbolically significant for this community.   The SforSteel corpus includes a significant number of stories which were not deliberately elicited but emerged naturally in conversations with the participants as well as in their own backstage discussions (all data recorded with the participants' consent). Among these, a specific autobiographical story, which draws on the partners' shared past (their first acquaintance), re-emerges on different occasions and instances across the data. The story has been mobilized during every-day small talk between partners, in business transactions and in research interviews. In what follows, we focus and analyse this story over four instances. The story consists of three different episodes that include the narrators as protagonists, or are "other" oriented as the protagonists are not the narrators themselves but either their parents or other family members (see also De Fina, 2008). The story can be characterised as shared, given that it regards events that are known to participants already and have been possibly narrativised in the past (Georgakopoulou, 2008). We consider this story with its sub-episodes a powerful analytical tool for unpacking how partners do identity work to claim membership of the CofP.

The story was chosen on the basis of its iterative character. In our analysis, we look for similarities in the ways the story and its episodes/sub-sections are told, the themes circulated in them and the meaning that participants ascribe to them, as well as in the ways they present themselves and others to claim locally significant identities. Specifically, our analysis focuses

on how partners claim regional identity through the story. Identity is understood as a construct which is constituted in social action, and especially through language (Bamberg et al., 2011), while the regional focus was prescribed by the context, as this identity was foregrounded and made mostly relevant by the participants.   More specifically, our participants' self-identify as being Pontic, coming from a Black Sea region, Trabzon. The image of the region that participants construct is multidimensional. The Black Sea in their stories represents a specific place including the physical landscape, architecture, cooking style and dialect, cultural elements, such as music and dancing but is also connected with narratives of 'homeland'. As classic diaspora studies have shown (e.g., Tsagarousianou, 2004; Angouri, 2012) the ancestral homeland is an imaginary contrast often idealised as the 'true' place and associated with strong links with the past and perceptions of belonging. For SforSteel, it provides a shared context of a common identity. Business partners attribute symbolic significance to the place, identify themselves as co-members of this particular regional group and construct their identities and relationships around the region. Despite the memory of collective trauma, which has been preserved over generations, regional identity is still very strong and people commit time and effort in maintaining the local language and custom. Our Greek participant and core gatekeeper, Nick, and his family constitute a prime example. We show in our data how regional identity is mobilised in partners' social and professional interactions.

Following De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008), our analysis attends to the micro context of the interactions at hand, but links this to broader macro-processes too. Participants claim regional identity in the story and enact belonging to their CofP. Our analysis draws on interactional sociolinguistic tools to identify contextualisation cues, i.e. the linguistic and pragmatic choices of speakers that lead to claiming identities, looking into how something is said instead of only what is said as per the principles of Gumperz (1982). We specifically focus on the sequence where narratives were mobilised, as well as on direct/indirect ascriptions of

categories/labels, pronoun use, use of metaphors and lexical choices that convey evaluations (De Fina, 2015) which in other workplace literature have been shown to indicate category formation.

Analysis and Discussion

In this section we present and discuss the story of first acquaintance over four instances. The excerpts are drawn from a research interview (excerpt 1), every-day talk between the researcher and participants (excerpt 2), small talk between participants (excerpt 3) and a business transaction (excerpt 4) and constitute illustrative examples of the use of recurring stories in the dataset. The excerpts were selected based on the perceived significance associated with the core incidents and the central role of the narrative in the interactional order. The story discussed concerns the initial acquaintance of the partners' families and stresses the values of family and friendship, which are both highly idealised in the Greek and Turkish sociocultural contexts and are closely related to claims of morality.   Excerpt 1 was elicited during a research interview with Nick, the Greek informant in the case-study, who mobilises the story to justify his trusting relationship with his Turkish partners.

Excerpt 1

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Context:  This excerpt is drawn from a formal interview with Nick in his
office in Greece. Nick and the researcher converse in Greek.
(1)   Res   I would like you to tell me a bit more, the other time you told
(2)         me that there is blind trust between you and your partners. I
(3)         would like you to explain this.
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(4)   Nick Look. Blind trust, right? These friends and partners are not

(5)   random people. Each one of use has its own history (…)*

(6)   Res   Of course, it is the company to be able to..

(7)   Nick Exactly. Many years ago, thirty-five years ago, when my father

(8)   met the father of Mehmet and he went to Istanbul and he stayed

(9)   at his house, not at a hotel, and they were speaking in the

(10)   Pontic dialect, they were talking about Pontos, for the way

(11)   people live there and here, and they started to come and go,

(12)   he told me one time: You will go to Istanbul to meet this

(13)   family. And he told me this in the Pontic dialect: Avoutoi

(14)   en emon emas (dialect). They are like us (he translates).

(15)   Res   Ohh

(16)   Nick And I went. At the airport Mehmet was waiting for me, this was

(17)   the first time we met. And I went, I stayed for 12 days at their

(18)   house. His sister who today has two children, this girl here

(19)   (he shows a picture of her), was like this (he shows the

(20)   researcher her level of height with his hand) and she was

(21)   bringing me the cherries as an offering. My beloved Esra. Who is

(22)   the Muslim woman with the hijab, you know, the scarf. And when

(23)   she saw me again at the village, the first time I went to

(24)   Pontos, she ran spontaneously to me and hugged me in front of

(25)   her husband. Something that is prohibited by all means there.

(26)   Res   Yes

(27)   Nick Her husband, then, seeing me for the first time, a stranger, he

(28)   became red (upset). And his father in law kept him and told

(29)   him: he is the older brother

(30)   Res   Ohh

(31)   Nick Ok? You don't have the right to feel bad, he is her older

(32)   brother. He is even higher from Boran(the oldest brother of

(33)   the family)because he is older. Agrabey' means older brother.

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(34)          Once we had built this relationship over all these years, in

(35)          2000-2001 I had an idea of doing this business in Turkey.
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*irrelevant talk on the background of a partner that was not included for
anonymity purposes

Nick provides an account of the reasons that he directly associates with the 'blind' trust ideal. Shared history between the two partners' family is foregrounded and personal relationships are prioritised over professional ones. Nick organises his talk around a story comprised of three different temporal episodes, built around three different visits (7-14, 16-22, 22-35). From line 4, Nick already projects the identity category of friends to his partners, ('friends and partners', line 4) instead of just partners or partners and friends. The choice and sequence denotes the significance and prevalence that friendship is intended to signify over partnership in this context. The specific story has implications for the construction of a shared regional identity between partners. The first significant point for regional identity construction is found in lines 9-11, where Nick draws special attention to the fact that his father and Mehmet's father were talking to each other in the Pontic dialect and about topics in connection with the area of Pontos. Linguistic choices of speakers act as tokens of particular social identities for them (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985; De Fina, 2013). Speaking the Pontic dialect in this context, thus, becomes an index of "Ponticness". Ponticness is central in the retellings of the story and is deeply embedded in the discursive and material environment of the community as we show later. Claims of regional identity are further intensified by presenting the two men talking about Pontos. Talk about specific places can become a powerful means of doing identity. De Fina (2008) has demonstrated how members of an Italian club in the US used travel narratives about Sicily to demonstrate their attachment to Italy and their origins and make their membership of the club more legitimate. Nick's statement here has a

similar effect; through presenting his father talking about Pontos, he claims attachment to the area and makes his membership of the Pontic group more authentic and legitimate.

A regional identity reference is mobilized later in the excerpt, in lines 13-14, where Nick chooses to reproduce the supposedly exact words of his father, after his visit to Turkey, in their original form, in the Pontic dialect (Avoutoi en emon emas), which he then translates for the researcher (they are like us, line 14). Note here that the researcher is quite familiar with the Pontic dialect, which is based on ancient Greek. As Nick knew that, it was not necessary for him to translate simple phrases of the dialect for her. However, Nick here and at other points in our interactions chooses to provide the researcher with the translation of the dialect, a practice that can be read as excluding or at least marking her as 'outsider' and signals her as linguistically limited in relation to the regional dialect (see Bucholtz and Hall, 2008 on translation as an exclusion practice). In this way, Nick achieves an identity claim for himself as a person with exclusive or superior knowledge of the dialect. Moreover, the statement of Nick's father "They are like us" formulated in the regional dialect clearly proposes a common group membership for the two families. The use of the personal pronouns "us/they" is illustrative at this point. Previous research on identity has shown that self and other positioning, manifested in talk, mainly though us/them comparisons, are powerful means of constructing identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005) and this is a prime example of that practice. The power of regional identity surpasses even the power of national identity in the specific case and is a significant resource for justifying 'blind' trust -despite other national narratives that associate the 'other' with untrustworthy qualities. This is functional in SforSteel business praxis; the association with a region that connects the two countries is mobilized in making the partners accepted when operating in the sensitive cross-border context.

In more detail, the first acquaintance story was found to be retold in similar ways in other points within our dataset, often in front of other partners or collaborators. This shows its status as a shared resource for the specific community. A reiteration is provided in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

Context: The excerpt is taken from a conversation that takes place between Nick, Mehmet and the researcher at the premises of their factory, in Mehmet's office. The conversation between the researcher and Mehmet is in English (with some intersections in Turkish and Pontic dialect) and turns to Greek between the researcher and Nick.

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1)   Mhm   Actually we are not partners, we are friends with Nick. For a
2)         long time. From my father and his father maybe he told you
3)         about it.
4)   Res   Yes he did.
5)   Mhm   I was child. Maybe 5,6 years old I was. And we were living in
6)         Istanbul.And his father and mother came to Istanbul with my
7)         uncle who was selling some machines to Greece, Turkey. And his
8)         father bought a machine from my uncle so he became a friend. So
9)         one day my uncle bring his father and mother in Turkey and I
10)        remember.
11)  Res   You remember?
12)  Mhm   And there was too much snow at that time. It snowed too much and
13)        they stayed in our house, maybe one week or 10 days, I'm not
14)        sure. What I remember, I tell you. His father and mother maybe
15)        also they were using the crème, krema for the coffee, it is in
16)        my mind still.
17)  Res   Really
18)  Mhm   The coffee. Crème, krema, the milk like. It is in my mind
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19) Res   It was new for you.

20) Mhm   Yes, it new for us. Because we don't have much a coffee culture

21)   you know.

22) Res   Yes, you drink tea.

23) Mhm   So I think his father liked my father and after

24)   a while he told them, to George and to Nick, in the future

25)   you will make a partnership with this family. Right Nick?

26) Nick   Na eftate douleias (dialect:Do business together)

27) Mhm   Na eftate douleias. (dialect:Do business together)

28) Res   I want to keep a note of this.

29) Mhm   This is the bit why we are partners now.

30) Res   So you were first friends and then partners.

31) Mhm   In fact my uncle opened this way.

32) Nick   I told them, how my father met your uncle. And after this

33)   meeting his uncle said I have a brother in Istanbul, who is a

34)   dentist, you should meet him. And my father came..they came at

35)   that time when his sister, Esra..Esra, how old is she now? We

36)   came when his

37) Mhm   33 (in Greek)

38) Nick   Now she is 33 years old, she has two children. When I went

39)   there she was 5,6 years old. When my father came, how old was

40)   she (dialect)

41) Mhm   Even younger, because I was 6-7 years old

42) Nick   Two years old

43) Res   Oh only two years old, a baby.

44) Mhm   Baby.

45) Nick   Thirty-two years ago, imagine (…) When they returned to Greece

46)   he told me 'One day you will go and meet this family. They are

47)   like us.' And when I came here, I remember this as if this is

48)   happening now, her image of bringing me a plate with cherries

49)   and next to it a wet towel to clean my hands. I remember her

50)   very young. And I found her again, a married woman

51)   with a child. And we also had a scene. When she saw me

52)   she ran and spontaneously hugged me. Her husband stood like ice

53)   cube. And her father explained to him, he is my older son. And

54)   now we are friends. He is a well-educated man, he was raised

55)   in Germany, he learnt his job there too. And now he lives here.

56)   So, our family relationship is very very deep. This is why I

57)   told you, we are not the typical example of a relationship

58)   between a Greek and a Turk, we are something particular,

59)   different, weird and rare.

The excerpt starts with Mehmet elaborating on his relationship with Nick in line 1, which he links to their fathers' friendship. Mehmet refers to the first visit of Nick's parents to their house in Istanbul (the first episode of the story) and claims to have fond memories of it (line 9, 10). His narration draws on the bad weather conditions (line 12), the duration of their stay (line 13) and the fact that they were drinking a new type of coffee (lines 14-18) that his family members were not familiar with. Mehmet refers to their fathers' suggestion to make this partnership in the past and invites Nick to contribute to the story (line 25), acknowledging its shared status and actively doing inclusivity. Pontic dialect is introduced at this point by Nick, who chooses to reply with the exact words of their fathers using the Pontic dialect "Na eftate douleias" (do business together), which is then ratified by Mehmet (lines 26-27). Echoing works to strengthen team bonding here, while code-switching is read as doing Ponticness. From this point on (line 25), the two partners claim telling rights by echoing each other and co-telling the story, something which is consistent in the dataset as they reproduce stories multiple times. Co-telling or adding details to a shared story has been argued to demonstrate shared group

membership (Norrick, 1998) and the story here also becomes a symbolic resource for the community to index loyalty to the group.

The second and third episodes of the story are re-mobilised in the interaction after line 45 with Nick re-producing them in almost identical ways as in excerpt 1. Nick draws on the same events, his father's suggestion to meet the Turkish family and the scene with Esra bringing the cherries and hugging him, presenting the episodes in the same sequence and paying attention to the same concepts. To date, the limited research on repeated stories shows that "frequent re-telling leads some tellers to crystallize and recycle stories as fairly complete units, sometimes with moveable subsections" (Norrick, 1998: 94-95). The similarities in the way these episodes/sub-sections of the story are reproduced indicates that they have become part of Nick's linguistic repertoire.

Mehmet's and Nick's narratives do not offer new information to one another, but rather contribute to relational work (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). The two partners use these stories as an arena for showing adherence to the same values, foregrounding similarity and group membership. This is further intensified by the use of the personal pronoun 'we' in its prototypical way (lines 56, 57, 58), which strengthen proximity and shared group membership.

Part of the above story (the first two episodes) has been elicited in another context during every-day talk between Nick, his wife, Mehmet and his mother. The narration takes place during an informal discussion between the participants, which has a small talk function.

Excerpt 3

Context: The excerpt is taken from from a conversation that takes place between Nick, his wife, Mehmet and his mother at Mehmet's house over coffee/tea. The researcher is not present on this occasion. The discussion takes place in Turkish and the regional dialect.

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1.  Moth    Your father was drinking too much coffee (Turkish)

2.  Mhm     Your father was drinking too much coffee. They came to our

3.          house for 12 days, 9 days. (dialect)

4.  Nick    9 days.

5.  Mhm     9 days. One day it snowed a lot, do you know this? Your

6.          father and mother. They came with my uncle in Istanbul, in our

7.          house and it snowed a lot.

8.  Nick    How old was Esra?

9.  Moth    6 months old.

10. Nick    Esra was 6 months old.

11. Nick's  Yes my mother in law had not seen her till then and she saw
    wife

12.         her two years ago when she came to Turkey.

13. Nick    Yes two years ago.

14. Nick's  And she saw Esra again after so many years, since baby.
    wife

15. Nick    Since baby, yes. When I came to Istanbul Esra was 5?

16. Moth    5 years old.

17. Nick    5 years old. I remember her very young.

18. Mother  When your father came she was 6 months old. It was snowing,

19.         there were 70-80 cm snow. We were playing snowball fights

20.         outside. Your mother was too young then. Your father had your

21.         age today, right? Or was he younger?

22. Nick    He was younger. It was in 1982. So many years ago.

23. Mother  It was in 1982.

24. Nick    In 1982 my father was 48 years old, younger than me today.
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In this excerpt participants co-tell the story of first acquaintance, contributing parts to form a coherent whole. The story is not fully developed; there is reference to the first two

episodes (the two visits of Nick's family to Mehmet's family house in Istanbul), but not to the third episode with Esra and her husband.

The story is introduced in line 1 by Mehmet's mother, who comments on the habit of Nick's father to drink a lot of coffee. Mehmet subsequently claims telling rights through echoing and continues the narration of the first episode of the story, which draws on the same actors and events as the second re-iteration provided in excerpt 2: the heavy snow at the time (line 5, 7, 18-20), the duration of the couple's stay (line 3-5) and the memory of Nick's father drinking a lot of coffee (lines 1, 2). The main topic of discussion though is the continuity of the relationship which builds the community's historicity. Nick makes a reference to Esra's age in line 8 and the rest of the discussion (up to line 24) develops around the main protagonists' age at the time of the two visits, which becomes a point of negotiation and reaffirms their equal rights in the relationship. The longevity of their family relationship acquires symbolic significance in the given context and is enacted throughout the narrative – note reference to time 'so many years ago' (line 22). Moreover, through co-telling and echoing (lines 3-5, 9-10, 15-17, 22-24) the participants manage to claim telling rights and show the status of the story as a shared resource in the specific community.

The story almost emerges in business transaction contexts too; an example is provided in the fourth and last reiteration. The excerpt is drawn from recordings of business talk during an industrial exhibition in Turkey (for further discussion of business interactions of the community see Efthymiadou and Angouri, in prep). Nick interacts with another professional at the exhibition and explains the reasons that led him to make a partnership in Turkey.

Excerpt four

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Context:  The excerpt was recorded at an business exhibition and is taken

from a conversation between Nick and another professional in the same

domain of activity. The interaction takes place in English.
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(1)   Nick  So, one of my major reasons to make business here is to make

(2)         better friendship with my friends. Because one of my partners'

(3)         father was a friend with my father before 35 years. They had

(4)         very strong relation. And he told me one day 'You will go

(5)         to Istanbul to meet this family, they are like us'. And I came

(6)         and I stayed at their house maybe for ten days and after years

(7)         we built this relationship we made this business together.

(8)         And was one of my dreams, of my grandma, to step to the

(9)         land of our homeland. You know, when I'm going there, every

(10)        year I'm going to Trabzon.

(11)  Paul  Really?
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Nick mobilises the first acquaintance story in a condensed form, retaining the main themes. Friendship is once again foregrounded (lines 2, 3) and proposed as the main reason for making the partnership, while historicity (before 35 years, line 3) and the intimacy (line 4) of the relationships are stressed too. Nick projects the identity category of friends to himself and his partners (line 2), similar to excerpts 1 (line 4) and 2 (line 1). Later in the excerpt, he performs the verbatim recital of the father's words (they are like us, lines 4, 5) as he did in excerpts 1 and 2, affirming a collective identity for his own and Mehmet's families and perhaps also reassuring the enquiring professionals of his closeness with Turkey and his strong bonds with the country. Professional identities are intertwined with personal and social identities (Angouri, 2018). The members of our community skilfully mobilise their common origin to establish an accepted presence in the sensitive cross-border space. They also reinforce their partnership through aligning membership to the group with their shared commitment to the success of their business.

Through reference to Trabzon as 'homeland', throughout the dataset, Nick does Ponticness. His membership of the Pontic group is further intensified and authenticated by the reference to his grandmother's dream for him (line 8). This part of the first acquaintance story is crystallized and frequently reproduced by the partners. The re-tellings of the source story indicates the importance of community symbols for sense-making in the given community. Through the story, partners define their relationship, shared values and community symbols through which they enhance group membership. In turn, group membership is then associated with the imaginary of common origin and the mythical homeland.

Conclusion

This paper explored the functions of a recurring story in the SforSteel dataset and has shown how participants draw on shared interactional histories to re-affirm strong interpersonal relationships and Ponticness, which, in their turn, become the two core symbols in the SforSteel CofP. By circulating this story, the partners perpetuate the significance of the symbols and re-generate their community, while doing membership. We have expanded on studies of iterativity in storytelling practices and added to previous scholarship by showing the local function of those stories in the workplace environment of our participants.

Our approach is informed by and builds on the work of Georgakopoulou (2013: 92), who analyses iterativity in stories by looking at ways of telling, sites and tellers and argues that iterative aspects of storytelling indicate 'repeated enactment of social roles' and point to more stable identities. In our case, the four reiterations of the story share similarities in terms of tellers, in the sense that certain episodes/sub-sections of the story are associated with certain narrators (i.e. the episode involving Esra and her husband with Nick) and ways of telling. More

specifically, the episodes in the re-iterations follow the same sequential order, which is in line with the temporal sequence of the three visits. Moreover, narrators draw on the same actors and events and put emphasis on the same themes, historicity of their family friendship and Ponticness, which acquire the status of community symbols.

The story forms part of the shared repertoire of SforSteel partners and acts as meaning-making device, defining and re-generating the CofP and providing space to its members for negotiating shared understandings of social norms. This has implications for trusting relationships too. First, partners draw on this shared repertoire to demonstrate knowledge of key narratives concerning their common past and adhere to the core values of their community, which enhances group membership. By constructing a bonded in-group partners get all the benefits that membership of a close-knit group implies, such as emotional ties, support and solidarity, which further facilitate the development of trust (Rosanas and Velilla, 2003). At a second level, the story provides the space for partners to construct discourses of trust which become ideals for community members to draw upon for business practice.

Furthermore, recurring stories or typologies of stories provide an insight into the dominant ideals in a given business context. This is neither static nor given and workplace scholars have stressed the need to understand the local practices that make up the workplace culture of the organisations under study (see Angouri, 2018; Sifianou, 2012). Recurring stories that have been turned into shared resources for participants are an important part of the local context and should receive more attention in future studies on group membership and trust. In closing, the interest in trust within the field is in its infancy and more work needs to be done in order to understand how trust and trustworthiness are enacted and negotiated in and through the negotiation of relationships in business contexts. We hope our work paves the way for future studies to look further into these questions in general and in sensitive cross border collaborations in particular.

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