

9. Summary and Discussion

In the last three chapters I have shown how social and local belonging is established in different interactional contexts with community outsiders. In this discussion, I will conclude by bringing together four analytical core principles: First, I will scrutinize the spatial, social and temporal categories the speakers make relevant in all of the interactional contexts that are taken into account in this book. Second, I will focus on the references of the deictic terms chosen to express categorical belonging. Third, the positionings that speakers repeatedly use in the narratives leading to certain metanarratives are outlined. Fourth, I will discuss the narrations themselves as a shared practice and as articulations of a “collective memory” in the community. I will close this discussion with an outlook on the concept of *community of practice*, and the advantages of different data for this specific analysis of belonging.

I will begin by re-examining the categories of belonging in their spatial, social and temporal dimensions. The most prominent category that appears repeatedly, partly “condensed” in specific sequences and partly used as a supplement to other spatial references, is the local adverb *aquí* ‘here’. Both in the workshop interaction with the trainer and in the narrative accounts of the participants, *aquí* is used to refer to the speakers’ and/or to the community’s local “rootedness”. In the workshop, the women employ it as an argumentative device for rejecting the ethnic category system of the trainer from the outside. At the same time it is used to underline the importance of the locality for their belonging, which is based on spatial “rootedness” and “origin” in relation with temporality: *nacimos todos de aquí* ‘we were all born from here’, *somos de aquí* ‘we are from here’. In the narratives, *aquí* in relation to “origin” and “rootedness” appears most often in answers to the question ‘since when did you live here’, or as an opener to the narrative on the community’s transformation or a personal story, especially in the type of “spontaneous narratives”. The analysis of *aquí* in all interviews has shown that the majority of references made with the local adverb point to the spatial boundaries of the community, and at the same time indicates a meaningful “place of belonging” which can hardly be defined solely in geographical terms. *Aquí*, thus, can be defined as an R_m term from Schegloff’s (1972) taxonomy, inseparably related to the members of the community and vice-versa. R_m denotes a place that belongs to the members “to whom the place is formulated” (Schegloff, 1972, 97) as the members belong to the place. The R_m category points to relations between speaker and place that go beyond a referential function, as

I have argued in section 8.1. By emphasizing their relationship to the ‘here’ in interactions with interlocutors who are not part of the community, the speakers can achieve three interactive goals: First, they can explicitly point to their local conceptualization of belonging and the relevance of place in it. Second, they can use it as an argumentative device. In the workshop interaction with the trainer, ‘being from here’ and ‘being born here’ is used in order to counter their “inability” to categorize themselves according to the trainer’s category system which suggested a different ethnically framed account of belonging. In the interview narratives and in stories for outsiders, the speakers’ intense connection to the ‘here’ serves as a device for legitimization (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, 136) and authentication (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, 385) on two different levels: the “why” of the narrated events and the “how” in narrating the events. On the level of narrated events, the reference to birth and upbringing ‘here’ (which is usually done at the beginning or before the story), or the reference to five generations who were ‘born here’ (as in JavierJV) legitimizes the unfolding content of the narrative events. In the stories, in which the occupation of the *finca* and the community of workers’ resistance is elaborated, the relationship to the place functions as a motivation and legitimization of these (arguably questionable or illegal) actions. As the place belongs to the speakers and the speakers belong to the place, any kind of measure to maintain this kind of relationship is evaluated as legitimate. On the level of narrating, the interaction in the “here and now” – the emphasized relation to the *aquí* – serves as a means to position the speaker. Being ‘from here’ or ‘born here’ positions the speaker as an authority on the story which happened ‘here’ and reinforces the events she portrays as being “authentic”. This heightens the overall credibility of the narrations presented to the visitors from outside. Hence, emphasizing spatial belonging and relations to place can also function as a means for legitimizing and authenticating how one talks about that place and the events that occurred *aquí* ‘here’.

The second major component of establishing belonging is the social category “we”, expressed through the personal pronoun *nosotros* or through the use of verbs in first-person-plural forms. Strikingly, the majority of speakers tell the story of community transformation in a we-voice or with mixed pronouns in which the “we” still has a prominent place. This includes stories of participants who did not experience the events first-hand, but who are actually retelling them. My question aims at eliciting the personal experiences during the times of transformation (‘how do *you*_{SG} remember’). The speakers’ memories, however, are presented as collective thoughts, actions and struggles with the narrator forming part of the narrated “we”. Besides the explicit pronoun and verb forms

indicating collectivity, we can find other forms of we-voices in the workshop interaction. In this context, the women construe their turns as choral voices to co-construct their reactions to the trainer's questions and to explain or argue their local belonging. The choral assemblage of voices strengthens their position towards the demands of the trainer and lets them appear as a homogeneous group that effectively speaks in "one voice". It could be a subject to further discussion whether the choral voice could not only be considered as an expression of social belonging to a group and place in categorical terms, but also potentially as another practice that establishes belonging *with* the group.

Finally, temporal categories are expressed in relation to the spatial and social ones, and thus shape the local practice of narrating. Temporal categories play a role as shared features in all of the narratives. Even in the most concise account of the events, the general distinction is introduced between *antes* 'before' and *ahora* 'now'. The references to specific time-frames have a categorical quality because certain characteristics are attributed to them. The former is predominantly associated with the existence of the *patrón/patrono*, sometimes even articulated as defining the temporal category e.g. in *en el tiempo del patrón* 'in the times of the patrón' or *cuando estaba el patrón* 'when there was the patrón'. The existence of the *patrón/patrono* points to specific labor conditions, suffering or dependence. Given this relationship, the temporal category of the past is evaluated negatively by all speakers.¹⁵³ The present 'now' is evaluated positively, either by pointing to independence, ownership, better wages or to a general state of being 'better off'. Only in the more elaborate stories is the transition between *antes* and *ahora* actually narrated. In the short narratives, the two temporal categories are directly contrasted, thereby emphasizing the negative and positive evaluations of the different times.

Temporality also plays a crucial role in its relation to place and to the speakers expressing this relation in the narratives, but also during the workshop interaction. 'We were born here' implies a temporal relation between the place and the speakers' past – the very beginnings of their lives – and connects this relation with the "here and now" of interaction. Often, the birth/past-relation to *aquí* is presented in temporal categories of generations, in the form of the parents and grandparents etc., who were also 'born here'. As outlined above, the temporally manifested relation of the speaker herself or the community to the place underlines "a sense of association and attachment" (Relph, 1976, 31). It also supports

153 As I pointed out, the older participants, who also knew other owners beyond the *patrón* responsible for the mismanagement of the *finca*, differentiated between the other owners and this specific *patrón* who is a character in the majority of stories.

the “authenticity” of their “origin” and their “legitimate” claim to being “rooted”. The relational interplay between the main categories of belonging which are relevant in the community – ‘here’, ‘we’, ‘before and now’ and ‘since birth’ – evoke the concept of *autochthonous* belonging.

In the community context “‘individualized autochthony’ links the individual, territory and group in such a way that shared culture and/or descent ultimately follow from place of birth/or residence within the same present” (Zenker, 2011, 65).¹⁵⁴ It underpins “claims to territory¹⁵⁵ and the concomitant certainties it brings – authenticity, legitimacy and belonging” (Garbutt, 2011, 183). As I have discussed above, place as a central category of belonging also serves as an argumentative device for the events and actions the community members had to endure or do in order to maintain their relationship to the place and be able to stay or return there. Autochthony in “commonsense understandings” (Brubaker, 2002, 166) is conceptualized as “self-evident” and “natural” (Ceuppens & Geschiere, 2005, 397) or as a “primordial truth claim about belonging to the land” (Geschiere & Jackson, 2006, 6). In its unquestionable and elementary characteristic, autochthony does not seem to need other defining features for a community basing their belonging in it. Zenker (2011, 70) thus contrasts autochthony with concepts of ethnicity, based on a common history, cultural practices and other community-defining features. Seen in this kind of opposition, it appears that “[d]espite its heavy appeal to the soil, autochthony turns out to be quite an empty notion in practice: it only expresses the claim to have come first” (Geschiere, 2009, 28).

“Coming first”, however, is not an issue in the linguistic expressions of belonging in the community. In the workshop interaction the women openly and repeatedly assert *no sabemos* ‘we do not know’ about their ancestors origin, and accordingly, their (ethnic) belonging. In the narratives some of the speakers refer to the generation (from the ‘fifth’ to the grandparents) who came to the *finca* with

154 Zenker (2011) outlines two different but interlocking “causal logics” of autochthony: the “individualized” type in which “place of birth and/or residence” determine commonality and groupness; and the “collectivized” type in which the primordial belonging category is social, and in a second step, the group claims belonging to a certain territory (Zenker, 2011, 71ff.).

155 Principally, the community members’ claims focused on the salary the owner of the plantation owed them. The “claims to territory” (Garbutt, 2011, 183) only emerged after the community members had to leave the *aquí* and migrate to other places because of the unbearable living conditions, i.e. only after their relation to the place was disrupted.

the goal of finding work. The primacy of existence of the *patrón*-owned plantation for the subsequent and somehow “unanticipated” formation of the community Nueva Alianza is never questioned. The autochthony the community members implicitly refer to in using ‘here’ and ‘we’, consolidated with a specific time linking the two, apparently is not “primordial”, “natural” and “self-evident”. It becomes relevant when the relationship between place (*aquí*) and group (*nosotros*) is disrupted, in this case caused by the historical circumstances, the *patrón*’s mismanagement, and the subsequent collective actions as they are presented to visiting outsiders. Belonging as conceptualized in deictic categories by the speakers in interactions with outsiders might therefore better be framed as grounded in *neo-autochthonous* (Savendra & Mazzelli-Rodrigues, 2017) claims. This refers to an undisputed relation between people and land, and through that also a legitimate “claim” to that relationship (*autochthonous*). However, this relation is not framed as a self-evident conception of “being there first”, but rather as a result of collective struggle, suffering and resistance to alienation from the place (*neo*).

The individual and collective belonging *to* the place that is portrayed by the speakers in the interactions with community outsiders represents a “phenomenological view of place”¹⁵⁶ (Garbutt, 2011, 52) as it focuses on “lived experiences” (ibid., 58) and relations within it: “Within this local frame, place and community appear co-extensive; the local and the locals are easily conflated” (ibid., 65). As I have outlined in the theoretical discussion on identity and belonging in chapter 2, the construction of “we” and a positioning of that “we” in a “here” demands the existence of an “other” and of a “there” to accomplish the differentiation necessary for creating “we” and “here”. The boundaries drawn between these imagined entities determine the actual social composition of the group and the place where it “belongs”. However, there is an evident “insideness” (Relph 1976, 41; Garbutt 2011, 55f.) to the narrations of the community members and to the outlined local system of belonging in the workshop interaction. The community members construe their belonging not in contrast to “others” and/or a space “outside” of the community¹⁵⁷, but by reference to the inside – the “here” and the

156 The other approach would be a “materialist” one (Garbutt, 2011, 57ff.) containing the interconnections between a place and external processes, places and people outside of it that determine the characteristics of the local place.

157 An exception to that general observation is the narrations of the practiced narrators Carlos and Javier, who refer to the larger Guatemalan context to stress the specificity of the developments in the community Nueva Alianza. Another exception is Ana’s utterance *allí hablan k’iche* ‘there they speak K’iche’ (6.3, extract 2, lines 44–45; 45–46 ET), in which she points to an ambiguous place ‘there’ (only specified in di-

“we” – and the events that formed them over time.¹⁵⁸ The *patrón/patrono* is introduced in nearly every narrative as the antagonist to the “we”, who belongs to the past but whose actions are still placed “inside” the boundaries of the *finca*. The community members’ migrational movement is depicted as a transitory state between *being* in the community and *returning* to the community in the majority of narrations. The story of the community, again with the exception of the practiced narrators, is not complemented by external discourses, by experiences or voices from the cities or the other places the Alianza people had to migrate to. The story is told from an internal perspective of “insiderness” that takes ‘here’ as the pivotal point of history (as events in time), of we-construction and – threading all three elements together – of belonging.

The linguistic expression of spatial and social belonging, which is solidified through the temporality of their relations, is striking and needs to be analyzed more closely. The local adverb *aquí* ‘here’ is used without explicit reference in 278 of 449 cases in the interview corpus. The “we” is not assigned to other social categories, except for two narratives, in which the community members are assigned to the category of *trabajadores* ‘workers’ (Alex and Carlos), and one story closing with *nosotros los campesinos* ‘we the peasants’ (Maria). Temporal categories, which are collectively used by all speakers, are *antes* ‘before’ and *ahora* ‘now’ and usually not specified with temporal markers like dates or years, again with the exception of the practiced narrators. The speakers generally express categories of belonging in the interaction with outsiders in “basic” deictic terms. These deictics are not connected to category-bound activities or predicates (Sacks, 1995) *a priori*. For example, the categories ‘workers’ and ‘peasants’ can be correlated with class-based properties like relations of dependency/independency or poverty/property and respective category-bound activities. The specifics of the categories are object to interactional achievement; however, interlocutors count on a “shared ‘stock of common-sense knowledge’” (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002, 62) and basic ascriptions to spatial, social and temporal categories. By using the deictic terms ‘here’ and ‘we’, the referential meaning of the categories is primarily established in the situated interaction. The reference of *aquí* and *nosotros* (or the “we” marked in verb forms) in the context of visitor narrations

rection through her head tilt) and an undefined ‘they’ who, in differentiation to the ‘we’ in the ‘here’, speak a language other than Spanish.

158 A differentiation to other communities and/or for example practices in the cities, or Guatemala as a whole, is part of the interview trajectories (see question 4 on the interview questionnaire in appendix B). The differentiation to others and to other places is question-induced in these contexts.

and workshop interaction is not made a “communicative problem” (Hausendorf, 2000, 99f.) that would have to be processed. It is the *common ground* between the interlocutors where the boundaries of the ‘here’ are, and who counts as part of the “we”, since the terms are related to prior text. The “generality” (Hanks, 2005, 195) of these deictic terms, as I have argued in section 8.1, allows the speakers to “load” the terms with meanings that go beyond referentiality and establish belonging in the interactions with outsiders. This additional meaning is indexed through co-occurrences of ‘here’, for example with the verb *nacer* ‘being born’, or by its grammatically emphasized and repeated use in sequences in which the temporal relations of the speaker, her ancestors or the community group as a whole to the place are made relevant. ‘We’ and ‘here’ in their relation to ‘before/now’ and ‘since birth’ are not general and arbitrary. They rather acquire their function as terms that define belonging in the interaction with the outsiders as a self-representation of “who we are” in the narratives for different audiences, or as a counter-argument to other categories of belonging in the workshop. Especially for the social categories of belonging, the speakers could draw from a variety of different categories related to times past and present, e.g. workers, *colonos*, peasants, farmers, beneficiaries, owners etc. By using forms of “we” with its “positive emotional significance” (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, 86) instead, they emphasize collectivity. This is strengthened by the underlying story of community transformation. By using forms of “we”, the speakers also implicitly fortify claims to neo-autochthony – as ‘we’ and ‘here’ are the most basic, elementary and presumably “authentic” categories that can be related to each other.

Portraying of the community in terms of a cohesive and collective “we” that is rooted in the ‘here’ through time promotes a homogeneous and undifferentiated in-group. Every member of the community is subsumed under the collectivizing umbrella of the ‘we’ in most of the narratives¹⁵⁹ and the workshop interaction. This invokes a community concept in the primordial sense as an “organic” relation of kinship, neighborhood and friendship (Tönnies, 1972[1887]). In sociological theory, the primordial community is often contrasted or seen as a primary stage in the development to a highly differentiated, individualized and alienating society¹⁶⁰, resulting in discussions on *communitarianism* (Honneth, 1993) that might tackle the woes of modern society by re-establishing the values and norms of a local, cohesive and collective groupness. These are also the

159 Except for eight stories that focus on ‘they’, ‘I’, and ‘he’ or use a generalized voice in the stories (see 7.7).

160 See theories of Tönnies (1972[1887]), Simmel (1908), Weber (1980) or Parsons (1985).

characteristics highlighted in the content of the narrations and through the community members' language use. Nonetheless, this cohesion and collectivity that is portrayed as a successful project to the visiting outsiders, is also fragile as I have shown in excursus 8.2.

The positionings of the “we” in the narratives contribute to these constructions of cohesive and homogeneous collectivity because they evoke a narrative “evolution” in the acquisition of power and agency. For the short and concise stories, we can find a transformation in the overall evaluation of the speakers from negative (past, *antes* ‘before’) to positive (present, *ahora* ‘now’). In the more complex narrations of other speakers, the evaluations are connected to positionings of the narrated “we” in the past as a victim and/or endurer; and in the present as self-organized agents. A recognizable persistent motif is the transition of the “we” from a dependent, powerless and passive “object” of the *patrón’s* regime, to an organized, proactive and independent “subject” united in the common cause of retrieving money and land with the means of collective agency and legitimate claims. A metanarrative emerging from the synopsis of all narratives in the corpus, then, is a “David vs. Goliath” story of victory against all odds. This points to the low social position of the Alianza people as landless peasants vs. the landowner, who receives ‘privileges’ from the Guatemalan state (as for example Carlos repeatedly tells us) and the powerful institution of a bank. At the same time it is a story about the “power of the many” – about the strength of the group against an individual. The positionings of the “we” are aligned with a positioning of the speakers in the “here and now” of the interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, 592). Most of them tell the story as part of the “we”, and thus position themselves as part of the collective that suffered, and in the end and against all odds succeeded. The speakers reconstruct past events in a way that creates a positive and admirable image of the community and of themselves as part of it. By telling the story in this way, they get recognition from their interlocutors (visiting groups or the interviewer): recognition of their struggle and recognition of their success. Apart from the psychological impacts of such a form of reconciliation with the past, it ultimately also leads to economic benefits. With this kind of story, and of course also democratic organization, ways of working and a competent funding application, the community was able to obtain substantial financial support for their projects from NGOs or state institutions. Likewise, people hearing the story are prone to spread it (as does this book) and possibly create revenue from the visits of other people interested in this extraordinary story.

The telling of the story also has another compelling effect – it is a practice that “makes the history” of the community: “Storytelling is how historical reality is

socially constructed through language” (Johnstone, 1990, 126). Narrating community transformation in an interview setting is a rather unusual practice, at times perhaps even a onetime event for the participants. Narrating community transformation for visiting tourists is a common practice for a certain group of “eligible” speakers since the opening of the eco-tourism project. The story is also told to other organized rural groups or community representatives from all over Guatemala and Central America. In these narrations, the collective memory (Halbwachs, 2011) of the community is consolidated in authenticating spatial and social belonging and perpetually reproducing local categories of belonging and positions through the trajectory from ‘before’ to ‘now’ to others. The knowledge about the story (what to tell and how to tell) is shared, amongst the ones who personally experienced the events and also among the ones who did not participate: the young community members or the ones who (re)joined the common endeavor later on. The shared story expresses social belonging since “[s]hared stories are the sources of shared notions of truth and appropriateness which bind people together” (Johnstone, 1990, 126). Telling them is a reproduction of that “truth”, of “how the things happened” in the community and partaking in a community-based practice that “may provide a sense of belonging, of attachment, of agency” (Lessard et al., 2011, 12). The shared story and the narration of it using similar core elements, again, bolster the collectivity and social cohesion of the community as it is portrayed by the participants to others. Participating in this community of narrative practice implies a linkage to the story, and an access to the collective experiences and the authority to tell it to others.

The conceptualization of the participants’ stories as a practice of belonging shows how a community of practice can be both cohesive and diversified. The practice of narrating in this community consists of individual realizations of core story elements, categories and positions performed very differently according to context and interlocutors. Communities of practice have been portrayed as having specific endeavors in common around which practices emerge (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992a; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Only recently has the analytical focus turned from a focus on collective *doing* (and learning how to do it), to differentiations in the communities of practice that show how “the process of identity construction leads speakers to construct their own styles to find their own ways of asserting their own places in group practice” (Eckert & Wenger, 2005, 584). The variations within this particular community (of practice) are instantiated by the different narrative types all focusing on different aspects of the same story. Strikingly, variation in terms of gender seems to play only a minor role in the ways of telling the story. The only gender-based difference is the access to

positions of “official” narrating for tourist groups, which is a privilege of the male community leaders. Age is a determining factor for narrative practice, though. Whereas the older participants predominantly engage in first-hand, spontaneous and more elaborated stories based on personal experiences, a large number of the younger generation tells the story as a re-narration since they did not experience the events themselves. The analysis of the narrative corpus has shown that belonging is not only established through categorization, but that it is also grounded in shared practices such as narrating the community story. It provides a basis for belonging *with* the other members by referring to a shared past and narrating it to others in ways that are at the same time collective and individual.

To conclude, comparing data from different interactional contexts in the same community and with the same speakers is an opportunity to consolidate the general findings on belonging and language use in the community. The interactional contexts were made up of similar insider-outsider constellations, as they always involved one or more community members and one or more outsiders inquiring about the story, or more explicitly, about their (ethnic) belonging. In *all* of these interactions the same categories emerged, pointing to the participants’ emphasis on spatial and social belonging which can only be legitimized by linking it to temporality, to the time the “we” spent ‘here’. That this emerges in varying interactional contexts with different speakers from the community and with different interlocutors from the outside emphasizes yet again the local, emic and collectively shared significance of these categories in the portrayal of their community towards others. Due to their specific history, the participants do not have many other categorical resources to draw on. As I have pointed out several times now, a conceptualization of the community’s belonging in these neo-autochthonous terms – ‘here’, ‘we’, ‘since birth’/‘before and now’ – strengthens their claim to the land they have negotiated, their legitimacy of and authority over their own belonging, and their symbolic power as a locally “rooted” and “cohesive” collective. Narrating them is a communally shared practice in which belonging *to* place and group through time is made relevant, and in which belonging *with* the community can be expressed.