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Circulation and localization of a transnational founding story in a social movement

Abstract: This article investigates the circulation and appropriation of the "origins" story in a social movement called Emmaus. In particular, it analyzes storytelling in two localities, Barcelona and London, at critical moments when collective identity is foregrounded for different socio-political purposes. Emmaus is a transnational social movement that (re)inserts marginalized people who live and work with more privileged members in local groups called "communities" dedicated to recycling and social projects. Ethnography is essential to situate and understand narratives in broader interactional and socio-political contexts. My multi-sited ethnography (2011–2012) affords an outlook on the storytelling practices that produce and negotiate a *cultural chronoscope*, "depictions of place-time-and-personhood" to which participants orient when they interact with each other (including telling their life stories) within Emmaus. Situated storytelling constructs a collective identity across linguistic and national borders at a particular sociohistorical juncture. The Emmaus story constructs a certain worldview and person types within an *imagined community* made up of (narrated) others all over the globe. The Emmaus chronoscope is based on the encounter between two individuals from different backgrounds, which will transform their reasons to live thanks to the shared value of solidarity with others.

Keywords: ethnography, storytelling, social movement, imagined community, cultural chronoscope

1 Introduction

The goal of this article is to investigate the circulation and appropriation of the "origins" story in a social movement called Emmaus through ethnographic data. Emmaus is "an international solidarity movement" dedicated to the (re)insertion of marginalized people through live-in "communities" of people that collectively do recycling work and run social projects locally and

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abroad. In particular, I analyze storytelling episodes in two different communities located in Barcelona and London at critical moments when collective identity is foregrounded for different socio-political purposes such as recruiting new members. Theoretically, the analysis of storytelling contributes to an understanding of the (re)production of "sameness" in a social movement across linguistic and political borders as well as of the circulation of narrated events, morality and personhood in Emmaus. Methodologically, adopting an ethnographic lens sheds light on the storytelling context and informants' trajectories in ways that enrich the interpretation of stories in connection to other social practices observed and socio-political purposes in a given socio-historical context.

Ganz (2010: 7) rightly observes that "A social movement tells a 'new story'". Throughout my ethnography of Emmaus, most informants regarded the movement's common origins (which they/I learned about through storytelling) as the basis of its articulation into one big "family" across borders. As an illustration, Àngels, who was one of the four community *responsables* [companions in charge] in Emmaus Barcelona, visited the Cambridge community while she attended an academic event there in September 2011. During our research interview after her return to Barcelona, I asked her what could possibly unite all the people who form part of the Emmaus movement worldwide. She replied that she did not know the answer but exemplified it with Emmaus Cambridge, which she described as a group that "has the same name as us and has a common origin" (2 September 2012). The "common origins" story emerges as a common practice in new members' socialization and self-justification processes across sites in this transnational social movement.

Narrative is a social practice that shapes and is shaped by the contexts in which it is (re)told (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008: 275). The story of Emmaus is a narrative that is entextualized across time and space. It is appropriated in over 350 local groups in 37 nation-states on four continents (as of 2015), which must adhere to the Universal Manifesto of the Emmaus movement (1969) entextualizing a version of the founding story (see Example 1). I analyze the Emmaus founding story through a multi-sited ethnography (2011–2012) centering on two Emmaus communities.[1] My primary research site is Emmaus Barcelona, an independent, grassroots community founded in 1980 by some youth who had participated in *soixante-huitard* Emmaus work camps in the 1970s. This community was ideologically vested in alter-globalist tenets

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1 The local communities investigated agreed to disclose the name of the movement, which is so unique that it would be hard to anonymize, but the exact geographical locations and people's identities have been kept confidential.

and Progressive Catholicism. At the time of fieldwork, it was a stable community of 13 residents, called "companions" in the movement, in which four acted as community *responsables* for decision-making. It also counted with over 20 external volunteers but no external staff for administration. My secondary site is Emmaus London, which opened in 2007 thanks to a local fundraising initiative under the expansion scheme of the federation Emmaus UK, which is vested in discourses of activation through (voluntary) labor on behalf of the nation-state. This community adopted the model of the top-down social enterprise, with a board of trustees, a team of employees and clients as any registered English charity. In 2012, Emmaus London had 27 companions as clients and was run by staff who would control new recruits' access, run ongoing projects and manage the group's finances in accordance with the board's directions.

The article is organized as follows. The second section will be devoted to presenting the main concepts that I use to analyze narratives in a social movement, namely *imagined community* (Anderson 1983), *founding story* (Linde 2009) and *cultural chronotope* (Agha 2007). The third section will briefly present my critical sociolinguistic ethnography and the different types of data gathered. The fourth section of analysis is divided into two sections about first, storytelling the "origins story" of the Emmaus movement and second, telling intertextual life stories of personal transformation thanks to Emmaus. The ensuing section will present a closing discussion revolving around storytelling practices that appropriate the Emmaus "origins" story in local contexts and over history. Last, the sixth section will draw some conclusions on the theoretical and methodological contributions of this article to narrative in ethnography.

2 Conceptual framework

The power of imagination in the fabrication of transnational social spaces and people's biographies inescapably draws on images, ideas and languages that come from elsewhere (Appadurai 1996). Members of a social movement will never know most of their fellow members, yet there is an imagined consciousness of a transnational "family" of unseen others. Anderson's seminal work on *imagined communities* (1983) suggests that all communities larger than small villages (and I would argue that even those) are, to some extent, sustained by notions of imagined, understood others. My appropriation of the concept of imagined community as applied to Emmaus retains the consciousness of fellow readers of a stock of common stories and discourses. Contrary to Anderson's

shared readership in a standard, national language, Emmaus readership is inherently heterogeneous and multilingual by virtue of its cross-border nature and multi-locale network. Following Anderson, this community of "deep, horizontal comradeship" (1983: 16) hides social stratification on the basis of legitimate subjectivities constructed through text appropriations in localized entextualizations.

How is this common imagination in the Emmaus movement (re)produced across different localities around the world? Local practices aim to produce a degree of "sameness" (Pennycook 2010) that aligns the communities where they occur with the Emmaus transnational movement. Paradigmatic stories about the origins and the founder become the glue of the movement. Hence, this "sameness" emerges from the *founding story*, a narrative retold through time and across borders by tellers who were not participants in the narrated events (Linde 2009). This shared story is in dialogic relationship to everyday experiences in the communities. The founding story is based on shared lived experiences in the history of the movement, as much it constructs and justifies the on-going actions of participants in multiple localities. Linde (2009) analyzes the collective imagination of belonging through readership in an insurance company. This so-called textual community is organized around the story of the founder and the paradigmatic stories of the ideal agent, in other words, a set of valued texts that produce identities and shape practices for members.

The ethnographic analysis of the founding story draws on Agha's concept of *cultural chronotope* (2007) to analyze the interactions in which it is retold in my research sites. Cultural chronotopes refer to "depictions of place-time-and-personhood to which social interactants orient when they engage each other through discursive signs of any kind" (Agha 2007: 320). It is based on Bakhtin's chronotopes (1981), the different ways in which time (*chrono*) and space (*topos*) are described by language in the novel and how this time-space construct allows certain subject positions and behaviors for the characters. In Agha's formulation, chronotopes can be used for analyzing not only the storyworld of the founding story (as in Bakhtin's literary chronotopes) but also the interactional storytelling contexts. Storytelling brings images of narrated personae into dialogic interaction with images of current participants. Different orientations to person types are constructed through local participation frameworks and social actors align with real/imagined voices in the constructed spacetime (Agha 2005; Agha 2007). Interestingly, role alignment plays a part in discourse circulation across spatiotemporal removes, well beyond face-to-face interactions (Agha 2005).

A person's voice is linked to that of others. In Agha's words,

[...] chronotopic representations enlarge the "historical present" of their audiences by creating chronotopic displacements and cross-chronotope alignments between persons here-and-now and persons altogether elsewhere, transposing selves across discrete zones of cultural spacetime through communicative practices that have immediate consequences for how social actors in the public sphere are mobilized to think, feel and act [...].
(Agha 2007: 324)

Becoming part of such a community requires telling and performing one's own story. This is the case in mutual help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA henceforth), whose meetings are based on storytelling of personal accounts consonant with the cultural worldview of this movement (Cain 1991; Humphreys 2000).

Socialization is based on learning how to tell your story of personal transformation in a reinterpretation of the past. You retell your past experiences to meet the person-types and the moral values that are legitimate among established members in order to become one. For example, telling and hearing AA personal stories implies comparing potential members to the prototypical incurable alcoholics whose life has been completely affected by addiction. Established members will make comments on and re-interpret inappropriate passages as well as tell similar narratives with different interpretations. The story of the AA founders is also used as a justification of traditions and as a legend to instill a sense of wonder at their amazing experiences and abilities, similarly to the Abbé Pierre and George's story in Emmaus. Newcomers will have to readjust their definition of "alcoholic" and realize that "these people are just like me" by virtue of common episodes with story protagonists. Thus, AA members are expected to turn their life around, which is measured by quitting alcohol and "carrying the message" in their stories (Cain 1991: 232) as expected behaviors in this community.

According to Ganz (2010), social movements tell public *stories of us, stories of self* and *stories of now* that largely overlap with each other. "Stories of us" tell a story about the shared values and lived experiences that distinguish "our" community from others and thus construct collective identity. It requires a legitimate storyteller who communicates the collective founding, challenges, outcomes and lessons learned. The person-types, actions and morality that appear in the "story of us" shape members' individual stories that become aligned and intertextual with it. "Stories of self" communicate identity through the choices that have made us who we are and the collective values that shaped them in a public account of ourselves interacting with those of other participants. In these stories, pain and hope are intertwined to lend credibility to a

storyteller. All stories are structured around turning points of founding moments, challenges faced or lessons learned. In my ethnography, both stories of us and of self (based on the founding story) are mobilized in the here-and-now. I interpret them as "stories of now" that communicate an urgent challenge to those shared values that demand action in a particular locality and socio-historical juncture. These stories draw on moral sources to make and justify choices in a vision of hope that mobilizes people into action. My analysis below will look into critical moments in my ethnography that foreground shared identity and prompt storytelling to justify the communities' existence, positioning or actions.

3 Methodology

My approach to narrative is concerned with the situated occasions for storytelling that construct a collective identity for social action rather than the formal analysis of narrative structure (Patiño-Santos 2018). This requires an ethnographic, practice-oriented approach to identity looking into situated, minute discursive practices as indexical of larger collective formations (Blommaert and De Fina 2016). Communicative encounters in Emmaus communities orient towards the cultural chronotope as a historical frame of reference for everyday life and for collective identity. Forms of identity and communication are closely tied to specific timespace configurations, since they can only be legitimately learned and deployed in specific spaces and/or within temporary frames. For that reason, such a localized analysis of chronotopes calls for a more precise, ethnographically grounded notion of "context" where social relationships evolve.

    This article is based on a multi-sited sociolinguistic ethnography carried out in multilingual settings. In order to understand this (re)creation of sameness in a social movement, I draw on sociolinguistic ethnography with the objective of "describing, understanding and explaining the role of language in constructing the relations of social difference and social inequality that shape our world" (Heller 2011: 34). The empirical goal is to track the distribution and circulation of resources (in this case, a story) to reveal the construction of a collective identity and legitimate membership in a transnational space, Emmaus. Narrative is a multi-dialogic social practice that requires a situated, interactional negotiation of both the storyteller(s) and his/her audience in a given context. Ethnography affords a privileged outlook on the situated (re)tellings that (re)produce and appropriate the same story in different local linguistic, socio-political and cultural contexts. Besides, it produces fine-grained accounts of the tellers' (dis)

alignments with situated institutional and moral views of the narrated and narrative events.

Both in the London and Barcelona sites, I did intensive ethnographic field-work that allowed me to document everyday social practices in which storytelling was mobilized for different socio-political purposes. The participants in my ethnography oriented to this cultural chronotope and appropriated narrative episodes in situated interactions including media/public presentations (see Example 2), welcoming visitors or new recruits (see Example 3), internal assemblies (see Example 4), interviews with me as a researcher and also a range of publications including grey literature since the early days and institutional materials produced by both the communities and Emmaus International. My ethnographic account below will take into consideration the narratives' socio-historical conditions of production in order to better understand the co-construction of particular self- and collective identities among participants.

4 Analysis

The place-time-and-personhood in the Emmaus founding story engenders subject positions and communicative practices within the local communities in order to constantly re-enact the narrated events and person types elsewhere over time. The analysis that follows centers on the Emmaus origins story of the first encounter between the Abbé Pierre and Georges Legay in November 1949. At that time, the Abbé Pierre was a privileged French parliamentarian who chose this alternative lifestyle to work for social justice and Georges Legay was a former prisoner who had tried to commit suicide and decided to help Abbé Pierre build houses for unprivileged families, which gave Legay a new reason to live. This encounter between a privileged and a marginalized person created the first live-in community of Emmaus in post-war Paris. The Universal Manifesto of the Emmaus Movement (adopted in 1969) entextualizes an official version of the founding story that has widely circulated in different languages since.

(1)   Preamble, Universal Manifesto of the Emmaus movement, official English translation (source: emmaus-international.org). Emphasis mine.

1   Our name, "Emmaus", comes from the name of a village in Palestine where **despair** was
2   transformed into **hope**. For all, believers and non-believers alike, this name evokes our shared
3   conviction that only **love** can unite us and allow us to move forward together. The Emmaus
4   Movement was created in November 1949 when men who had become aware of their

5   privileged situation and social responsibilities in the face of injustice and men who no
     longer
6   had any **reason to live** crossed paths and decided to combine forces and take action
     together
7   to help each other and come to the aid of those who were suffering, in the belief that it is by
8   saving others that you yourself are saved. To this end, the Communities were set up,
     working
9   to live and give. Groups of friends and volunteers were also set up to continue the struggle in
10   the private and public arena

The analysis of the founding story of Emmaus (Example 1 above) reveals the interaction of two Bakhtinian literary motifs, that of the *encounter* and that of *metamorphosis* (1981), in ways that construct a cultural chronotope in Emmaus for social action. The participants in my ethnography continually appropriate and re-enact this founding story in situated interactions such as community assemblies or presenting Emmaus to other organizations for a range of socio-political purposes.

Example (1) is intertextual with the Biblical story of Emmaus (Luke 24: 13–35) where the resurrected Jesus Christ appears to two dispirited disciples on the road to Emmaus who hosted him for the night. The Emmaus story adopts the implicit motif of the road as a path of life, since the two men "crossed paths" (line 6) as the travelers to Emmaus. According to Bakthin, "of special importance is the close link between the motif of the meeting and the chronotope of the road" (1981: 98). In these stories, there is an "emotional evaluation of meetings" (Bakhtin 1981: 97) in which despair is transformed into hope, as in the Emmaus story (lines 1–2), and the encounter takes on a symbolic value in the movement. The motif of the meeting is one of the most universal ones not only in literature but also in spheres of public and everyday life, where organized meetings are ubiquitous (Bakhtin 1981: 98–99). Example (1) makes the link between the narrated events and real-life communities set up to re-enact this meeting and to work for social justice "in the private and public arena" (lines 8–10). Emmaus communities offer Bakhtinian "salons and parlors" (1981: 246–247), such as communal meals and assemblies, defined as spaces for encounters where dialogues happen. There the founding story is retold, linking private lives with socio-historical events and reminding members of past events.

The Emmaus story draws on the literary motif of metamorphosis in interaction with the motif of the meeting. Togetherness is the locus for self-transformation as in AA above, since the meeting occurs between two people

who are at a turning point in their lives, "the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life" (Bakhtin 1981: 248). This is the basis for portraying the whole of an individual's life through its "exceptional moments" that shape their subsequent trajectory and carry a morality that transform who s/he was, as in Biblical parables. The metamorphosis from despair to hope is connected to a Christian conception of love (1 Corinthians 13) since "by saving others you yourself are saved" (lines 7–8). Ganz (2010) posits that pain and hope feature in the stories told by social movements in order to mobilize activists "to combine forces and take action together to help each other and come to the aid of those who were suffering" (lines 6–7).

"The image of man (sic) is intrinsically chronotopic" (Bakhtin 1981: 85). In the chronotope of the road, the spatial and temporal pathways of people from different "social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages" intersect in ways that collapse social distances (Bakhtin 1981: 243). In Emmaus, the dichotomy and interaction between privileged and underprivileged person-types is central to understanding the meeting symbol. These person-types are in the margins of society, akin to the highborn renegade who fights for social justice (e.g. Robin Hood) and to the homeless wanderer in the lowest level of society (e.g. el Lazarillo de Tormes). Their meeting unites them by giving them new "reasons to live" (line 6) based on a Christian interpretation of "love" (line 3) that calls for solidarity with others. This cultural spacetime-and-personhood allows certain types of behaviors, narratives and identities among my ethnographic participants.

This encounter between diverse people transforms identities and motivates social action in local Emmaus communities. It locally (re)produces the Emmaus movement's "common rhetoric" which shapes (and is shaped by) people's actions locally.

> La logique intentionelle du fondateur d'Emmaüs, reprise dans les Manifeste Universel du Mouvement, est ce qui construit les sens vécu de l'Abbé Pierre et des dirigents, ce à partir de quoi ils se mobilisent, donnent sens et valorisent non seulment leurs actions mais encore celles des communautaires. La logique intentionelle met donc en relief la rhétorique commune produite par le Mouvement. C'est en faisant echo à cette rhétorique que la reconnaissance d'une communauté Emmaüs se confirme et s'étend, et par elle que le langage local – du responsable aux communautaires- participle et s'inscrit dans la langue commune de tout le Mouvement.

> [The Emmaus founder's intentional logic, taken up in the Universal Manifesto of the Movement, is what construes the lived meaning of the Abbé Pierre and the leaders, through which they become mobilized, give sense and add value to not only their own actions but also those of community members. The intentional logic then emphasizes the common rhetoric produced by the Movement. It is in echoing this rhetoric that the recognition of an Emmaus community is achieved and expanded, and through it the

> local language - from the community leader to the companions - participates and inscribes itself in the common language of the whole Movement.] (Bergier 1992: 13, my translation)

The Emmaus story is retold in local communities around the world and appropriated to narrate life stories involving frequent intertextuality with the tropes of despair transformed into hope and finding new reasons to live. The legitimation of any cultural chronotope is a social process through modes and moments of participation in communicative encounters, which can be mass-mediated (Example 2) or closed (Examples 3 and 4). The ethnographic snapshots of storytelling in this social movement reveal the construction of a collective identity through the founding story (see Section 4.1.) and the prototypical personal story (lines 4–8 in Example 1) which is highly intertextual with the "origins" one (see Section 4.2).

4.1 Stories of us: making the collectivity

When asked about the origins of the movement, senior members who present Emmaus publicly often tell the fully-fledged canonical story, as for instance in meetings with other organizations and in welcoming new recruits to the community. Below we will see how the collectivity is discursively constructed in two sites during critical moments where identity is brought to the fore in order to legitimize socio-political stances. The first example is taken from a public presentation of Emmaus Barcelona to justify their collective action and socio-political denunciation in the crisis, whereas the second example from Emmaus London shows how a staff member appropriates the founding story to justify voluntary labor in the context of neoliberal activation. The Emmaus "story of us" is appropriated differently to also tell "stories of now" that mobilize people into action for particular socio-political goals at critical historical junctures.

The first narrative from Emmaus Barcelona is taken from a radio interview with the community founder, Rita (in her sixties), at a time of financial crisis. In November 2011, the city hall decided to abruptly stop its financial contribution to a residential project for migrants run by Emmaus and also to significantly reduce its budget for a migrant-support umbrella organization that Emmaus was part of. This decision motivated demonstrations, manifestos, meetings and declarations against the budget cuts for migrant services in which Emmaus members were very vocal against the city hall. At the time of this interview, Rita and other companions often appeared in the local newspaper with headlines such as "Emmaus warns that the associational fabric in the city is collapsing" (23 November 2011). In this context, Rita was invited to this local radio program that "every week invites well-known people in the city to share an hour

of conversation in depth and in sincerity". Rita is undoubtedly the visible face of Emmaus Barcelona and as such, she had already featured in interviews with well-known locals. Locally born to a middle-class family, she has a long trajectory in the local Emmaus and she is one of the spokespeople with the local administration and social platforms. Rita told me that she had accepted this interview, despite her shyness, since this gave her an opportunity for socio-political denunciation of housing and migration conditions.

In the radio interview excerpt (Example 2), Rita's response to the question "how did the Emmaus movement emerge?" is a founding story retelling which is a fully-fledged narrative with named characters (unlike Example 1). In that socio-political juncture, Rita's goal is to legitimize the community's existence and socio-political denunciation for a local audience through the narrative alignment with the Emmaus founding story. This public presentation of the Emmaus movement constructs a temporal continuity of this collective identity since the founding encounter between different people is constantly re-enacted in Emmaus Barcelona as in the original narrative.

(2)   Fully-fledged founding story. Interview with Rita, founder of Emmaus Barcelona, on a local radio station. 2 November 2011. My translation from Catalan.

1	*PRE:	ehh explica'm una una mica ehh com com va sorgir el moviment Emmaús #
2		d'on va sorgir-? va ser fundat a França:-?
	%tra:	uhh tell me a bit about how the Emmaus movement emerged # where did it emerge from-? was it founded in France-?
3	*RIT:	+^sí.
	%tra:	+^yes.
4	*PRE:	per Abbé Pierre.
	%tra:	by Abbé Pierre.
5	*RIT:	als anys cinquanta.
	%tra:	in the fifties.
6	*PRE:	aham.
7	*RIT:	i: i va se:r una una trobada espontània o sigui # Emaús no: no és una cosa que
8		vagi de- després de trenta mil reunions i pressupostos i: històries sino que va
9		sorgir # de la trobada de dues persones molt diferents # una era l'Abbé Pierre
10		que era una persona normal # que en aquell temps era diputat al parlament
11		francès #0_1 i una persona que havia viscut una vida no:rmal que havia pogut
12		optar que havia sigut estimat no? # i despues es va trobar amb una altra
13		persona que venia doncs del món de la marginació estava: en un estava tancat a
14		la presó amb cadena perpetua.
	%tra:	a:n and it was a spontaneous encounter that is # Emmaus is no:t not a thing that

comes af- after thirty thousand meetings and budgets a:nd stories but it emerged # out of the meeting between two very different people # one was the Abbé Pierre who was an average person # who at that time was an MP at the French Parliament #0_1 and and a person who had lived a no:rmal life who had been able to choose who had been loved right? # and then he ran into another person who came from the world of social marginalization who wa:s in a who was locked up in prison with a life sentence.

15	*PRE:	que era Georges Legay.
	%tra:	who was Georges Legay.
16	*RIT:	el Georges.
	%tra:	Georges.
17	*PRE:	aham.
18	*RIT:	no? # i és clar ell va va veure que li havien donat la llibertat però què fer-ne
19		no? # llavors va intentar suicidar-se i a la: al li van dir a l'Abbé Pierre que
20		l'anés a: a visitar # i l'Abbé Pierre li va dir que: que no podia: fer gran cosa per
21		ell però que si l'ajudava # en aquella època l'Abbé Pierre feia cases per gent
22		que no en tenia en terrenys més o menys legals # més més il·legals que altra
23		cosa i amb materials de segona mà: bueno de reciclatge # a l'espera de que
24		sortís una política d'habitatge social # i li va dir doncs si m'ajudes ehh ehh a la
25		gent més aviat tindrà la casa no? i podrà: viure: més més decentment # i el
26		Georges eh eh realment va va triar això perquè tampoc podia triar massa no? o
27		sigui es va comprometre amb ell i al llarg de la seva vida en comú li va dir
28		moltes vegades que li havia di- donat lo que necessitava que eren **raons per**
29		**viure** # que si li hagués donat treball o # o diners que ell es hagués tornat a a
30		suicidar #0_1 **i d'alguna manera encara que hagin passat els anys # sempre**
31		**que hi ha aquesta trobada entre una persona que: # que: bueno que que la**
32		**vida l'ha permès triar i d'altres doncs que tenen dificultats doncs és és com**
33		**repetir una miqueta aquesta de dir junts podem # podem fer més coses**
34		**no?** i podem ajudar més als altres.
	%tra:	right? # and of course he saw that he had been given his freedom but what to do with it? # then he tried to commit suicide and wh:en they asked Abbé Pierre to go visit him # and the Abbé Pierre told him that he couldn't do much for him but if he [Georges] helped him # at that time the Abbé Pierre built houses for people who didn't have one on more or less legal plots # more more illegal than anything else and with second-hand materials # well recycled ones # while waiting for a social housing law # and then told him [Georges] if you help me uhh uhh people will have their house earlier right? and will be able to live more more decently # and Georges uh uh really chose this because beggars can't be choosers, right? So he committed to him and throughout their life in common he told him [Abbé P] many times that he had given him what he

needed which was **reasons to live #** that if he would have given him work or money he would have committed suicide again #0_**1 and in a way # although years have gone by # every time there is this encounter between a person who # well whose life has allowed him/her to choose # and others who have experienced difficulties it is like somehow repeating this one that says that together we can # we can do more things can't we?** and we can help others more.

Rita's retelling is framed within the Bakhtinian chronotope of *encounter* from line (7) onwards, characterized by a dominance of temporality over space and "a higher degree of intensity in emotions and values" (Bakhtin 1981: 243). Temporally, Rita links the encounter between people from different backgrounds in the 1950s (line 5) with the present "although the years have gone by" (line 30). Rita claims that Emmaus symbolized by the meeting is spontaneous and unplanned, as the Biblical travelers on the road to Emmaus, implying that top-down projects do not belong in the same chronotope. In the story above, space is undefined and backgrounded except to index privilege through the French Parliament and marginalization through the prison. Person-types are linked to the value of love understood as solidarity with others (see Section 4), since his privileged position allows the Abbé Pierre to build houses for others, while Georges attempts to commit suicide in desperation but finds a reason to live by joining the Abbé Pierre's effort.

Telling the founding story on the radio legitimizes the local community's alter-globalist ethos and collective activities, which might seem odd and isolated locally in a context of neoliberal austerity measures in Spain. In this interview excerpt, Rita's storytelling voice aligns with the "spontaneous", "more illegal" beginnings of Emmaus. Rita contrasts the Abbé Pierre's spontaneous encounter with Legay in 1949 to the bureaucratized meetings with the administration in 2011 (lines 7–9). This criticism between the lines legitimizes the Barcelona community's bottom-up social action in the Abbé Pierre's fashion and criticizes the increasing project regulation by the city hall, namely, "thirty thousand meetings and budgets and so on" (line 8). Besides, Rita links her reality to Abbé Pierre's post-war context in which social needs on the ground (i.e. home-less families) forced the Abbé Pierre to bypass legality and to call for housing policies from the government (lines 22–24). Earlier that year, the community had participated in 15 M (Spanish Occupy movement) and collaborated with the local *Plataforma d'Afectats per la Hipoteca* to ensure the right to housing.

Drawing on the movement's key motto of *raons per viure* [reasons to live] (lines 28–29), the local community aligns with *altermondialiste* ideals in their local motto "Cap a altres raons per viure" [towards other reasons to live], against

consumerism and individualism in neoliberal times. It justifies the existence of this social movement on the basis of collective values of solidarity, since "together we can do more things" (line 33), and a broader social movement that carries on over time (lines 30–33). Rita's story brings the past and the storyworld into the storytelling context, that is, the local Emmaus Barcelona community where encounters between privileged and marginalized people still take place over time and across spaces, in the communal house, in the second-hand shops or in the solidarity projects with third parties. In this line, a transnational Emmaus activist from Peru that I interviewed during her visit to Barcelona answered that "*pienso que nos une el hecho de que nuestra vida se siga repitiendo aquel primer encuentro entre el Abbé Pierre y Georges*" [I think that what unites us, the fact that our life continues to repeat that first encounter between the Abbé Pierre and Georges] (interview, 15 November 2011). Bakhtin (1981) makes reference to real life encounters in the organization of social life (see Section 2). In Emmaus, the first encounter serves as a frame of reference, or as a secular parable, for actual members in local communities. They reproduce this encounter elsewhere, given the interchangeability of space in the encounter motif (Bakhtin 1981: 100), and over time, since the mythical founding moment of 1949 is relived in present participation frameworks (Agha 2007).

Chronotopic situations act as frames of reference for subsequent forms of life (Agha 2007). There is an interrelationship between the storyworld or narrated events, i.e. the Abbé Pierre's founding story, and the storytelling encounter in which narrators enact positioning vis-à-vis their audiences, acting like particular person-types (see Wortham 2001). In her role as Emmaus spokesperson, Rita aligns with the person-type embodied by the Abbé Pierre, that is, "men who have become aware of their privileged situation" (Example 1) and a "normal person" who "had been able to choose" (lines 10–12 above). In our research interview, she claims that in the local community, "*hi ha gent que per la vida que ha fet tens més capacitat de reflexió, més capacitat de fer una anàlisi de com està el món*" [there are people who because of the life that they have led we have more capacity of reflection, more capacity to do an analysis of what the world is like] (21 March 2012). According to Gal, "the stories/theories link the arenas of action of those who narrate with the arenas of action of those whom the stories of origin, essence and moral worth are told" (2007: 3).

During my fieldwork, Emmaus London instrumentalized the founding narrative's moral value of solidarity with others under the Big Society discursive regime. The Conservative and Liberal-Democrat Coalition ran a big election theme called "Big Society", which endorsed voluntary action in local communities for social inclusion and local, citizen-focused services for a more diversified provision. The Big Society scheme set policies to strengthen neoliberal

activation of passive populations through voluntary labor and offloading of services to the third sector. In 2012, Emmaus London participated in the Borough's Pathway of Services, consisting on collaboration with charities that provided social services for the homeless under the supervision of the local authority. In this framework, it had recently started a volunteering program for Pathway service users (i.e. the homeless) in Emmaus London. The fieldnotes in Example 3 below narrate a welcome visit to a new Pathway volunteer in which the Emmaus founding story was appropriated to legitimise the existence and the work focus in Emmaus London.

(3)   Telling the origins story to a new recruit. Fieldnotes from Emmaus London, boutique. 24 May 2012.

1   While I am arranging and cleaning the boutique, Mike [volunteer coordinator] enters with a
2   middle-aged man named Tim who is a new volunteer from Spring House [homeless shelter].
3   He is a bit nervous when he shakes my hand. Mike tells him about the boutique and Tim asks
4   "how was this set up?". Mike tells a very detailed "official story" about the origins of
5   Emmaus. He describes the context of post-war Paris vividly, with broken families, the
6   devastating effects of the occupation and homeless people who were coming from the war.
7   Against this backdrop, a man who wanted to commit suicide after returning to Paris was
8   brought to the Abbé Pierre, a Catholic priest who was also an MP. Abbé Pierre told this man,
9   Georges (pronounced the English way with final s), that he could not help him but that
10   Georges could help him build houses for the poor. Georges accepted and they started the first
11   ever Emmaus community. Georges said that the Abbé had given him a purpose, a reason to
12   live and not just food and shelter. In other words, a bed and a reason to get out of bed. At the
13   moment, there are communities like that one all over the world, in 90 countries. Mike asks me
14   if I have done research into how many, and I reply that it's actually 36 countries and over 300
15   groups.

The socialization into the Emmaus movement is based on interactions and exposure to stories which introduce newcomers to the worldview, person types and appropriate narratives (Cain 1991). Mike (in his early forties) was the Volunteer Coordinator based at Emmaus who had been recently hired by the local council and who was in charge of recruiting and supervising new volunteers from other homeless charities, like Spring House (line 2), who were working at Emmaus. In our research interview, Mike explains that he quit the banking sector four years before inspired by his voluntary work to move on to British charity,

since he feels that charity work fits his outlook and character better. Tim was a new volunteer in his late fifties who was a client in a homeless hostel in the same London Borough and who Mike had just recruited to volunteer at Emmaus.

On his first day at Emmaus, Tim's question (line 4) probably referred to the second-hand shop or perhaps to the local Emmaus, but Mike launches the founding story of the transnational movement. The two participants are institutionally unequal and (re)produce the microhegemonies in this context. We could argue that Mike takes on the person-type of the Abbé Pierre, offering Tim an opportunity to help others (lines 9–10), and positions Tim implicitly as Georges, who in my own field narratives appears as someone who is nervous (line 3) and who needs socializing in this new context. In the storytelling world, i.e. Emmaus London, Mike acts as the expert on Emmaus by virtue of his institutional position and length of participation. Mike socializes the newcomer Tim by appropriating the "origins story" of Emmaus as a legitimate storyteller in order to justify the present activities in Emmaus London within a sociopolitical regime of neoliberal activation (see below).

This story serves two purposes in this socio-political context: on the one hand, legitimizing the volunteer scheme and on the other, differentiating Emmaus from other charities. Mike narrates a story set in a detached spacetime of post-war Paris where the social crisis is described in detail (lines 4–6). Later, he links the narrated story in which Georges finds a new reason to live (line 11) to the present British charity that gives people "a bed and a reason to get out of bed" (line 12). One of the commonalities across retellings of the founding story is the intertextual proposition "a reason to live" (line 11), present in the two preceding examples. In fact, Emmaus UK (the federation of Emmaus groups in the UK) has appropriated it in the nationwide motto "A bed and a reason to get out of it" which the Emmaus London shops have on the boutique front.

The first purpose of the story above is to legitimize voluntary work as neoliberal activation of passive (homeless) populations, who get "a bed" in day shelters and "a reason to get out of bed" in Emmaus volunteering. When I asked Mike about the role of voluntarism in the current socio-economic climate, he explicitly referred me to the "Big Society" scheme, which he defined by saying, "The government are very keen to get people umm who've got something to offer maybe people who aren't working into voluntary work, yeah, and very much along the lines of reciprocity" (interview, 14 June 2012). The founding story's trope of "helping each other" is here appropriated to justify reciprocity in the Pathway volunteering scheme, in which service users are also service providers. Reciprocity is based on the Emmaus value of love as solidarity, as the homeless client receives solidarity in the form of charity services and s/he gives it back to others as a volunteer.

The second purpose is to differentiate Emmaus from other homeless charities in London. As we have just seen, Mike's story constructs Emmaus as a purposeful organization which offers more than a homeless hostel: it gives an opportunity to work and in Mike's words "meaningful occupation". His narrative provides a justification for voluntary labor, having "a purpose" which goes beyond covering basic needs, "food and shelter" (line 12), as is often the case in homeless shelters in this London Borough. Besides, this story reinforces the moral value of solidarity with others (lines 9–10) which links Emmaus London with a transnational movement, as Mike later tries to demonstrate with numbers (lines 12–14).

4.2 Stories of self: transforming people's identities

This origins story that constructs collective identity in Emmaus shapes and is shaped by the life stories of ordinary people ("stories of self", according to Ganz 2010). Stories mobilize people for social action through empathetic identification with narrative person-types and storytellers. In the previous narratives, we have already grasped the protagonists' voices and trajectories and to a lesser extent, those of the storytellers. Becoming part of the Emmaus imagined community entails taking up subjectivities produced in interaction, especially in storytelling. Companions' socialization process involves learning how to tell one's story, namely to present one's subject position in relation to the accepted collective narrative (Cain 1991; Ganz 2010; Linde 2009; Ochs 2004). According to Agha (2007), a representation of the past is a representation of persons and its influence on the present depends on "cross-frame interpersonal alignments between characters and participants" (2007: 228) in the narrated and narrative events respectively. In fact, Wortham (2001) claims that telling an autobiographical story can transform the narrators' enacted positioning and actions in the storytelling world, the Emmaus community.

Stories teach and give a lesson in an emotional experienced understanding (Ganz 2010). In the Emmaus cultural chronotope, the main Bakhtinian chronotope of encounter in the Emmaus founding story is in dialogue with that of metamorphosis in the (narrated) lives of characters. Storyworld characters and storytellers tend to present their encounter with Emmaus as a turning point regardless of their social backgrounds. The prototypical companion narrative is that of a "desperate" person, like the travelers in Palestine (see Example 1), who finds a "reason to live" in the collective action to help suffering others (Examples 1 and 2). Their personal stories revolve around character development (Ochs 2004) emerging out of the life crisis and/or decisions that brought them to

Emmaus. The teller's life crisis is narratively overcome by means of becoming part of Emmaus and narrated as having found (new) "reasons to live". In either case, their character is transformed thanks to the encounter with others.

This transformation narrative is exemplified by Àngels' autobiographical story in Example (4) below. She is one of the four community *responsables* in Barcelona and she is a highly educated, upper-middle-class woman in her early sixties who arrived at Emmaus after a divorce. This narrative is a contribution to a "volunteer meeting", an assembly held every first Tuesday of the month after a communal meal with all Emmaus volunteers in the community. This particular one gathered 31 companions and volunteers with the goal of reflecting on the reasons why they participate in Emmaus, often expressed through the form of personal experience narratives. Assemblies and meals are collective rituals that (re)produce the Emmaus cultural chronotope to which participants orient in their actions. They instantiate the encounter between different people-types that the founding story constructs and also serve as an arena for storytelling this same story or orienting to it through commentaries or other stories in response. Àngels opens the contributions to the chosen topic by "breaking the ice" (line 1) and other participants later say that they were too shy to share their own stories. In fact, similar personal stories follow Àngels' opening narrative in ways that discursively (re)produce and co-construct the common transnational imaginary of Emmaus stories and subjectivities.

(4)   Companion's personal narrative. Volunteers' assembly on the topic "Why do we do what we do?" at Emmaus Barcelona. 8 November 2011. My translation from Catalan. Emphasis mine.

1	*ANG:	sí # perquè trenco el gel jo per què-? per què estic aquí-? perquè m'he volgut
2		quedar a Emmaús # primer vaig venir per **desesperació** perquè no sabia on
3		posar-me # i després va arribar un moment que vaig di:r però molt aviat eh-?
4		al cap d'uns mesos vaig dir pues #0_1 la meva vida ja passa per Emmaús # i
5		crec que ho vaig dir amb aquestes mateixes paraules i continua passant-hi
6		#0_1 vull dir perquè perquè he trobat **un motiu per viure** # o per seguir
7		vivint # qua:n jo m'he trobat pues que (ha)via fet moltes coses havia: #0_1
8		plantat l'arbre: havia tingut els fi:lls havia escrit el llibre # i: buenu pues són
9		els xxx # això és mig broma.

%tra: yes # I'll break the ice, why-? why am I here-? Because I wanted to stay in Emmaus # first I came because of **desperation** because I did not know where to go # and later it got to a point when I said very early on huh-? after a few months I said so #0_1 my life goes through Emmaus # and I think that I said it with these same words and it still goes through it # 0_1 I mean because I

have found **a reason to live** # or to go on living # whe:n I found myself that I I had already done many things I had #0_1 planted a tree: raised my children written the book # well these are the xxx # this is a sort of a joke.

This story connects the teller's own experience to a shared, implicit narrative: the Abbé Pierre's founding story. The participants in this assembly recognized the prototypical narrative through intertextuality with the founding story, mainly "reasons to live" and "desperation" as prototypical repetitions, as well as a shared chronotope of (Christian) love in the encounter with others that transforms people who were at a turning point in their lives. Drawing on intertextual elements of the founding story, Àngels represents her "desperation" at not knowing where to go (line 2 in Example 4, line 1 in Example 1) and narrates how she found a "reason to live" (line 7 in Example 4, line 6 in Example 1) despite all her previous achievements, including forming a family and an academic career. In actual fact, Àngels' story recalls that of Georges Legay (see Examples 2 and 3), since both stories are examples of an extreme life crisis. Like Georges, she decided to stay in this community because she found a purpose in life. As in the vast majority of personal narratives gathered, Àngels does not explicitly mention the founding story (e.g. she does not flag it in connection to the Abbé Pierre or Georges Legay, and the Universal Manifesto). Nonetheless, she had learned how to tell her personal story in this Emmaus spacetime. All subsequent contributions to this assembly comment and build on similar aspects, thus constructing a prototypical story of personal crisis followed by transformation owing to the Emmaus solidarity value.

Becoming a full member implies learning how to tell one's story in accepted ways within the *emmausien* cultural chronotope analyzed in this article. Àngels' biographical narrative is a performative account of the self since she not only describes her actions in the storyworld, leading to her past resolution to join Emmaus, but also enacts a role model for novice members by telling her own story in the storytelling event of the assembly (Cain 1991; Wortham 2001). Therefore, socialization takes place both in the narrated events and in the storytelling world. Her story socializes newcomers who might step into the narrated events by enacting an analogous transformation. The performance of a collective identity implies a stratification process that unequally positions actors according to their symbolic capital as an Emmaus member, which is performed, among other aspects, through legitimate storytelling in interactions such as assemblies or interviews. Socialization of a newcomer by an experienced old-timer entails power relations that shape and stratify their storytelling practices in the local community as well as ways of acting, speaking and behaving. In fact, the ways storytellers position

themselves reveal the habitual positioning that characterizes individuals or their Emmaus community. This connects to the discursive rules and constraints for a legitimate identity in this transnational, yet locally negotiated imagined community.

5 Concluding discussion

The goal of this article was to ethnographically analyze the situated appropriation of the "origins" story in a social movement called Emmaus at critical moments when collective identity is foregrounded for different socio-political purposes. I have showed the ways in which the situated interactions where the founding story and prototypical life stories are retold construct a cultural chronotope that orients participants to a collective identity marked by encounter and transformation. From a broader viewpoint, this *emmausien* cultural chronotope articulates, (re) produces and maintains the social movement over time since its foundation and across multiple localities in its on-going expansion. Social movements as (not-so new) transnational spaces are a crucial site to explore post-national collective identities which are imbricated in post-national processes in late modernity (Appadurai 1996). The overlap between the global, the local and the personal in my ethnographic data shows the situated character of transnational processes, that is to say, how the transnational founding story is constituted in/by the everyday (storytelling) practices of people in specific localities. Globalized life is thus built upon the circulation of not only people and objects, but also of stories that enable the (re)creation of sameness in an imagined community.[2]

The article's theoretical contribution for narrative in ethnography is a nuanced, complex and situated understanding of the (re)production of a transnational identity through the circulation of stories. In line with the objectives of this Special Issue, the analysis shows that the "circulation" of this founding story involves semiosis across encounters (Gal 2007) where storytelling practices (either of the founding story or prototypical life stories based on the same spacetime) play a central role in people's roles, everyday interactions and discursive norms. Community membership is chronotopic and stratifying in nature. The Emmaus community preserves and reproduces legitimate discourse, like stories, in a closed network where (would-be) members construct a desirable self. Technologies of the self are involved in the circulation of cultural chronotopes in ways that give (institutional and discursive)

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2 The so-called "circulation" of stories does not involve physical movement as in the circulation of people and objects, but may be linked to these geographical mobilities in some cases.

power to those aligning with, and embodying, the discursive norm in everyday interactions, such as Rita, Mike or Àngels above. The processes in forming chronotopes in/through interaction involve power relations among participants in different (dis)alignments with person-types as well as among different local community's interpretations which give rise to struggles over the imagined *emmausien* chronotope in the movement, as suggested in the illustrations of Barcelona and London.

Despite the commonalities and intertextuality, not all stories are copy-paste versions since the same founding story and cultural chronotope are appropriated in multiple interactional contexts and by storytellers with different trajectories. This article's focus on the construction of "sameness" in localities that ideologically belong to the Emmaus movement is but one side of the coin, since the story gets recontextualized, recycled and clasped with other situated discourses (Gal 2007) as I have showed in Examples (2) and (3). Local retellings allow for the possibility of simultaneously creating sameness and difference because what might appear as mere repetitions of key textual elements from the shared story are forms of change and social differentiation within the movement (Pennycook 2010). The findings suggest that the local participants' orientation to the founding story constitutes the "discursive glue" that brings together hundreds of heterogeneous localities and participants worldwide. The founding story constructs a cultural chronotope that sets the basis for the Emmaus ethos, people's self-identities and collective action in a social movement in constant evolution.

Methodologically, the formation of cultural chronotopes is anchored in specific contexts which call for ethnography. The article's ethnographic framing of narrative analysis contributes a contextualized, nuanced and interconnected social interpretation of texts and interactions orienting to the *emmausien* chronotopes based on metamorphosis through the encounter between the privileged and the marginalized in solidarity with others. Ethnographic fieldwork has allowed me to avoid representing stereotypical people or spacetime as "copy-paste" in multiple sites, since participant observation reveals the specificity of how different people understand and appropriate the cultural chronotopes in their personal lives, aligning to different degrees with transformed selves in the everyday encounters occurring in Emmaus communities. Stories shape, and are shaped by, social actors' behavior in specific places and time frames. Despite the (re)production of sameness, each and every Emmaus community and participant is unique in their narratives. Why do my informants mobilize the founding story and prototypical companion stories? One main function is socializing new recruits into the movement's ethos (see Examples 3 and 4 above). Besides, the founding story is evoked in the here-and-now to justify their existence and actions (see Examples 2 and 3) at critical moments, even contributing to the creation of an Emmaus "brand" in the UK. For individuals, the orientation to

this cultural chronotope gives coherence to one's life trajectory (Linde 2009) and constructs a new identity as part of the movement (Cain 1991; Humphreys 2000), as we saw in Example (4).

As an example of a transnational network, the Emmaus social movement is in constant evolution over time and it changes across localities. These spacetime transformations allow for different possibilities of identity play within the framework of the shared *emmausien* cultural chronotope. Discourse is indeed socially constitutive of lived realities in Emmaus and, in the frame of this article, of the articulation, maintenance and transformation of an imagined community across linguistic, national and even ideological boundaries. Ethnography is thus indispensable to investigate the (re)production of cultural chronotopes in situated storytelling practices in geographically-dispersed localities in a transnational formation such as a social movement. Emmaus stories construct a certain worldview and personhood within an imagined community, or an imaginary chronotope, made up of narrated others all over the world. Echoing the Abbé Pierre, "Comment aurions-nous pu imaginer que cette rencontre avec Georges, le premier compagnon, allait aboutir, cinquante ans après, à un mouvement de trois cent cinquante groups à travers le monde?" [How could have we imagined that this encounter with Georges, the first companion, would result, fifty years on, in a movement of three hundred and fifty groups across the globe?] (Lefèvre 2001: 9). The answer lies in (his)story.

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