

**Multilingual Knowledge Production and Dissemination in *Wikipedia*:
A spatial narrative analysis of the collaborative construction of city-related
articles within the user-generated encyclopaedia**

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ABSTRACT

As the fifth most visited website on the internet today, the user-generated encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* has attracted significant attention from researchers based across the academic disciplines. However, this previous work has generally neglected the multilingual aspects of the encyclopaedia, and downplayed the significance of translation within the collaborative processes of content creation that take place within the platform. Consequently, this doctoral thesis has set out to investigate the people and practices involved in the co-production and dissemination of knowledge across linguistic and cultural borders in the context of *Wikipedia*. By developing an analytical approach that combines narrative theory (Baker 2006) with insights drawn from the work of Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) and Michel Foucault (1967/1986), I have examined the construction of 27 city-related articles published within the English- and French-language editions of the platform. This analysis has shown that *Wikipedia* volunteers make abundant use of source materials published in a diversity of languages other than that in which they are writing, and that the creation of these encyclopaedic articles involves a wide range of partly overlapping multilingual activities, a complex combination of translating, re-contextualising, summarising and synthesising. My study has also brought to light the multi-faceted negotiations that occur between the different participants involved in these processes of intersubjective knowledge production. This has drawn attention to *Wikipedia* as a space of discordant juxtaposition and creative simultaneity, and foregrounded the cacophony of opposing narrative positionings present within each article-focused community of multilingual producers.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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NOTE ON HYPERLINKS

An electronic version of this thesis has been uploaded to the CD-ROM included at the back of this document. This has been done to facilitate access to the online *Wikipedia*-based content on which much of this thesis focuses: all of the *Wikipedia*-based references have been hyperlinked so that clicking on these links will direct the reader to the specific webpage in question.

NOTE ON APPENDICES

There are four appendices attached to this thesis:

- APPENDIX I contains detailed tables providing the results of the core group analysis for the English-language dataset (see Section 5.3.2);
- APPENDIX II contains detailed tables providing the results of the core group analysis for the French-language dataset (see Section 5.3.3);
- APPENDIX III contains detailed *Microsoft Excel* tables providing the results of the Reference List analysis for the English-language dataset (see Section 5.4.1). A *PDF* download of each of the corresponding *Wikipedia* articles is also included;
- APPENDIX IV contains detailed *Microsoft Excel* tables providing the results of the Reference List analysis for the French-language dataset (see Section 5.4.2). A *PDF* download of each of the corresponding *Wikipedia* articles is also included.

Appendices I and II are included as the final section of this document.

Appendices III and IV have been uploaded to the accompanying CD-ROM.

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To my parents

1 INTRODUCTION

*Imagine a world in which every single person
on the planet is given free access to the sum of
all human knowledge.*

That's what we're doing.

- Jimmy Wales (2004b)

1.1 INTRODUCING WIKIPEDIA

There is certainly no shortage of anecdotes concerning the notorious unreliability of the online user-generated encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*. One story involves for example Léon-Robert de L'Astran, an eighteenth-century merchant ship-owner and humanist from La Rochelle, France, who was actively involved in campaigning for an end to French participation in the slave trade. In fact, such was his exceptional and outspoken commitment to the cause that, to mark the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in June 2010, the French politician and prominent member of the French Socialist Party, Ségolène Royal, paid extensive homage to the historical figure in her high profile blog posts on the subject (Brosset 2010). Following her lead, the story of de L'Astran's activism appeared in a host of further blog entries and newspaper articles across the world; a tourist-industry organisation in La Rochelle even named a regional food and drink trail after the local hero ('La route gastronomique de L'Astran' – Brosset 2010).

The problem, it was later revealed, was that Léon-Robert de L'Astran had never actually existed – except, that is, on *Wikipedia*. After consulting with a number of expert historians and specialists in

the field, the French press were gleefully able to report that, while undoubtedly inspired by true characters and events, 'de L'Astran' was no more than a figment of the perhaps overly energetic imagination of a *Wikipedia* contributor from La Rochelle going by the simple pseudonym of 'Pierre' (Brosset 2010).

Such cautionary tales do of course highlight the inherent weakness of an encyclopaedia which, as its tagline makes very clear, "anyone can edit", anonymously and at the click of a mouse ([Wikipedia: Homepage](#)).¹ But, as René König (2013: 162) notes, these stories also demonstrate the central position that the encyclopaedia has come to occupy in many societies across the modern world and its considerable influence as a knowledge resource both on and offline. Indeed, for many people, *Wikipedia* has truly become "part and parcel of the ordinary routines of our networked life" (Lovinck & Tkacz 2011: 9), a fact confirmed by the site's impressive usage data: according to the *Wikimedia Foundation*², the *Wikipedia* platform receives an average of 15 billion page views a month (around 6,000 page views a second) from a worldwide readership of approximately 495 million individuals ([Wikimedia: Statistics: Page views](#)). On any given day, 15% of all internet users will consult the encyclopaedia (*The Economist* 2014), making it the fifth most visited website on the internet (*Alexa Traffic Statistics: Wikipedia*). What is more, due to its unique position as by far the largest free online knowledge source, many important technologies and web-based applications now rely heavily on the site (Hecht & Gergle 2010; Swarts 2009). As one journalist recently put it, "look something up on *Google* or ask *Siri* a question on your *iPhone*, and you'll often get tidbits of information pulled from the encyclopaedia and delivered as straight-up facts" (Simonite 2013).

In addition to its tremendous popularity and prominence as an information resource, *Wikipedia* is also best known as the online encyclopaedia that has been, and continues to be, collaboratively constructed by many thousands of volunteer internet users ([Wikipedia: Wikipedia](#)). Previous reference works have almost always relied extensively on models of collaborative authorship (Feldstein 2011: 77), but *Wikipedia* takes this collaboration to new levels "with contributors from pretty much every ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic background, political ideology, religion, sexual orientation and gender" (Gardner 2013). Indeed, *Wikipedia* is viewed by many as the most

¹ Throughout this thesis, I refer to specific pages within *Wikipedia* in a format that reflects their precise location in the platform's internal structure. This location is visible in the title and/or the web address (URL) attributed to the page by the *Wikipedia* community and software. Typing any of these strings (e.g. '[Wikipedia: List of Wikipedias](#)' or '[Wikipedia: Milestones/June 2001](#)') into an internet search engine should provide the reader with quick access to the page in question. Alternatively, in the electronic copy of this thesis (submitted via CD-ROM), these references have been hyperlinked to the relevant page within *Wikipedia*. Unless otherwise stated, all of these references are to the English-language edition.

² The *Wikimedia Foundation* is the umbrella organisation that hosts *Wikipedia* and a number of other collaborative wiki-based projects such as *Wiktionary*, *Wikitravel* and *Wikiquote*.

successful example of a ‘crowd-sourcing’ model for the production and dissemination of knowledge (McDonough Dolmaya 2012: 169), a project that unselectively brings together nearly 200,000 unpaid and otherwise unaffiliated volunteers every month in the pursuit of a single aim ([Wikimedia: Wikipedia: Editor activity levels](#)).³ As Joseph Reagle (2010: 1) has highlighted, this means that “[u]nlike previous reference works that stand on library shelves distanced from the institutions, people, and discussions from which they arose”, *Wikipedia* is in equal parts, both and simultaneously, an encyclopaedia and a community, a product and a process. The surface content that we read when searching the site is in a sense only the most visible artefact of the ongoing conversations of this vast and diverse, supranational collective (Reagle 2010: 1).

In order to place the emergence of this community in its proper context, it is worth recounting briefly the early history of *Wikipedia* and the series of happy accidents by which it came into existence. In the beginning, *Wikipedia* was the brain-child of Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger. Wales was a director of a moderately successful, Florida-based web commerce company (*Bomis, Inc.*), while Sanger was a PhD student at Ohio State University with an interest in the philosophy of knowledge (Reagle 2010: 35). Wales had got to know Sanger through their interactions on a number of online mailing lists and, in January 2000, he hired Sanger to act as editor-in-chief for a new, internet-based and freely accessible encyclopaedia that *Bomis* was interested in building. This project began life as ‘*Nupedia*’ and the team initially adopted a fairly conventional model for the creation of encyclopaedic content: Sanger (2005) writes in his memoirs that his first step in this new role was to set about recruiting a group of “highly-qualified editors and reviewers, mostly Ph.D. professors but also a good many other highly-experienced professionals” and to establish “an extremely rigorous seven-step system” of peer-review and quality control. Contributions and revisions were made using email and mailing list systems, and Sanger maintained more or less exclusive control over uploading content to the *Nupedia* site (Sanger 2005).⁴ The project’s first article (on ‘Atonality’) was written by German music scholar Christoph Hust and published online in June 2000 (Sanger 2005).

³ Identifying the precise population of the *Wikipedia* contributing community is famously difficult, and depends to a large extent on one’s definition of what constitutes an ‘active community member’. This figure of 200,000 individuals is based on the number of registered users that have contributed at least once in the preceding month (January 2017). If we reduce our focus only to those contributors who have made more than five edits, this number quickly drops to around 70,000. Approximately 10,000 volunteers make over 100 contributions a month ([Wikimedia: Wikipedia: Editor activity levels](#)).

⁴ Interestingly, Simon Winchester’s (1998) account of the production of the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that the strategy followed to create this reference work was in many ways similar to that of *Nupedia*. Starting in 1878, thousands of volunteers were engaged to research the etymology of the English lexicon and then asked to send their findings by post to a central location where the entries would be checked, organised and catalogued (see also Feldstein 2011: 77). As with *Nupedia*, however, this was not a fast or efficient means of content production, and the first edition of the dictionary would not be published until 1928.

By the end of that year, it was becoming increasingly clear that *Nupedia* was struggling, both in terms of recruiting new contributors and creating content (Sanger 2005): a contemporary news report (Frauenfelder 2000) suggests that, in November 2000, the encyclopaedia contained just two articles and that the burgeoning community was becoming increasingly frustrated with the slowness of progress so far. Then, during dinner at a taco stand in San Diego on 2nd January 2001, Sanger's friend Ben Kovitz introduced him to the concept of the wiki, a new kind of software developed by Ward Cunningham that would enable large numbers of individual internet users to access, contribute and edit – quickly⁵ and easily – a text published online, using a simplified coding language. As Cunningham (2014) himself summarises, the key features of wikis are that they remain:

- **Simple** - Easier to use than abuse. A wiki that reinvents HTML markup (`[b]bold[/b]`, for example) has lost the path! [...]
- **Open** - Should a page be found to be incomplete or poorly organized, any reader can edit it as they see fit. [...]
- **Incremental** - Pages can cite other pages, including pages that have not been written yet. [...]
- **Universal** - The mechanisms of editing and organizing are the same as those of writing, so that any writer is automatically an editor and organizer. [...]
- **Observable** - Activity within the site can be watched and reviewed by any other visitor to the site. [...]

Sanger immediately recognised the potential of this technology as a means of accelerating the encyclopaedia construction process and pitched the idea to Wales that same evening (Reagle 2010: 39; Sanger 2005): as a solution to their problems, the team should create a wiki-based knowledge repository as a 'feeder' project for *Nupedia*, "a way for the public to develop a stream of content that could be fed into the *Nupedia* process" (Sanger 2005). He suggested that wiki software could provide a low-cost means of opening up the writing of encyclopaedia articles to the general internet-using public and thus of harnessing the web's full potential as "a universal medium for sharing information" (Berners Lee 1999: 84). Sanger and his carefully recruited, expert community of editors and reviewers would then 'clean up' these wiki-produced texts, before publishing them within *Nupedia*. Despite some not insignificant resistance within the *Nupedia* community, Wales agreed to the plan and launched *Wikipedia.com* on Monday 15th January 2001.

⁵ As Reagle (2010: 39) notes, 'wiki wiki' means 'super fast' in the Hawaiian language.

The rapid rise to popularity of this new project was astonishing, far exceeding even Sanger's own expectations: by the end of the month, *Wikipedia* already had approximately 600 articles; by May, 3,900; by December, 10,000 (Sanger 2005). Moreover, in June 2001, Sanger noticed for the first time that "he could look stuff up in *Wikipedia* that he didn't know, and answer a few questions he had, just as one does with a real encyclopedia" ([Wikipedia: Milestones/June 2001](#)). Indeed, over the next two years *Wikipedia* proved to be so successful, attracting thousands upon thousands more contributors and readers than its sister project every month, that "when the server hosting *Nupedia* crashed in September 2003 (with little more than twenty-four complete articles and seventy-four more in progress) it was never restored" (Reagle 2010: 40). *Nupedia*'s laborious and costly process of "filter, then publish" simply could not keep pace with *Wikipedia*'s radically new system of "publish, then filter" (Shirky 2008: 81).

Sixteen years later, *Wikipedia*'s content still continues to grow at a staggering rate: as of 20th March 2017, the online encyclopaedia contains well over 44 million articles in 296 different language editions ([Wikipedia: List of Wikipedias](#)). The largest of these editions is the English-language *Wikipedia* which currently includes 5,363,046 entries, a figure which increases by around 800 new articles a day. Twelve other language versions have amassed over a million articles each and a total of 58 *Wikipedias* each hold over 100,000 articles ([Wikipedia: List of Wikipedias](#)). On the one hand, the success of this mass-participation, 'crowd-sourcing' model to encyclopaedia construction has certainly been facilitated by the simple efficacy of the wiki software and the relative pervasiveness of the hardware required for the general public to get involved in the co-production of online content: as Mark Graham (2010a: 425) describes, personal computers had by the turn of the millennium become generally affordable for millions of inhabitants of the developed world and, in many Western countries, were already firmly embedded within the everyday routines of the home and the work place.⁶ On the other hand, we should also note the importance of a general sea-change in societal attitudes towards democratic participation over the past generation. As discussed by Cohen and Fung (2004), Western societies have become increasingly sceptical with regard to the systems of competitive representation on which most of today's mass democracies are built, with many now calling for increased public involvement in policy-making deliberations. The rise of what has come to be termed 'citizen media' follows this trend. As defined by Mona Baker and Bolette Blaagaard (2016: 16), this concept

encompasses the physical artefacts, digital content, practices, performative interventions and discursive formations of affective sociality produced by

⁶ For instance, writing in 2002, Diana Saco (2002: 96) cites a report which suggests that 49% of U.S. households owned a PC in December 1998 and that this figure was expected to rise to 65% by 2003.

unaffiliated citizens as they act in public space(s) to effect aesthetic or socio-political change or express personal desires and aspirations, without the involvement of a third party or benefactor.

In this light, the popularity of volunteering for alternative news and information sites such as *Wikipedia*, *Global Voices*⁷, *Yeeyan*⁸ and many other such projects, should be acknowledged as part of “an emerging value system and set of expectations regarding the way people (should) act and interact within the contemporary network society” (Deuze 2006: 63). It should be seen as indicative of a growing desire among ordinary people to challenge existing power hierarchies, to engage directly in the collaborative production and mass dissemination of knowledge, and to make their voices heard (cf. Chouliaraki 2010: 227).

1.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

Because of *Wikipedia*’s prominence in modern society and the site’s radically different systems of knowledge creation, it is hardly surprising that the online platform has attracted significant amounts of scholarly attention over the past decade or so. Many of the earliest studies into *Wikipedia* focused on the issue of its quality as a reference work (Menchen-Trevino & Hargittai 2011: 25). Indeed, in direct response to growing public awareness of the influence of *Wikipedia* and increased concern regarding the accuracy of the information it contains, Jim Giles’ (2005) now famous special report for the science journal *Nature* sought to compare a selection of 42 science-related *Wikipedia* articles with their corresponding entries in the online version of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The texts from both knowledge resources were downloaded, anonymised and sent out to university academics expert in the relevant fields: these reviewers were then asked to critically assess each article and to highlight any errors and significant omissions they found. By compiling the results, Giles (2005) revealed that “the average science entry in *Wikipedia* contained around four inaccuracies; *Britannica*, about three.” His analysis controversially suggests that – at least when it comes to science-related topics – the difference in accuracy between *Wikipedia* and *Encyclopaedia*

⁷ *Global Voices* is an online citizen journalism initiative whose mission is to “find the most compelling and important stories coming from marginalized and misrepresented communities”, to bring these together into one place and to thus ‘amplify’ these voices for a global audience (*Global Voices* website: What is *Global Voices*?).

⁸ *Yeeyan* is a virtual platform and community which aims to provide Chinese web users with translations of a broad range of news stories published outside China. It thus seeks to improve access to global information for the general Chinese population by removing linguistic barriers and circumventing their government’s strict internet censorship laws (Fan 2015).

Britannica is not nearly as great as one might have assumed. In other words, although the study certainly revealed errors, omissions and misleading statements within *Wikipedia*'s representation of knowledge, it clearly demonstrates that the user-generated resource is not significantly worse in this respect than prestigious public information sources produced through traditional models of knowledge dissemination.⁹

Media and communication scholars Ericka Menchen-Trevino and Eszter Hargittai (2011), on the other hand, have analysed the information-seeking behaviour of 210 American university students to examine the extent to which *Wikipedia*'s readers assess the credibility and validity of the information they obtain from the site. Therefore, while Giles' (2005) study is interesting for the way it attempts to evaluate the quality of *Wikipedia*'s content from an expert perspective, Menchen-Trevino and Hargittai's work is important for the way it interrogates how the site's daily readers actually perceive this question of accuracy and reliability. Through 285 task observation interviews during which participants were encouraged to discuss with the researchers what they were thinking and doing as they engaged in each information-seeking task, Menchen-Trevino and Hargittai (2011: 37) found that "[o]f the 162 students who accessed *Wikipedia* during their task completions, 57 percent (92 students) used information from it to answer at least one task." Strikingly, only around one quarter of these 92 students then verified the information found on *Wikipedia*, either by clicking on the in-text hyperlinked references or by comparing this with information found elsewhere. In the majority of cases, this was not for lack of understanding of how the site's content is generated and the implications of this model for reliability: when asked how *Wikipedia* works, "[m]ost students [...] knew that anyone could edit the site, and two had even mentioned making small changes to articles themselves" (2011: 36). Instead, the authors suggest that *Wikipedia* is seen as generally 'good enough' for most everyday research purposes; or, as one participant put it, a resource to be used "whenever I need to find something quick [sic]" (2011: 36).

Another prominent strand of research has recognised *Wikipedia* as a prominent new "arena for the social construction of reality", a new space for the collaborative production and mass dissemination of knowledge about the world in which we live (König 2013: 164). Most notably, René König (2013) has focused on the construction of the German-language *Wikipedia* article concerning the '9/11' attacks that took place in New York in 2001. Chosen because of its "politically loaded" subject matter

⁹ In relation to this study, it is also worth mentioning that within one month of Giles' report (2005), every one of the errors raised by his expert reviewers with respect to the *Wikipedia* content had been corrected (see comment by *Pinktulip* at 14:11 on 25 January 2006 to [Wikipedia: User Talk: Jimbo Wales](#)). No indication can be found in the responses written by the publishers of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that the same is true of the inaccuracies included in their articles.

(2013: 172), his analysis of the evolution of this text and the associated Talk pages¹⁰ provides a fascinating exploration of how Wikipedians collect appropriate information, debate between themselves as to what knowledge can be trusted, and negotiate differences between competing truth claims (2013: 163). In this way, he is able to suggest that traditional hierarchies of knowledge and expertise are still largely maintained within this volunteer co-production process. In other words, despite the fact that “anyone can edit” *Wikipedia*, the mainstream accounts of the attacks produced by conventional sources of expertise appear to retain their dominance in this context, while alternative narratives of the events are effectively marginalised.

However, as Pnina Fichman and Noriko Hara (2014: 1) have recently recognised, much of this previous research has neglected the “global and multilingual nature” of the encyclopaedia, and tended to focus exclusively on one language version, most commonly the English *Wikipedia*. Yet, not only is more than 87% of *Wikipedia*’s content written in languages other than English ([Wikimedia: List of Wikipedias](#)), but each individual edition constitutes a community of “contributors from various countries with diverse socio-cultural, political and religious beliefs” (Fichman & Hara 2014: 1). As a result, one cannot deny that *Wikipedia* is very much a multilingual and multicultural phenomenon, and that a rounded understanding of the dynamics of the online encyclopaedia must involve input from a perspective which might take these factors into account.

The essays contained in Fichman and Hara’s (2014) edited volume constitute an important first step in promoting research into the global nature of *Wikipedia* in a number of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. For instance, the chapter written by Taha Yasseri *et al.* (2014) uses statistical methods to compare and contrast the most controversial topics within the ten largest *Wikipedia* projects. They find that while articles discussing politics, politicians and political ideologies are uniformly the most hotly debated across all ten language editions of the site¹¹, a number of intriguing anomalies do emerge from their data. For example, sports-related content is shown to be particularly controversial in the Spanish-language *Wikipedia*, while science-focused articles cause comparatively little debate in the French-language edition *vis-à-vis* the other encyclopaedia versions analysed: as the authors note, this would seem to provide clear evidence of the influence on content production of “cultural differences and the variation of community priorities from one language to others” (Yasseri *et al.* 2014: 39).

¹⁰ As I will discuss in Chapter 4 of this thesis, a particularly intriguing feature of the *Wikipedia* environment is the presence of so-called ‘Talk’ pages. These are essentially discussion forums, connected to every encyclopaedia article within the platform, which are intended to be used by the community to discuss issues relating to the construction of each text.

¹¹ Interestingly, Yasseri *et al.* (2014) find that geography-related articles (*i.e.* articles such as the city-related texts on which this thesis focuses) are the second most controversial topics across all language versions.

On the other hand, Paolo Massa and Asta Zelenkauskaitė's (2014) chapter examines *Wikipedia's* gender gap from a multicultural perspective: drawing on previous research showing that barely ten percent of contributors to the English-language *Wikipedia* are women, they ask to what extent this imbalance is more or less pronounced in other language editions of the site. Their analysis of the 76 *Wikipedias* with at least 20,000 registered users demonstrates that the Slovenian, Estonian and Lithuanian editions have the narrowest gender gap (39.93%, 38.12% and 36.20% women, respectively – 2014: 91), while the Hindi, Bengali and Malayalam versions have the largest imbalance (3.75%, 4.09% and 5.34% women, respectively – 2014: 92). Interestingly, the authors note that these figures correlate closely with those found in many global indexes concerning the participation of women in the fields of science and research in these different regions of the world (2014: 93-4).

Although his work does not feature in Fichman and Hara's (2014) book, Scott Hale's (2014; 2015) recent research into *Wikipedia's* multilingual volunteers should also be mentioned here. Once again, both of Hale's (2014; 2015) studies are essentially quantitative analyses of activity within the platform: in his first paper (2014), he downloads and examines a dataset of all edits made during one month in 2013 to the top 46 most active *Wikipedia* editions (*i.e.* all those with at least 100,000 articles). In doing so, he is able to show that while the majority of Wikipedians edit only one language version, a significant proportion (15%) contribute to multiple editions and that these multilingual volunteers tend to be more active overall (they make 2.3 times more revisions) than their monolingual counterparts. He also finds that the English-language *Wikipedia* receives particularly large amounts of attention from these multilingual contributors, indicating that this edition of the encyclopaedia acts as a major 'hub' for knowledge production and dissemination within the site as a whole (2014: 104).¹² Finally, his analysis suggests that as many as 44% of the articles edited by multilinguals in their non-primary languages were texts that no monolingual users in that language edited during the time-period studied. This leads him to the conclusion that multilinguals play a valuable role in transferring information between linguacultures in *Wikipedia*, thereby reducing levels of 'self-focus bias' within each language version of the site (2014: 106-7).¹³

¹² Hale's (2014) finding that the English-language edition occupies a particularly central role in the global *Wikipedia* is also corroborated to a large extent by Ronen *et al.*'s (2014) comparative analysis of UNESCO's book translation index, *Twitter* and *Wikipedia* as 'global language networks'. Indeed, they too observe that multilingual *Wikipedia* editing practices are very much centred on the English-language encyclopaedia, although they do suggest that the dominance of this language is less than is the case in the published book translation network (2014: E5620).

¹³ As Brent Hecht and Darren Gergle (2009: 11) affirm, 'self-focus bias' relates to the idea any given language community will tend to "encode information that is important and correct to them and a large proportion of contributors to the same repository, but not important and correct to contributors of similar repositories." For example, the French-language *Wikipedia* community will tend to focus more of their efforts on producing

Hale's (2015) second paper then continues along this research trajectory by investigating what types of edits multilinguals make in their primary and non-primary languages, again by means of a statistical approach. Using a dataset of all the *Wikipedia* articles in both the English- and Japanese-language editions related to the Japanese island of Okinawa, he is able to corroborate his earlier findings by showing that, although Japanese users concentrate most of their efforts on improving the Japanese-language *Wikipedia*, they also make important contributions to the English-language edition. Characterising these users as 'information bridges', he suggests that such contributions may include "updating out-of-date information" and "fixing incorrect romanizations of Japanese words and/or adding Japanese characters for terms" (2015: 7-8), but is unable to provide more specific insights from this macro-level statistical perspective. Hale (2015: 8-9) concludes that further research is needed, not only to better understand the roles currently performed by these multilingual contributors, but also to help improve platform design in ways which might "encourage these users to transfer more information between different languages, and thereby enable wider access for all users to the most interesting and important material that is not yet in their primary languages."

1.3 WIKIPEDIA IN/AND TRANSLATION STUDIES RESEARCH

As a field which places encounters across languages and cultures as its central concern, translation studies is perhaps particularly well situated to provide a platform for more qualitative analyses of multilingual *Wikipedia* activity and, specifically, to answer Fichman and Hara's (2014: 1) call for detailed research into what they describe as the "intercultural collaborative processes of knowledge production" that take place within the encyclopaedia. This is particularly the case given the discipline's recent interest in the roles, forms and functions of translation within global flows of information and knowledge in the electronic and now digital age (Bielsa & Bassnett 2009; Cronin 2003). Most notably, translation scholars such as Esperança Bielsa and Susan Bassnett (2009), Christina Schäffner (2005) and Luc van Doorslaer (2010; 2012) have investigated the world of international news journalism with the aim of demonstrating that "[t]ranslation is in fact a very regular phenomenon for news production, even if this is not always explicitly indicated" (Schäffner 2005: 156). Schäffner (2005: 154-6) notes for instance how, when the UK's Prince Harry was photographed wearing a Nazi uniform at a fancy-dress party in January 2005, an article in *The*

content about aspects of French society and culture, rather than on improving coverage of other parts of the world.

Economist referred to coverage of the incident in the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, quoting extracts from this foreign-language text as a means of illustrating differences in attitudes across Europe towards the past and World War II in particular. As Schäffner (2005: 156) comments, such intertextual references are a common feature of journalistic writing and yet, in the case of foreign sources, the fact of translation is only very rarely acknowledged. Instead, “these quotes are usually incorporated in the text in a coherent way without stating that they were originally made in another language. The addition of ‘said through a translator’, or ‘said through an interpreter’, is the exception rather than the rule in media texts” (Schäffner 2005: 156). As I argue below, translation is similarly pervasive yet underplayed in the context of *Wikipedia*.

Moreover, through a series of analyses including fieldwork at the *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* news agency and close examination of *Reuters* multilingual newswire output, Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 64) argue that this general invisibility contrasts strongly with the decisive and highly ‘interventionist’ role translators play in the processes of global news circulation. While translators have traditionally been theorised in terms of their “ingrained subservience” (2009: 64) to the original text and its author, Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 104) show how, in the context of news journalism, translation not only involves but requires an active practice of “reorganising and contextualising information [...] an exercise of subtle rewriting in order to heighten the effectiveness of the original text in the new context.” For example, a French-language article published by *AFP* in June 2004 concerning the then Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez combines, reworks and reorganises two separate Spanish-language texts, selectively appropriating and modifying their contents in order to meet the needs of the French target audience (2009: 102). This results in a major ‘reinterpretation’ of the source texts which reformulates positive descriptions of Chavez’s government in a more neutral tone and omits references to his radical social programmes, whilst characterising him more explicitly as a populist leader. As Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 103) note, this target-language presentation of Chavez conforms more closely to dominant narratives of Latin American socialism circulating among European readers (2009: 103). The researchers conclude that “through translation, significantly different versions of texts are globally circulated” (2009: 110) and that further research is needed to reveal the complexity of the conditions, norms and practices governing the production of these texts. As I will discuss in detail in Chapters 2 and 5 of this thesis, such analyses also hold significant implications for contemporary understandings of globalisation and the emerging ‘network society’ (Castells 2010) which have so far tended to overlook issues associated with the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of humankind, in favour of a focus on supraterritoriality and instantaneous communication.

The potential of *Wikipedia* as an object of inquiry for translation studies should additionally be situated within the current wave of interest within the discipline in translation phenomena occurring outside of the paid professional sphere (Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva 2012). As Luis Pérez-González and Şebnem Susam-Saraeva (2012: 149) note in their introduction to a special issue of *The Translator* on ‘Non-Professional Translation and Interpreting’, translation scholars have increasingly recognised that their “traditional focus on translator and interpreter training and on the advancement of the status of translators and interpreters as professionals is no longer sufficient to address the complexity of real-life situations of translating and interpreting.” Research in the past decade has thus begun to examine more explicitly the roles and activities of individuals who translate for free and without necessarily having received any formal training in linguistic mediation (Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva 2012: 151). Most notably, beginning in the mid-2000s, Rayna Denison (2011), Jorge Díaz Cintas and Pablo Muñoz Sánchez (2006), Tessa Dwyer (2012), Matthew Kayahara (2005), Luis Pérez-González (2006; 2007; 2013; 2014) and others have investigated emerging communities of multilingual ‘fans’ who collaborate online to produce and distribute interlingual subtitles (‘fansubs’) for their favourite television shows. In doing so, they have provided insights into the complex relation such ‘produser’ groups hold with the mainstream (*i.e.* commercial) media distribution industry and the experimental new approaches to audiovisual translation that their non-professional members have developed.¹⁴ Pérez-González (2013: 7) notes for example how many Japanese *anime* fansubbing collectives were founded out of a shared sense of frustration with the ‘culturally insensitive’, highly domesticating manner in which most commercial translations rendered the original dialogue. In this way, his research has highlighted the range of alternative practices by which volunteer fansubbers have sought to subvert this industry norm, through the production and circulation of titles which better respond to their own needs and interests as fans and consumers of this media content. These practices include for example the use of ‘headnotes’, positioned at the top of the screen and in addition to the standard dialogue subtitles, as a means of glossing highly source-culture specific terms in the source text (Pérez-González 2007: 75; 2013: 8; 2014: 80). As Pérez-González (2013: 8) explains, the heavy use of these extra-textual interventions “allow[s] them to enrich the viewer’s reading experience by introducing additional layers of representational and affective content”. It produces, in other words, a ‘thicker’ translation which allows the consumer to engage much more directly with the source culture and text. Interestingly, while such practices began only as a relatively small, ‘niche’ operation (Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sanchez

¹⁴ ‘Produser’ is a term coined by media theorist Axel Bruns (2008) to describe the technologically empowered consumers who actively participate in the production, appropriation, manipulation and recirculation of media content in the digital age. The neologism emphasises, in other words, the extent to which the traditional industrial-era distinction between consumers and producers is becoming increasingly blurred as a result of the new media context.

2006), many fansubbing groups now attract in excess of 200,000 viewers per episode, despite the best efforts of industry representatives to crack down on the illegal distribution of their products (Pérez-González 2013: 19). Despite – and in many ways through – their translation norm-breaching practices, such collectives thus contest and undermine the authority and role-specific expertise of paid professional subtitlers, destabilising traditional hierarchies between the producers and consumers of translated content.

Given these shifts in perspective within the discipline and *Wikipedia*'s prominence as a particularly successful example of multilingual 'produsage' within global flows of knowledge production and dissemination (Bruns 2008), translation studies research into *Wikipedia* is strangely lacking. Alain Désilets *et al.* (2006) cite *Wikipedia* as just one of many wikis whose multilingual content could be significantly improved through the design and implementation of better tools to aid interlingual translation, and the encyclopaedia is mentioned only briefly in Joanna Drugan's (2011) discussion of the relevance of professional codes of ethics within new contexts of 'community translation'. Ari Hautasaari has published research into *Wikipedia* translation (Hautasaari 2013; Hautasaari & Ishida 2011), but this work is explicitly much more concerned with "processes of human-computer interaction" than with translation *per se* (Hautasaari 2013: 946).¹⁵ Indeed, the only extensive studies of *Wikipedia* to date from a translation studies perspective are two papers by Julie McDonough Dolmaya (2012; 2015), both of which focus on the profiles and practices of individuals involved in translating encyclopaedia articles directly between different language versions of the site. In the first, McDonough Dolmaya (2012) is interested in *Wikipedia* as an example of a 'crowdsourced translation initiative': she compares interlingual translation activity in the context of the online encyclopaedia with that taking place within other internet-based projects such as *TED*, *Twitter* and *Facebook*, and contrasts this 'new translation model' with the TEP model used in professional translation-industry contexts.¹⁶ By conducting a large email-questionnaire survey of Wikipedians who have volunteered their language skills on the '[Wikipedia: Translators available](#)' page, her analysis aims to explore what kinds of people participate in these projects, why they translate and how they perceive translation as an activity. McDonough Dolmaya's (2015) second article then turns to focus on the issue of translation quality, using Mossop's (2006) taxonomy of editing and revising procedures to identify 'transfer and language/style problems' in a dataset of *Wikipedia* articles that have been translated into English from other language versions of the site. This allows her to investigate questions such as: "Are Wikipedians producing translations that require revision? Does the open-editing process of the

¹⁵ Ari Hautasaari's (2013) analysis aims to discover what software tools might be developed in order to better support *Wikipedia*'s translators.

¹⁶ TEP is a widely used acronym in the professional translation sphere, standing for 'Translate-Edit-Proofread'.

wiki environment help eliminate errors in translated articles? And finally, are certain types of errors more commonly resolved?" (2015: 13).

Both studies certainly provide intriguing insights into these otherwise under-researched facets of the encyclopaedia platform: McDonough Dolmaya finds for example that 68% of her respondents have never worked as professional translators (2012: 174) and that the primary motivation behind participation in this translation project is an altruistic desire to make information available outside of the source-language community (2012: 182). She also finds that language/style errors in the target texts produced through translation are frequently and rapidly rectified by the community, while transfer errors (*i.e.* mistranslations and omissions) are only rarely corrected in this context (2015: 14).

Nevertheless, the focus is very much rooted in what Reine Meylaerts and Maud Gonne (2015: 146) call the 'classical binarisms' of the traditional translation studies metalanguage which divides source text from target text, original writing from translation, authorship from translatorship. Indeed, the extent to which the act of translating is seen as an entirely distinct activity to that of original writing is particularly clear in the following passage taken from the introduction to McDonough Dolmaya's second article (2015: 1, my emphasis):

Wikipedia is a well-known example of a website with content developed entirely through crowdsourcing. It has over 4 million articles in English alone, and content in 284 other language versions. *While the articles in the different versions are often written directly in the respective target-language, translations also take place.*

The suggestion is that "writing directly in the respective target-language" does not involve any form of translation, that this is essentially a monolingual activity and that, as a result, this is of no interest to the field of translation studies. Translation is seen as an activity that occurs only *between* different language editions of the *Wikipedia* platform, and not as an integral part of the processes through which content is produced *within* each version of the site.

Moreover, by highlighting the existence of 'transfer errors' – and, to be precise, by foregrounding them as 'errors' – McDonough Dolmaya (2015) implicitly assumes that the primary aim of *Wikipedia*'s volunteer translators is to reproduce the source text in the target language, to create a linguistically equivalent representation of the original article. She thus denies these users any degree of individual agency, fails to acknowledge how they might intervene as co-participants in the social construction of reality, and frames their role as essentially one of interlingual and intercultural

transmission and mediation. Put simply, the extent to which these translation phenomena in this context might simultaneously involve creative processes of authorial intervention is ignored.

McDonough Dolmaya is by no means alone in making this assumption and conceptualising the role of translation within *Wikipedia* in this way. Similar notions also underlie Désilets *et al.*'s (2006: 20) paper when they contrast 'parallel authoring approaches' for web-content production with 'translation approaches': in the former model, "parallel communities [...] produce content about overlapping sets of topics in different languages" and the authors propose that "a significant amount of effort" could be saved if new processes and tools could be developed for translating such content between language editions. Translation and original writing are again viewed as entirely separate activities, and translation is framed as being fundamentally about the transfer and reproduction of meaning in another language. Likewise, and in much the same manner as McDonough Dolmaya (2012; 2015), Hautasaari (2013: 945) begins his paper by stating that "*Wikipedia* translation activities aim to improve the quality of the multilingual *Wikipedia* through article translation" and later goes on to define '*Wikipedia* translation' as

the activities related to translating *Wikipedia* article pages. *Wikipedia* translation can also include the translation of non-encyclopedic pages, such as *WikiProject* pages, and even discussion pages attached to each *Wikipedia* article.

Once again, it is assumed that this kind of direct translation of whole articles between different *Wikipedia* language editions is the principal form of translation activity occurring within the encyclopaedia platform, and that this should be the primary focus of research from a translation studies perspective.¹⁷

In this thesis, however, I wish to challenge this assumption. I will try to show that, during this process of what McDonough Dolmaya (2015: 1) calls "writ[ing] directly in the respective target-language", Wikipedians make abundant use of materials composed in multiple languages other than that in which they are creating their article text. As a result, I will attempt to demonstrate that the construction of every one of the articles in my dataset has entailed a diverse range of partly overlapping multilingual processes, simultaneously involving practices of translation, summary, paraphrase and synthesis across linguistic and cultural borders. I will argue that the boundaries

¹⁷ As I will discuss in Section 5.2, it is worth noting that the *Wikipedia* community's own guidelines present translation in very similar terms: the guidance page entitled '[Wikipedia: Translation](#)', for example, frames the activity as the relatively mechanical procedure by which content published within one language edition of the platform might be transferred into another.

between writing and translating, authorship and translatorship are thus profoundly blurred in this context, and that treating these activities as entirely separate processes makes little sense.

Indeed, I want to suggest that, by focusing exclusively on a narrow definition of translation, McDonough Dolmaya (2012; 2015) and others impose artificial, inadequate and restrictive delimitations on what the data shows to be a far more fluid, messy and – for this very reason – *interesting* reality. Their approach takes into account only one small facet of the wide variety of multilingual encounters taking place within *Wikipedia*, and obscures from view many of the other, more complex processes through which knowledge is negotiated and exchanged across languages and cultures in this intensely pluricultural context. They neglect, in other words, the ‘bigger picture’ of the ways in which the linguistic and cultural diversity of human society shapes the construction of this online encyclopaedia, and fail to recognise the complexity and full significance of the roles and practices of *Wikipedia*’s multilingual volunteers.

In order to distance my investigation from these previous studies, I have adopted a much broader understanding of the objects of translation studies as developed within what has become known as the ‘narrative approach’ to translation research (Baker 2014). As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis, this analytical framework is rooted in the theory that human experience of the world is fundamentally configured by the stories we tell ourselves and others about it. Narratives are understood, in other words, as the primary means by which “we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world” (Somers & Gibson 1994: 58-9). Translation scholars such as Mona Baker (2006a; 2006b; 2009; 2010; 2013; 2014), Sue-Ann Harding (2011; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d), and others have thus sought to examine how translators are involved in the production, dissemination and contestation of such narratives.

With the story as its basic unit of analysis, this approach has already allowed for the investigation of issues extending far beyond those associated with source-target accuracy and equivalence (*i.e.* ‘transfer errors’). Specifically, it has concentrated attention much more explicitly on the diversity of activities in which translators engage and the “decisive and highly complex role” they often play in their own societies as well as on a global scale (Baker 2014: 159). By applying these ideas to the investigation of *Wikipedia*, the focus is placed on the processes of narration and renarration through which knowledge is collaboratively produced and disseminated within the multilingual context of the user-generated encyclopaedia. Following Baker (2014), the multilingual Wikipedians on which this study fixes are conceptualised as ‘(re)narrators’ and the analysis centres on bringing to light the full significance and range of their roles and practices within the site. In this way, I provide greater

insight into the multitude of multilingual processes in which they participate, into the muddy mix of translation, summary, paraphrase and synthesis through which they produce their content.

The narrative approach also provides us with a framework with which to investigate the as-yet-unexplored processes of collaboration involved in the multilingual production and dissemination of knowledge within the *Wikipedia* environment. Drawing inspiration from the work of René König (2013 – see Section 1.2), I explore how members of this geographically, culturally, politically, professionally and linguistically heterogeneous community come to agree between themselves what knowledge can be trusted, and how they reconcile differences between competing narrative constructions of the world in which we live. My analysis thus contributes towards current research within translation studies into virtual translation communities as platforms for the transnational negotiation of intersubjectivity (e.g. Baker 2013; Pérez-González 2010). Previous investigations in this area of study have tended to focus on the elements that constitute the ‘gravitational core’ of each multilingual community (Pérez-González 2010: 263) and what we might call the ‘centripetal’ forces of affinity that bind such collectives together: Baker (2013) for instance has looked at activist groups such as *Translators for Peace*, *Babels* and *Tlaxcala*, and highlighted the key narratives of global justice and pacifism by which these groups define themselves. For instance, by examining the ‘manifesto’ included on the *Tlaxcala* group’s website, she shows that the gravitational core of this group is “a narrative of an inherently conflictual world where different imperial powers have subjugated weaker nations and groups and reinforced this subjugation through their language since time immemorial” (Baker 2013: 28). The translators belonging to the collective are then narrated as resistance fighters with a specific role to play in de-imperialising the English language and in combatting the homogenising tendencies of Anglo-centric neoliberal globalisation. Pérez-González (2010), on the other hand, has looked at the sense of narrative affinity binding a more ‘ad-hoc’ group of activists known as *Ansarclub*. As Pérez-González (2010) describes, *Ansarclub* was formed online in the summer of 2006 to produce Spanish-language subtitles for a controversial English-language interview with Spain’s former Prime Minister José María Aznar López, aired on the BBC News 24 television channel. Pérez-González (2010: 276) focuses on the way in which members of the community “jointly construct the gravitational core of their emerging affinity space” through their interactions within the comments section of the personal blog of progressive journalist Ignacio Escolar. He shows how the diverse participants are brought together into a collective force for political action through their shared dislike and distrust of Aznar’s opinions with respect to NATO, Israel and the ‘War on Terror’.

My research here concentrates much more explicitly on the ‘centrifugal’ forces that constantly threaten to rip the multilingual *Wikipedia* community apart. My analysis seeks to highlight, in other words, the difficult balance of consensus and dissensus through which this heterogeneous group of individuals maintains cohesion, and the variety of conflict-ridden processes of negotiation, exchange and transmission through which it produces and disseminates new accounts of the social reality in the target language and culture. In doing so, I challenge the primary conceptualisation present in many of the previous analyses cited above (most notably: Hale 2014; 2015; McDonough Dolmaya 2012; 2015) that frames these participants as ‘information bridges’, as impartial conduits for the interlingual and intercultural transmission of knowledge.¹⁸ As I will discuss in the Conclusion to this thesis (Chapter 7), my findings demonstrate that, like all Wikipedians, these volunteers are firmly rooted in a specific ‘narrative location’, that they often care deeply about the article topic in question, and that they frequently argue vociferously to ensure their understanding of this aspect of the shared reality is adequately presented in the text.

Finally, this research project aims to expand our understanding of the roles and activities of *Wikipedia*’s multilingual volunteers by investigating a dataset of encyclopaedia articles concerning a selection of prominent cities from around the world. As I will explain in Chapter 4, these are drawn from *Wikipedia*’s so-called ‘Vital Articles’ lists in the English- and French-language editions of the site. In doing so, I seek to highlight the role that *Wikipedia*’s multilingual users play in producing, reproducing and contesting established geographies and systems of spatial knowledge. By combining theories of social space with the narrative approach to translation studies (see Chapters 2 and 3), I will show how multilingual Wikipedians participate in elaborating and disseminating the ‘spatial narratives’ by which we come to know and make sense of the spaces of society, both at a local level as well as on a global scale.

In this way, I hope to develop more explicit connections between translation studies and the themes of what has become known as the ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities and social sciences. As I will argue in Chapter 2, translation scholars have yet to explore in great detail the role of language and translation in the social production of space, and an understanding of the work of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) can provide a valuable platform from which to launch such research. Indeed, by applying this approach to the study of *Wikipedia*, I will show that translation studies can make valuable contributions to wider understandings of emerging forms of so-called

¹⁸ Pnina Fichman and Noriko Hara’s (2014: 1) reference to “intercultural collaborative processes of knowledge production” (see Section 1.2) also betrays a view of the participants involved as essentially neutral agents who mediate *between* cultures. Framing multilingual users’ activities as ‘intercultural collaboration’, in other words, overlooks the decisive nature of their role as active and culturally embedded participants in the social construction of reality.

‘neo-geography’ (Goodchild 2007/2011; Graham 2010a), that is, the production, manipulation and re-circulation of geographical representations by ordinary citizens collaborating outside of the professional sphere in the networked digital age (see Section 3.5). Scholars such as Mark Graham (2010a) have acknowledged to some extent the significance of linguistic barriers in determining how we come to know and make sense of our spatial environment: he notes for instance how the amount of information provided about specific places (he cites for example the town of Corte, France) within user-generated sites such as *Wikitravel* varies dramatically depending on which language edition of the platform one reads (2010a: 430). Nevertheless, such discussions in the field of social geography remain the exception rather than the norm, and scant attention has been paid to the ways in which spatial knowledges are circulated across languages and cultures through the supraterritorial flows of the internet. Further research is needed in order to raise awareness of the central role played by translation and translators in producing, disseminating and contesting geographical representations of our world.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In sum, this thesis explores the following primary research question:

Drawing on a dataset of English- and French-language Wikipedia articles about world cities, what does an analytical approach developed by combining narrative theory and spatial theory reveal about the collaborative production and dissemination of knowledge across linguacultures within the user-generated encyclopaedia (2001 - 2017)?

In other words, the study aims to extend our understanding of *Wikipedia* as a prominent new site for the social construction of spatial knowledge through a focus on the people and multilingual practices involved in this process. To this end, I draw on the work of Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991), Michel Foucault (1967/1986), and narrative theorists such as Mona Baker (2006) and Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson (1994) to develop a conceptual framework for investigating the construction, negotiation and propagation across languages and cultures of the ‘spatial narratives’ by which we make sense of, interact with and constantly produce and reproduce our socio-spatial environment.

In the data analysis chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), I respond to this primary research question by breaking it down into a series of precise sub-questions (SQs). Specifically, in Chapter 5, I ask:

SQ1) *How does the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of human knowledge shape the collaborative production of spatial knowledge by Wikipedia producers?*

- a. *Are the most active contributors to each of these pages proficient in other languages?*
- b. *To what extent do their linguistic skills drive their engagement in multilingual renarration activities?*
- c. *What role do their language skills play when piecing together their encyclopaedia articles?*
- d. *Based on an analysis of Wikipedia's Talk pages, why do Wikipedians make use of foreign-language source materials?*
- e. *To what extent are the multilingual narrative construction practices of the English- and French-language communities similar? How do they differ?*

Chapter 5 thus seeks to demonstrate that, although *Wikipedia* is narrated within the community as a free, open and flat space for democratic citizen engagement (in accordance with the metanarratives of cyberspaces that dominate in contemporary society), the encyclopaedia platform is in fact a much more complex, contoured, heterogeneous and dynamic environment with its own intricately structured and structuring topography. In particular, drawing on three different sources of data, I will attempt to demonstrate that, given the linguistic and cultural diversity of humankind, the production of knowledge in this context involves a muddy mix of translation, summary and synthesis; and that, depending on their particular skills and backgrounds, different users experience different areas of the site in different ways. I also explore the similarities and differences between the English- and French-language datasets in these respects, with the aim of contributing insights into the role of English as *lingua franca* in the internet age.

Chapter 6 then looks in more detail at the collaborative practices of multilingual knowledge production and dissemination within the site, with a particular emphasis on the process of negotiation between the multiple narrative standpoints we find in the *Wikipedia* environment. It notes that *Wikipedia* has been conceptualised as a 'digital heterotopia' in which many different and otherwise incompatible spaces and narrative positionings are juxtaposed (Haider & Sundin 2010), and asks:

SQ2) *How does this heterotopic nature affect the collaborative production and dissemination of knowledge across languages and cultures in this context?*

Both data analysis chapters also aim to provide insight into the complexity of the multilingual activities through which knowledge is produced in *Wikipedia*. In the concluding chapter (Chapter 7), I assess the evidence collected throughout this thesis and discuss the implications of my findings for broader understandings of the object of translation studies. In doing so, I seek to answer the following final sub-question:

SQ3) *To what extent does the collaborative production of content by multilingual Wikipedia users challenge traditional conceptualisations of translation developed to account for the production and circulation of knowledge in other (largely offline) environments?*

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is divided into seven chapters: an introduction, two theoretical chapters, a methodology chapter, two data analysis chapters and a conclusion. In Chapter 2, I situate my research within the so-called ‘spatial turn’ that has occurred in the humanities and social sciences over the past two decades. I show how this turn has so far manifested itself in the field of translation studies, principally through the study of the ‘geography of translation’ but also – to a lesser extent – the ‘translation of geographies’. In other words, I demonstrate that translation scholars have begun to recognise not only the importance of taking into account *where* translation happens for understanding *how* and *why* it happens, but also to explore the role of translation as a “cultural activity that creates ‘new’ spaces, [...] new ‘imaginative geographies’” (Italiano 2012: 1). I then argue that both these streams of analysis could usefully be developed through an understanding of the work of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) and his writings on the social production of space. The key concepts and implications of his work are presented in detail, before I address a number of issues that are frequently raised as criticisms of Lefebvre’s ideas. Most notably, I contend that Lefebvre’s approach is not well suited to the analysis of what he terms the ‘micro-level’ spaces which constitute the “sphere of everyday life”, which exist at the immediate point of our common experience of the spatial (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 366). As a solution, I show how these problems can

be overcome by connecting Lefebvre's ideas with the mode of analysis encouraged by Michel Foucault's (1967/1986) concept of 'heterotopia', on the one hand, and by drawing on elements of socio-narrative theory, on the other. The chapter closes with a discussion of the core principles of the study of heterotopia and sets the stage for the theoretical development of what I will term 'spatial narratives' that forms the focus of Chapter 3.

Indeed, Chapter 3 is wholly dedicated to demonstrating the relevance and usefulness of sociological understandings of the concept of narrative to the present research project. As in the previous chapter, I trace the historical development of this approach and outline the key ideas on which it is based. The chapter then presents the typology of 'spatial narratives' that I have developed for analysis of my dataset by combining Lefebvre's writings with narrative theory, and shows the connections and differences between my typology and others found in the translation studies literature.

In Chapter 4, I explore *Wikipedia* as a research environment for spatial narrative analysis. Much of this section is devoted to discussing the main features of the *Wikipedia* space itself and the methodological challenges and possibilities that these present from a translation studies perspective: I describe the many different sources of data that are available to the researcher and raise awareness of the practical, theoretical and ethical issues that these features engender. I also show how I have resolved these problems in my analysis and attempted to harness the full explanatory potential of the research tools on offer within *Wikipedia*. In this chapter, I additionally present my dataset of city-related articles identified within the English- and French-language editions of the platform, and justify my selection.

Chapter 5 is the first of two data analysis chapters. Here, I highlight *Wikipedia's* 'public space' narrative as part of the gravitational core of this community, one of the essential stories that unites this diverse group of people into a social collective with a shared sense of identity and purpose. I contend that, although valuable, this narrative ultimately reproduces metanarratives of globalisation and the digital age; metanarratives, that is, which have been shown to obscure the significance of linguistic and cultural diversity in shaping our experience of global flows of knowledge and information. Through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the dataset, I demonstrate that language does in fact play a highly influential role in structuring the internal geography of *Wikipedia*, in shaping the production of knowledge in this context, and in determining how different users participate within the platform. This chapter also provides some insight into the role of English as *lingua franca* in the twenty-first century by comparing and contrasting multilingual practices observed both within the English- and French-language datasets.

Chapter 6 then examines in more detail the difficult processes of intersubjective negotiation through which spatial narratives are produced and transmitted across linguistic and cultural barriers in this context. Using the notion of heterotopia as a 'conceptual method', it focuses on the lines of division between multilingual contributors subscribing to opposing narratives in relation to each city, using detailed case-studies to illustrate each point. This analysis reveals the cacophony of individual voices involved in the construction of each article and the complex characteristics of *Wikipedia* as an environment for social action and interaction.

Finally, in my Conclusion, I bring all these strands of enquiry together and reflect on the implications of my findings and approach to the data. I discuss how the diverse practices of multilingual knowledge production and negotiation on which my study has focused challenge the traditional conceptualisations of translation on which much previous study within the discipline has focused, and suggest areas of potential study for future research.

2 SPACE AND SPATIALITY

“L’espace (social) est un produit (social)”

- Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l’espace* (1974)

“Geography is too important to be left to geographers”

- David Harvey, *On the History and Present Condition of Geography* (1984/2001)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this chapter is to explain my interest in (social) space, and to set out the theoretical basis which informs my approach to the dataset. It begins by positioning my research into *Wikipedia* within the wider ‘spatial turn’ that has occurred across the humanities and social sciences in the last twenty years (Section 2.2), before presenting an overview of the ways in which translation studies have so far engaged with this shift in perspectives (Section 2.3). It is proposed that, while a number of translation scholars have been successful in engaging with the ‘geography of translation’ or the ways in which socio-spatial factors affect translation practices, the ‘translation of geographies’ – translation as “a cultural activity that creates ‘new’ spaces, [...] new ‘imaginative geographies’” (Italiano 2012: 1) – has been left largely under-theorised. It will be argued that both these research areas (‘geographies of translation’ and ‘translation of geographies’) would usefully benefit from an approach which draws on a number of key contributions to spatial theory (Foucault 1967/1986; Lefebvre 1974/1991) and combines this with ‘socio-narrative’ analysis (Baker 2006).

To this end, Section 2.4 of this chapter will turn to consider first Henri Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) writings on space and their implications for academic research. The criticisms that have been

launched at Lefebvre's theory will then be reviewed and I will explain how many of these problems can be overcome by connecting Lefebvre's ideas with the mode of analysis encouraged by Michel Foucault's (1967/1986) concept of 'heterotopia', on the one hand, and by drawing on elements of socio-narrative theory, on the other. This conclusion thus sets the stage for the discussion of what I will term 'spatial narratives' that forms the focus of Chapter 3.

2.2 THE SPATIAL TURN

Over the past two decades, the humanities and social sciences have undergone what has come to be termed the 'spatial' turn. As manifested in the emergence of journals such as *Space and Culture* (SAC website), and of edited volumes such as *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (Warf & Arias 2009), scholars from across the disciplines have begun to open up new areas of research which focus specifically on the significance of space and spatiality in human societies and cultures. This is not the space of 'outer space', of planets, stars and distant galaxies, but the space of "place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography" (Soja 1996: 1).

While Section 2.3 will examine the extent to which translation studies has so far been affected by this turn, we must first ask, faced with such a shift in research perspectives and given my own project's interest in space, "[w]hy space, why now?" (Warf and Arias 2009: 2). By way of an answer, I discuss below what I see as the two principal reasons: the first concerns changes in theoretical perspectives towards space, whilst the second has to do with wider transformations in contemporary society and culture.

2.2.1 The rise and fall of 'absolute space'

In an essay entitled 'Space as a Keyword', the pre-eminent social geographer David Harvey (2006a) identified three ways in which space has historically been conceptualised in European thought: the first, that of 'space as absolute', considers space as a "thing in itself" (Harvey 2006a: 271), as a 'generality' existing everywhere and always (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 1). According to this conceptualisation, space is independent from the matter it contains and is often represented as an abstract and immovable 'grid' stretching boundlessly in every direction. This is space as it is represented in today's maps, as a limitless field in which objects have an absolute position. The second is 'space as relative' which, unlike the absolute view, maintains that space cannot be

abstracted from its substance, *i.e.* separated from its content: in this sense, space exists only “between objects” (Harvey 2006a: 271) and, as Einstein showed, is derivative of how we measure it (Warf 2009: 59). This is space as it is understood in the idea of a parking space or the space between two words on a page (Torretti 1998). Finally, Harvey presents ‘space as relational’ which is similar to relative space in that it too cannot exist independently of matter. According to this view however, space does not exist externally to objects but is contained internally within them: here, space is the complex web of relationships that link an event or thing to everything else going on around it (Harvey 2006a: 274). In this subsection I will argue that the current ‘spatial turn’ in Western theory has come as a result of a major shift in academic conceptualisations of space, that it has to do with the historic rise in Renaissance Europe of the theory of ‘absolute space’, and with its more recent demise in favour of the ‘relational’ view.

According to Roberto Torretti (1998), the idea of absolute space first came into being in Europe in the late medieval period. Before this time, and based largely on the work of the Greek philosophers, space was simply considered the “empty or potentially empty expanse between things” (Torretti 1998). This ‘relative’ conceptualisation was well-grounded in the everyday experience of space in the pre-Renaissance world,¹⁹ and it could also be linked back to the original meanings of the Latin word (*‘spatium’*, meaning ‘race-track’, or generally ‘distance’, ‘interval’, ‘terrain’) (Torretti 1998).

With the beginnings of the European Renaissance in the fourteenth century, however, thinkers increasingly came to consider in more detail the nature of the world in which they were living, and space soon became the subject of an intense philosophical and theological debate. As Torretti (1998) explains, the problem revolved around the apparent incompatibility of conventional views of space and the Christian doctrine of God’s omnipotence: on the one hand, if space only existed in the void between two objects, then no space or void could conceivably exist “beyond the firmament” (Torretti 1998), for the firmament contained all things. If the firmament bounded all space, however, then the firmament itself must be fixed and immovable to the extent that even God could not move it should He wish. This proposition jarred with the idea of God as all-powerful and, as a result, it was vehemently condemned by the Church.

¹⁹ A fascinating visualisation of the dominance of this conceptualisation of space can be found in the fifth-century Roman ‘road map’ known as the ‘Tabula Peutingeriana’ now kept in the Austrian National Library, Vienna (see EURATLAS: Tabula Peutingeriana website). Here, the space of Western Europe is not represented in the way we have become accustomed to in the modern world, but in relative terms. In the *Tabula*, places are not plotted on gridlines and are not represented as having an absolute position. Instead, the map shows how each of the cities connects to the next and how many days journey are required to travel between them, in a form that shares much more with a modern-day London tube map than those published by Ordnance Survey.

Debates raged on how to reconcile these two ideas. Some scholars, such as Thomas Bradwardine (c.1375), supported the hypothesis that while space was in most cases relative, outside the firmament must exist some special kind of 'imaginary' space that "God can make real (in part), should he decide to move the world" (Torretti 1998). Others, such as Nicole Oresme (c.1375), suggested the problem proved that space must exist boundlessly and, most importantly, independently of its substance, separately from the matter it contained. In other words, they proposed that space was absolute, a "thing in itself" (Harvey 2006a: 271), an abstract and infinite, three-dimensional 'vacuum'. While this latter 'solution' certainly gained considerable traction in some quarters, it was by no means universally accepted, and the discussions continued throughout the Renaissance period.

Indeed, it was not until the seventeenth century that the idea of absolute space truly started to become the dominant mode of spatial thinking in Western Europe. In this respect, it is widely agreed that it was the British physicist and mathematician Sir Isaac Newton who provided the decisive turning point (Warf 2009: 59). Newton was inspired by his predecessor René Descartes' development of Euclidean geometry, a development that allowed for any point in physical space to be described in abstract, purely mathematical terms (by means of its 'co-ordinates'). Realising the potential utility of such a model for empirical scientific observation, Newton became a prominent supporter of the absolute model, making this 'absolute' conceptualisation of space central to his framework for the description of the laws of motion (Harvey 2006a: 273).²⁰ With the increasing dominance of Newtonian physics in all areas of science came the increasing dominance, despite vociferous protestations from his arch-rival Gottfried Leibniz, of Newton's understanding of space and time. Absolute space and time thus became established in the modern era not merely as "the only proper materialist basis for scientific inquiry" (Harvey 2006a: 287), but also as the more general "space of common sense" (Smith 2003: 12) for European society as a whole.

The scholarly implications of this shift from pre-Renaissance relative space to post-Newtonian absolute space were profound. While the presentation of space as an inert, pre-existing and abstract Cartesian 'grid' was certainly "amenable" to standardized measurement, geographically accurate mapping and empirical analysis of the physical world (Harvey 2006a: 272), it also rendered this space as, in the words of Michel Foucault (1976/2007: 177), "the dead, the fixed, the undialectal, the immobile." In other words, while the notion of absolute space lent itself neatly to the science of

²⁰ In adopting this absolute model of space, Newton was also spurred on by the recent invention of the clock (Warf 2009: 59). For him, this new technology seemed to prove that time "flows equally without relation to anything external", that time exists independently of events and that it is thus an absolute entity (Newton, cited in Warf 2009: 59). If time had a reality of its own, Newton reasoned, then the same must be true of space.

mechanics and the practice of geography, the latter understood strictly in its literal and etymological sense²¹, it was seen as irrelevant, or at best an uninteresting ‘variable’, in the study of human society and culture (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 170). In the modernist period, therefore, spatial considerations became increasingly marginalized in analyses of social and cultural phenomena and a ‘historicist’ way of viewing the world predominated: as Barney Warf and Santa Arias (2009: 2) note, for many of the thinkers of the age, including Bergson, Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Toynbee, the past came to be seen – broadly speaking – as linear, as “the progressive, inexorable ascent from savagery to civilization, simplicity to complexity.” Little or no consideration was given to the three-dimensional “plurality of trajectories” that different human civilisations across the globe have simultaneously undergone (Massey 2005: 76). Theorists sought to formulate general laws of society and culture which would apply uniformly to all areas of the globe (Duncan & Savage 1989: 180), and all cultures and societies were presumed to be developing in the same direction, *i.e.* towards the same goal of (implicitly European) modernity (Warf & Arias 2009: 2).

The recent spatial turn has come in part as a post-modernist reaction against the modernist “great obsession” with time and history (Foucault 1967/1986: 22), and its equally great neglect of space and geography. It is an attempt to correct this “ontological distortion” (Soja 2009: 26), reassert the relation between time, space and society, and in the process re-theorise these concepts according to a more ‘relational’ view of the world (Elden 2004: 170). While the so-called Chicago School of sociologists and geographers certainly made some progress in this respect with their work on society and the urban environment in the 1920s (Soja 2009: 18), it is the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991; 1996) who is most widely regarded as the godfather of this turn. Indeed, as we will see later in this chapter (Section 2.4), it is because of his “radical rethinking” (Soja 2009: 18) of the nature of space and its theoretical connections with time and society, that disciplines as diverse as social movement studies (Leitner *et al.* 2008), literary theory (Winkler *et al.* 2012) and law (Blomley *et al.* 2001) have all come to regard space as a fundamental concern within their own areas of study.

2.2.2 The spatial turn in the context of wider societal change

However, it should also be recognised here that the changing fortunes of space and spatiality in the Western intellectual world are by no means purely academic. In fact, we should link the linear historicism in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to the dramatic socio-cultural and

²¹ Etymologically, geography is “the science of describing the Earth’s surface”, from the Greek γεωγραφία (OED Online website: ‘Geography’).

technological changes engendered by the industrial revolution and the rise of the European colonial empires. In this way, it is possible to understand how the political, technological and military dominance of Western powers in the Far East and Africa was conducive to a view which held travelling outside Europe to be primarily a journey back in time, back to an earlier, more 'primitive' stage in human development, rather than simply a journey through space (Massey 2005: 36). As Bernard McGrane (1989: 104) neatly puts it, for many nineteenth-century Europeans, "[g]oing beyond [was] going back"; Europe was equated with the modern, everywhere else with the past (see also Sheppard 2002: 308).

Likewise, the recent interest in space and spatiality must be considered in light of much wider transformations in the economy, politics and culture of the modern world. For instance, Michael Cronin (2013: 13) has noted that the technological advances of the last few decades have dramatically changed the way in which Western society views the space in which we live. On the one hand, in the same way that the domestication of horses and then, later, the invention of steam-powered locomotion revolutionised the relationship that earlier societies held to proximity and distance, modern improvements in (predominantly air) transport mean that journeys which would once have taken many months to complete (*e.g.* London to Sydney) can now be achieved relatively painlessly and inexpensively in a matter of hours (Cronin 2013: 13-14). People have thus become increasingly mobile, travelling thousands of miles both for tourism and in search of work. At the same time, ever since the invention of the telegram, physical distance has all but ceased to represent a barrier to human communication, a phenomenon which has been taken to a whole new level with recent developments in wireless network technology and satellite telephones. This has led to the massive expansion of social, cultural and economic networks and 'flows' onto a global scale with very few places now remaining that are not in some way 'globally linked' (Appadurai 1996).

As a consequence of these changes, the dominant narrative of neoliberal globalisation insists, usually with reference to Marshall McLuhan's popular notion of the 'global village', that physical space has been 'annihilated' by time in the contemporary era (Sheppard 2002: 309). As Eric Sheppard (2002: 309) comments, citing the economist Richard O'Brien (1992), the suggestion is that "geographical location no longer matters, or matters less than hitherto", because old territorial structures (*e.g.* the nation-state) are becoming less and less relevant to the circulation of information, goods and services, and development opportunities are being equalised at a global scale. Today's world, we are told, is a one of instantaneity and connectivity; a 'flat' world, Thomas Friedman (2005) has argued, in which it is no longer significant where you are.

A more cogent argument can be made for these technological advances having instead made our societies more aware than ever before of the significance of geography in determining our experience of the world in which we live. In fact, it is exactly *because* of these communication and transportation technologies – because of the increased virtual and physical contact that they enable with people and situations often thousands of miles away – that citizens of Western nations have been repeatedly, and ever more frequently, reminded of the simultaneous heterogeneity of human lives across the globe and of the spatially differentiated nature of reality (Massey 2005: 77). For example, through our increased ability to witness the plight of the victims of famine, drought, war and disease in other parts of the world, we in the UK are unavoidably confronted with the fact that so much of our wellbeing is ultimately determined by our fortune (or misfortune) to have been born to parents living in one area of the planet's surface rather than in another.

Doreen Massey (2005: 82) has argued that, in the West, this awareness is being further reinforced by the recent emergence of India, Brazil and China as new economic superpowers. While still generally classified as 'developing' nations, their increasing prominence on the world financial stage would seem to pose a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the historicist and 'aspatial' linearity of such categorisations (Massey 2005: 82): if the term 'developing' implies a nation is progressing along exactly the same trajectory of development as those countries that are considered 'developed' (albeit forever and always twenty or thirty years 'behind'), then it would seem to wholly ignore the existence of alternative trajectories, of the other modes of progress which these new powers appear to be leading. Observers such as Massey (1999; 2005) and Hall (1997) have thus been increasingly keen to deconstruct the use of such linear terms and lay bare the "political projections and identities they engender" (Hall 1997: 204).

In addition, we should recognise that spatial issues have also entered the wider social consciousness with the rise of what Marc Augé (1992/1995) has labelled as 'non-places'. These are the motorway service stations, the shopping centres, the generic, faceless high streets, the "anonymous spaces and exchangeable environments" (Relph 1976: 143) that have proliferated in the age of capitalist supermodernity. As Augé (1992/1995: 78) describes, this is

[a] world where people are born in the clinic and die in the hospital; where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious and inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday camps and refugee camps, shanty towns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot

machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral...

The spread of such non-places therefore denies the possibility of creating any form of lasting, meaningful connection with an increasing number of the locales of our everyday lives. Their proliferation endangers our 'sense of place' (Seamon & Sowers 2008: 4), progressively replacing it with an unsettling and somehow less 'authentic' attitude that Edward Relph (1976) termed 'placelessness'. This steady drift away from our attachment to specific, unique physical places as "significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world" (Relph 1976: 141) has gone hand in hand with the increasingly virtualised nature of many aspects of our social lives. Indeed, growing numbers of people now spend more time interacting through telecommunications technologies than they do face-to-face, whether it be making and sustaining friendships through online platforms such as *Facebook*, or holding video conference calls with colleagues and clients via software such as *Skype*. As I will argue later in this thesis with regard to *Wikipedia* (Chapter 6), these are essentially 'placeless places', spaces that engender an unsettling and discordant experience of the spatial.

Finally, we must note the prominence of socio-spatial politics in the most recent wave of protest movements. From the 'Arab Spring' uprisings in 2010 and 2011, to the Spanish '15-M' and the worldwide 'Occupy' movements, activists have pushed spatial issues to the forefront of political debate. Public urban space has become both a resource and an objective (Marom 2011): by physically occupying symbolic centres, whether it be Tahrir Square in Cairo or Wall Street in New York, with their tents and their banners, the movements have been able to give citizens "rhetorical and operational openings" (Sassen 2011: 579). What is more, by proclaiming their 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1996), the protesters have sought to resist and reverse the spatial politics of neo-liberal capitalism, marching in from the geographical periphery to reclaim the city "for the people, not for profit" (Brenner *et al.* 2012, Marom 2011).

2.3 TRANSLATION STUDIES AND THE SPATIAL TURN

If we move now to look at this spatial turn in the context of translation studies, we must start by acknowledging that discussions in this discipline have always involved, to some extent, an awareness of the relationship between translation and space. To begin with, the idea of movement "from an originally spatial source to a spatial goal" (Halverson 1999: 204) is implicit in the etymology of the

English²² word (its prefix ‘trans-’ means ‘across’ in Latin, whilst the stem ‘latus’ is the past participle of the Latin verb ‘ferre’, meaning ‘to carry’). Moreover, the metaphor of ‘translation as transfer’, a metaphor which is inherently and explicitly spatial in nature, has long been a staple of discussions within the discipline (Kershaw & Saldanha 2013: 136). Finally, in dealing with cultures, people and texts originating most often in places geographically distant to their own, translators are more aware than most of “the difference that space makes” (Sayer 1985), of the geographically variegated nature of human existence.

Even so, it can be argued that translation studies has followed the ‘spatial turn’ and that spatial concerns are currently experiencing an unprecedented “period of prosperity” within the discipline (Italiano 2012: 1). As Federico Italiano (2012) suggests, the last decade in particular has seen increasing numbers of scholars turning their attention to what might be termed the ‘geography of translation’ by foregrounding in their research the fact that “*where* things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen” (Warf & Arias 2009: 1; emphasis in original).

2.3.1 The geography of translation

This shift is best illustrated by the recent interest in ‘cities as translation zones’ (see Cronin & Simon 2014). Researchers working in this field have sought to question one of the default assumptions of the discipline with regards to the space of translation: they contend that for much of the history of translation studies, scholars have concentrated almost exclusively on translation as it is performed between the distinct cultures of monolingual and geographically distant nation states, a mind-set which certainly reflects the traditionally “tight connection of language and nation in Europe” (Tymoczko 2010: 120). In doing so, it is argued, the location-specific effects of translation as it is realised in other contexts and environments, and in the context of the multilingual city in particular, have been largely neglected.

Sherry Simon (2006; 2012a; 2012b; 2016) is undoubtedly the most prominent voice in this area of study. In her book, *Cities in Translation* (2012a), she explores four cities – namely, nineteenth-century Calcutta, early twentieth-century Trieste, post-war Montreal and modern-day Barcelona – and examines the translation practices of a selection of translators who have lived in them. These cities have been chosen because of what Simon terms their ‘dual’ nature: they are all places in which “two historically rooted language communities [...] feel a sense of entitlement to the same territory”

²² This is also true for many of the other European languages and cultures on which translation studies have traditionally focused, including French, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese (Tymoczko 2003: 189).

(2012a: 3), whether it be the Spanish- and Catalan-speaking populations of Barcelona, or the English- and French-speaking populations of Montreal society. Simon (2012a: 3) proposes that in these spaces of connecting and converging linguistic groups, not only are language relations marked by “the special intensity that comes from a shared history, a common territory and the situation of contending rights”, but also the very ‘meaning’ of translation is transformed. For the inhabitants of the urban environments that Simon studies, translation becomes not just the ‘benevolent’ exchange of cultural artefacts between two linguacultures²³, but “a process through which a common civility is negotiated” (Simon 2012a: 7). In other words, translation is shown to play a key role in the processes by which the complex power relations between the various language communities of the city are sustained and/or challenged.

Simon argues that this situation engenders two specific kinds of translation in places such as Barcelona, Trieste, Montreal and Calcutta. On the one hand, she contends that translations may be produced to have a ‘distancing’ effect: they can be used to maintain the socio-cultural separation between the various language communities residing in the city (2012a: 12). As Simon (2012a: 29) shows, this was for instance the kind of translation used by the British ‘Orientalist’ translators of Bengali mythology working in the colonial city of Calcutta. Their translations subjugate the indigenous culture by fixing it in textual form, making it “seem static and unchanging” (Niranjana 1992, cited in Simon 2012a: 29), and thus emphasise the differences (East/West, ancient/modern) between the Oriental and Western inhabitants of the divided city.

On the other hand, Simon suggests that the co-existence and interaction of two language communities in the same geographical context can also prompt translation strategies which have a “revivifying and expansive effect” (Grossman 2010, cited in Simon 2012a: 16). She terms this a ‘furthering’ kind of translation and, if we draw once again on her chapter on Calcutta, this is illustrated in the work of nineteenth-century translators such as James Long, Herasim Lebedeff and Bankimchandra Chatterjee. Rather than separate the so-called ‘white’ (European) and the ‘black’ (indigenous) halves of Calcutta, the innovative translations of these three writers, Simon (2012a: 23) argues, constituted spaces of ‘cross-fertilisation’, bringing the two communities closer together in a process resulting in mutual cultural enrichment. Lebedeff, for instance, was the first to translate European theatre into Bengali, radically adapting the text and form to create a unique hybrid of the source culture and traditional Bengali *jatra*, in order to improve its appeal for his predominantly

²³ In her enthusiasm to highlight the different ‘meaning’ of translation in the multilingual city, Simon (2012a) could be accused of putting forward a rather simplistic view of inter-national translation. Describing this latter form of translation as the ‘benevolent’ exchange of cultural artefacts would seem to disregard the often complex politics at play in such situations, as countless translation scholars have described (see *e.g.* Baker 2010).

Indian audience (Simon 2012a: 30). Indeed, as Simon (2012a: 23) notes, translations of this kind stimulated what became known as the Bengali Renaissance, a 'golden age' for the Arts and Sciences in Calcutta lasting from 1830 through to around 1900.

Sherry Simon's work has inspired a wave of further research into this issue of translation in the specific context of the city. Kaisa Koskinen (2014) for example has looked at the Finnish city of Tampere as a 'translation space' and documented the different kinds of translation that have been practised there between the Finnish-, Swedish- and Russian-speaking populations of the town over the last two hundred years. While her analysis is by no means as detailed as Simon's (most of the article is given over to a description of the history and linguistic landscape of the city), it is important for the fact that, unlike Simon's choices, her chosen city of Tampere is intentionally one which is not particularly well-known for its multilingualism. In exploring this translation space, she has therefore aimed to show the cultural significance of translation and particular translation practices to be prominent features of all cities, not just those that Simon would classify as 'dual', no matter how cosmopolitan or otherwise.

Reine Meylaerts and Maud Gonne (2014) on the other hand have sought to expand Sherry Simon's work in another direction. In their recent journal paper entitled 'Transferring the City', they have highlighted the need for studies in this area of inquiry to move the notion of translation beyond the traditional scope of translation studies. Rather than concentrate simply on interlingual translation practices in the urban environment, Meylaerts and Gonne (2014: 136) have argued convincingly in favour of approaches which might additionally incorporate other forms of 'intercultural transfer activity'. For this purpose, they have introduced the broader concept of the 'cultural mediator' to refer to individuals who "develop a broad range of partly overlapping transfer activities through different cultural fields (literature, painting, music), different languages and spatial frontiers" (2014: 136). They are interested therefore not simply in the work of translators, but also in the discursive mediation of bilingual writers, poets and critics, of anyone writing in the contact zones between the multitudinous linguistic, artistic and geographical spheres of the city. For example, one of Meylaerts and Gonne's (2014: 138-42) case studies focuses on Georges Eekhoud (1854-1927), an influential bilingual mediator who lived in the Belgian city of Antwerp. Eekhoud not only translated fiction and non-fiction from Dutch into French (and *vice versa*) in an attempt to improve the status of the Dutch language and Flemish culture within the locale, but also wrote fiction in a way that was seen as blurring the boundaries between creative writing and translation. Indeed, his style was such that one critic is cited as commenting "the author [...] thinks, one would say, in Flemish and translates himself in French" (Gauchez 2010, cited in Meylaerts & Gonne 2014: 141). By taking into account the full

scope of this individual's mediation activity, Meylaerts and Gonne (2014) show this approach to be highly productive in exploring the aims, forms and functions of interactions between the different language communities of the city. At the same time, they reassert Sherry Simon's insistence on the 'key role' that intercultural transfer activities play in "urban cohesion and citizenship" (Meylaerts & Gonne 2014: 134).²⁴

My research follows in this same research trajectory by exploring the importance of translation within the specific space of *Wikipedia* and the ways in which the socio-spatial factors that structure this online environment affect the (re)narration activity of its contributor community. It is also argued here however that in all three of these examples, and others besides, only one dimension of the relation between translation and social space has been presented. To reiterate what was stated above, the focus in these studies is on the 'geography of translation', on how the specific socio-cultural variables of the location in which translation occurs shape translation practices. In the next section, I want to follow Irene Sywenky (2014), Federico Italiano (2012) and Paola Smecca (2009) in arguing that there is another way of looking at the links between translation and space, and that this facet has been explored less explicitly by translation studies so far. I want to argue for a greater emphasis on the 'translation of geographies'.

2.3.2 The translation of geographies

To illustrate what is meant by this research theme, it is useful to consider briefly the case studies presented by Sywenky (2014), Italiano (2012) and Smecca (2009). Sywenky's paper (2014), on the one hand, explores how the urban reality of the Ukrainian city of Lviv is 'translated' into both fictional and non-fictional texts by mediators based both within and outside of the city. In other words, she adopts a radically broad understanding of translation (termed as 'cultural translation') to argue that the numerous writers, historians and journalists who have written about Lviv over the years "necessarily engage as mediators, cultural translators and producers of meanings that shape the way the city is perceived and packaged" (2014: 154). In addition, she looks at what happens to

²⁴ The historical nature of their object of study means that Meylaerts and Gonne (2014) are essentially restricted in the scope of their analysis to examining only the mediation activity of the more prominent members of Antwerp's multilingual cultural scene. For lack of available data, they cannot take into account for instance the city's ordinary 'nobodies' whose interventions may not have been preserved in published texts. As I will discuss in Chapter 4 of this thesis, one of the many advantages of working in an environment such as *Wikipedia* is its 'complete documentation' (Yasseri *et al.* 2014: 25), meaning that every action and every interaction occurring between members of the community is archived and accessible online. We are thus able to incorporate a much wider range of actors into the analysis.

these literary and informational texts when they are translated into another language for foreign audiences. Sywenky compares for instance the Ukrainian, English and Polish editions of a popular tourist guidebook of Lviv, concluding that each of the texts “effectively acknowledge[s] their respective audience’s expectations and construct[s] slightly different versions of the same city and their histories” (2014: 159).

Italiano’s (2012: 7) research on the other hand studies the translation into fourteenth century Venetian of the geography of an imaginary place: the paradise island described at the end of the tenth-century Irish ‘bestseller’, the *Navigatio Santi Brendani Abbalis*. While the original Irish text constructs an image of paradise that is very much based on a West-oriented, “geopoetics of the Atlantic” (Italiano 2012: 2), the Venetian manuscript features a major interpolation by the translator(s) which has the effect, Italiano (2012: 6) contends, of reconstructing the ‘imaginative geography’ of the island in a manner which reflects the dominant “territorial, geographical discourse of a certain epoch”. The paradise described in the translation is thus distinctly reminiscent of the lands described in Marco Polo’s *Divisament dou monde*: it is replete with symbols of the ‘exotic East’ which Venice had already been exploring and trading with for centuries (Italiano 2012: 13).

A third example is provided by Smecca’s (2009) comparative analysis of the English-language *Lonely Planet* travel guide to Sicily and its Italian-language translation. Beginning with the English-language edition, Smecca (2009: 114) shows how this text does little to challenge, and indeed enthusiastically exploits, many of the national stereotypes and cultural conceptions by which the island is traditionally framed in the Anglophone world. The text presents, in other words, “an image of Sicily characterised by the constant dangers of Mafia and thefts, a certain backwardness, a dislike for rules, the importance of the family and particularly of the mother figure” (2009: 118). The Italian-language translation, in contrast, actively avoids depicting Sicily in this way, deliberately omitting most of the original’s references to the Mafia, for instance, and providing additional details to explain the region’s problems and present situation. As Smecca (2009: 115) suggests, this is most likely for fear of offending its predominantly native-Italian target audience. However, Smecca (2009: 118) resists falling into the trap of concluding that the Italian version captures Sicilian life more ‘accurately’: instead, she stresses that this representation of reality too is ‘partial’, that the translation also tells a new narrative of Sicily, albeit from quite a different perspective and with different aims to those of the English-language text.

Fascinating as such accounts are, I would argue that they still only scratch the surface in their exploration of translation as a “cultural activity that creates ‘new’ spaces, [...] new ‘imaginative geographies’” (Italiano 2012: 1). Most notably, none of these translation scholars seem to engage

with the extensive literature published over the past few decades in the field of social geography on space as a social product. In order to further this line of research, as well as that of the 'geography of translation', it is proposed that translation studies might benefit from returning to the writings of the 'godfather' of the spatial turn, Henri Lefebvre, and applying a theoretical framework inspired by his theory of the "social production of space" (Lefebvre 1974/1991).

2.4 HENRI LEFEBVRE

As Stuart Elden (2004: 1) comments in the introduction to his book *Understanding Lefebvre*, Henri Lefebvre truly had "an extraordinary life". Born in 1901 in the French Pyrenees, he survived two devastating world wars, joined the Resistance against Nazi occupation, became a central figure both within the French Communist Party (*PCF*) and the student uprisings of May 1968, and lived to see the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. While he spent much of his time oscillating between his home region and Paris, he also travelled widely, not only in Europe, but throughout North and South America, East Asia and parts of Africa too (Merrifield 2006: 73). His career was equally atypical: although in his later years he did spend time in a more traditional academic setting, his early working life was spent as a leading sociologist for France's *Centre National de Recherches Sociologiques* (National Centre for Sociological Research), a secondary school teacher, a factory worker and even a Parisian taxi driver (Elden 2004:2).

With regards to his writings, he was impressively prolific, publishing a total of sixty-nine books over his lifetime on a wide range of subjects, including Marxism, literature, music and the nature of modernity (Kipfer *et al.* 2008: 2). However, he is best known for being "more influential than any other scholar in opening up and exploring the limitless dimensions of our social spatiality" (Soja 1996: 6). Indeed, while earlier philosophers certainly touched on the issue (*e.g.* Cassirer 1944, Langer 1953), it is to Lefebvre that we must attribute the development of "one of the most powerful ways in which space can be conceptualised" (Massey 1995: 284), that is, space as "a (social) product" (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 26).

2.4.1 "L'espace (social) est un produit (social)"

Before we come to elaborate on the theory of space lying behind this statement, it is useful to discuss the immediate context from which Lefebvre's ideas developed. As Lukasz Stanek (2008: 66)

describes, for Lefebvre, the need for a re-conceptualisation of space emerged most concretely from a sociological study that he carried out in 1959 on the subject of Lacq-Mourenx, a new town recently built in the foothills of the French Pyrenees. In the course of a series of interviews with the inhabitants of the town, he was particularly struck by a comment made by one of the participants: “ce n’est pas une ville, c’est une cité” (“it’s not a town, it’s a *cité*” – cited in Stanek 2008: 67). The implication was, Stanek (2008: 67) notes, that “Mourenx was not what a city [ville] was supposed to be.” It was a place of constraints and closure – “the connotations that reverberate in the old French word *cité*” (Stanek 2011: 116) – rather than a place of life, culture and possibility. This encounter marked the beginning of what became a life-long obsession with what he termed ‘social space’, the space, that is, “of society and social life” (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 35).²⁵ As Soja (1996: 7) explains, it was from this moment on that social space became Lefebvre’s “primary interpretative thread”, his chief concern and point of entry in all his subsequent writings.

In his analysis of Lacq-Mourenx, Lefebvre recognised that the dissatisfaction of the town’s residents was linked with the ‘meaninglessness’ of their new home environment (Stanek 2008: 67). While the philosophy of functionalist urbanism according to which the city had been built had been more or less successful in distributing amenities in a manner conducive to efficient and cost-effective living, it had deprived inhabitants of the possibility of creating a meaningful connection with the place. In light of this conclusion, he reasoned that the dominant mode of thinking about space (space as absolute) was wholly inadequate when attempting to come to terms with the nature of the space in which we live. He argued that this space is not “a void packed like a parcel with various contents”, it is not reducible “to a ‘form’ imposed upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality” (1974/1991: 27). Instead, Lefebvre posited, this space is more usefully conceptualised in terms of its “social character” (1974/1991: 26-7), as something that “‘incorporates’ social actions” (1974/1991: 33), that is “fundamentally bound up with social reality” (Schmid 2008: 28). Space is thus viewed as the “product of human labour and social meaning” (Farrar 1997: 108); it is ‘socially produced’ (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 26).²⁶

²⁵ In Lefebvre’s work, the social is examined at all levels of human interaction. ‘Social space’ thus refers simultaneously to the private sphere of the home, and to the public space of the city, the nation-state and beyond (Schmid 2008: 27).

²⁶ As Stanek (2008) discusses, Lefebvre’s understanding of the notions of product and production is based on the interpretation developed in the writings of Hegel and Marx: rather than being restricted to the outcomes and processes of manufacturing, as we might conventionally use these words, Hegel and Marx gave the terms a broader scope. In this sense, production has its own ‘imminent rationality’: for Lefebvre (1974/1991: 74), production is not a process undertaken “with a perfectly clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication.” Instead, it is understood as an open process by which “a sequence of actions with a certain ‘objective’ (i.e. the object to be produced) in view” are organised (Stanek 2008: 66).

This theory of space is most developed in what has arguably become his most famous work, *The Production of Space* (1974/1991). Here, he draws on his experience in Lacq-Mourenx and his interpretation of Marx and Hegel to identify three dialectically interconnected ‘realms’ or ‘spheres’ within and through which he proposes social space is produced: the first, ‘perceived space’ (*l’espace perçu*) is the material domain in which ‘spatial practice’ occurs (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 33).²⁷ It is to a large extent the realm of the “visible” and the “readable” (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 389) and is generally associated with the physical world, and our sensory perceptions of it (Schmid 2008: 39). As such, Edward Soja (1996: 66) notes, ‘perceived’ space is the traditional, empirical focus of study for all the spatial disciplines, including geography, urban studies and architecture.

The second ‘moment’ of social space lies in ‘conceived space’ (*l’espace conçu*), the sphere in and through which ‘representations of space’ are produced (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 33). This ‘mental’ space is composed of “systematic and coherent” conceptions of reality, abstracted from the chaos of the physical world (Stanek 2011: 131). These take their form most often in systems of verbal signs, written and spoken language, texts, knowledge and ideas about the space in which we live. (It is also, as I will argue in Chapter 3, the primary domain of narrative, of the stories we tell and are told about the world.) While Lefebvre acknowledges that these conceptions of space are generally derived “from accumulated scientific knowledge”, he underlines the importance of recognising that they are nevertheless “disseminated with an admixture of ideology” (1974/1991: 40). They are hence ‘tools’ of power and control, holding “a substantial role and a specific influence” in determining our experience of the spaces of our daily lives (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 42).²⁸

Finally, Lefebvre introduces ‘lived space’ (*l’espace vécu*). As the name suggests, this is social space as it is “directly lived” and experienced, the realm through and in which societies produce their ‘spaces of representation’ (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 39).²⁹ By including this third element in his

²⁷ The choice of terminology (‘perceived’ space) here may seem strange given that ‘perception’ is understood in the field of phenomenology (and more generally) as an activity which, because it involves the human senses, is by no means objective and which necessarily “depends upon the subject” (Schmid 2008: 37). As Christian Schmid (2008: 37) explains however, this was a deliberate decision by Lefebvre: by adopting this term and combining it with the activity of spatial practice, he sought to introduce the idea that perception involves both the human subject and the material world. “[P]erception not only takes place in the mind,” he writes “but is based on a concrete, produced reality” (1976/1991: 38). He thus re-emphasises the interconnected nature of the physical, mental and lived realms of space.

²⁸ Soja (1996: 36) notes that this insistence on the dominance of the ‘conceived’ world of ideas and ideology over the ‘lived’ world of material social relations can be traced back as a theme present in even Lefebvre’s earliest publications. A work that he co-authored in 1936, *La Conscience Mystifiée*, for instance, critiques what he saw as his fellow Marxist philosophers’ ‘under-appreciation’ of this fact (Guterman & Lefebvre 1936).

²⁹ Lefebvre’s English-language translator, Donald Nicholson-Smith, renders Lefebvre’s ‘espaces de représentation’ as ‘representational spaces’ (see Lefebvre 1974/1991: 33). Following Soja (1996) and Harvey (2006a), however, I have chosen to translate this term by ‘spaces of representation’ which I find to be both more elegant in form and transparent in meaning.

conceptual framework, Lefebvre hoped to emphasise the 'paradoxical' nature of social space. Inspired by Karl Marx's analysis of labour as a 'concrete abstraction', as an abstraction which becomes "true in practice" (Marx, cited in Stanek 2008: 67), Lefebvre sought to define social space too in terms of an abstraction, that is, a representation of reality, that in turn "concretizes and realizes itself socially, in the social practice" (Lefebvre 1977: 59). In this third moment, Lefebvre's theory thus 'unites' the physical and mental dimensions of social space, and highlights the complexity of the interplay between them. Social space is viewed as simultaneously real, imagined and lived; at once perceived, conceived and experienced.

2.4.2 Implications and applications

This theorisation has had profound implications for the humanities and social sciences. For a start, Lefebvre's model dramatically opens up the scope of the 'science of space' to include the previously neglected subjective and lived dimensions of social space (Warf & Arias 2009: 3). The space of everyday life is understood to include "not only a concrete materiality but a thought concept and a feeling" (Schmid 2008: 41); it exists, as James Donald (1997: 182) puts it, "as representation and projection and experience as much as it exists as bricks and mortar or concrete and steel." In the wake of the publication of *The Production of Space*, the spatial disciplines, and geography in particular, began to reimagine themselves as being no longer "simply about fixed, abstractable spatial rules" (Gilbert 2009: 102), but as fields which might more decisively take into account the conceived, lived and thus social dimensions of their objects of study. For example, geographers such as Nigel Thrift (2004: 57) have recently investigated cities as "roiling maelstroms of affect", as spaces with complex geographies of "anger, fear, happiness and joy", and whose features are frequently designed to elicit specific emotional responses and to impose particular political agendas. Most notably, he describes how

[c]ities are increasingly expected to have 'buzz', to be 'creative', and to generally bring forth powers of invention and intuition, all of which can be forged into economic weapons, so the active engineering of the affective register of cities has been highlighted as the harnessing of the talent of transformation (Thrift 2004: 58).

While these aspects of space may indeed be more difficult to measure and quantify, as Harvey (2006a: 274) admits, Lefebvre's approach nevertheless transformed geography, urban studies and

architecture into some of the most “dynamic” and “innovative” of the social sciences (Warf & Arias 2009: 1). Furthermore, as Lefebvre’s ideas began to spread across the disciplines, geography became the centre of a growing ‘transdisciplinary’ approach to the study of space: researchers such as Soja (1996) and Harvey (2006a) recognised that by incorporating subjective, social factors into the discussion of space, Lefebvre had made spatial concerns inherently and intensely relevant to all studies of human society and culture across the academic spectrum. No longer could social processes be considered to simply occur ‘in space’; no longer could space be thought of as “nothing more than the passive locus of social relations” (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 11). Instead, as David Harvey (2006b: 153) explains, social activities are revealed to “define their own spatial frame”. Through his work, Lefebvre thus helped to trigger the start of the spatial turn, an explosion of interest in social space from a broad range of perspectives, as described at the beginning of Section 2.2.

Second, we should highlight the fact that via this ‘relational’ conceptualisation, space moves from being considered “the dead, the fixed” (Foucault 1976/2007: 177), to something much more “fluid” and “unstable”, more dynamic in nature (Warf 2009: 74). In other words, Lefebvre’s work injects a temporal dimension into the study of space: we are forced to recognise, as he himself argues (1974/1991: 41), that because space is unceasingly constructed in and through spatial practice, representation and lived experience, it is necessarily always undergoing a process of change. “It is not the work of a moment,” Lefebvre (1974/1991: 34) writes, “for a society to generate (produce) an appropriated social space in which it can achieve a form by means of self-presentation and self-representation [...] This act of creation is, in fact, a process”. While Lefebvre is keen to suggest this calls for a shift in the focus of study from static ‘things in space’ to the actual processes by which spaces are produced over time (1974/1991: 26), he is also careful to note that we must be wary of neglecting the products of these processes altogether. The fact is, he argues, that “space is always, now and formerly, a present space, [...] an immediate whole” and, as a result, “production process and product present themselves as two inseparable aspects, not as two separable ideas” (1974/1991: 26). Doreen Massey’s (2005) more recent work in this area resolves this issue neatly: drawing on Lefebvre’s writings, she conceptualises space as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (2005: 9). Space is thus understood in terms of a plurality of interconnected ‘trajectories’, each of which, while encountered in the present moment, necessarily has a past history and future direction.³⁰

³⁰ While this notion of ‘stories-so-far’ seems at first glance directly relevant to my focus on spatial narratives (see Section 3.5), Massey (2005: 12) is clear in affirming that she does not use the word ‘story’ in terms of narrative, in terms of “something told”. Rather, she employs the label simply to stress the temporal dimension of space, “the history, change, movement, of things themselves” (2005: 12).

The third implication of Lefebvre's theory is that space becomes, in the words of Doreen Massey (2013), "utterly political". By theorising space as a product of social practices, Lefebvre was one of the first to think seriously about space in terms of power hierarchies: specifically, he showed that, as Massey (1995: 285) puts it, "the social relations which are the medium and the form of power are necessarily spatialised." In other words, Lefebvre placed the spotlight on how social space is constructed in hierarchies of centre and periphery, how these structures are formed and what impact they might have on our daily lives. Lefebvre thus encourages scholars to investigate the ways in which space has been employed as a tool of social "control and hence of domination" (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 26). This may be through specific spatial practices, such as for instance the development and enforcement of private property and trespassing laws (Forman 2002: 2), or through the perhaps more subtle, albeit no less powerful, diffusion of particular representations of space which might support a political project. In this respect, Tom Mels' (2002) research into the discursive framing of Sweden's National Parks by the Swedish *Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) serves as an interesting illustration. In an article entitled 'Nature, Home and Scenery', he analyses the "multimedia dialectic of map, text and image" (2002: 137) contained within a recent publication by the EPA in order to demonstrate how the space of the parks has been discursively produced by this government agency in such a way as to create an image of a harmonious and natural bond between people, land and nation (as 'organic space') (Mels 2002: 135). In doing so, Mels (2002: 138) argues, the parks are used as a symbol of 'Swedishness', as a key element in the myth of the nation, its unity and continuity. The 'dense forests' of the parks for example are, according to the EPA, "deeply rooted in the Swedish soul, and are a dominant theme in our country's history and culture" (EPA, cited in Mels 2002: 141). What is more, by simultaneously, if slightly paradoxically, constructing the parks as 'empty' or 'pure' nature, external to society (an image which is powerfully reinforced by the wide-angle landscape photography which illustrates the *Agency* text), the EPA articulate an "understanding of parks as a pre-social realm, where permanent human dwelling is supposed to remain absent" (Mels 2002: 136). As Mels (2002: 143) suggests, the government agency thus delegitimises the indigenous Saami people's continued residence within the northern most regions of the country: rather than acknowledging this marginalised social group's long historical connection with these areas, they are narrated as "an alien element" which has an unnatural and detrimental effect on the purity of the National Parks.

Fourthly, space becomes "heterogeneous and infused with many different lived dimensions" (Seamon & Sowers 2008: 44). Where previously space had been considered homogenous, a vast void existing emptily "prior to whatever ends up filling it" (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 15), for Lefebvre, the idea that space is a social product means that "every society [...] produces a space, its own space"

(1974/1991: 30). That is to say, every social group, no matter how big or small, powerful or peripheral, has their own experience of the space in which human civilizations exist. Every social group produces their own conceptions of that space with their own particular rhythms and centre-periphery structures (conceptions which in turn influence their lived experience of this space). As a result, we can no longer speak of space as a homogenous whole, but must consider it “a diversity or multiplicity of spaces” (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 27), all co-existing and competing on each of the interlocking levels and scales of society (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 294).³¹ This is particularly well demonstrated in the research of Murray Forman (2002) who has adopted Lefebvre’s theory to examine the various ways in which a selection of musicians “adhering to the styles, images and values” (2002: 3) of North American hip-hop subculture construct the urban spaces of ‘the ghetto’, ‘the inner city’ and ‘the ‘hood’ in their rap texts. Forman (2002: 3) suggests that these minority groups, composed for the most part of working-class black and Latino youths, have demonstrated remarkable capacities “to construct different spaces and, simultaneously, to construct spaces differently”, producing textual representations of the spaces of their social lives which contrast often radically with the dominant discourse. While ‘the ghetto’ and ‘the ‘hood’ are generally reviled in mainstream American society as places of violence, desolation and despair, the rap artists that Forman studies project an alternative picture of these lived spaces which, whilst acknowledging their ‘gritty’ urban reality, incorporates a more positive sense of optimism, charity and creativity into the representation (2002: 8).

A fifth and perhaps more unanticipated implication of Lefebvre’s re-working of spatial theory has been that it provides us with a means of stepping beyond the taken-for-granted spatiality of cyberspace.³² Writing in the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when the first internet technologies were only just becoming available outside of their original military settings (Saco 2002: 90-92), Lefebvre illustrated his arguments using examples based predominantly in modern urban spaces, such as the housing estates of Lacq-Mourenx that initially stimulated his interest (see Section 2.4.1). Likewise, much of the scholarship that has subsequently drawn on his writings has largely focused on the production of other ‘physical world’ spaces, as can be seen in the two examples cited above: the

³¹ This idea is key to the typology of spatial narratives developed in the next chapter (Section 3.5).

³² By ‘taken-for-granted’ spatiality, I mean the ways in which the language used to describe the internet (in English, at least) is essentially spatial in nature: while in terms of its structure and linguistic foundations it might be considered closer in character to a newspaper or magazine (King 2011: 2), we talk nevertheless of *sites*, *platforms* and *environments* with specific *addresses* which locate them in the network. The connections between these different places can be *navigated* or even (in the early days of the web) ‘*surfed*’, unless a *pay-wall* or log-in *gateway* blocks us from *entering*. As Julie Cohen (2007: 213) and others (e.g. Saco 2002) suggest, drawing on philosophical arguments that go back at least as far as Kant, this is no casual coincidence. Rather, it is directly linked to the centrality of space within human sensibility: “we are embodied, situated beings, who comprehend even disembodied communications through the filter of embodied, situated experience” (Cohen 2007: 213).

North American inner-city 'ghetto' for Forman (2002) and the National Parks of northern Sweden for Mels (2002). In more recent times however, it has been suggested that this focus on the material world is far too narrow in its understanding of the spaces in which we live (Saco 2002: xvii) and that the French philosopher's approach can also usefully be applied to the virtual worlds we inhabit every time we go online, visit a website, enter into these "technologically mediated social spaces" (Gordon 1998). Indeed, as Robert Prey (2015) argues, although important differences between offline and online spaces do of course exist, Lefebvre provides us with the means to recognise that cyberspace is in fact a real space, not just a metaphor, because it is practiced, represented and experienced as one (see also Saco 2002: 1). His work promotes a 'relational' view of space which, unlike 'absolute' theorisations (Section 2.2.1), encourages analysis of the virtual as something that is produced in and through its vast web of relationships between objects, events and people. This is important, as I will demonstrate later in Chapter 5, because it allows us to problematize dominant understandings of the internet and develop a much deeper knowledge of how its structures, forms and functions as a new space for social interaction are produced and reproduced.

Lefebvre's work draws our attention not only to the nature of the space of the web in terms of its technical affordances and limitations, but also to the importance of the ways in which online spaces are constructed in the minds of their users, and actually experienced, used and lived in their daily interactions (Saco 2002: 76). His approach helps us to emphasise, in other words, the inextricably social foundations of the virtual and points us towards an understanding of the internet that takes into account the "dynamic interplay of material, conceptual, and experiential processes" through which cyberspace is socially produced (Nunes 2006: xxi). Robert Prey (2015) for instance has used Lefebvre's ideas to arrive at a more critical understanding of the development of digital music streaming services such as *Spotify* and *Deezer*. Specifically, by viewing these platforms from the triad of the perceived, the conceived and the lived, Prey has been able to explore the variety of ways through which these new capitalist spaces of music consumption are socially constructed. He shows for example how these companies have adapted to and exploited transformations in the medium of music delivery, making changes to the visual and aural interface through which users perceive and engage with the platforms, and 'datafying' all aspects of users' lived experiences in the name of the myth of 'personalisation', in order to generate revenue.³³ For Diana Saco (2002: 76) on the other hand, a Lefebvrian approach has helped her to place greater emphasis on 'wetware' (as opposed to hardware and software), that is, on the human element of cyberspace and the "lived experiences of users in the everyday spaces of representation" (2002: 77). Rather than seeing internet technologies as

³³ As Prey (2015: 9) explains, 'datafication' is the process of "turning social action into quantified data", usually for commercial purposes.

inherently utopian or dystopian in their effects on modern democracy and society³⁴, she is able to convincingly argue the case for a conceptualisation of new digital tools as “a set of latent potentials”, as an environment which shapes human (inter)actions according to a collection of site-specific laws, but which is ultimately “filled up with meaning” through human experience and practice (2002: 106).

2.4.3 Criticisms

There are of course problems with Lefebvre’s work and his theory has not escaped strong criticism from a variety of perspectives. Most significantly for our purposes here is the fact that, although undoubtedly one of the most important books ever written on the subject of social spatiality, *The Production of Space* (1974/1991) is quite simply a “bewildering” text (Soja 1996: 8). Even Edward Soja, one of Lefebvre’s most admiring disciples, cannot help but comment at length on Lefebvre’s chaotic style: he describes the book as being “filled with unruly textual practices, bold assertions that seem to get tossed aside as the arguments develop, [...] perplexing inconsistencies and apparent self-contradictions” (Soja 1996: 8). Lefebvre’s conceptual triad of ‘spatial practices’, ‘representations of space’ and ‘spaces of representation’ is a case in point: although they form the core of his argument, these notions are only ever loosely defined through a series of disconnected statements that sporadically punctuate the text. It is only by reconnecting these ideas and making assumptions based on the text as a whole that one can begin to piece together the main thrusts of Lefebvre’s argument.

Some have tried to explain this chaos by attributing it to Lefebvre’s unruly personality as a self-proclaimed ‘nomadic’ thinker. As he himself admitted, he “loved too much the bubbling and the fermenting of an idea that burst out new and fresh” (Lefebvre; cited in Merrifield 2006: xxii). As a result, Lefebvre often simply ‘blasted out’ his books, “jerkily, hastily, nervously”, (Lefebvre; cited in Merrifield 2006: xxii), rarely completing one project before he flitted on to something else. Indeed, as Merrifield (2006: xxii) informs us, in many cases, Lefebvre did not even compose his works in the traditional sense: instead, his ideas were hurriedly dictated, “the spoken word transcribed on the page by faithful secretaries, current girlfriends, or a latest wife.” Soja (1996: 9) on the other hand has offered an alternative explanation: for him, *The Production of Space* is the result of a deliberate

³⁴ Saco (2002: xv-xvi) notes in her introduction how internet commentary has thus far tended to fall into two, diametrically opposing camps. Either it is presented as a utopian “electronic agora” that greatly improves the possibilities for democratic discussion and deliberation, or it is portrayed as a dystopia that serves only to “further isolate and disaffect individuals from their communities, create an ever wider gap between the knowledge-rich and the knowledge-poor, and distract people from social problems and collective-action remedies by giving them a false sense of political effectiveness.”

attempt by the philosopher to 'spatialise' the academic text. With this work, Soja (1996: 9) argues, Lefebvre has sought to break with the conventional linear flow of introduction-development-conclusion in order to "explore new rhythms of argument and (con)textual representation." The 'keynote themes' of the introduction are thus intentionally disrupted in a polyphonic fugue of "contrapuntal variations that [take] radically different forms and harmonies" (Soja 1996: 9).

In my view, however, the most convincing theory relates to the 'ideal method' proposed by Lefebvre's contemporary and *concitoyen*, Jean-Paul Sartre. For Sartre (1968: xxxiii), "[i]t is the nature of an intellectual quest to be undefined. To name it and to define it is to wrap it up and tie the knot." While the style and structure of *The Production of Space* may seem eccentric and unruly, I would argue that this was a purposeful technique, a way of resisting the "canonisation of his ideas into rigidly authoritative protocols" (Soja 1996: 9) and thus leaving them suggestive and open to further adaptation and exploration. In other words, Lefebvre wrote his book in this way in order for his ideas to be taken as a set of under-defined "approximations" (Schmid 2008: 29) rather than as dogma, as an exploration rather than an explanation; as an approachable and flexible stimulus for future investigations into our social spatiality.

This seems particularly clear when, in the penultimate chapter of *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1974/1991: 366) sketches out a "variety of conceptual grids" which may be created to help 'decipher' the complex spaces that exist at the micro level of human experience.³⁵ He puts forward for instance one grid that could serve to distinguish between "types of oppositions and contrasts in space": he suggests this might include "*isotopias*, or analogous spaces; *heterotopias*, or mutually repellent spaces; and *utopias*, or spaces occupied by the symbolic and the imaginary" (1976/1991: 366, emphasis in original). As I will argue later in the next section, as well as in Chapter 6, such a grid would seem to be particularly useful in the context of this thesis, given the intriguing heterogeneity of the *Wikipedia* space and the ways in which it juxtaposes, mirrors and subverts many of the other, otherwise incompatible social spaces of our daily lives. Having made this preliminary observation however, he deliberately and explicitly holds back from developing his ideas further. "[A] completely satisfactory grid", Lefebvre argues (1976/1991: 367), would serve only to "eliminate contradictions, to demonstrate a coherence and to reduce the dialectical to the logical". Consequently, he states that he will go no further along this path, because to do so would mean aspiring to produce a form of 'absolute' or 'pure' knowledge which ultimately "reduce[s] reality in the interests of power." As he writes elsewhere, his aim is "to break up systems, not to substitute another system" (Lefebvre 1996: 63).

³⁵ For Lefebvre (1974/1991: 366), the 'micro' level corresponds to "the local and the localisable [...] the sphere of everyday life."

Whether we agree with such dogged idealism or not, the fact nevertheless remains that Lefebvre's writings on space are by no means the most stable or complete of methodological frameworks on which to base concrete research into the oppositions and contrasts that structure a complex, discordantly heterogeneous, micro-level space such as *Wikipedia*. Indeed, as Christian Schmid (2008: 29) comments, there is "near-total confusion of opinion" about how to apply Lefebvre's ideas to most forms of real-world data. It is for this reason that I propose to develop an analytical approach which combines Lefebvre's key ideas with tools and concepts adapted from narrative theory, as I will explain further in Chapter 3. In order to better conceptualise the specificities of the *Wikipedia* space however, I also propose to follow in the footsteps of a number of scholars who have productively supplemented Lefebvre's work with Michel Foucault's more developed understanding of heterotopia (see *e.g.* Saco 2002, Soja 1996). Such a move is justified, I would argue, despite Lefebvre's concerns, because – as we will see in the next section – the mode of analysis encouraged by the notion of heterotopia does not serve to eliminate contradictions or reduce reality, but rather to embrace and highlight the complexity of the spaces in which we live as sites of difficult juxtaposition and productive simultaneity.

2.5 HETEROTOPIA

The concept of 'heterotopia' first made an appearance in the writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault in the preface to his third book *Les Mots et les choses* ('The Order of Things' – 1966/1970). However, his ideas on the subject are most extensively developed in a lecture entitled 'Des Espaces autres' ('Of Other Spaces') which was delivered to a class of architecture students in 1967, and it is on this short text that almost all subsequent scholarship has drawn (Rymarczuk & Derksen 2014). Here, he defines a heterotopia in much the same terms as Lefebvre does in the passage quoted above³⁶, albeit with significantly more detail: as a space ('*emplacement*' in French) in which "all the other real sites ['*emplacements*'] that can be found in the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (Foucault 1967/1986: 24). Heterotopias exist both inside and outside of other social spaces, mirroring and condensing their realities, whilst simultaneously refashioning and

³⁶ It should be noted that while Lefebvre and Foucault's understandings of the term 'heterotopia' appear to coincide here, there is no clear evidence to suggest that Lefebvre wished to draw explicit parallels between his thinking and that of Foucault, or even that he was aware of Foucault's earlier use of the concept in his lecture (the text of this talk would not be published in print until 1984). Moreover, in other earlier sections of *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre uses the term 'heterotopia' quite differently, to define "places of sorcery and madness," for instance, "places inhabited by demonic forces – places which were fascinating but tabooed" (1974/1991: 263). The divergence of these definitions would seem to block any attempt to show genealogical continuity in the thinking of these two philosophers.

subverting them. This is what Foucault (1967/1986: 27) calls their 'function' in a society: to create transformative new spaces and/or to undermine existing ones.

Foucault illustrates his argument with numerous examples, perhaps the most famous of which is that of the cemetery. As Foucault (1967/1986: 25) explains, the cemetery is a space in Western culture quite separate from many of the everyday spaces of our social lives, an 'other' space with its own characteristics, its own rules, its own expected ways of behaving. Despite this apparent distinctness, the cemetery is nevertheless intimately connected "with all the sites of the citystate or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery." Otherwise incompatible spaces are thus juxtaposed in the heterotopia: spaces of life and of death, of public and of private, of the individual, of the family and of society – to name but a few – are all brought together into new relations, and in their combination, new attributes, meanings and practices are generated.

Another interesting example is that of the garden which, throughout its long history, has always been considered a contradictory but somehow 'sacred' site (Foucault 1986: 25). The first gardens of ancient Persia, Foucault (1967/1986: 25) informs us, were deeply symbolic places "that [were] supposed to bring together inside [their] rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world." Much as in modern zoos, they were spaces in which all the vegetation of the world was meant to be collected and collated, in order to create "a sort of microcosm" (Foucault 1967/1986: 26). Foucault suggests that, in Europe since the nineteenth century, museums and libraries have fulfilled a similar function too, albeit with an additional chronological, as well as a geographical, emphasis: their popularity is driven by the "idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages [...] a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place" (Foucault 1967/1986: 26).

Other examples provided in this short lecture include fairgrounds and festivals, brothels and libraries, and scholars from across the Humanities have subsequently added many further spaces to this list (see Johnson 2013 for a useful overview). Most notably for our purposes here, McKenzie Wark (1993: 154) has suggested that cyberspace can be considered a heterotopia: this is a "logical, inaccessible space", he argues, of "relational difference, [...] a network, linking terminals in difference [sic] places and times into a unified environment." It shares much in common, Wark argues, with Foucault's (1967/1986: 27) example of the ship, a "place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and [...] from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious

treasures.” Cyberspace similarly exists both inside and outside of our everyday spaces; it is a real but somehow ‘other’ space, the development of which acts to create new transformative connections between otherwise incompatible and unaffiliated sites. In the words of Diana Saco (2002: 100), it is an environment of “productive confusion”, a space that is

“at once impersonal and personal, mass mediated and popular, governmental and grassroots, corporate and individual, serious and playful. It has given rise to temporal ambiguities (heterochronia) between past and present in the mix of archived data and real-time exchanges. And perhaps most significantly, it has thrown public and private together in the same space, blurring that traditional liberal distinction.”

Building on this idea, Jutta Haider and Olof Sundin (2010) have more recently posited that the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* constitutes “a mirror of the Web which is part of the Web”, a platform which – much like the museums, libraries and archives that Foucault mentions in his lecture – brings together all kinds of contradictory ‘emplacements’ – from all times, all places, all tastes – all within a single environment. Indeed, not only does it provide a meeting place for geographically dispersed individuals to collaborate on a vast array of projects, but it juxtaposes and actively challenges the traditional boundaries between the spheres of work and leisure, expert and lay knowledge, public and private (cf. Saco 2002: 100). “Calling *Wikipedia* a digital, a networked heterotopia”, argue Haider and Sundin (2010), “is a very fitting description since it takes account of all these characteristics.”

While it is certainly easy to agree with this judgement, it is important to be aware of the risks associated with this line of thought. Most significantly, critics such as Benjamin Genocchio (1995: 40) have pointed out that “scouring the absolute limits of imagination, [...] what cannot be designated a heterotopia?” Indeed, it is difficult to think of a space in society which does not in some way fit the mould of heterotopia as a mere category. This is because, as Lefebvre (1974/1991) argued much more extensively (see Section 2.4.2), all social spaces are heterogeneous, multifaceted, multivalent; all are ‘relational’ and interlinked by means of a constellation of dynamic and often contradictory connections. One might legitimately ask questions then as to the whereabouts of the ‘normal’ sites in society to which heterotopias might be considered ‘radically other’. Put bluntly, what use is heterotopia as a theoretical construct if it describes everything and therefore nothing?³⁷

³⁷ Another criticism that can be raised here has to do with the way in which identifying a space as a heterotopia would tend to characterise it as something relatively stable in nature, with fixed characteristics and sets of relations. This is problematic because, as I have argued earlier in this chapter (following Lefebvre), space is unceasingly constructed in and through spatial practice, representation and lived experience, and

In response to these criticisms, supporters of Foucault's concept including Sherman Young (1998), Peter Johnson (2013) and Robin Rymarczuk and Maarten Derksen (2014) all make an important point: they argue that heterotopias must be seen not simply as a category with which to label a particular site, but primarily as a 'conceptual method' (Johnson 2013: 791), as a means with which to consider a particular phenomenon from a new perspective. It must be placed, in other words, within the wider context of Foucault's career-long project of 'making difference' (Johnson 2013: 800), of destabilising dominant approaches and structures within established fields of study, and of promoting the development of alternative connections and ideas. Conceptualising *Wikipedia* as a heterotopia is helpful, not because it identifies the website as something absolutely different from the rest of society, but because it encourages us to think differently about the encyclopaedia. It provides a framework from which to consider *Wikipedia* first and foremost as a heterogeneous space, "as a site of juxtaposition and simultaneity" (Haider & Sundin 2010), with its own unique geography, its own particular functions and its own specific set of dynamic relations with all the other spaces of the world.

As I will show in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, it helps bring into focus the ways in which these environmental characteristics reflect and subvert those found in other locales, and the ways in which these qualities determine both who is involved in the project, and how they interact and engage in their multilingual encyclopaedia-building activity. Specifically, using the analytical framework that I develop in the next chapter (Chapter 3) through a combination of narrative approaches to translation studies and Lefebvre's ideas on the social production of space, I will show how *Wikipedia* functions simultaneously as a space for the production and reproduction of expertise; as a local and a global space; as a neutral and an occupied territory. Indeed, as I will suggest in the conclusion, the combined lenses of Lefebvre, heterotopia and narrative allow us to unpick and understand the difficult processes of negotiation and exchange through which knowledge is produced and transmitted across linguistic and cultural borders in this online context.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has attempted to situate my research into *Wikipedia* both within the 'spatial turn' that has been taken in the humanities and social sciences, and within the recent surge of interest in space in the specific field of translation studies. It has presented the basis of a theoretical framework

therefore is always inherently unstable, always undergoing a process of change. I will return to the implications of this point in the conclusion of this thesis.

for understanding social spaces including the spatiality of *Wikipedia* itself, drawing on the work of both Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault. The next chapter (Chapter 3) aims to show how a ‘socio-narrative’ approach to translation studies might be productively incorporated into this model and applied to the dataset to explore the collaborative production and dissemination of spatial knowledge across linguistic and cultural borders within *Wikipedia*.

3 NARRATIVE AND NARRATIVITY

“The world is a set of stories which must be chosen among.”

- Walter Fisher, *The Narrative Paradigm: In the beginning* (1985)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As explained in the introduction to this thesis, in addition to drawing on Lefebvre’s writings on the production of social space, and Foucault’s concept of heterotopia, this project constructs its analytical framework using elements of narrative theory. This chapter begins (Section 3.2) by introducing the notion of narrative and tracing the history of its use and development as a unit of analysis with explanatory power in disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. In Section 3.3, I show how this theory has thus far been applied within translation studies, before explaining my interest in further developing this theoretical approach within the discipline through the introduction of a new class of narrative, namely, ‘spatial narratives’ (Section 3.4).

I will then discuss the various typologies (Section 3.5) that have been developed within translation studies with respect to narrative, and set out the way in which I intend to adapt these by combining them with insights drawn from the work of Henri Lefebvre to suit the specific requirements of my research aims. The chapter will finish (Section 3.6) with a brief summary, before we move on in Chapter 4 to consider questions relating to the research methodology.

3.2 NARRATIVE THEORY

In everyday speech, and indeed for much of the history of research in the humanities and social sciences, the term ‘narrative’ has been most closely associated with the world of literature and fiction. As a close synonym of ‘story’, it has generally been linked to specific and finite ‘texts’ (understood sometimes in a broad sense so as to include film, theatre and opera, as well as written texts), and considered one of many possible ‘forms of expression’: one particular mode of representing “a real or fictitious event or series of events” (Genette 1969/1976: 1). Across the decades, scholars such as Mieke Bal (1985/1997), Gérard Genette (1969/1976) and Gerald Prince (1973; 1982) have developed various theories with which to study such phenomena. To cite Bal (1985/1997: 3), these are intended as “systematic sets of generalised statements” which might enable the analyst to pick apart the features of a work of fiction in order to expose its structure and devices in such a way that is both informative and easily accessible for readers.

From the mid-1980s however, narrative has received a great deal of attention not simply in literature departments but from a swathe of disciplines across the human sciences, ranging from history to linguistics, jurisprudence to sociology (Lucaites & Condit 1985: 90). This surge of interest has been driven by research which has sought to show that story-telling is essential to our very humanity (Fisher 1984), and that “narrative represents a universal medium of human consciousness” (Lucaites & Condit 1985: 90). To use Hayden White’s (1980) terms, narrative is thus highlighted as a ‘metacode’ by which all messages about our shared reality are transmitted. In this way, and following the influential work of Jerome Bruner (1985) in psychology, Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson (1994) in sociology and Walter Fisher (1984; 1985) in communications studies in particular, the humanities have seen a broad shift in perspectives towards narrative, expanding its scope as a concept from simply a ‘representational’ mode of expression to one that deals with “social epistemology and social ontology” (Somers & Gibson 1994: 58).

Analytical approaches based on this view of narrative (often termed ‘socio-narrative’ approaches – Harding 2012a) have focused on the stories we tell and are told in our everyday lives and on the ways in which these are involved in how “we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world” (Somers & Gibson 1994: 58-9).³⁸ Drawing on William Hume and Immanuel Kant’s constructivist philosophies, narrative theorists argue that humans can have no direct access to objective reality and that instead our experience of the world is mediated by the stories we

³⁸ In this thesis I follow Mona Baker (2006a; 2006b; 2014) in using the terms ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ as interchangeable synonyms to refer to (inter)subjective accounts of events and happenings, occurring in space over time.

subscribe to about it (Harding 2012a: 21). This does not mean that there is no 'real world' out there, that outside of our minds there is nothing. Rather, narrative analysts propose that while this 'material realm' certainly exists, and while our physical senses are able to perceive many elements of it (as Dr Johnson once purportedly sought to show by deliberately stubbing his toe on a stone – Whitworth 2008: 6), it is only through narrative that we are able to render the chaotic complexity of experience *meaningful* (Polkinghorne 1988: 1-3).

Narratives are helpful in this respect in two principal ways. On the one hand, they are highly selective: as Somers and Gibson (1994: 60) state, faced with a "potentially limitless array" of social experiences, of interactions with events, objects, people and institutions, narratives allow us a means with which to efficiently filter this mass of conflicting information. They package or 'thematise' reality (Somers & Gibson 1994: 60), offering streamlined and manageable accounts which satisfy our innate desire for order and simplicity. Perhaps even more important, on the other hand, is the fact that narratives provide "*constellations of relationships* (connected parts) embedded in *time and space*" (Somers & Gibson 1994: 59; emphasis in original), enabling us to understand the social, temporal, logical, causal, moral and hierarchical connections between the infinite variety of elements of the real (Harding 2012a: 22). Such sets of relationships – of cause and effect, good and bad, us and them – are invaluable in allowing humans to comprehend the relative significance of any one event, object or action, and to determine how this affects us and our place in the world.

Narratives are however by no means impartial filters or impartial webs of connections. They do not merely reflect certain aspects of the reality we experience but are deeply involved in refracting them too. As subjective accounts of reality, all narratives are told from a particular standpoint, for a particular intended audience and with a particular purpose: the process of 'selective appropriation' by which particular elements are included and others excluded is thus both politically determined and has political consequences (Somers & Gibson 1994: 59). In other words, what is selected and what is neglected is governed by the geographical, temporal, social, political and cultural 'location' of the narrator or narrators involved in elaborating the story in question, and by their reason(s) for telling it (Baker 2014: 167). Analysis of media coverage during the UK's European Union referendum debate in June 2016 provides clear illustrations of this fact. We may note for instance how different newspapers foregrounded the views and opinions of different politicians and commentators as a means of constructing either a pro-Leave or a pro-Remain narrative. On the one hand, a recent report (Levy *et al.* 2016: 28) has shown that spokespersons of the *UK Independence Party* (UKIP) were cited in 24% of all the referendum-related articles published in the *Daily Express*, a popular right-wing tabloid which has campaigned for many years in favour of Britain exiting the EU. In this

way, the report suggests, the *Express* was able to give special prominence to the voices of *UKIP* leader Nigel Farage and his fellow campaigners, and place the arguments supporting a Leave vote at the forefront of its readers' minds. This strategy contrasted strongly with that adopted by the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*, who all chose to quote *UKIP* representatives significantly less frequently (in just 9%, 7% and 12% of their articles, respectively), as they attempted to promote their pro-Remain stance.

Equally, the patterns of 'relationality' that narratives establish are far from natural or universal but are subjectively and ideologically constituted (Somers & Gibson 1994: 59). To take the example of the EU referendum once again, this was clearly demonstrated in the sets of relationships constructed in the *Daily Express*' narrative of the debate as an attempt to garner support for the 'Brexit' movement. As Levy *et al.*'s (2016: 21) report notes, the newspaper repeatedly linked a pro-Leave vote to ideals of national sovereignty and patriotic pride, "describing the EU as an 'undemocratic superstate' that took away from Britain its 'hard-fought freedom' and calling for the UK to 'save democracy', 'regaining control' and its independence."³⁹ The narratives constructed by prominent 'Remainers' such as the then Prime Minister David Cameron also used patriotism but mainly tended to connect a Leave vote to a future of massive economic and political instability for the UK (a policy which ultimately failed to convince the electorate, having been dubbed by many Brexiteers as 'Project Fear').

Finally, we should note that, unlike their literary cousins, the narratives that we are interested in here are best conceptualised as fluid, diffuse and amorphous 'configurations' (Baker 2006b: 4). They are not fixed in form but evolve with every new telling, being endlessly "constructed and reconstructed in the context of internal and external relations of *time* and *place* and *power* that are constantly in flux" (Somers & Gibson 1994: 65; emphasis in original). No two narrators will tell the same story in the same way: each will impose their own particular set of 'evaluative criteria', affording certain elements and connections more weight and prominence to the detriment of others, leading to gradual changes over time and space in the construction and reception of the narrative. Furthermore, while the socio-narrative approach takes the narrative as its basic unit of analysis, it does not assume these 'social stories' necessarily exist in one single and discrete text or section of text (Baker 2006b: 4). As Baker (2006a: 464) suggests, they are in fact 'more likely' to underpin and inform "a whole range of texts and discourses without necessarily being fully or explicitly articulated

³⁹ Indeed, right-wing politicians and commentators have long sought to push nationalist narratives of this kind in a bid to unite citizens into 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983), bound to each other both by their 'relation of identity' with an otherwise fairly arbitrary area of the planet's surface, and by their adherence to a shared account of history and a collective future (Shields 1991: 222).

in any one of them.” This means that even texts belonging to modes and genres that would not traditionally be labelled as ‘narrative’ can nevertheless be subjected to narrative analysis (Abbott 2008: 1-2). Every cultural production, from maps to music videos, advertising campaigns to encyclopaedia content, can be said to both inform and be informed by the stories we tell and are told in our daily lives.

3.3 APPLICATIONS OF NARRATIVE THEORY IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

This theory of narrative has already proved itself productive when applied within translation studies. It has helped the discipline to move further beyond its historically rather introspective concern with translation quality and the degree of ‘equivalence’ between source and target texts, and to engage more decisively with the socio-political implications of translation activity. Indeed, the narrative approach followed here promotes a much enlarged view of the object of translation studies than has traditionally been considered. While the discipline was once tightly tied to a focus on translation phenomena involving the “replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)” (Catford 1965: 20), narrative theory has helped to widen the scope of translation studies to encompass an interest in the many overlapping activities through which narratives are produced and disseminated across linguistic and cultural barriers (Baker 2014).⁴⁰ Specifically, following Baker (2014: 159), translation is broadly conceptualised as “a form of (re)narration”, and the spotlight is placed on exploring the fact that translation is frequently involved in the construction and circulation of the texts and ‘second-hand’ accounts of reality by which we come to understand the wider social world. For example, Harding (2012a: 22, my emphasis⁴¹) has noted that it is often as a result of the activity of a – broadly-defined – translator or group of translators, that we come to hold (narrative-based) beliefs about the

god(s) we cannot hear or see, the leaders, politicians and heroes we have never met, *the places we have never visited*, the ancient texts and news reports we have not read, and the long dead relatives and figures of history we will never know.

⁴⁰ As we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, this broader understanding of the object of translation studies is particularly helpful in the context of *Wikipedia* where the relationship of correspondence between ‘translated’ texts and their sources is rarely direct or straightforward.

⁴¹ It is the ways in which narratives construct “places we have never visited” that forms the focus of my discussion here in this chapter (see Section 3.5).

This understanding of translators as (re)narrators also acknowledges that these multilingual agents are themselves “embedded in the narratives that circulate in the context in which they produce a translation” (Baker 2014: 159). Rather than considering them passive conduits for intercultural communication, existing somehow *between* the source and target cultures, narrative theory foregrounds their socio-political emplacement and the ways in which this inevitably must affect their translation choices. Translators are thus shown to be crucially involved not only in the transfer across linguistic and cultural divides of the narratives that filter our experience of the world, but also in their transformation (Baker 2014: 159). Accordingly, narrative theory argues that a focus on translation solely in terms of its linguistic dimensions neglects the “decisive and complex role” translators can play in “(re)configuring reality” within their own societies as well as on a global scale (Baker 2014: 159).

Kalliopi Pasmatzis’s (2012) recent narrative analysis illustrates this point well. The focus of her study is Nicholas Gage’s novel *Eleni* (1983) and its Greek-language translation by controversial novelist Alexandros Kotzias (1983). Set during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), the book follows the life of the author’s mother (Eleni) and her cruel death at the hands of Communist insurgents. Thus, rather than supporting the narrative of the war that was dominant in Greece at the time of its publication – a narrative which over-romanticised the Left as unequivocal heroes in the fight against fascism – *Eleni* was seen as contesting this perspective, and Kotzias’ translation as a ‘heretical import’ amongst the Greek left-wing literati. Therefore, Pasmatzis (2012) examines the possible motivations which lay behind Kotzias’ decision to translate Gage’s novel, and the series of enveloping social, public and personal narratives that shaped this process.

While her theoretical framework is based on Bourdieu’s (1990, 1999) notions of ‘habitus’ and ‘field’, Pasmatzis argues that developing an understanding of these concepts through the analytical tools of narrative theory can enable the analyst to better unpick the nature of the complex interaction between translators and the social context in which they are embedded. Indeed, as Pasmatzis (2012: 115) argues, the narrative approach allows her to establish Kotzias’ habitus “as a multiple entity”, affected simultaneously by the ‘diktats’ of professional standards and norms (*e.g.* fidelity and fluency), as well as by struggles occurring outside of his restricted professional field in wider society. In the last section of the paper, she shows for instance how many of the primary and secondary characters of the novel are subtly ‘renarrated’ in translation: through an arsenal of colloquial expressions and satirically ambiguous terms, communist characters in particular are reworked and made to seem even more unsympathetic and grotesque than they are in the original text. This renarration “abides by Kotzias’ own constructed narrative of the civil war” (2012: 128), a narrative

which draws on testimonies from both sides of the ideological war in order to demonstrate the impact of the conflict on the common man (2012: 123).

Also of note here is Sue-Ann Harding's (2011; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d) research into the national and international news reportage following the events of the Beslan school siege in Russia in September 2004. By conducting a narrative analysis of the reports in which the hostage-taking was covered by three very different Russian-language news agency websites (*RIA-Novosti*, *Kavkazcenter* and *Caucasian Knot*), and then comparing these texts with those found on the English-language version of these same sites, she has been able to show that these translated accounts of events differ often radically from those provided in Russian. For instance, while the Russian-language versions of the two 'fringe media' websites (*Kavkazcenter* and *Caucasian Knot*) offer a number of strong challenges to the mainstream narrative by which the events at the school were framed in the state-controlled *RIA-Novosti's* coverage, these 're-characterisations' and 're-weightings' are largely absent from the corresponding English-language texts (2011: 59). The international audience of this 'dissident' reportage thus comes to a very different understanding of the siege which serves simply to 'ossify' their previously held convictions with respect to the so-called 'war on terror', Russia and the Chechnyan conflict, rather than yield 'new insights' or identify 'new points of struggle'. Consequently, Harding (2012c: 359) argues in favour of alternative translation strategies which might have enabled *Kavkazcenter* and *Caucasian Knot's* more 'multi-vocal', dissenting narratives to reach the international community and thus "pose more effective resistance to power and serve as a better impetus for social change."

Both these studies clearly challenge the dominant conception of translators as politically neutral conduits for the transmission of information and knowledge (cf. Baker 2013: 23). Indeed, they demonstrate the extent to which such individuals are often heavily invested in the politics of the context in which they are working, and that their activities are invariably influential in producing, reproducing and contesting the *status quo*.

3.4 TIME, SPACE AND NARRATIVE

As Marie-Laure Ryan (2012/2014) has recently highlighted, the primary focus for most previous discussions of narrative has tended to rest on issues associated with the representation of events situated in time and (social and/or personal) history. Indeed, narrative is most often explicitly approached as the "principal way in which our species *organizes its understanding of time*" (Abbott

2002: 3, my emphasis) and many of the foremost scholars in this area of study have directed the main thrust of their analysis towards the ways in which the principles of temporality and narrativity interact. Most notably, theorists such as Hayden White (1980) and Paul Ricoeur (1984) have explored the narrative nature of history writing and emphasised the centrality of story-telling for making sense of the connections between our past, our present and our future. Issues related to space, setting and geography, on the other hand, have tended to attract less attention from narratologists (De Bleeker 2014: 229; Ryan 2012/2014).

As discussed in the previous chapter (Section 2.2.1), this is largely due to the common neglect of human spatiality engendered by modernist historicism. At the same time, we should also highlight the fact that, while all narratives necessarily contain an explicit temporal dimension (in the words of Jerome Bruner, they are “irreducibly durative” – 1991: 6), their spatial ‘setting’ represents only an ‘optional’ element in their construction, and may sometimes be left undefined (Abbott 2002: 17, Prince 1987: 88). Certainly, as H. Porter Abbott (2002: 17) comments, one can tell a perfectly valid story without ever openly locating the chronological sequence of events in a specific space (as in E. M. Forster’s example, “[t]he king died, and then the Queen died of grief” – cited in Abbott 2002: 17). Therefore, prominent narratologists such as Roland Barthes (1966) and Gérard Genette (1969/1976) have considered space to be associated primarily with description (*i.e.* the non-narrative elements of a text), unnecessary to the development of the story and beyond the scope of narratology (De Bleeker 2014: 229).

However, this disregard for the relationship between space and narrative overlooks a number of important issues. It ignores for instance that narratives do not – and cannot⁴² – exist in some absolute, aspatial, supraterritorial dimension but are firmly rooted and bounded within specific and limited real-world spaces (Ryan 2012/2014). This idea is particularly relevant to translation studies given the role that language often plays in determining the boundaries of the spaces within which ‘everyday stories’ circulate. Totalitarian regimes, for example, have historically been able to effectively limit the extent to which alternative sets of narratives can infiltrate and circulate within the national space by preventing the translation of foreign news reports and cultural products into the national language. Tessa Dwyer and Ioana Uricaru (2009) describe for instance how, before the advent of the internet and satellite television, the communist government of Romania (which held power from 1947 until 1989) was able to regulate public opinion by closely controlling what foreign-language films and television series were permitted to be translated and the manner in which this

⁴² As Bruner (1991: 8) asserts, narratives “do not exist, as it were, in some real world, waiting patiently and eternally to be veridically mirrored in a text” but exist only in the telling. Consequently, since all narrators are necessarily narrating from somewhere, all narratives must have a spatial range or scope, however big or small.

was done. Any applications to translate content that included themes deemed contrary to the values of the State (e.g. references to organised religion, nudity, alcoholism, consumerism, ostentatious luxury, etc.) were blocked, and the film or television show would only be released if an 'ideologically cleansed' form could be produced (Dwyer & Uricaru 2009: 53-4). Interestingly, the proliferation of social media technologies and the internet appears to be fast eroding the ability of present-day regimes to enforce such boundaries and prevent exposure to foreign narratives and alternative accounts of the world. As various contributions to Mona Baker's edited volume *Translating Dissent* (2015) show, translation remains an essential means of circumventing these barriers and extending the geographical reach of the narratives of struggle and solidarity on which revolutionary activist groups often depend.

Moreover, despite Abbott's comments, it is reasonable to suggest that the majority of narratives do contain significant amounts of spatial information, and that often their setting is not simply an optional 'extra'. In fact, in many cases, it may constitute a crucial contributing component – or even the primary focus – of the narrative being told (Prince 1987: 88). A select few theorists have made insightful explorations into this issue, and shown it to be a productive and fascinating area of research. The French philosopher Michel de Certeau, for example, devotes a large section of his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980/1984) to a discussion of what he calls 'spatial stories' and the ways in which these "traverse and organise places [...] select them and link them together [...] make sentences and itineraries out of them" (de Certeau 1980/1984: 115). Using an understanding of narrative which is in many ways similar to that presented here, he argues that many of the stories we tell and are told in daily life do not merely involve the 'description' of specific spaces, but contribute towards creating or 'founding' them (1980/1984: 123). According to de Certeau (1980/1984: 94), they do this in two principal ways: first, he argues that such stories are critical to the construction of the frontiers and boundaries by which spaces are ordered and structured. For instance, the act of naming and describing a city or section of a city "provides a way of conceiving and constructing [that space] on the basis of a finite number of stable, isolatable and interconnected properties" (1980/1984: 94). In other words, the story creatively reduces complex, interrelated and amorphous geographical realities into ordered simplicities (simpli-cities?) with definite limits and distinct borders, providing the illusion of a predictable and bounded 'theatre' for social activity. Second, he contends, spatial stories play a decisive role in determining both what is socially permitted and forbidden in that particular space, in organising different spaces according to their social function. They tell us where we should walk and where we shouldn't, where it is acceptable to behave in a certain way and where it isn't. They thus produce 'geographies of actions', ways of being in and moving through the spaces of the social world (1980/1984: 116).

Edward Said (1993) too has looked at the ways in which narratives (understood in this case in the more traditional, literary sense) do more than simply reflect the spaces they describe. In *Culture and Imperialism*, for instance, he explores the representation of the European colonies in the domestic literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Taking Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as an example, Said (1993: 67) argues that the Africa that the author depicts as the setting of his short novel is a result not merely of Conrad's personal, direct experience of the continent, but also of the influence of a 'huge library' of lore and writing about Africa in which the book and author were culturally embedded. Indeed, he shows that, as in much European fiction during that period, it is in fact a highly "politicised, ideologically saturated Africa which to some intents and purposes was the imperialised place, with those many interests and ideas furiously at work in it, not just a photographic, literary 'reflection' of it" (1993: 67). Interestingly, Said also adds that because "to most Europeans, reading a rather rarefied text like *Heart of Darkness* was often as close as they came to Africa", this work would in turn have held 'immense influence' in shaping general knowledge and understanding of Africa, contributing towards further entrenching the socio-cultural projections by which that particular geography was conceived in Western imaginations.

More recently, and specifically within the field of translation studies, Luc van Doorslaer (2012) has examined TV news reports produced by two Flemish media corporations in order to investigate the role multilingual journalists and newsroom editors play in constructing images of Belgium's neighbours (Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) in Flemish society. Specifically, he looks at the extent to which the narratives that these journalist-translators tell are informed by the dominant images and stereotypes that are associated with each nation and culture. Van Doorslaer (2012) conducts a quantitative analysis of the information topics that are most commonly presented in news coverage about each country, showing how Germany is 'pointedly associated' in the Flemish news with the financial sphere and economics, while stories about France more commonly feature discussion of the nation's arts and cultural scene. The repeated presence of such narratives, he argues, actively reinforces the stereotyped images with which these countries are often associated, 'normalising' such narratives in the public eye.

My interest here draws on these lines of enquiry to focus on what I will term 'spatial narratives'. These can be defined as a particular kind or class of 'everyday story' that we narrate to ourselves and others specifically about the (directly or indirectly) 'perceived', 'conceived' and 'experienced' spaces of society. These narratives take social space as their primary focus and therefore belong most strongly to what Lefebvre called the 'conceived realm' of ideas and ideology about space. As such, they play a "substantial role" (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 42) in the ways in which we make sense of,

interact with and constantly ‘produce’ and ‘reproduce’ our socio-spatial environment (see Section 2.4.1).

In this thesis, the concept of spatial narrative is used first and foremost to investigate *Wikipedia* as a new and influential platform for the development and global dissemination of spatial knowledge. The site’s presentations of world cities are analysed primarily as texts which both shape and are shaped by the variety of dynamic stories that circulate with regard to those urban spaces, and the focus in Chapter 6 is on exploring the processes of negotiation between them. On the other hand, a spatial narrative analysis also informs my analysis of *Wikipedia* itself as a produced space for social action and interaction. Specifically, in Chapter 5 of this thesis, I discuss the ‘public space’ narrative that dominates the ways in which the platform has been discursively constructed within the community as well as in general society. I show how this central story is fundamentally a reiteration of more abstract ‘metanarratives’ (see Section 3.5) of the internet and suggest that, although valuable for the continued success of *Wikipedia*, this spatial narrative ultimately obscures the significance of linguistic and cultural barriers in determining how different users experience different areas of the site.

3.5 A TYPOLOGY OF SPATIAL NARRATIVES

One of the foremost advantages of the narrative-based approach to translation studies described above is that it provides us with an incisive conceptual toolkit with which to differentiate between the various different types of narrative that might influence the construction of a text. In other words, it permits exploration not merely of the ‘institution-driven’ discourses on space promoted by the most dominant forces in society, but equally of the various ways in which, to paraphrase Baker (2014: 159), individuals and more marginal social groups participate in constructing and circulating the stories that make up our world. I would argue that this feature is particularly useful given my research focus on *Wikipedia* because of the diverse range of actors and influences involved in the development of the encyclopaedia project’s content. It allows us, in other words, to explore *Wikipedia* as a heterotopic environment of difficult juxtaposition and discordant simultaneity involving a whole variety of different spaces and individual (re)narrators.

In their framework, Somers and Gibson (1994) proposed four different ‘dimensions’ or ‘levels’ of increasingly abstract narrativity: ‘ontological’, ‘public’, ‘conceptual’ and ‘meta’. This typological model has been widely adopted by many scholars since, particularly by Baker (2010; 2014), through

whose work narrative theory was introduced to translation studies. Indeed, while in her more recent writings, Baker (2010; 2014) has made minor adjustments to the labels by which the four levels are identified, replacing ‘ontological’ and ‘conceptual’ with the more immediately transparent terms ‘personal’ and ‘disciplinary’, her typology remains in essence very similar to that set out by Somers and Gibson (1994). Thus, ‘personal’ narratives refer to those that focus on the self, that define who we are as individuals (Baker 2014: 159, Somers & Gibson 1994: 61). They are the most fundamental of narratives, serving as ‘preconditions’ for everything we do and how we act in society (Somers & Gibson 1994: 61). ‘Public’ narratives, in contrast, are those more abstract but also more powerful stories that circulate in and about social groups and institutions “larger than the single individual [...] however local or grand, micro or macro” (Somers & Gibson 1994: 62). Next, Baker’s (2006b: 39) third category of ‘disciplinary’ narratives represents those theories, concepts and explanations that researchers in any field of study “elaborate for themselves and others about their object of inquiry”, while ‘meta’ narratives, finally, are defined as the “epic dramas of our time” (Somers & Gibson 1994: 63). These are the ‘master’ narratives whose plots are so ingrained in our collective understanding of the world around us (and have been for such long periods of time) that their influence often passes unnoticed and we “simply tend to take them for granted” (Baker 2014: 162).

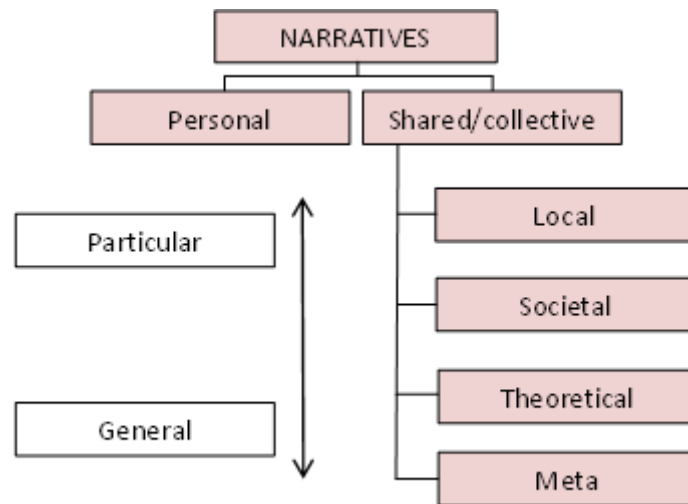
This foundational model is of course very much intended to be open to adaptation (Somers & Gibson 1994: 63) and many translation researchers have subsequently modified this typology to better suit their needs and interests. In Julie Boéri’s (2008) typology, for example, an additional category is that of ‘professional’ narratives, defined as the “stories and explanations that professionals elaborate for themselves and others about the nature and ethos of their activity” (Boeri 2008: 26). Boéri’s research investigates from a narrative perspective a controversy that arose within the professional conference interpreting community as a result of the involvement of a volunteer network of largely untrained but politically engaged translators and interpreters (known as ‘*Babels*’) in meeting the linguistic needs of the alter-globalist ‘World Social Forum’ in 2005. Therefore, by introducing this new category to the standard typology, she has been able to focus in on and better accommodate those stories (about impartiality and accuracy, for instance) that the trained interpreters use to promote themselves, and to contrast them with the many different narratives through which the *Babels* group was framed (by itself and by others). She is thus able to explore and explain precisely why it was that professional interpreters felt so threatened by the activities of these self-appointed volunteers during this event.

Likewise, Harding (2011; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d) has adapted Baker’s basic typology by imposing a ‘dual’ structure which emphasises both the difference and interplay between the

‘personal’ narratives that individuals narrate and the ‘shared and collective’ ones that are consensually constructed and that circulate within broader society (‘public’, ‘disciplinary’ and ‘meta’ narratives in Baker’s typology). This revision proves especially valuable in Harding’s analysis of the use of eye-witness accounts and ‘temporary narrators’ in the reportage on Beslan (Harding 2012b: 292). It enables her to show how the personal experience-based narratives of certain actors were embedded into public narratives of the events, how they were “marginalised, manipulated, selectively appropriated into, or simply deselected from, each primary narrative text” (Harding 2012b: 292).

For our purposes here however, the most significant change that Harding (2012b) makes to the original typology is the addition of a new category of what she terms ‘local’ narratives. This marks an important departure from previous models in that, unlike the categories presented by Baker (2006b; 2014), Boeri (2008) and Somers and Gibson (1994), it explicitly foregrounds the extent to which this type of ‘shared and collective’ story is tied to experience of the specificities of a particular real-world space. As Harding (2012b: 293) describes, ‘local’ narratives distinguish themselves from broader ‘societal’ narratives (more or less equivalent to Baker’s ‘public’ narratives) by the fact that they concretely relate “particular events [...] at particular times in particular places” and that they are locally bounded or “confined to a limited area or part.” Examples include for instance the ‘raw material’ stories of different social groups during the hostage-taking in Beslan’s School No.1 in September 2004 because these “concern specific times, places, people and events” (Harding 2012b: 293). A copy of Harding’s (2012b) dual typology is reproduced in Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1: A 'dual' typology of narratives, presented by Harding (2012b)

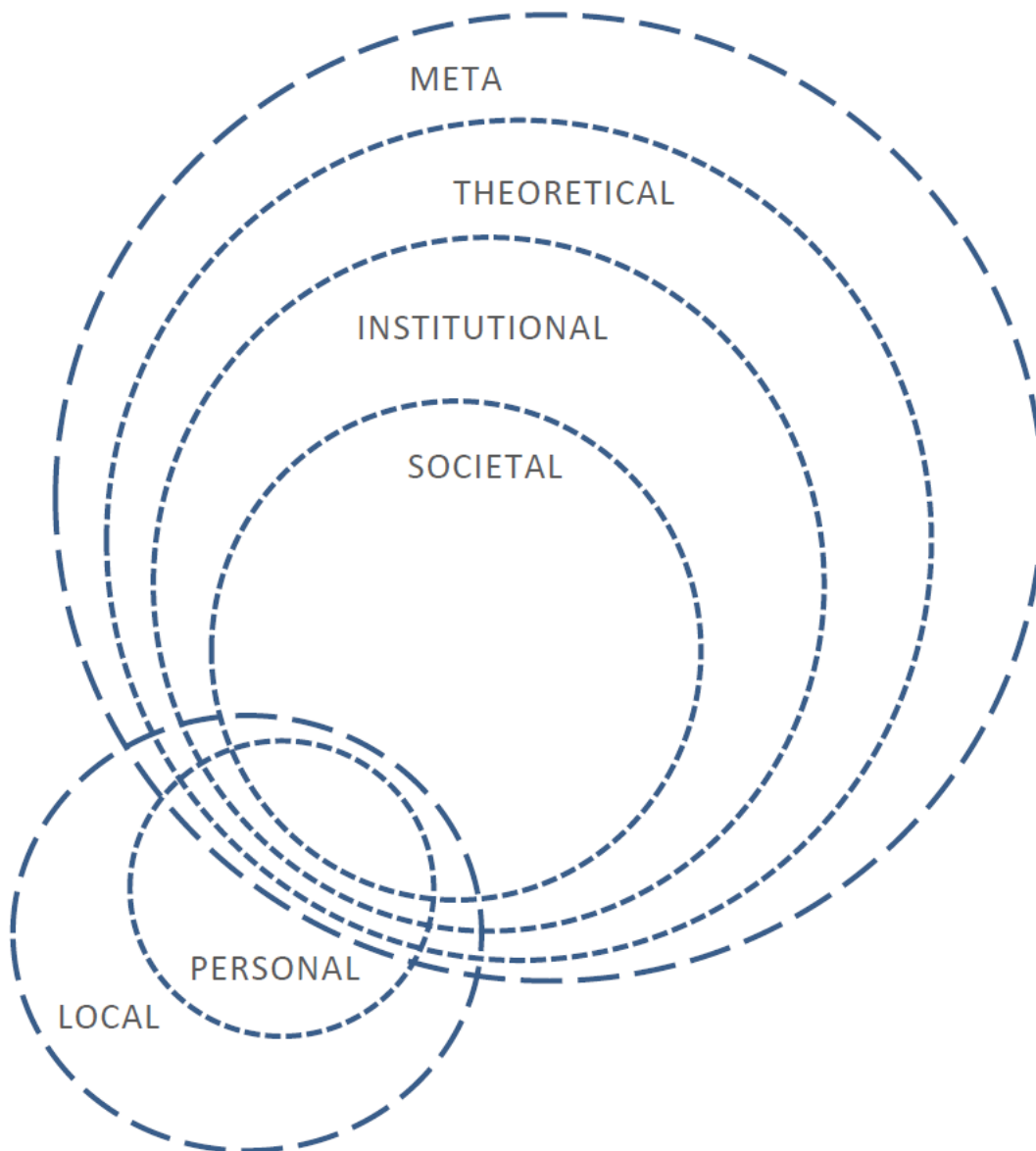


The typology of spatial narratives that I am proposing here takes this departure further still, placing the degree to which the stories are grounded in direct ‘first-hand’ experience of the social spaces in question at the core of my model. To do so, it again uses a ‘dual’ structure but separates ‘direct-experience’ narratives from ‘second-hand or indirect’ accounts into two distinct branches or fields of narrativity. This division aims to replicate the distinction between ‘perceptions’ of space (based primarily – if not exclusively⁴³ – on information directly received via our physical senses) and ‘conceptions’ of space (received indirectly via ‘representational practices’) that stands at the heart of Henri Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) writings (see Section 2.4.1). A diagram illustrating visually the structure of my typology is presented in Figure 3.2.

⁴³ To reiterate what was stated earlier in this chapter (Section 3.2), one of the core tenets of the understanding of narrative adopted here is that we can have no direct access to reality and that our experience of the world is mediated by the stories we subscribe to about it. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that the narratives on this branch of the typology are never derived purely from direct experience, but are shaped and constrained by the numberless accounts of reality that circulate in society.

Figure 3.2: A typology of spatial narratives.

The dual structure of my typology and the distinction between experience-based and ‘second-hand’ narratives is represented by the way in which ‘personal’ and ‘local’ stories are visually set apart from the more abstract, ‘societal’, ‘institutional’, ‘theoretical’ and ‘meta’ narratives. The interlocking circles and perforated borderlines are intended to emphasise that the categories exist in a dynamic relationship of complex interaction and influence.



In one branch or field of the typology, we have ‘personal’ spatial narratives and ‘local’ spatial narratives: the ‘personal’ category is connected simply to those most basic stories that the individual relates with regard to the spaces that form or have formed the ‘arena of experience’ for their daily lives (Taylor 1982), *i.e.* the street, city, region or country in which they live or have lived, or which they have visited. These stories might be exchanged amongst friends or colleagues in everyday conversation, or perhaps written on the back of a postcard to family back home. *Tripadvisor.com*

reviews can also for the most part be seen as good examples of personal spatial narratives, as the following account of a visit to Vienna's 'Rathaus' ('city hall') shows:

We visited Rathaus [sic] during the day just to look around and we weren't disappointed - it was a lovely haven from the busyness of the city, it was quiet, peaceful and beautiful. There were rooms upstairs set up for a big chess tournament - I imagine it would be a great place for events like this. Very beautiful.⁴⁴

(*Tripadvisor.com* review 2015)

The individual narrator's voice is clearly foregrounded throughout this review by the use of first-person pronouns ("We", "we", "I") and emphasis is placed on their direct, lived experience of this urban space through the prominence of the subjective and affective language: the reviewer focuses, in other words, on how the Rathaus *feels* ("a lovely haven [...] quiet, peaceful and beautiful") rather than simply what they see.

Next, 'local' spatial narratives are similar in many ways to Harding's (2012b) 'local' narratives in that they are projected by and shared among members of small social groups (within families, neighbourhoods, minority groups, street associations, workplaces, artist collectives) based on a common, concrete experience of a specific and locally-bounded region of social space. Families, for example, often hold particular symbolic and sentimental attachments to certain places and collectively construct stories about them: about 'where we used to go on holiday' or 'where we used to live', for instance.

Because they are generally told within limited social circles in a limited geographical area, the personal and local stories in this field of the typology are, in most contexts, comparatively 'weak' in their power to guide wider social practice. As noted in the Introduction chapter (Section 1.3), the proliferation of digital networked communications technologies over the past two decades has facilitated the emergence of practices of so-called 'neogeography', with ordinary citizens now able to engage much more directly in the production, manipulation and – most significantly – mass

⁴⁴ An on-going Manchester-based writing project entitled 'Stories from the Road' provides a further set of fascinating examples of personal spatial narratives. Focusing specifically on the Oxford Road, this project brings together the stories of people who live, work and travel along this 'urban corridor' with the aim of building "a layered picture of this rapidly changing part of the city and what it means to the people who experience it" (*Smarter Manchester* website: 'Stories from the Road'). The featured stories include memories of a daily commute, musings on the cultural diversity of this small strip of Manchester, and histories of a number of the lesser noted fixtures of the Road's past and present.

circulation of spatial knowledge (Goodchild 2007/2011; Graham 2010a).⁴⁵ In other words, through the development of popular online platforms such as *Tripadvisor.com*, *Expedia.com*, *Wikipedia*, *Wikitravel* and *Google Earth*, more people are now able to publish the personal and local spatial narratives through which they interpret their surroundings, and share them with potentially millions of other internet users.⁴⁶ Moreover, as Dina Mayzlin *et al.* (2014: 2421) discuss in their analysis of customer reviews posted on *Tripadvisor.com* and *Expedia.com*, such individual experience-based accounts of the world are afforded unprecedented weight and prominence within many such websites, meaning they hold much greater influence in terms of affecting how large numbers of people interact with the spaces of our social worlds. Previous research into this phenomenon has demonstrated for instance that online reviews have a significant impact on the quantity and price of bookings taken by hotels, restaurants, attractions and other tourist-oriented spaces, and that consumers tend to rely more heavily on the personal accounts of their peers than on information provided by the businesses themselves (Kardon 2007; Vermeulen & Seegers 2009). Indeed, such is their power that many companies have now been caught producing ‘fake’ narratives of the spaces they aim to promote, posting wholly positive accounts of fictitious experiences in the hope of attracting more customers (Mayzlin *et al.* 2014).⁴⁷

In separating these ‘direct-experience’ stories from the other categories of spatial narrative I do not wish to suggest that they somehow exist in isolation from these more abstract stories. Indeed, although a clear distinction is made between the two fields of the typology, it should be emphasised that, as in Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) model, the two domains exist in a dialectical relationship of complex interaction. Not only do ‘personal’ and ‘local’ narratives often play a vital role in providing many of the individual component parts for the construction of the ‘societal’, ‘institutional’,

⁴⁵ As Mark Graham (2014: 423) correctly notes, human beings have always felt a desire to create representations of their physical surroundings: the celestial maps found in Palaeolithic cave paintings at Lascaux, France (c.17,500 B.C.E.) are a clear demonstration of this fact. What is significant about the rise of neogeography is that these representations can now be easily and instantly shared and accessed by many millions of people the world over.

⁴⁶ Dramatic as these changes have certainly been, it is important to note that the extent to which these technologies have led to a ‘democratisation of geography’ remains limited, and that significant ‘black holes’ characterise these emerging practices (Graham 2010). Mark Graham (2010: 429) for instance has shown how places such as North Korea, Saharan Africa and North-eastern Thailand can be quite literally ‘left off the map’ within such systems “because of technological, economic and educational barriers faced by people with in-depth knowledge about those places.” In another article (Graham *et al.* 2011: 22), he and his colleagues have made the quite remarkable discovery that there are more *Wikipedia* articles about Antarctica (whose resident population rarely exceeds 4000 individuals) than about any country in Africa or South America (including Brazil, a country with a population in excess of 200 million).

⁴⁷ Mayzlin *et al.*’s (2014: 2434) research also suggests that some companies may additionally post negative reviews on rival companies’ *Tripadvisor.com* pages as an effective means of dissuading consumers from choosing alternative accommodation/attraction options.

‘theoretical’ and ‘meta’ spatial stories that will be described below, but they are in turn themselves embedded within and thus shaped by these grander, further reaching, more powerful narratives.

For instance, the ways in which visitors interpret their experience of a city is often influenced by ‘societal’ spatial narratives, a category again inspired by Harding’s (2012a: 25) typology. These operate at a much wider, more abstract level than those placed in the first branch and thus circulate not just among the (temporary and/or semi-permanent) inhabitants of the space being narrated but also among members of larger and more loosely defined social groups. This category would include the stories shared amongst a city area’s population that construct a particular neighbourhood as “the wrong end of town”: while those subscribing to this narrative may have only very limited direct experience of the urban space concerned, they nevertheless associate it (through their interactions with these societal narratives) primarily with a specific set of events, characters and characteristics. Societal narratives are thus both influential and often highly contentious: as Murray Forman’s (2002) research showed (discussed earlier in Section 2.4.2), although widespread, the societal narrative of the inner-city ‘ghetto’ does not correspond with many local hip-hop artists’ own experience and understanding of these urban spaces. It is only through their attempts to promote an alternative spatial narrative (a ‘local’ narrative) in their lyrics that they have been able to begin to contest this dominant representation and circulate what they see as a more ‘balanced’ story in wider society.

In turn, these societal spatial narratives not only frequently provide many of the ingredients for, but are also heavily shaped by what I will term here ‘institutional’ spatial narratives. This new category of narrative belongs to the stories by which large and powerful social organisations – such as governments, city councils, tourist boards and companies – attempt to frame specific spaces or regions. This includes for example the “official discourses of urban regeneration” that form the focus of Tim Hall’s (1997) study concerning the city of Birmingham, UK. Hall (1997: 203) examines the promotional materials accompanying the redevelopment of Birmingham in the early 1990s and the construction of its two centre-pieces, the Symphony Hall and International Convention Centre in particular. Having discussed how the city has long occupied a position of peripherality within the national system of space in Britain, he shows how the city authorities sought to disassociate the city from this dominant societal narrative by renarrating and re-locating Birmingham as a cultural ‘hub’ within European and even global geographical orders. Hall (1997: 213) cites the following excerpt as a particularly clear demonstration of how these international constellations of relationships are key to the city’s new institutional narrative:

In April 1991, the world of music will witness the opening of the UK’s finest concert hall – Symphony Hall Birmingham. Modelled on the great concert

halls, such as the Musikvereinssaal, Vienna and the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Symphony Hall's classic elegance benefits from the latest technology to make it a truly versatile venue for all forms of music. Seating 2,220 people in style, Symphony Hall will provide a platform for the finest orchestras and artists in the world.

By foregrounding the commonalities between Birmingham's new concert hall and these global meccas of the (high) art world (the Concertgebouw and the Musikvereinssaal), the narrative effectively bypasses the established dominance of London, challenging the "ascriptions of the cultural geography of British national space" (Hall 1997: 213). Birmingham is narrated as no longer peripheral to the capital's centre, but as a prominent core or hub in its own right. Interestingly, Stuart Aitken *et al.* (2005: 246) argue that the construction and transmission of a positive and coherent 'city-brand' and dynamic urban history is a strategy to which more and more city councils are now resorting in the current era of accelerated neoliberal globalisation. As national and regional markets are increasingly opened up onto a planetary scale, not only are cities being forced to compete with each other more than ever before in order to attract financial investment and tourism (Short *et al.* 1993: 207), but a "sharpening inequality" is developing between them (Sassen 2005: 38). As a consequence, such narratives are seen as becoming all the more vital to each urban space's future economic and sociocultural prosperity (see also Nijman 1999; Crump 1999).

Thirdly, we come to the category of 'theoretical' spatial narratives which relates to even more abstract stories that describe in theoretical, classificatory terms the spaces in which we live from a scholarly, specialist and ostensibly 'objective' perspective (cf. Baker 2014: 161). Again, these narratives exist in a dynamic relationship of mutual influence with the other narratives circulating in society, determining what is included in institutional or societal spatial stories whilst simultaneously being themselves moulded by the dominant 'meta' narratives of the time and place (see below). Here we can situate anything from the books written by local historians about particular spaces (see *e.g.* Kidd 2006), to the sociological reports of academic researchers (see *e.g.* Wacqaunt (2008) on the 'anti-ghettoisation' of the French *banlieues*). This category would also include the stories of economic development told by organisations such as the *Globalisation and World Cities Research Network* (GaWC website) which attempt to classify and order the major urban areas of the world as either 'Alpha', 'Beta' or 'Gamma world cities'. These narratives are often based on extensive research, rigorous models of data collection and critical approaches to analysis, but narrative theory helps us to recognise that, although a worthy aim, complete neutrality in the production and communication of knowledge is an impossible ideal. In other words, no matter how objective we

attempt to be, we are all deeply embedded in a shifting web of (inter)subjective and highly selective stories without which we are unable to interpret the world around us (Morales Moreno 2011: 3-4; see also Bilić 2015: 1262). The scientific production of knowledge is always shaped by social dynamics of ideology, power and authority.

As an encyclopaedia which aims to produce articles from a 'neutral point of view' (see [Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View](#)), *Wikipedia* policy suggests users should favour such apparently objective theoretical narratives as the basis for the construction of articles. The community's core guidelines suggest for example that, "[i]f available, academic and peer-reviewed publications are usually the most reliable sources" for the production of new *Wikipedia* content, although university-level text books, volumes published by respected publishing houses, magazines, journals and mainstream newspapers are also mentioned as admissible ([Wikipedia: Verifiability/Reliable sources](#)). Moreover, the online community encourages its contributors to use an 'impartial tone' ([Wikipedia: Neutral point of View/Impartial tone](#)), to present their knowledge in a way that echoes the language of traditional encyclopaedia entries and dictionary definitions, *i.e.* a language endowed with a "certain objectivity, along the lines of scientific discourse" (Morales-Moreno 2011: 3). This entails avoiding ideologically loaded words (such as 'terrorist' or 'freedom fighter' – see [Wikipedia: Use of the word terrorism](#)) and striving to "eliminate expressions that are flattering, disparaging, vague, or clichéd, or that endorse a particular point of view" ([Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View/Words to watch](#)). Thus, the *Wikipedia* articles about world cities in my dataset are intended to resemble a collection of intersecting and interweaved theoretical narratives of each urban space. As my analysis in Chapter 6 will show however, many additional kinds of spatial narrative inform the collaborative construction of this content.

Finally, following Somers and Gibson (1994) and Baker (2006b; 2010; 2014), what we will term 'meta' spatial narratives are those all-pervasive stories whose influence is so strong that their account of the world is commonly mistaken for empirical truth. The 'nationalist' narratives discussed earlier (Section 3.3) are a clear example of the stories belonging to this category, as are the shared narratives that bind the member states of the European Union into an imagined regional community with a distinct history and unique sense of identity (Hall 1997: 202). Most relevant to the present study are those definitional stories of urban progress and prosperity which inform much of the content of many 'institutional' spatial narratives today. As John Eyles and Walter Peace (1990: 75) have shown, these master narratives underwent a significant shift in focus during the 1970s and 1980s: accordingly, progress and prosperity for an urban area now means a transition from an economy based on mass-manufacturing to one based on services (shopping, restaurants, finance,

‘creative’ industries, education), from a narrative focus on production and industry to a focus on consumption and exchange. While in the past, cities were widely promoted using narratives of booming industrial sectors and expanding employment opportunities, the postmodern city now aspires to be narrated as a place of middle-class easy-living, culture and leisure (Short *et al.* 1993: 208). All reference to ‘lo-tech’ industry is largely downplayed in the context of this new meta narrative, for this now holds connotations of pollution and the degradation of the natural environment, of work, the working class and working-class culture. In contrast, elements associated with ‘hi-tech’ science and the environment, with exclusivity, flexibility, diversity, style and innovation, are afforded utmost prominence (Watson 1991: 63).⁴⁸

As should be evident from the above discussion, narratives do not by any means circulate on an even playing field. As Somers and Gibson (1994: 73) note, “[w]hich kinds of narratives will socially predominate is contested politically and will depend on the distribution of power.” The understanding here is that the ‘larger’ or more abstract the narrative, the more powerful it becomes, and that the more dominant institutions in society tend to be able to mobilise grander (societal, institutional, theoretical and meta) narratives. Meanwhile, smaller, more marginal groups and individuals may normally only be able to circulate relatively minor (personal and/or local) accounts. As we will see in the data analysis chapters that follow, the hierarchical structure of this typology is key to making sense of the interactions and discordances between the different types of spatial narrative circulating within and through *Wikipedia*.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 3 has focused on demonstrating the relevance and usefulness of narrative theory to the research aims set out in the Introduction to this thesis (Section 1.4). I have explained that not only does this theoretical framework hold the advantage of already having proved itself within the discipline in the analysis of complex and multifaceted texts, but it also brings with it a set of conceptual tools which can enhance our ability to investigate the social production of space. Indeed, I have argued that the narrative approach complicates traditional conceptions of translators as

⁴⁸ As Harding (2012a) notes with respect to her own work, the boundaries between all the various levels of narrative detailed in such typologies are far from distinct. As a result, while it could be argued that this spatial narrative of urban progress has yet to truly acquire ‘meta’ status, it is worth remembering that, like the narratives they describe, such categories are fluid and diffuse and serve only to act as guides for analysis rather than as definitive and fixed designations. Thus, this spatial narrative has only been placed in this category here to emphasise its more abstract and more widely influential nature in comparison with ‘smaller’ societal and institutional narratives.

'information bridges', forcing us to reconsider them as influential participants in the development and dissemination of the stories that construct our experience of the world. Finally, my understanding of the nature of these spatial narratives has been presented and a typology which will inform my approach to the dataset has been developed.

4 METHODOLOGY AND DATA SELECTION

*“[I]t is impossible to separate categorically
the act of writing from the written work.”*

- Louis Hay, ‘Does “Text” Exist?’ (1988)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This methodology chapter examines the characteristics of *Wikipedia* as a research environment in which to conduct spatial narrative analysis. In Section 4.2, I focus on describing the key features of the site, drawing on previous studies of *Wikipedia* to discuss how a number of the encyclopaedia’s paratextual spaces and tools can open up new possibilities for the researcher. Section 4.3 then presents several of the major challenges posed by this online context and considers how these factors must influence methodology design in this area of study. I also justify the ways in which I have sought to overcome these difficulties in my analytical approach. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of the data selection and collection processes (Section 4.4), thereby setting the stage for the spatial narrative analysis provided in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.2 METHODOLOGICAL POSSIBILITIES

The central spaces of the *Wikipedia* platform are its encyclopaedic content pages. It is these primary texts that are the focus of the majority of reader interest in the site and it is predominantly around such landmarks that individual contributors come together to form communities of action and interaction (Kittur *et al.* 2007: 454). All users (including readers, writers and of course researchers)

may access these pages either by entering the name of the topic in question (*e.g.* 'Paris' or 'Jakarta') into the 'Search' box in the top right-hand corner of every *Wikipedia* page, or by clicking on the links to this encyclopaedia content provided by an internet search engine such as *Google*.⁴⁹ These article pages typically feature images and 'infoboxes' on the right-hand side of the screen, and written content is aligned to the left.⁵⁰ Below the article title and a brief introduction to the area of knowledge under consideration (known within the community as the 'lead' or 'lede', following journalistic practice), a table of contents then provides a list of hyperlinks to the sections and subsections which structure the entry. Readers may click on these hyperlinks to jump directly to a particular section, or continue scrolling down the page. If, whilst reading, users notice an error or they wish to add, improve or remove content within the body of the text, they are encouraged to click on the blue 'edit' link situated to the right of any of the section headings, or to select the 'Edit' tab from the menu located near the top right-hand corner of the page. They may then choose to 'make an edit' either by manipulating the wiki mark-up coding language (see Figure 4.1) or, for the less technology-savvy, via the 'Visual Editor' which presents an interface much like that presented by popular word-processing software such as *Microsoft Word*.

⁴⁹ As Graham (2010b: 271) notes, as much as half of all *Wikipedia*'s traffic comes directly from *Google* searches.

⁵⁰ 'Infoboxes' are tables specifically created to summarise the key facts about the topic of the article in question. For the city-related articles on which the current study focuses, the infoboxes often include a map showing the location of the locale, its population and perhaps the name of its mayor or governor.

Figure 4.1: The Wikipedia editing interface.



4.2.1 Reference Lists

Beyond these article texts and their most immediately evident, ‘surface’ features however, there are many other paratextual spaces within the *Wikipedia* environment that have been developed by the community to facilitate their collaborative effort (Kittur *et al.* 2007: 454). Many of these, as Julie McDonough Dolmaya (2015: 3) notes in her most recent paper on *Wikipedia*, open up intriguing possibilities for the researcher. To begin with, we must note the extensive use of what are interchangeably known as ‘reference’ or ‘citation’ links within the body of each article text. These numbered hyperlinks are inserted into the article by contributors after almost every sentence or paragraph (see Figure 4.2), and are intended to be used to connect truth-claims made within the online encyclopaedia to the original source materials from which they were extracted ([Wikipedia: Help: Referencing for beginners](#)). This practice clearly derives from the traditions of Anglophone academic writing, but marks a significant departure from most previous encyclopaedia projects which have tended not to cite their sources (Leitch 2014: 39). Instead, works such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* have based their authority on the quality of their expert authors, on the highly selective means by which they recruit their contributors, as well as “by subjecting their work

to rigorous editorial review” (*Britannica* website: About). In other words, such publications ask their readers to trust in the reputation, thoroughness and objective ideals of their authors and fact-checking systems. However, they do not expose this process of knowledge production to the general public.

Figure 4.2: Illustration of the use of numbered 'reference' or 'citation' links.

The 18th and 19th century [edit]

See also: *Paris in the 18th century*, *Paris during the Second Empire*, and *Haussmann's renovation of Paris*

Paris grew in population from about 400,000 in 1640 to 650,000 in 1780.^[34] A new boulevard, the *Champs-Élysées*, extended the city west to *Étoile*,^[35] while the working-class neighbourhood of the *Faubourg Saint-Antoine* on the eastern site of the city grew more and more crowded with poor migrant workers from other regions of France.^[36]

Paris was the centre of an explosion of philosophic and scientific activity known as



The storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 marked the beginning of the French Revolution.

Within *Wikipedia*, on the other hand, the strict referencing system aims to help counteract the potential difficulties for an encyclopaedia that “anyone can edit” and to improve the validity and ‘verifiability’ of the platform’s content ([Wikipedia: Verifiability](#)). As Kathryn Tabb (2008: 7) notes, the policy promotes what is essentially a pragmatic understanding of human knowledge in the tradition of philosophers such as Charles Sanders Pierce: truth is “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate” (Pierce 1940, cited in Tabb 2008: 17). The idea is that anyone who doubts the truthfulness of an article’s account of reality can simply follow the hyperlinked in-line citations to the (mostly online⁵¹) sources in question and judge for themselves their value as reliable and relevant ‘ingredients’ for the text. The processes of fact-checking and quality control are thus opened out to the ‘wisdom of the crowds’ (Surowiecki 2004), and the lack of expert editorial

⁵¹ Ford *et al.*’s (2013) wide-angle analysis of the different kinds of information sources used in *Wikipedia* content production suggests that as many as 77% of all citations link to a webpage, as opposed to a physical book or any other form of offline resource.

oversight is compensated for by the sheer quantity of individuals involved: “given enough eyeballs”, as Eric Raymond (2000) suggested, “all bugs are shallow.”

These in-line citations are collected within the *Wikipedia* space in so-called ‘Reference Lists’ at the very foot of every article page (see Figure 4.3). Analysing these lists can permit us a powerful insight into the process of composition behind the site’s encyclopaedic content. Indeed, as George Landow (1992: 53, cited in Littau 1997: 91) has suggested in relation to hypertext documents more generally, the online encyclopaedia’s articles can be seen to serve as “an almost embarrassingly literal embodiment” of the principles of postmodernist theory and Barthesian deconstructions of authorial originality. The ‘Reference Lists’ provide us, in other words, with an exciting glimpse of the constellations of intertextual relations within which the *Wikipedia* content is situated, a trace of the wide variety of original materials from which each article has so far been created.⁵²

⁵² Useful as these lists are, it is important to recognise that in some cases they may not be as comprehensive a guide to all of the information sources that have been used as one might hope. Indeed, the in-line citation system deployed within *Wikipedia*’s online editing software is still rather cumbersome and glitch-prone, even after the software was updated in 2013 to make it more user-friendly ([Wikipedia: Visual editor](#)). As a result, large sections of text are still left ‘unsourced’ by the community, without any indication of the provenance of the information they contain. Thus, the Reference Lists can only be seen as indications of the kinds of source materials used, rather than precise maps of the production process.

Figure 4.3: Montage of sections of the Reference Lists relevant to the article text reproduced in Figure 4.2.⁵³

[...]

34. ^ Durant, Will; Durant, Ariel (1975). *The Story of Civilization XI The Age of Napoleon*⁵³. Simon and Schuster. p. 3.
Retrieved 11 February 2016.

35. ^ Combeau 2003, pp. 45–7.

36. ^ Sarmant 2012, pp. 129–133.

[...]

- Combeau, Yvan (2003). *Histoire de Paris*⁵³ (in French). Presses universitaires de France. ISBN 978-2-13-053865-3.

[...]

- Sarmant, Thierry (2012). *Histoire de Paris: politique, urbanisme, civilisation*⁵³ (in French). Editions Gisserot. ISBN 978-2-7558-0330-3.

A number of scholars working in other areas of the humanities and social sciences have already begun to explore the opportunities this opens up for *Wikipedia*-focused research. For example, Heather Ford *et al.* (2013: 1) have used these referenced citation links to investigate what types of information sources Wikipedians draw on most frequently in their attempts to create a repository of all human knowledge. The researchers have analysed a large dataset of 67,026,537 source postings extracted from 3,482,541 distinct English-language articles, and developed an automated means of categorising these original materials according to whether they constitute ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ or ‘tertiary’ sources of knowledge.⁵⁴ In this way, they have found that, despite the community’s official policy of privileging well-respected secondary sources of knowledge (*i.e.* academic publications and government reports), primary data sources by alternative publishers such as businesses and non-mainstream media sites are “both popular and persistent”. In light of this conclusion, Ford *et al.* (2013: 8) suggest that, in *Wikipedia*, the notion of a ‘reliable source’ does not necessarily refer

⁵³ Note that sometimes the full bibliographic reference is not given in the Reference List (as in the case of Reference Numbers 35 and 36), but that this information may be provided elsewhere, such as in a separate ‘Bibliography’.

⁵⁴ For Ford *et al.* (2013:4), ‘primary’ sources include statistical data, public announcements and presentational materials directly created by institutions, companies or individuals themselves; they are ‘raw’ information sources which are offered in their most basic form with little in the way of discussion or analysis. ‘Secondary’ sources, in contrast, consist of news reports, scholarly interpretations and opinion pieces, where the focus is much more on explaining rather than simply showing. The ‘tertiary’ category, finally, comprises such materials as archives of information published elsewhere and encyclopaedia entries. These are, in other words, publications that summarise and synthesise primary and secondary sources.

exclusively to traditional sources of expertise and that, as such, we are witnessing a shift in conceptualisations of what is considered ‘trustworthy’ content on the web.⁵⁵

As I hope to demonstrate through the analysis that follows in Chapters 5 and 6, the prevalence of these intertextual references is potentially all the more interesting to the field of translation studies, because it allows us to shed light on the complex flows of knowledge and information across linguistic and spatial barriers that occur in the context of *Wikipedia*. Specifically, it provides a clear means of understanding what kinds of knowledge Wikipedians tend to extract from what kinds of sources written in which languages. It allows us to explore the ways in which, much like the multilingual journalists who feature in Luc van Doorslaer’s (2012; 2014) research, many *Wikipedia* contributors make use of their multilingual abilities to identify and selectively appropriate information contained within a range of different foreign-language source texts, translating, combining, summarising, reorganising and recontextualising them as part of the creation of their target-language article. As the analysis in Chapter 5 will show, this data thus offers strong evidence of the extent to which the boundaries between authorship and translatorship, original writing and translating are blurred in this environment.

4.2.2 Revision History archives

A second set of paratextual features of particular value to researchers are the ‘Revision History’ pages. By clicking on the ‘View history’ tab in the upper right-hand corner of any *Wikipedia* page (see Figure 4.4), we are given ready access to a fully comprehensive archive of every one of the previous formulations of the content, from the moment it was created right through to the present day. This page history lists earlier versions of the article chronologically and provides information as to the date and time each revision was made, the contributor’s name (or IP address in the case of unregistered users⁵⁶) and even the size of the alteration in terms of the number of bytes or octets⁵⁷ of information added or removed from the page. In many cases, a comment left by the editor is also

⁵⁵ We will return to discuss this issue of the negotiation of expertise from a more qualitative angle in Section 6.2 of this thesis.

⁵⁶ Contributors to *Wikipedia* are not required to register and many individuals make edits to the encyclopaedia’s content ‘anonymously’ *i.e.* without choosing a username and setting up an account. In these cases, the contributor is identified within the wiki system only by their Internet Protocol (IP) address, the number assigned to their computer or other device within the global network. These are traceable to their geographical location using websites such as IPlocation.net (IPlocation.net website).

⁵⁷ An octet is an international standard unit of digital information, consisting of eight ‘bits’. This is used by the French-language *Wikipedia* community to define the size of their pages, but (oddly) not by contributors to the English-language edition (who use ‘bytes’).

included, as can be seen in the screenshots provided in Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6. This is known as an 'Edit Summary' and is generally used by Wikipedians to justify or explain their intervention.

From the Revision History page, previous formulations of the text can easily be compared side-by-side using the 'Difference between Revisions' button which helpfully highlights (in blue on the right for additions and yellow on the left for deletions) any differences between them (see Figure 4.6). This feature thus allows us to explore how the article has evolved over time, who added what content, when and where in the text this took place, and how this new version was received by the rest of the editing community. In the example provided in Figure 4.6, for instance, we can see that a contribution was made to the English-language *Wikipedia* article about Moscow by a user named *Yadsalohcin* at [10:02 on 11 September 2016](#), which updated the 'Transportation' section of the text with information about a new service that had recently been added to the city's metro system. By examining later versions of this same article, we can see that this was accepted as a useful and factual addition to the article by other reader-contributors, given that this information was not subsequently deleted: it is in fact still present in the current version of the article at the time of writing (December 2016).

Figure 4.4: Screenshot indicating the location of the 'View history' tab.

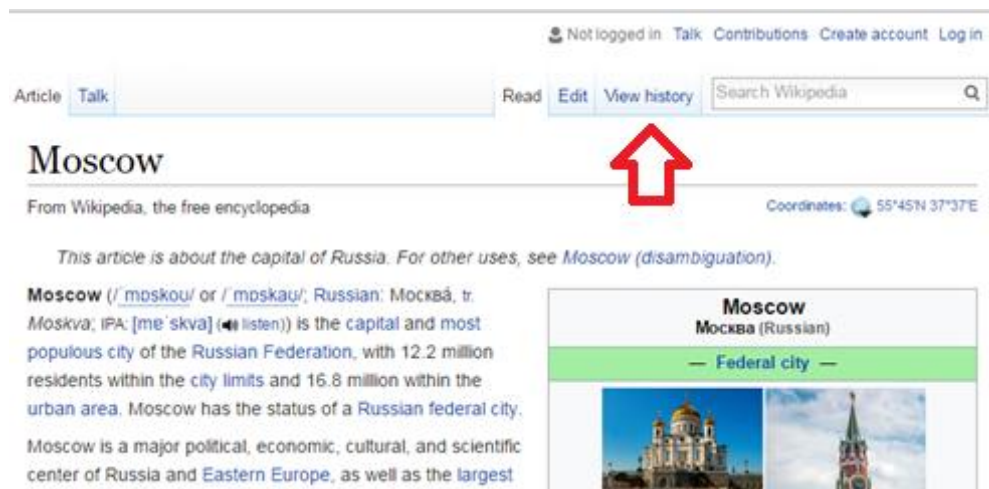


Figure 4.5: Screenshot showing Revision History for the English-language article about Moscow. The red arrow indicates the location of user Anatoliyhokage's Edit Summary.

- (cur | prev) 20:26, 10 November 2016 Дима83 (talk | contribs) . . (170,576 bytes) (+93) . . (undo)
- (cur | prev) 12:51, 5 November 2016 AnomieBOT (talk | contribs) m . . (170,483 bytes) (+19) . . (Dating maintenance tags: {{Cn}}) (undo)
- (cur | prev) 12:30, 5 November 2016 Parkywiki (talk | contribs) m . . (170,464 bytes) (+7) . . (Correcting spelling: transporation->transportation) (undo)
- (cur | prev) 12:05, 5 November 2016 Anatoliyhokage (talk | contribs) m . . (170,457 bytes) (+108) . . (I added new information about a new circle metro railway that has been opened recently) (undo) (Tag: Visual edit)



Figure 4.6: Screenshot showing the 'Difference between revisions' tool. The red arrow indicates the location of user Yadsalohcin's Edit Summary.

Moscow: Difference between revisions

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Coordinates: 55°45′N 37°37′E

Revision as of 09:11, 11 September 2016 (edit)

185.3.147.192 (talk)
(→Moscow Central Circle)
← Previous edit

Revision as of 10:02, 11 September 2016 (edit)

(undo)
Yadsalohcin (talk | contribs)
(→Railway: Updating Little ring and mention of greater ring railways)
Next edit →



Line 940:

Suburbs and satellite cities are connected by commuter [[elektrichka]] (electric rail) network. Elektrichkas depart from each of these terminals to the nearby (up to {{convert|140|km|mi|0|disp=or|abbr=on}}) large railway stations.

The [[Moscow Little Ring Railway]] is only used for cargo traffic. There are plans to use the railway for passenger traffic. There is a connecting railway line on the North side of the town which connects Belorussky terminal with other railway lines. This is used by some suburban trains.

Line 940:

Suburbs and satellite cities are connected by commuter [[elektrichka]] (electric rail) network. Elektrichkas depart from each of these terminals to the nearby (up to {{convert|140|km|mi|0|disp=or|abbr=on}}) large railway stations.

During the 2010s, the [[Moscow Little Ring Railway|Moscow (Little) Ring Railway]] was converted to be used for frequent passenger service; it is fully integrated with Moscow Metro; the passenger service started on September 10, 2016. There is a connecting railway line on the North side of the town which connects Belorussky terminal with other railway lines. This is used by some suburban trains.

+

+

The [[Greater Ring of the Moscow Railway]] forms a ring around the main part of Moscow.

4.2.3 Talk pages

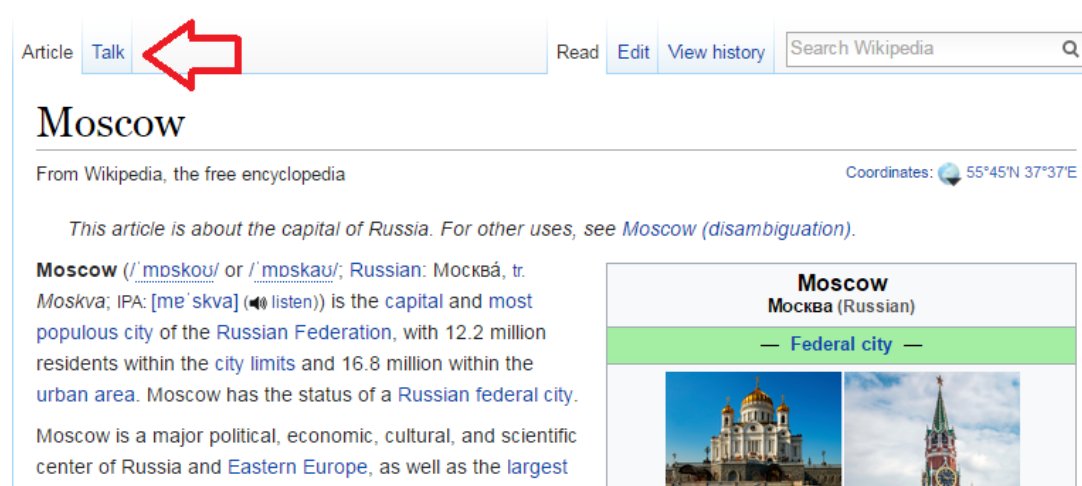
Third, each *Wikipedia* article is also accompanied by a dedicated ‘Talk’ page. These are used primarily as a discussion forum in which contributors are able to debate issues relating to sections of the existing article, plan new content and negotiate consensus within the community (Pentzold 2009: 257). Once again, these paratextual spaces can be accessed simply by clicking on a tab (labelled ‘Talk’) located near the top left corner of each article page (see Figure 4.7). Comments are organised within the Talk page both chronologically and thematically (according to topic headings created by the community) and, having posted within the forum, contributors are strongly encouraged to sign and date their comment.⁵⁸ In much the same way as for the main article Revision History archives, every comment made on these Talk pages from the forum’s creation through to the present day can be accessed through the ‘View history’ tab.⁵⁹

Discussions here range from rather banal arguments over the ‘house-rules’ governing the presentation of *Wikipedia* content (*e.g.* hyphenation and capitalisation policies), to fascinating and long-running debates concerning politics, culture and ideology. Han-Teng Liao’s (2009) exploration of the Chinese *Wikipedia* for instance discusses the fact that the encyclopaedia’s Talk pages are often the site of ‘flame wars’, or particularly intense clashes between editors, often reflecting deep-seated offline political tensions (such as those associated with the relationship of Hong Kong to mainland China). These discussion pages thus provide unprecedented access to the ‘rich context’ lying behind each article’s content (Viegas & Wattenburg 2006): as Fernanda Viegas and Martin Wattenberg (2006) suggest, while similar arguments undoubtedly occur ‘behind the scenes’ among the editors of the *New York Times* or the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, this feature of the *Wikipedia* platform explicitly reveals the “cacophony of individual voices” that have been involved in its construction.

⁵⁸ This is done by the contributor pressing the tilde (~) button on their keyboard four times. An automated script or ‘bot’ then adds – in the case of registered users – the contributor’s name with a link to their User Profile, and enters an accurate timestamp. In the case of unregistered users, contributions are marked simply by the user’s IP address and the time and date this addition was made. On the rare occasions that a contributor does not sign and date their Talk page comment, this information can still be found by accessing the Revision History of the Talk page.

⁵⁹ On particularly active Talk pages, discussions are periodically archived and placed in a separate location (*e.g.* [Talk: Paris/Archive 1](#)). Links to these archives are generally placed prominently near the top of the current version of the page.

Figure 4.7: Screenshot showing the location of the 'Talk' page tab.



Previous research has already indicated that, when some form of translation activity has been used in the creation of an article, these pages also often include some discussion of issues and difficulties encountered when negotiating linguistic and cultural barriers. Ari Hautasaari and Toru Ishida (2011: 127) for example have shown that Wikipedians frequently use these spaces to exchange ideas on problems associated with target-culture relevance, source referencing, transliteration, and wording choices. As we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, incorporating analysis of such discussions into methodological models for text analysis thus permits translation studies researchers to gain a much deeper understanding of the processes and tensions that shape multilingual contributor activity.

4.2.4 User Profile pages

Fourthly, we should note the potential insights made possible by *Wikipedia's* 'User Profile' pages (see Figure 4.8). Users are not required to register an account with the encyclopaedia project in order to edit most of its content, but frequent contributors are encouraged to do so, *i.e.* to choose a username (*e.g.* *Marek69* or *Der Statistiker*) and to create and maintain a personal profile page.⁶⁰ This is because, as the relevant community guideline states ([Wikipedia: User pages](#)), User Profiles "facilitat[e] interaction and sharing between users" by enabling Wikipedians to find and leave

⁶⁰ The information requested by the *Wikipedia* community as part of the account registration process is minimal. Users may provide an email address but this is entirely optional, and they are not asked to disclose their name, age, gender, nationality or any other kind of personal data.

messages for one another in the labyrinthine bazaar of the platform.⁶¹ These pages can be accessed by typing ‘User:’ and then the desired username into the search box in the top right-hand corner of any *Wikipedia* page, or by clicking on links to that user’s name where it appears in the Revision History archives and/or Talk pages.

While in a minority of cases these profiles contain very little or no information that might be relevant to our research interests, contributors frequently volunteer details relating to their particular interests, motivations, professional background, nationality, education and language skills, as well as a list of those articles or projects they have previously worked on. This information may be presented in the form of a short paragraph, narrating that individual’s personal history of involvement in *Wikipedia* (as is the case for user *Simonides* in Figure 4.8), or alternatively by means of a selection of ‘userboxes’ (as is the case for user *Hectorian* in Figure 4.9). These colourful boxes are chosen by the user themselves and contain a wide range of different types of information, from the trivial (“This user prefers warm weather” – [Wikipedia: Userboxes](#)) to the various specialisms and interests of that person (“This user comes from Greece and is Greek Orthodox” – [User: Hectorian](#); see Figure 4.9). When analysed in conjunction with comments made by the contributor on the Talk pages described above, these profiles often enable the researcher to build up a complex picture of the authors involved in creating *Wikipedia*’s content.⁶² As we will see later in this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6), such a picture is frequently invaluable in understanding the ‘narrative location’ from which any given edit was produced.

Of particular relevance to our analysis in Chapter 5 is the fact that a user’s language skills are often promoted on their User Profile via so-called ‘Babel’ boxes (see Figure 4.10). These boxes list the languages with which the individual considers themselves able to contribute and their level of proficiency in each case: the user can thus let the rest of the editing community know that he or she is able to contribute with a ‘basic’ (Level 1), ‘intermediate’ (Level 2), ‘advanced’ (Level 3), ‘near-native’ (level 4), ‘professional’ (level 5) or ‘native’ level of proficiency in any number of the world’s (real or artificial) languages ([Wikipedia: Babel](#)). According to the guidelines found on the ‘Babel’ project page ([Wikipedia: Babel](#)), having a ‘basic’ level of linguistic ability means that the individual has enough of an understanding to be able to interpret written material or answer simple questions in this language. ‘Intermediate’ language skills on the other hand are “enough for editing and

⁶¹ Like article pages, User Profiles also have a designated Talk page where contributors may discuss issues that do not relate directly to any one encyclopaedia entry.

⁶² As mentioned above, unregistered users do not have such personal pages but are identified solely by their IP address. Nevertheless, some information can occasionally still be gleaned by tracing this IP address to a specific geographical location and by looking at other edits made from that same internet connection, most likely by the same individual.

discussions”, while ‘advanced’ level users “can write in this language with no problem, [though] some small errors might occur.” The ‘near-native’, ‘professional’ and ‘native’ categories are reserved finally for those contributors who are completely fluent in the language in question, either because it is their mother-tongue or the language in which many of their daily (professional or non-professional) interactions take place.

Figure 4.8: User Profile page for Simonides.



The screenshot shows the Wikipedia user profile page for Simonides. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'User page', 'Talk', 'Read', 'Edit', and 'View history'. To the right of these links is a search box labeled 'Search Wikipedia' with a magnifying glass icon. Below the navigation bar, the title 'User:Simonides' is displayed in a large, bold font. Underneath the title, a subtitle reads 'From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia'. The main content area contains a paragraph of text describing the user's history on Wikipedia, followed by a bulleted list of three areas of interest: subsuming all Lists of Writers, Philosophers, etc. under a giant index of major writers; someone to help with creating, sorting and editing all the copious data for the lists; and agreement on a system of distribution for these lists among the appropriate categories.

User page [Talk](#) [Read](#) [Edit](#) [View history](#)

User:Simonides

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

I joined on the 16th of June, 2004 after reading an article on [Wilhelm Reich](#) that needed correction. I then noticed that Wikipedia did not have an article on [Cavafy](#), the famous Greek poet, and I decided to create a brief article about him. In my first flush of enthusiasm I also created articles on [Henri Michaux](#), [Dubravka Ugresic](#) and [Yuri Olesha](#), without actually writing much. It has been downhill since then. I've been sucked into the pedant's whirlpool of Suggestions, Critiques, and Edits, and below are some of my current obsessions.

I believe all or most members should be using the [Wikiprojects](#) to smooth out the reckless, incomplete and unorganized [categories](#), [lists](#), and unformatted or stubbed or forgotten articles that infest Wikipedia. I've personally restructured the [Catalogue of Wikiprojects](#), and I would like co-operation and assistance with three areas:

- subsuming all Lists of Writers, Philosophers, etc under a giant index of major writers, for which I need
 - someone to help with creating, sorting and editing all the copious data for the lists;
 - agreement on a system of distribution for these lists among the appropriate categories;
 - standardization of the lists everywhere they occur;

Figure 4.9: User Profile page for Hectorian.

User page

Talk

Read

Edit

View history

Search Wikipedia

Q

User:Hectorian

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Subpages

[edit]

User:Hectorian/Articles

User:Hectorian/Songs about Smyrni

User:Hectorian/Draft

Famous quotes about the Greeks

[edit]

For those who think that Greece today is of no importance, allow me to say that they could not had been more wrong. Modern, just like ancient Greece, has unique importance for everyone who is trying to find himself.

Henry Miller, American writer

When the birthplace of the finest civilization the world ever experienced, the country to which we owe what makes life superior and more beautiful, faces such an attack, the place of all real people is by her side.

Wikipedia:Babel

Facts, Interests and Ideas

This user comes from Greece and is a Greek Orthodox.

This user is of Greek ancestry.

This user supports the return of the Parthenon Marbles.

This user supports the European Union.

This user is a citizen of the European Union.

This user is a citizen of the European Union.

Figure 4.10: Wikipedia Babel boxes for Swedish, English, Norwegian, Hebrew, Lithuanian, Spanish and Aragonese.

Wikipedia:Babel

sv

Den här användaren talar **svenska** som **modersmål**.

en-5

This user is able to contribute with a **professional** level of **English**.

no-4

Denne brukaren/brukeren meistarar/behersker **norsk** på **morsmålsnivå**.

he-3

משתמש זה מסוגל לתרום ברמה **מתקדמת** של **עברית**.

lt-2

Šis vartotojas gali prisidėti prie projekto **vidutinio lygio lietuvių** kalba.

es-1

Este usuario puede contribuir con un nivel **básico** de **español**.

an-0

Iste usuario **no repleca l'aragonés** (u el repleca con prou dificultat).

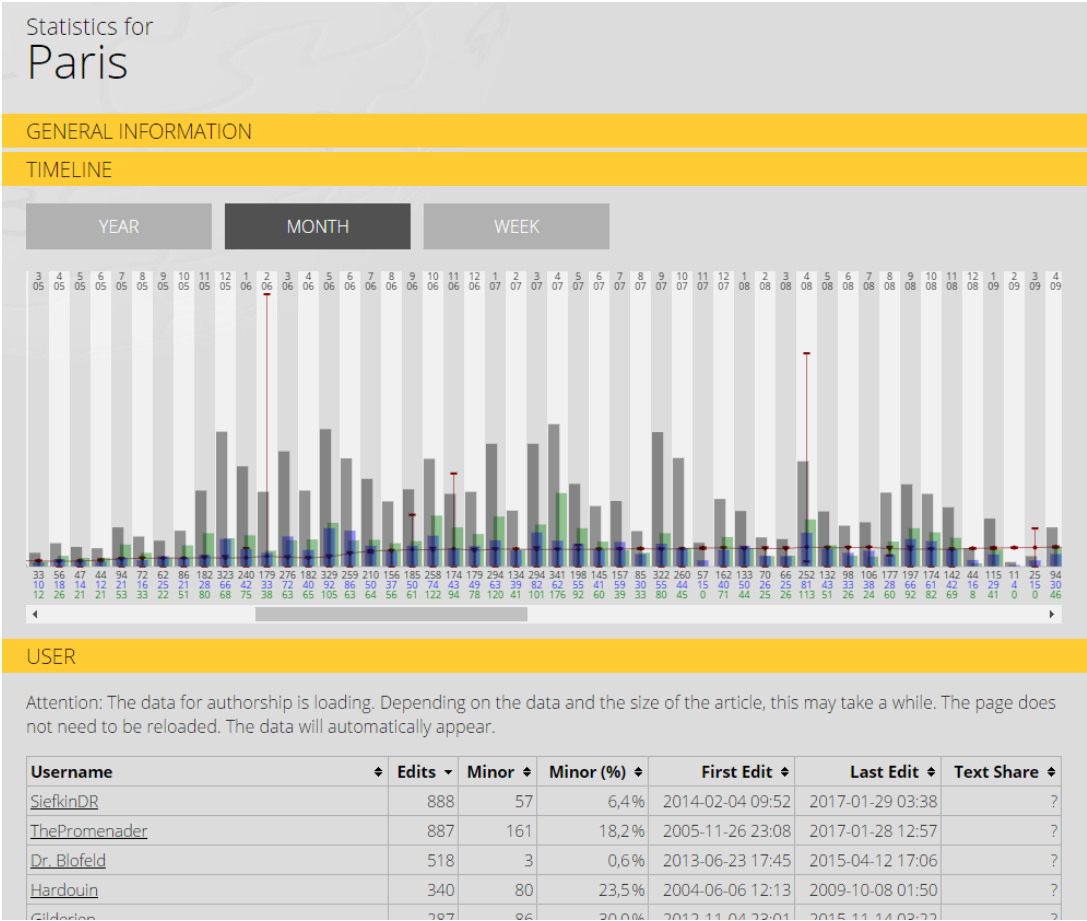
4.2.5 Statistics engines

Finally, there is the wealth of statistical information that *Wikipedia*, as an online digital platform, is able to provide. On the one hand, tools such as the ‘Page View Statistics’ generator, accessible via the ‘View history’ tab from any article page, give a day-by-day break-down of the number of times a specified article has been viewed, with the option to choose between page views registered over the previous ninety days or in any month in the past going back to December 2007 (when the database was created). Analysis of this information can thus provide precise insight into the relative level of interest *Wikipedia* readers show towards different entries or kinds of entry, and how this might change over time (see e.g. [Page View Statistics: Paris](#)).

Alternatively, there are the ‘Revision History Statistics’ pages (also known as ‘X! Tools’ after the software that generates them) which allow the researcher access to tables and graphics describing, amongst other things, the relative intensity of community activity (in terms of the number of edits) in any year, month or week of the article’s past (Figure 4.11). This data too is accessible from a link within the ‘View history’ tab and can be used, most notably, to identify particularly conflictual moments in the text’s construction. The statistics available for the English-language article on the city of Paris for instance show that there have been around 12 ‘spikes’ in editor participation over the past 14 years (periods when the file size and number of non-minor⁶³ edits fluctuated significantly – [X! Tools: Paris](#)). Focusing initially on these moments in the history archives of the text has provided a useful starting point from which to launch the analysis in Chapter 6 as they represent periods when Wikipedians were engaged in negotiating major changes to the article’s content.

⁶³ A ‘minor’ edit is one which makes only superficial changes to the text, such as the correction of typographical errors, and small formatting and presentational amendments ([Wikipedia: Help: Minor edit](#)). These are identified within the Revision History archives by a small letter ‘m’ placed adjacent to the revision in question. They are also omitted from many of the statistical analyses of editor activity provided by the *X! Tools* environment.

Figure 4.11: Revision History Statistics for the English-language Wikipedia article about Paris.



Moreover, the Revision History Statistics have also proved valuable in the analysis offered in Chapter 5 for identifying the ‘core group’ of most active users working on each article. As I will explain in Section 5.2.1, by downloading the lists of contributors for each page and ranking them according to the number of edits they have made and the relative size of their personal contribution, we can use this quantitative data to find out which contributors have been the most influential within each article-focused community over the full course of its development. The Revision History Statistics for the English-language article on Paris for instance show that this text is to a large extent the result of the collaboration and deliberation of *SiefkinDR*, *ThePromenader*, *Dr. Blofeld*, *Hardouin*, *Gilderien*, *Der Statistiker*, *Blue Indigo*, *Marek69*, *Green Giant* and *Cold Creation*, each of whom have made over 100 changes to the article over the years and added many thousands of bytes of text.

Finally, we should note that, for statistics relating to any individual contributor, we can refer to the ‘Wikiscan’ tool which presents information on the total number of edits made by that user and the number of hours they have dedicated to participating within *Wikipedia* over the years (see *e.g.*

[Wikiscan: User: RHaworth](#)). This software also provides links to a full list of that Wikipedian's contributions and Talk page comments, with hyperlinks leading directly to each action and interaction.

4.3 METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Inextricably connected to each of these paratextual opportunities for research is an equally intriguing set of methodological challenges. This next section explores a selection of these issues in turn and discusses the ways in which these difficulties have informed my approach to the dataset.

4.3.1 Size

Most immediately evident perhaps is the over-abundance of information and potential data with which the researcher is now presented in this digital environment. Indeed, even if we look at the English-language *Wikipedia* alone, the scale of the full dataset defies all comprehension: just counting the encyclopaedic content pages, the project contains 5,363,102 articles at the time of writing (March 2017), a figure which grows by almost 800 articles every day. If we then factor in Talk pages and User Profiles, we quickly arrive at a total of over 41 million individual pages of data ([Wikimedia: Wikipedia statistics](#)).

Faced with such a sea of information, it is no wonder that many studies conducted with respect to the encyclopaedia have adopted approaches which harness the mass computing capabilities of modern PCs and digital software technologies to analyse the activity of Wikipedians in 'wide-angle', statistical terms. Indeed, "its complete documentation" (*i.e.* the fact that everything is recorded by *Wikipedia's* software), Yasseri *et al.* (2014: 25) note, "makes it particularly suited for such quantitative studies." Scott Hale's (2014) study of the wiki's multilingual users clearly illustrates this type of methodology. Using the *Internet Relay Chat (IRC)* system through which every change to every *Wikipedia* project is broadcast, Hale (2014: 100-101) collected data relating to every edit made in the 46 language editions with 100,000 or more articles over a one-month period (8 July 2013 to 9 August 2013). This resulted in a dataset of 3,518,955 edits produced by 55,568 registered users (Hale

2014: 102).⁶⁴ Having created various computer programmes capable of distinguishing between those users that edited in only one language version of the encyclopaedia and those that published in at least two, Hale (2014: 102) was then able to reveal not only that these multilingual users tend to be more active contributors than their monolingual counterparts, but also that the English edition seems to play a central role in the flows of information within the global *Wikipedia* project.

However, approaches which seek to provide a more qualitative picture of a particular aspect of user activity within the *Wikipedia* environment are confronted with the inevitability of having to drastically delimit in some way the dataset in order to reduce it down to a more practically manageable size. This has been done in a variety of ways by different scholars: in her study of the *Wikipedia* platform's volunteer translators, Julie McDonough Dolmaya (2015) decided to focus on just two language pairs (French-English and Spanish-English) and formed a set of 94 articles by compiling those listed within the 'Pages Needing Translation into English' sub-project over a two-year period. The size of this corpus was then further reduced by ranking the 94 articles according to the number of edits each received during the translation process and selecting every third one from this list. The resulting 29 articles could then be analysed individually and in much closer detail in order to explore the nature of the translation revision process within the encyclopaedia (McDonough Dolmaya 2015: 8). René König's (2013) case-study on the other hand focuses on just one article, namely, that referring in the German-language *Wikipedia* to the 'September 11' attacks on the USA in 2001. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis (Section 1.2), this article was selected because of its "politically loaded" subject matter (König 2013: 172), and through an analysis of the Talk page negotiations of its community, König provides a deep exploration of the power dynamics at play in the ostensibly 'democratic' construction of *Wikipedia* content. Indeed, it is only by investigating this one article at this high level of detail that König is able to make sense of the multifaceted discussions that have occurred on this page between proponents of many different accounts of the attacks.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the authors of both these studies are forced to admit to the lack of 'generalisability' for their results (König 2013: 172; McDonough Dolmaya 2015: 5). The articles contained within the 'Pages Needing Translation into English' sub-project represent only a small fraction of the total number of article-to-article translations occurring within *Wikipedia*, even just in terms of those specific language pairs (McDonough Dolmaya 2015: 5), while König's 'September 11' page is only

⁶⁴ For various methodological reasons, edits made by unregistered users and 'bots' (computer programmes that have been assigned a particular task within the *Wikipedia* project) were discounted from Hale's study (2014: 101).

⁶⁵ We will return to discuss the results of König's analysis in Chapter 6 when we analyse conflicts between traditional and popular forms of expertise in *Wikipedia* (Section 6.2).

one of thousands of other equally controversial *Wikipedia* articles. Consequently, unlike quantitative approaches such as Hale's (2014), neither McDonough Dolmaya nor König are able to claim that their conclusions might be applicable to or fully representative of the whole of the *Wikipedia* project. Rather, to paraphrase McDonough Dolmaya (2015: 5), they are limited by the sheer size and heterogeneity of the project to being able to show the reader only a small selection of the various kinds of activity that transpire within the *Wikipedia* environment. As I will discuss in Section 4.4, the same is true of this doctoral research project.

4.3.2 Instability

Another challenging feature of *Wikipedia* is what we might term the 'immateriality' and 'instability' of its content. Unlike most of the non-digital texts with which translation studies and indeed the rest of the humanities have been historically concerned (*e.g.* books, newspapers, films), the online encyclopaedia's articles are significantly less easily identifiable as fixed and concrete 'objects of study' (*cf.* Littau 1997: 91). Rather, they are fluid and ephemeral, accessible only in the immaterial strings of virtual code contained within the web: all content is openly subject to change and what we read one minute could be transformed the next.⁶⁶

For the encyclopaedia, Axel Bruns (2008: 137) has suggested, this mutability surely represents one of its most ground-breaking strengths, allowing contributors to fix errors and keep its articles up to date with current affairs with much greater accuracy and timeliness than any of its rivals (*e.g.* *Encyclopaedia Britannica*). For researchers, however, this does have major implications for methodology design. Most significantly, this volatility requires that wiki pages must be thought of as comparable to a "single frame of a television broadcast" (Bruns 2008: 138).⁶⁷ While this 'frame' "may contain valuable information in its own right", Bruns (2008: 138) argues it must always be borne in mind that it "forms only part of a larger, moving image." In other words, we must recognise that a *Wikipedia* article is not a finished and complete product, but a dynamic and developmental component in an unfolding process. In practice this means that the analyst may never consider the

⁶⁶ Indeed, it is worth noting here that, as of February 2017 and since its creation in 2001, the English-language *Wikipedia* has been edited over 876 million times ([Wikipedia: Special: Statistics](#)).

⁶⁷ Although we can clearly understand the intention behind Bruns' use of this metaphor, it is suggested that likening a *Wikipedia* article to a single frame of a film would in fact be much more accurate than his comparison with a television broadcast. This is because each frame of a film is projected separately and sequentially onto the screen, much like each version of the *Wikipedia* text is published separately and sequentially within the platform. Television, on the other hand, works by changing each pixel of the image at a time, scanning across and down the screen. This means we do not see a rapid succession of still images, but the rapid evolution and transformation of a mesh of light-points.

current article page in isolation from its previous formulations, nor privilege its content over theirs. To do so would be to neglect its transient nature and to assign it a fixedness and completeness that cannot be justified in this digital environment.

As a solution to this issue, my analysis takes inspiration from ‘genetic’ methods for the study of literature first developed in France in the mid-1960s and early 1970s (Hay 1988: 68; see also de Biasi 2000; Ferrer 2011; Grésillon 1994; Lebrave 1992).⁶⁸ As Lars Bernaerts and Dirk Van Hulle (2013: 286) explain, whilst literary criticism has tended to consider only the published version of any given text as a worthy research object, genetic critics have argued that “it is impossible to separate categorically the act of writing from the written work” and indeed that it is productive to consider this final form of the text as only a single stage in the gradual process of creation (Hay 1988: 73). Therefore, scholars adhering to this view focus not merely on the ‘finished’ text itself, but additionally on its ‘compositional history’ and any preparatory materials or alternative versions that might be available to the analyst (Falconer 1993: 7). They are interested in the notebooks, diaries, sketches, rough drafts, manuscripts, letters to publishers, etc. that form its ‘pre-text’ (‘avant-texte’ in French), considering this potentially just as insightful as the published work (Hay 1988: 69). In examining these documents, genetic analysts hope to be able to better understand the process of literary production, to “identify and describe the combination of transfers, substitutions, extensions and reductions” that the manuscript underwent throughout the course of its development and to “trace back these operations to the dynamic forces which actuate[d] them” (Hay 1988: 70).

The narrative analysis in Chapter 6 of this thesis has aimed to follow a similar methodology and to reconstruct important moments in the genesis of each article’s content over time, inspecting previous archived versions of the current text in order to document the series of additions, deletions and other alterations that it has undergone. Through examination of the User Profiles, Talk pages and other paratextual comments, an attempt has also been made to uncover the ‘dynamic forces’ which prompted these changes in order to understand how different spatial narratives interact within the *Wikipedia* environment. While it must be admitted, as Louis Hay (1988: 68-9) does, that such an analytical model can still only hope to reveal “but a fraction” of the complicated mental, social and political processes to which this data bears witness, I would argue that this genetic approach nevertheless accommodates the unstable nature of my dataset much more effectively than any other methodologies which might focus simply on the most recent version of the text. The

⁶⁸ While Graham Falconer (1993: 8) suggests that this form of literary criticism predates the work of Louis Hay and his contemporaries by many decades, it is nevertheless commonly agreed that it was from the 1960s and 1970s onwards that the idea of genetic criticism was first paid serious and sustained attention (Falconer 1993: 13, Hay 1988: 68).

benefits outweigh the potential difficulties associated with attempting to weave together the many different elements involved in this form of textual analysis, and justify the added time and effort this approach will require.

4.3.3 Ethics

Third, there is the complex issue of research ethics as regards the use of web-based data and the analysis of *Wikipedia*'s User Profile and Talk pages in particular. Put simply, the rapidly changing media context of the internet age means that the researcher may no longer rely purely on the distinctions and boundaries developed and imposed by institutional review boards in order to maintain data confidentiality and to protect subjects from harm. Defining what constitutes 'personally identifiable information' is rarely simple in the online world: for instance, the capabilities of powerful modern search engines mean that almost anything can now potentially be linked back to an individual, even after conventional anonymization strategies have been implemented (Buchanan & Zimmer 2015). The classical binary oppositions of 'public/private' and 'published/unpublished' are also profoundly blurred here (Hudson & Bruckman 2005: 287): although comments uploaded to webspaces within *Wikipedia* are freely accessible and therefore in a sense public, these exchanges were often made within a close-knit community setting and the people involved were not necessarily aware that they would later be subjected to scrutiny, research and analysis. In some cases, it is conceivable that they may not now wish their contributions to be unearthed from the archives and made even more public – through publication in academic journals and doctoral theses – especially if the content in question contains embarrassing, misleading or politically sensitive information (Buchanan & Zimmer 2015).

Without the assistance and support of established ethics review frameworks, researchers must themselves put particular effort into ensuring that ethical considerations guide every aspect of their practice and take extra care to anticipate and evaluate the implications of their actions. This may be achieved only by maintaining a flexible approach which considers each emergent issue on a case-by-case basis, weighs the risks against the benefits and develops appropriate strategies accordingly (De Costa 2015: 249). To give an example, I have in most cases decided that it is ethically sound to quote Wikipedians' Talk page discussions directly and to identify such individuals by their usernames. I have judged that this does not in any way compromise these individuals' offline identities and that their comments are for the most part not sufficiently contentious or sensitive to warrant any

additional layers of anonymisation.⁶⁹ This policy additionally preserves the authenticity of my data: thus, not only does it lend my analysis significantly more weight, but it also helps ensure the subjects' views are fairly represented. That said, I have in just a few cases decided that it is wiser to omit reference to certain information collected altogether.

4.3.4 Hyperlinks

The fourth challenge presented by *Wikipedia* relates to the change in users' reading practices engendered by its digital networked architecture. As Lev Manovich (2001: 60) explains, in traditional media the individual elements of a text are 'hardwired' into a single fixed structure: a book for instance is in most cases produced to be read in a linear sequence, predetermined in advance by its author(s), from beginning to middle to end, and every 'copy' of that book is identical to the master from which it was created. Within new media platforms such as *Wikipedia* however, this idea of a set sequence in which the various elements of the content are to be received holds much less, if any, relevance (Hartelius 2010: 510-11). Rather, almost every sentence of a *Wikipedia* article contains at least one hyperlink (and often many more) connecting it either to another of the encyclopaedia's pages (a so-called 'Wikilink'), to a page on another project within the *Wikimedia* umbrella group (an 'interwiki link'), or a site existing elsewhere on the world wide web (an 'external link').

As a result, while a *Wikipedia* article may still be read in the customary manner (beginning-middle-end), this feature of the environment encourages users to navigate the series of links in order to find information according to their own individual interests and needs.⁷⁰ The reader's relationship to the text is transformed (Pym 2011): not only have we become active participants in creating our own version of the 'text' before us, giving rise to a potentially infinite number of configurations for the digital content (Manovich 2001: 57), but we now tend to engage in an "accelerated form of power browsing" (Cronin 2013: 101), spending on average between just 19 and 27 seconds on each

⁶⁹ We might for instance have considered carefully paraphrasing – rather than directly quoting – a comment containing contentious or sensitive information in order to limit the 'linkability' of that data to any specific individual.

⁷⁰ It could be argued that offline encyclopaedias had already taken a step towards this non-linear 'paradigmatic' style of text composition (Pym 2011). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for instance is not made to be read from its first to its last page, but to be seen as a collection of articles which the reader can choose to move between according to their interests. However, the fact remains that such encyclopaedias still maintain some kind of alphabetical, topical or historical sequence and therefore that *Wikipedia's* hyperlinks take this paradigmatic shift significantly further (West *et al.* 2009: 1097): the rhizomatic, graph structure of *Wikipedia* contains no hierarchical orders and gives the reader the option to link to another article in almost every sentence, meaning that in practice it is rare to read a full article from start to finish.

webpage (Clicktale 2008, cited in Cronin 2013: 101).⁷¹ In other words, texts are no longer necessarily read steadily, linearly and cumulatively, but are often consumed as rapidly as possible as part of a complex networked system of content in which there is no (single, predetermined) beginning, no middle and no end.

In this context, research methods too must change. Specifically, it is argued that textual analysis should lend particular weight to content that might tend to attract the attention of ‘power-browsers’. Approaches should take into account for instance the results of Jakob Nielsen’s (2006) web-user eye-tracking survey which has suggested that skim readers privilege text placed in the top few lines of a webpage and/or close to the left-hand margin in their search for information online. In other words, the position and layout of a segment of information on the webpage should be given specific significance in our analysis of the *Wikipedia* articles contained in the dataset, meaning we might focus especially closely on the title and introductory paragraphs as opposed to other sections of the text.

4.3.5 Translation

Finally, *Wikipedia* presents a testing environment in which to work as a researcher interested specifically in translation because of the complex nature of such activities in this environment. In the Introduction (Section 1.3), I have argued that, while more prototypical, classically defined forms of translation between different language editions of the site do occur within *Wikipedia*, to focus exclusively on this narrowly specific kind of translation is to fail to engage with the true breadth and variety of multilingual activities taking place in this online context. As we will explore in particular detail in Chapter 5, Wikipedians frequently produce new content by translating, collating and combining many tens and, in some cases, hundreds of resources published in languages other than that in which they are writing. The target text’s content is created, in other words, through a highly subjective process of multilingual ‘bricolage’ (Deuze 2006: 70), of repurposing, reworking, and reassembling multiple ‘bits and pieces’ of mediated reality across languages and cultures. As self-commissioning volunteers, multilingual users enjoy full freedom to choose the order and manner in which they present and synthesise this information, and the relationships between source and target texts are consequently much more diffuse and fluid than has traditionally been considered in translation studies.

⁷¹ Another study produced by Weinreich *et al.* (2008: 1-26; cited in Cronin 2013: 101) suggests that this average viewing time for webpages could even be as low as 10 seconds per page.

Thus, any attempt to apply conventional translation studies approaches developed for the comparison of source and target texts, and for the identification of shifts in meaning between the two – as McDonough Dolmaya (2015) has done in her analysis of *Wikipedia* translation – would completely miss the point. It would assume, I have argued in Section 1.3, that translation and original writing are two entirely separate processes in the *Wikipedia* context, and therefore that any perceived difference between source and target is essentially a ‘transfer error’ (cf. McDonough Dolmaya 2015: 14). Instead, translation scholars interested in *Wikipedia* must adopt a very broad understanding of the object of translation studies and look elsewhere to other disciplines within the humanities and social sciences as a source of alternative explanatory models for exploring these phenomena. This is why, following Baker (2006) and as explained in the previous chapter (Section 3.3), a theoretical framework based in narrative theory was chosen for the study of translation activity within *Wikipedia*. By highlighting the story as its basic unit of analysis, it takes a much wider-angle approach and allows us to look beyond source-target accuracy and correspondence to focus on the intricate processes involved in the “elaboration, mutation, transformation and dissemination” of knowledge across linguacultures (Baker 2014: 159). It additionally provides the analytical tools required for disentangling the various actors and influences implicated in the collaborative processes by which the texts of my dataset are produced (see Section 3.4.2), and enables the researcher to come to terms with the significance of each contribution through an understanding of the principles of selective appropriation and relationality (Section 3.4.3).

Finally, a narrative-based analysis also has the advantage of accommodating much more readily the multimodal approach that I have argued is necessary in order to take into consideration the hyperlinked nature of the *Wikipedia* environment and the power-browsing behaviour it engenders. Indeed, as Baker (2014: 159) comments, one of the foremost strengths of using socio-narrative theory as a basis for translation studies is that it allows for a more holistic understanding of the text as an object of study. In other words, rather than concentrate simply on the written or spoken language of the article itself, it also acknowledges the relevance of such non-verbal features as the layout of this content, and asks how these might be significant within the narrative being told (Baker 2014: 159).

4.4 DATA SELECTION AND COLLECTION

In Section 4.3.1 of this chapter I argued that any attempt to collect a data sample for qualitative analysis which might be entirely representative of the whole is essentially an impossible task, given

the size and heterogeneity of the *Wikipedia* project. Instead, the thesis will focus on a small subset of articles, analysing them intensively to provide detailed insights into the people and processes behind their construction. Specifically, it will examine the city-related articles contained within the 11 March 2016 version of the so-called ‘Vital Articles’ list in the English- and French-language *Wikipedias* ([Wikipedia: Vital articles](#)).

The English- and French-language editions of the encyclopaedia have been selected in order to foreground and counterbalance two different aspects of the collaborative production and dissemination of spatial knowledge across linguacultures within *Wikipedia*. On the one hand, the statistical analyses of Scott Hale (2014) and Shahar Ronen *et al.* (2014) have indicated that the activities of multilingual Wikipedians are largely centred on the English-language edition and consequently that English acts as a ‘hub’ language holding disproportionate influence within the site’s global knowledge networks (Section 1.2). Therefore, by exploring specific cases of translation activity within the French-language version, we are able to investigate the central position of English from a more qualitative perspective and to provide insight into how this dominance might be expressed at the textual level. Analysis of the English-language *Wikipedia*, on the other hand, allows us to demonstrate the extent to which even an encyclopaedia written in the internet’s *lingua franca* still depends heavily on forms of translation and the language skills of its volunteer contributors in order to achieve its goal of producing a representation of the sum of all human knowledge.

The ‘Vital Articles’ list is a collection of subject areas for which members of the wider *Wikipedia* community have decided that all language editions of their encyclopaedia “should have corresponding high-quality articles” ([Wikipedia: Vital articles](#)). This list was first created in 2004 after a proposal by Danny~metawiki (12:11, 29 May 2004, [Meta-Wiki: List of articles every Wikipedia should have](#)) and it has been added to and altered by many hundreds of Wikipedians since. As of January 2017, it currently has four ‘levels’ ([Wikipedia: Vital articles](#)): the first level contains just ten fundamental article subjects (namely, ‘Earth’, ‘Life’, ‘Human’, ‘History of the World’, ‘Culture’, ‘Language’, ‘The Arts’, ‘Science’, ‘Technology’ and ‘Mathematics’) while ‘Level 2’ features a wider range of one hundred article subjects, including articles on the six habitable continents, for instance. ‘Level 3’ lists one thousand articles and it is at this level of detail that a set of seventeen ‘vital’ city-related articles is found in the ‘Human Geography’ section (see Table 4.1).

Numerous objections could potentially be raised in terms of the extent to which this list truly represents the seventeen most globally significant cities. We might note for instance that only one Chinese city (Beijing) and one North American city (New York) feature, while two Indian cities (Mumbai and Delhi) are present. Moreover, not one sub-Saharan African city has been included,

despite the variety of cultures and many tens of millions of people who live in urban areas across this part of the world. Nevertheless, it is argued that this list does still constitute a suitable basis for the selection of my dataset. This is primarily because the prominent status accorded to these articles by the *Wikipedia* community itself means they can be considered important foci for the volunteer editor population, texts whose construction Wikipedians take particularly seriously. As ‘vital articles’, they are among the foundation stones on which the entire encyclopaedia project is built.

Table 4.1: List of cities contained in the ‘Vital Articles’ list (Level 3).

City name as it currently appears on the English-language <i>Wikipedia</i> :	Number of page views received in the past 90 days (26 April 2016):	City name as it currently appears on the French-language <i>Wikipedia</i> :	Number of page views received in the past 90 days (26 April 2016):
Beijing	353,669	Pékin	52,849
Cairo	186,423	Le Caire	35,212
Delhi	443,468	Delhi	18,497
Hong Kong	1,107,442	Hong Kong	113,100
Istanbul	470,003	Istanbul	82,433
Jakarta	253,159	Jakarta	28,492
Jerusalem	429,138	Jérusalem	64,622
London	1,255,013	Londres	188,444
Mexico City	427,204	Mexico	60,643
Moscow	358,494	Moscou	54,833
Mumbai	723,034	Bombay	52,665
New York	882,083	New York	275,191
Paris	695,382	Paris	492,619
Rome	518,869	Rome	133,455
São Paulo	234,139	São Paulo	38,023
Singapore	1,404,882	Singapour	177,274
Tokyo	522,065	Tokyo	100,782

As Table 4.1 also shows, these are in addition articles which receive a considerable amount of attention from the general internet-using public. In other words, these are not insignificant texts hidden away in the depths of *Wikipedia*’s most obscure corners, but core articles that receive many tens of thousands (or even hundreds of thousands in the case of the English-language *Wikipedia*) of visitors each and every month. Even the least ‘popular’ article in the selection (the French-language article on the subject of ‘Delhi’) attracts an average of just over 200 page views a day.

Finally, it should be noted that because my focus here is on processes of multilingual knowledge production, I will not be investigating the activity of communities involved in the construction of articles about cities where the dominant language is the same as that being used to write the article. In other words, I am not interested here in the volunteer editors working on the ‘London’ or ‘New York’ articles in the English-language *Wikipedia*, or the contributors to the ‘Paris’ article in the French-language edition. Rather, the analysis of the next two chapters concentrates on the construction of articles such as the English-language page on ‘Mexico City’ and the French-language page about ‘Hong Kong’, *i.e.* the production of city-related articles where the primary language of the source locale is different from that in which the content is being pieced together.

As for data collection, this proceeded in the first instance by locating and downloading the following materials in relation to each city-related article included in the Vital Articles list for the English- and French-language editions:

- a *PDF* copy of the latest version of the article text, including the Reference List for that page;
- a *PDF* copy of all the Talk pages connected to the entry, including any archived versions;
- a *Microsoft Excel* data file containing the Revision History Statistics for each encyclopaedic text;
- a *PDF* copy of the currently visible User Profiles for the ‘core group’ of the ten most influential contributors to each page (defined in Section 5.2);
- a *Microsoft Excel* data file containing links to the *Wikipedia* contributions of each of these users.

Any webpages which were subsequently required during the process of analysis were also downloaded to my personal hard drive in order to permit quick access and to ensure a certain degree of data stability. As I will explain in the next two chapters, the analysis then involved working through these *PDF* and *Excel* files, methodically highlighting and commenting on the issues raised in each article-focused community with reference to the narrative typology set out in the previous chapter. In a second stage of the analysis, all of these highlighted comments and periods of editing activity were then copied and pasted into a single *Microsoft Word* file, where they could be grouped thematically and analysed in comparison to each other.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Through a focus on the key features of the *Wikipedia* platform, this chapter has presented a comprehensive overview of the encyclopaedia as a research environment for spatial narrative analysis. It has discussed a range of the paratextual tools that open up significant avenues for investigation, and explored a number of the major challenges that are engendered by this online context. I have also demonstrated how I have sought to overcome many of these difficulties and explained the data selection and collection process. With this analytical framework now in place, we may now move to the data analysis of Chapters 5 and 6.

5 WIKIPEDIA AS SOCIAL SPACE

“It would be good if someone could translate this”

- C S, Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5 (05:04, 15 September 2008)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis of this chapter aims to demonstrate that a significant disjuncture exists between what Lefebvre would call the ‘conceived’, ‘perceived’ and ‘lived’ spaces of *Wikipedia* (see Section 2.4.1). Specifically, in Section 5.2, it discusses how the *Wikipedia* environment has so far been narrated, both by the *Wikipedia* community itself and in the majority of *Wikipedia*-focused research, and argues that these accounts largely obscure the role and significance of language and translation in structuring this space. Then, in Sections 5.3 and 5.4, I seek to highlight some of the ways in which linguistic barriers can be perceived to shape user participation within the site. I begin by analysing the profiles of the ‘core group’ (defined below) of the most influential contributors to each of the articles in my dataset (Section 5.3). This analysis clearly shows that proficiency in at least one of the official languages of the urban locales presented would seem to be an important prerequisite for significant engagement in the construction of each of these encyclopaedia articles, and that this is especially true when looking at the English-language edition of *Wikipedia*. Next, in Section 5.4, I examine the lists of ‘original materials’ that must be referenced at the foot of every article page according to *Wikipedia*’s core policy of ‘Verifiability’ ([Wikipedia: Verifiability](#) – see Section 4.2.1). This section provides strong evidence, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, of the extent to which Wikipedians rely on foreign-language sources – and consequently on the linguistic skills of certain members of their community – to produce detailed, useful and up-to-date content about many cities around the world. In this way, knowledge production and dissemination in this context is shown to

entail a complex range of multilingual activities, simultaneously involving translation, summary, paraphrase and synthesis across linguistic and cultural borders. Finally, the chapter looks at comments made by users and co-constructors of the *Wikipedia* space within Talk pages and Edit Summaries with regard to the multilingual dimensions of their work (Section 5.5). It makes use of these more anecdotal, lived experience-based accounts of participating within the online encyclopaedia to explain not only how language shapes user experience of *Wikipedia*, but also why this might be the case. Section 5.6 then concludes the chapter with a brief summary, linking its findings forward to the analysis and discussion of Chapter 6.

5.2 WIKIPEDIA AS CONCEIVED SPACE

From its very beginnings in January 2001, the unifying goal of the *Wikipedia* community has been to create a website through volunteer collaboration which might give “every single person on the planet [...] free access to the sum of all human knowledge” (Wales 2004b). According to recent surveys of the *Wikipedia* population (*Wikimedia* 2011), this ambition is the most frequently cited motivation driving user participation and, as such, it is what gives this vast and heterogeneous group of unpaid and otherwise unaffiliated individuals some sense of shared purpose and collective identity.⁷² It constitutes what Pérez-González (2010: 264) has termed, in reference to other volunteer networks, their ‘gravitational core’.

Central to this aim is a powerful institutional narrative⁷³ which presents the *Wikipedia* platform first and foremost as the most public of public spaces.⁷⁴ The project’s ‘About’ pages discuss for instance how “[e]very day, hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world”, including “[p]eople of all ages, cultures and backgrounds”, come together within this virtual meeting place ([Wikipedia:](#)

⁷² In April 2011, the *Wikimedia Foundation* commissioned a major survey of *Wikipedia* editing activity and user motivations. They found that 69% of editors “started to contribute to *Wikipedia* because they liked the idea of volunteering to share knowledge” (*Wikimedia* 2011: 2).

⁷³ In the analysis that follows, I draw a distinction between the way in which *Wikipedia* is narrated as an institution (*i.e.* as an organisation founded for a particular purpose) and the ways in which individual users actually perceive, conceive and experience this space. Accordingly, the site’s ‘institutional’ narratives are largely those formulated within community pages that attempt to present *Wikipedia* and its organisational policies as a whole: most notably, these include the platform’s ‘About’ pages (*e.g.* [Wikipedia: About](#)) and any guidelines (*e.g.* [Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View](#)) that attempt to outline what is and is not good practice within the *Wikipedia* space.

⁷⁴ Following Setha Low and Neil Smith (2006: 5) and Theresa Hoskyns (2014: 4), I understand ‘public space’ as a space into which the general population is allowed more or less unrestricted access, rather than simply a space which is publically owned or managed. Indeed, it is important to recognise that many of the spaces that we think of as public (including *Wikipedia*) are in fact owned and managed by private interests such as development companies, land owners or, in the case of *Wikipedia*, bodies such as the *Wikimedia Foundation*.

[About](#)). They describe *Wikipedia* as an environment which is “almost entirely open”, which features little in the way of restrictions that might prevent users from entering ([Wikipedia: Wikipedia](#)). The emphasis is on accessibility and freedom, on *Wikipedia* as a unified, supraterritorial space of global communication and education. Here, there are no borders and no barriers, nothing which might hinder users in exploring the site on their own terms, following their own interests and information-seeking needs. Even more significantly, anyone who is interested is keenly encouraged to get involved in the future construction of any aspect of the platform itself. Unlike many of the more conventional public spaces that we encounter in our daily lives, the general population are invited to become more than passive users of the environment: they are asked to “be bold”, to “[f]ind something that can be improved and make it better”, to become active co-participants in the site’s maintenance, development and success ([Wikipedia: Introduction](#)). Through this narrative, *Wikipedia* is constructed as an access-all-areas arena for democratic participation and interaction, made for the people, by the people (Kolbitsch & Maurer 2006).

Like all narratives, this spatial story is rooted in some perceived and lived reality, and it is difficult to think of a more open platform for global collaboration and education than *Wikipedia*. As discussed in the Introduction chapter (Section 1.1), the *Wikipedia* community is far larger and more diverse than any group previously involved in the production of a knowledge resource, and its content is read free of charge by a worldwide audience numbering in the hundreds of millions. That said, it is important to recognise that this public space narrative is – like all narratives – only partial and provisional, that it exists within a broader constellation of stories about the role of technology in the social production of space, and that it is told from a particular perspective with a certain set of objectives in mind. As such, it selectively appropriates certain features of the perceived reality and creates specific constellations of relationships between these elements (see Chapter 3). It highlights what is novel about the *Wikipedia* space (its virtual, supraterritorial existence and policy of allowing “anyone to edit”), whilst obscuring other features in discursive black holes.

Indeed, referring back to the analytical typology of spatial narratives developed in Section 3.5 of this thesis, it is interesting to emphasise the extent to which *Wikipedia*’s institutional account of its space reiterates many of the theoretical and meta narratives of the internet age that dominate more generally in Western societies. In all these stories, as Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 18) discuss, the development and proliferation of networked digital communications technologies, and the possibility they bring for instant communication across the globe, is linked to an intensification in the processes of globalisation and the shrinking of our human civilisation into a single space, a borderless world, a global village (cf. Lúcia Vasconcellos 2004; McLuhan 1962, 1964; Ohmae 1990).

In other words, and as is the case for *Wikipedia*, these master narratives foreground the creation of a unified supraterritorial space of flows for the instantaneous global dissemination of information and knowledge, the construction of a world-spanning singularity that exists both everywhere and nowhere.

By way of illustration, Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 23) note that this deterritorialised account of the emerging network society is particularly prominent in the work of Manuel Castells (2000/2010). In his study of the interface between globalisation, information technologies and capitalism, he constructs a theoretical narrative of cyberspace to explain how “a new communication system, increasingly speaking a universal, digital language, is both integrating globally the production and distribution of words, sounds and images of our culture, and customizing them to the tastes of the identities and moods of individuals” (Castells 2000/2010: 2). Indeed, this idea of a universal (*i.e.* deterritorialised), digital language as a *lingua franca* through which computer technologies and their users around the world are now able to communicate is key to Castells’ (2000/2010) discussion of ‘informationalism’, of information as the new, all-pervasive social and economic basis of world society. It is precisely this common digital language that not only allows data to be “stored, retrieved, processed, and transmitted” to any node in the global network, but that also permits the development of a “cumulative feedback loop” between knowledge production and knowledge application, leading to an exponential expansion of the information system (Castells 2000/2010: 29-31).

However, the fact is that, by focusing on the new supraterritorial features of this virtual dimension, these narratives largely mask the significance of the factors that determine how any given earth-bound, geographically-situated individual actually encounters, experiences and engages with this technologically-mediated space. They effectively “submerge the subject in indiscriminate, universalizing flows” and construct “frontierless utopias of cyberhype” (Cronin 2003: 59). Viewed from a translation studies perspective, this is particularly problematic, as Michael Cronin (2003: 59) has argued, because of the way they present what he terms a ‘neo-Babelian’ account of the world: these stories would suggest that the communication problems caused by the linguistic and cultural diversity of humankind are transcended in a new era of instantaneous intelligibility. The significance of the role played by translators within global communications networks is rendered ‘invisible’ in such narratives, and the ways in which language and culture structure human experience and understanding are almost entirely ignored (Bielsa & Bassnett 2009: 18; see also Bielsa 2010: 48; Demont-Heinrich 2011: 204; Pérez-González 2012: 162; van Doorslaer 2012: 1047).

Likewise, the significance and complexity of the role occupied by multilingual volunteers in the collaborative production and dissemination of knowledge within *Wikipedia* has been largely overlooked in most discussions of the site, both in the institutional narratives of the platform itself and the theoretical accounts of researchers. As argued above, *Wikipedia* as an institution is widely framed as a public space for global collaboration and education, as a borderless world that is openly accessible to all. Consequently, such accounts gloss over the implications of the linguistic diversity of human knowledge for the production of the encyclopaedia and side-line the importance of translation within the platform. Indeed, where translation is discussed at the institutional level of the project, it is presented only as the relatively mechanical procedure by which content published within one language edition of the platform might be transferred and made available in another. The policy page entitled '[Wikipedia: Translation](#)', for instance, serves primarily to advise potential 'wikitranslators' on the implications for the 'copyleft' licensing regulations of translating text from other *Wikimedia* projects.⁷⁵ It also informs users about software such as *Mediawiki*'s newly commissioned 'Content Translation' tool which can help automate many of the "boring steps" involved in "article translation" ([MediaWiki: Content translation](#)). The '[Wikipedia: Translate us](#)' page, on the other hand, has been put together in order to encourage users to translate articles from the English *Wikipedia* into other language editions: "we're particularly keen", it states, "where articles exist on this *Wikipedia* but not on one or more of more than 285 other-language *Wikipedias* [...], for volunteers to translate our English articles to fill the gaps."

Similarly, many of the academic studies cited in the Introduction to this thesis (Section 1.2) have focused on issues such as the quality of the site's crowd-sourced content (Giles 2005) and the processes of negotiation by which Wikipedians come to decide on which sources of expertise can be trusted (König 2013), without consideration for the role that linguistic barriers might have in shaping user practices. Moreover, even those researchers who have begun to investigate the work of *Wikipedia*'s multilingual volunteers (Désilets *et al.* 2006; Hautasaari 2011; McDonough Dolmaya 2012; 2015) have essentially conceptualised translation in this context as an activity which permits the transfer of knowledge *between* the different language editions of the platform. They have not, in other words, considered the extent to which translation might constitute an integral part of the processes involved in the production of content *within* each version of the site. In sum, these

⁷⁵ 'Copyleft' is a play on the term 'copyright' coined by the Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) community. It denotes "a general method for making a program (or other work) free (in the sense of freedom, not "zero price"), and requiring all modified and extended versions of the program to be free as well" (*GNU website: What is Copyleft?*). Thus, a copyleft licence stipulates that all works derived from a copyleft product (such as a translation of a *Wikipedia* article) must also be distributed with a copyleft licence: the aim is to give users of the derivative work the same freedom to adapt and redistribute the content as the original users of the original product.

institutional and theoretical narratives narrate each *Wikipedia* as a monolingual space in which translation and translators play only a minor role.

As a result, and in order to come to a fuller understanding of the platform, new narratives of *Wikipedia* are needed, *i.e.* new accounts of the online project that recognise it not simply as a neo-Babelian space of technology, but as a social space structured by social factors, and by language, most particularly. We must think beyond the popular institutional narrative of *Wikipedia* as the most public of public spaces and aim to highlight its complex spatiality as a human environment, just as heterogeneous, intricately layered and contoured as the offline spaces of society in which we live. The analysis of the next three sections seeks to provide evidence on which we might base these more nuanced conceptions of the platform, foregrounding the English and French *Wikipedias* as heterotopic spaces of language contact and multilingual interaction.

5.3 CORE GROUP ANALYSIS

As set out above, the aim of this next section is to examine the User Profiles and User Contribution lists of the ‘core group’ of the ten most active Wikipedians involved in producing each article page, and to assess the extent to which these users are proficient in languages other than that in which they are writing. In doing so, it aims to show that, despite the emphasis on openness and accessibility in *Wikipedia*’s public space narrative, user participation in the construction of the articles contained within my dataset can be perceived to be significantly shaped by linguistic barriers. Specifically, this section highlights the fact that those editors who are proficient in the principal languages of each locale tend to dominate the production of these texts, while other participants appear to be more restricted in terms of the level of engagement they can achieve. It also asks how similar the French- and English-language *Wikipedias* might be in these respects and how they differ. However, before presenting and discussing the results of the analysis, it is necessary in the interests of transparency to first highlight and justify the assumptions on which this specific investigation is based, and to explain the processes by which the data was collected.

5.3.1 Data

To start with, it is important to discuss the decision to analyse the profiles of only the top ten contributors to each page. On the one hand, this was partly out of practical considerations, given

that the size of each article-focused community means it would be unfeasible – at least within the scope of a doctoral research project – to conduct this kind of analysis for every single individual involved. For instance, we might note that, as of March 2016, an average of 3,457 editors have contributed to each of the English-language *Wikipedia* articles contained within my dataset, with the largest communities working on the ‘Paris’ and ‘Mexico City’ pages (5,556 and 4,257 editors respectively). Even the French-language article on ‘Delhi’, the page with the smallest number of contributors of all those analysed, has an editing population of 224 individuals, and so attempting to collect and process this much data is unrealistic (see Table 5.1).

On the other hand, this decision also reflects one of the realities of *Wikipedia* and the activity of its community: namely, that while many thousands of volunteer editors may contribute to an article over the course of its development, an examination of the Revision History archives, User Contribution lists and Talk pages clearly reveals that not all of these individuals can claim to have the same level of involvement. Indeed, if we take the ‘Tokyo’ article on the English-language *Wikipedia* as a typical example, over half of the total number of edits to the page (4,776 out of 9,373) have been made by just one percent of the editing community (40 editors out of a total population of 4,003 editors in March 2016), and twenty percent of edits (1843 edits) have been produced by the ten most active individuals ([X! Tools: Tokyo](#)). This level of disparity between contributors is additionally visible if we consider the amount of text added by each individual: a quick analysis of the relevant *X! Tools* tables for ‘Tokyo’ shows that of the 300,976 bytes of text that have been added to the page over the past fifteen years, 107,881 bytes (36%) have been added by a small group of ten users ([X! Tools: Tokyo](#)). Therefore, by analysing the profiles and contributions of this core group of most active users, we focus on those contributors who have been most influential in shaping the content of each page over an extended period of time.

Table 5.1: Number of contributors involved in each Wikipedia page contained within the dataset (as of 18 March 2016).

City article:	Number of contributors within the English-language page:	Number of contributors within the French-language page:
Beijing	3,108	626
Cairo	2,625	566
Delhi	-	224
Hong Kong	-	698
Istanbul	3,261	842
Jakarta	1,829	254
Jerusalem	3,267	649
London	-	1,472
Mexico City	4,257	737
Moscow	3,479	669
Mumbai	-	460
New York	-	2,084
Paris	5,556	-
Rome	3,276	1,310
São Paulo	3,369	483
Singapore	-	686
Tokyo	4,003	860
AVERAGE:	3,457	788.75

That said, actually identifying this core group of editors is not quite as straightforward as it may at first seem. Firstly, there is little hope of being able to create such a list based on any kind of qualitative analysis of the development of the page over the course of its history, given that all of the pages I am interested in have each been edited many thousands of times.⁷⁶ Second, if we accept this must consequently be done through quantitative means, there is the fact that, depending on which source of statistical data is used, a similar but every time different list of editors can be produced. If we use *X! Tools* statistics to draw up a list of the ten most active contributors to the ‘Tokyo’ page according to the ‘number of bytes of text added’, we are presented with a set of pseudonyms which features only six of the same users as a list based on the ‘number of contributions made’ to that article.

Moreover, each of these sources of quantitative data is subject to being skewed by different factors and activities occurring within the *Wikipedia* environment. In several cases, either ‘vandals’ themselves or those who are most active in defending against vandals dominate the top of the

⁷⁶ For example, as of March 2016, the ‘Paris’ article on the English-language *Wikipedia* has been edited 15,673 times since it was created in November 2001 ([X! Tools: Paris](#)).

‘bytes added’ list⁷⁷: an anonymous vandal sits in first position among the editors who have added the most text to the ‘Paris’ page in the English *Wikipedia* for instance, having made a malicious addition well in excess of one million bytes.⁷⁸ Likewise, when ‘anti-vandal patrollers’ arrive on the scene to clear up the damage done by such attacks, this often requires re-inserting large sections of text that had been malevolently deleted.⁷⁹ Such edits do not constitute true contributions to the city article page in particular, but merely maintenance edits made for the sake of the wider *Wikipedia* project. On the other hand, and as Kittur *et al.* (2007: 5) note, the issue with relying on the lists produced by ranking editors according to the number of edits they have made is that in doing so, “we effectively treat, say, the deletion of a comma as equivalent to the addition of three paragraphs of text.”

The best solution then seems to be to create an aggregate of the two lists, using each to balance out the flaws and anomalies of the other. This can be done by importing the *X! Tools* data to a *Microsoft Excel* file, calculating the position each editor occupies within each list and producing an average position (their ‘score’) from these two figures (see Table 5.2). All contributors can then be ranked according to this average position or score, and the top ten selected for analysis. To give an example, user *Ichtrinken*, who has made the third largest number of edits to the ‘Tokyo’ page (272 edits) and who is ranked the fifth most active contributor according to the number of bytes of text he has added (8,741 bytes), is given an average score of four. When compared with the rest of the editing community, this score places him in second position on the aggregated list and firmly within the core group of contributors to the page. This method successfully filters out those contributors who have been less influential in the construction of each text. For instance, a *Wikipedia*ian called *Jimmi Hugh* has made just one, very large contribution to the ‘Tokyo’ page in which he re-inserted 8,250 bytes of text that had previously been deleted by a vandal. This places him in 405th position in the aggregated list and therefore not within our core group of contributors for this article.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ A *Wikipedia* vandal is a user who edits the content of the encyclopaedia with the express aim of causing damage to the project and hindering the activity of its community ([Wikipedia: Vandalism](#)).

⁷⁸ At 06:06 (UTC) on the 25 April 2008, this internet ‘troll’ from Galt, California wrote “FUCK PARIS!!!” at the top of the English-language ‘Paris’ article and repeated the phrase 78,400 times ([Wikipedia Special: Contributions/99.139.253.27](#)).

⁷⁹ ‘Anti-vandal patrollers’ are *Wikipedia*ians who ‘patrol’ hundreds of vandal-prone articles using the *Watchlist* tool to prevent long-lasting damage being done to the encyclopaedia by malicious users. For instance, the act of vandalism mentioned above was visible for less than five minutes thanks to the speedy intervention of a Canadian *Wikipedia*ian (*WestJet*) who successfully reverted the article to its previous state ([Wikipedia: Paris: Revision as of 06:11, 25 April 2008](#)).

⁸⁰ Occasionally, it is the case that a certain individual has in fact edited a particular page from more than one registered or unregistered account. This practice (known as ‘sockpuppeting’) is very much frowned upon within the community, especially when it has been done as a means of giving the impression that more than one person holds a particular view in a debate. When this has occurred in the articles contained within my

Table 5.2: Core group of contributors to 'Tokyo' article on the English-language Wikipedia as of 14:32, 11 March 2016.

Username:	Number of edits made to article:	Position in list of contributors by number of edits made:	Number of bytes added to article:	Position in list of contributors by number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):
<i>Fg2</i>	362	1	28,876	1	1
<i>Ichtrinken</i>	272	3	8,741	5	4
<i>Sekicho</i>	73	8	13,070	2	5
<i>Photojpn.org</i>	68	9	12,944	3	6
<i>Rick Block</i>	209	5	7,651	7	6
<i>WhisperToMe</i>	181	6	6,985	8	7
<i>DAJF</i>	356	2	2,979	15	8.5
<i>TakuyaMurata</i>	38	15	11,921	4	9.5
<i>Oda Mari</i>	212	4	1,808	25	14.5
<i>ASDFGH</i>	25	24	3,720	11	17.5

If we turn now to consider the different means of identifying the language skills of each editor, we must start by noting that this section of the analysis relies particularly heavily on the userboxes which are placed by many members of the *Wikipedia* community within their User Profile pages. As explained in Section 4.2.4, these boxes contain a wide range of different types of information, but we are most interested here in the so-called 'Babel' boxes that list the languages with which the individual considers themselves able to contribute and their level of proficiency in each case.⁸¹ Most of the data for this investigation was collected from these sources but, just occasionally, this process was hindered by a number of factors. Users may for instance choose to delete these boxes from their page (if, for example, they feel their profile is getting overly cluttered) and so it is sometimes necessary to look through the Revision History archives for each userpage to access previous versions. A good example of this is *Ran* who retired from *Wikipedia* editing at [08:09 on 6 December](#)

dataset, I have simply collated the results from the various accounts linked to the 'sockpuppeteer' and totalled up the number of edits each of them has made. This was particularly necessary on the 'Istanbul' article on the English-language *Wikipedia* where the user *Shuppiluliuma* has edited the page under no less than eight different names, making him by far the most active contributor to this text. Indeed, such was the scale of his sockpuppeting behaviour that, when his misdemeanours were uncovered by his fellow contributors, he was banned indefinitely from editing *Wikipedia*.

⁸¹ The question of the extent to which we can trust what Wikipedians write on their User Profiles is of course relevant here. This kind of self-publishing is certainly open to abuse and it is not inconceivable that some users might exaggerate or even lie about their abilities in order to improve their status within the community. Nevertheless, when conducting research of this kind, we ultimately have no option but to 'assume good faith' (in the spirit of *Wikipedia*) and take what the data is telling us at face value, unless we find evidence that contradicts what the user has claimed on their userpage.

[2010](#).⁸² On this date, he/she removed much of the content from his/her User Profile, replacing it with a banner, stating “This user is no longer active on *Wikipedia*” ([User: Ran](#)). However, looking back to the version that was published at [22:51 on 20 October 2006](#) reveals a slew of userboxes and, most notably, the fact that *Ran* is Canadian but has Chinese parents and can speak Mandarin with native proficiency.

If no Babel boxes can be found on any of an individual’s User Profile pages, another good indicator of the language proficiency of many users is whether or not they have edited other language editions of *Wikipedia*. This information is provided by the global contributions tool ([Wikimedia: GUC](#)) which provides a fully comprehensive list of all the contributions that a particular user has made to every wiki project contained within the *Wikimedia* umbrella group. For instance, even though *Dennisadriann*’s Profile page is entirely blank, we can nevertheless confirm that this user is able to read and write in Indonesian by noting their extensive participation within the Indonesian *Wikipedia* ([Wikimedia: GUC: Dennisadriann](#)). That said, care must be taken with this kind of data as sometimes editors may edit a foreign-language *Wikipedia* without necessarily having the language skills required. For example, uploading a photograph to the French-language *Wikipedia* does not require knowledge of French, so the individual edits made on another *Wikipedia* edition must be qualitatively examined to determine if they demonstrate the user’s knowledge of the source language.

As a last resort, it is also possible to trawl through all the comments that a user has made on any of *Wikipedia*’s Talk pages (Section 4.2.3). A good example of the use of this kind of data is my analysis of user *Nggsc* whose personal userpage is entirely empty of information and who has only been active within the English-language edition ([User: Ngssc](#); [Wikimedia: GUC: Ngssc](#)). A few comments on *TheLeopard*’s Talk page ([User Talk: TheLeopard/Archive 1](#)) provide concrete evidence that *Nggsc* is a native Chinese-speaker with enough of an understanding of English to contribute to the English-language article about Beijing. At [10:23 on 5 August 2008](#), for example, *Nggsc* asks *TheLeopard* for help with the English translation of some Chinese resources:

Can you help to improve the transportation of Beijing? My english isn't very good, so I can't edit it just by myself. [...] Can you change the style and

⁸² All times are in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), as recorded in *Wikipedia*’s archives.

make it more similar like true english instead of "chinglish"(chinese english).⁸³

After *TheLeopard* replies, *Ngssc* goes on (at [03:39 on 6 August 2008](#)) to provide links to the relevant sources, noting that “all of them are written in Chinese”:

OK. About the number of all [subway] lines (using now):

<http://www.bjsubway.com/cns/zjdt/index.html>

About the future of lines: <http://www.bjsubway.com/cns/dtfz/index.html>

About "how many people are using it" (per day):

<http://www.chinametro.net/Content/DisplayNews.aspx?id=14776>

Finally, he asks *TheLeopard* (at [06:37, 6 August 2008](#)) to add them to the article, explaining that he does not feel his own English-language writing skills are up to the task:

I am not a English [sic], my English is neither good nor smooth.

Clearly, exchanges such as this can often serve as useful indicators of a contributor’s source- and target-language abilities.

5.3.2 Results from the English-language *Wikipedia*

Having explained how the data for this stage of the analysis was collected, we can now discuss the results, starting with those relating to the core groups working on articles within the English-language *Wikipedia*. As can be seen in the summary table (Table 5.3) and in the more detailed tables provided in Appendix I, this analysis clearly demonstrates that the construction of these city-related articles is largely dominated by editors with some level of proficiency in at least one of the primary languages of that locale. All ten of the most active contributors to the ‘Jakarta’ and ‘Paris’ articles, for instance, are able to communicate with at least a basic level of Indonesian and French respectively, while nine out of the ten core members on the ‘Mexico City’, ‘Rome’ and ‘São Paulo’ pages have good understandings of the source-languages appropriate to these three locales (Spanish, Italian and Portuguese). Analysis of the other city articles contained in the dataset reveals that, while the ratio is marginally lower, a high prominence of source-language proficient editors can be noted

⁸³ All quotations from *Wikipedia* are copied and pasted verbatim from their source, including any grammatical and spelling idiosyncrasies they contain. This is done to reflect as authentically as possible how they appear online.

here too: eight out of the ten core contributors to the ‘Tokyo’ page have Japanese, and there are seven Chinese-, Turkish- and Russian-speakers amongst the most active contributors to the ‘Beijing’, ‘Istanbul’ and ‘Moscow’ pages respectively. Finally, the production of the English-language article about the highly multilingual city of Jerusalem has thus far been dominated by a group of contributors of whom seven can read Hebrew. (Interestingly, only one member of this core community – *Gidonb* – has any knowledge of Arabic.)

Table 5.3: Summary of results from analysis of core groups of editors active within English-language Wikipedia city articles.

City article:	Official language(s) of locale:	Number of core group contributors proficient in language(s) of locale:
Beijing	<i>Chinese</i>	7
Cairo	<i>Arabic</i>	6
Istanbul	<i>Turkish</i>	7
Jakarta	<i>Indonesian</i>	10
Jerusalem	<i>Arabic</i>	1
	<i>Hebrew</i>	7
Mexico City	<i>Spanish</i>	9
Moscow	<i>Russian</i>	7
Paris	<i>French</i>	10
Rome	<i>Italian</i>	9
São Paulo	<i>Portuguese</i>	9
Tokyo	<i>Japanese</i>	8

The ‘Cairo’ core group features the lowest number of source-language proficient editors, with only six able to offer Arabic-language skills as part of their involvement in the *Wikipedia* project. While the reasons behind this difference remain unclear⁸⁴, it should be noted that if we look at the User

⁸⁴ This finding is to some extent supported by the results of Ronen *et al.*’s (2014) recent analysis of *Wikipedia* as a global language network. By mapping 382 million edits made by 2.5 million Wikipedians to 238 of the site’s language editions over a ten year period (2001-2011), the researchers report that Arabic occupies a relatively peripheral position within interlingual flows of knowledge and information in *Wikipedia*. They also suggest that comparatively low levels of participation *per capita* can be observed among Arabic speakers *vis-à-vis* speakers of other major world languages. Ronen *et al.* (2014) do not unfortunately provide explanations as to why this might be the case. One reason has likely to do with the technologies required to participate regularly within the *Wikipedia* community and the fact that internet penetration rates are significantly lower

Profile of the top-ranked contributor to this page (*Realman208*), we see that this editor is an Egyptian-born resident of Cairo, and therefore that the general pattern observed in the wider dataset is still to a certain extent maintained. In fact, it is interesting to consider that, when we examine the editors ranked first in the aggregated contributions lists for each article (*i.e.* the single most dominant editor in terms of the construction of each page), we notice nearly all these individuals seem to fit a similar profile. Specifically, almost every one of these top contributors – with the sole exceptions of ‘São Paulo’ and ‘Jerusalem’⁸⁵ – is a native-speaker of the locale language in question. The lead editor on the ‘Istanbul’ page, for instance, is *Shuppiluliuma*, a “true Istanbulite” as he puts it, born and raised in the city with Turkish as his mother tongue (21:10, 14 March 2007, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 3](#)). Likewise, the userboxes on the profile of *Gunkarta*, the most active contributor to the ‘Jakarta’ article, confirm that this individual too is a native-speaker of Indonesian, this urban locale’s principal language.

To explain this dominance of editors with proficiency in one of the primary languages of each locale, we should admit that this must at least partly be associated with the fact that most Wikipedians tend to concentrate their efforts on topics they know and care about from a very personal perspective. This may seem like an obvious point but it is nevertheless worth emphasising that, faced with well over five million existing articles in the English-language edition of *Wikipedia* alone and a theoretically unlimited number of potential new articles waiting to be created, contributors do not simply select subjects to write about at random, nor are they assigned tasks by some top-down management structure. Rather, as self-commissioning volunteers, they choose those text creation projects with which they want to be involved based on their individual interests and concerns. They recognise that writing a high-quality encyclopaedia article is a difficult and time-consuming process, and that their efforts are in most cases best spent working on an aspect of human experience about which they already have some degree of basic subject knowledge and with which they have some kind of personal connection.

across the Middle East and North Africa (the regions in which Arabic is predominantly spoken) than is the case for the other linguacultures represented in my dataset (*World Bank* 2015).

⁸⁵ The top editor to the ‘São Paulo’ article is a highly prolific contributor named *Marek69* ([User: Marek69](#)). While this individual does not fit the general pattern described above given that he is not a native-speaker of Portuguese (he is Polish, currently living in the UK), his editing activity clearly demonstrates that he has a good working knowledge of this language. Moreover, he has made only marginally more edits (244 compared with 230) than the second most active contributor to this page – *Hentzer* – who, according to their User Profile ([User: Hentzer](#)), is a Brazilian native-speaker of Portuguese. The exception to the general rule presented by the ‘Jerusalem’ article, on the other hand, can perhaps be explained by the fact that this article has been the site of a famously fierce and long-running edit-war, reflecting the complex religious, political and ideological conflicts associated with this locale. It seems that the two lead contributors to this page have risen to their current position of prominence within the core group less as a result of their particular language skills and more through their dedication to ensuring *Wikipedia*’s principles of neutrality and verifiability are upheld, keeping a close eye on contributions by editors representing all sides of the Jerusalem-focused conflict.

This occurs right across *Wikipedia* in all of its subject areas: individuals interested in the Japanese manga series ‘*Yu-Gi-Oh!*’ mostly concentrate their research and writing activities on pages associated with its characters, writers and trivia (see e.g. [User: Animeboye](#)), while die-hard football fans spend hours every week compiling and collating tables and lists of fixtures, results and player statistics (see e.g. [User: E.M.](#)). Therefore, it is not surprising that, of the all the millions of people who could potentially write an article about Mexico City or Beijing, it is in every case primarily Wikipedians who come from, have lived in or have enjoyed visiting the particular city that dominate the collective effort of improving *Wikipedia*’s coverage of this locale. For example, not only do all ten of the core group of editors working on the ‘Jakarta’ article have proficiency in Indonesian, but they are also all native-born residents of this city and are thus motivated by their desire to share their knowledge of their home town with the (English-speaking and internet-using) world. Similarly, at least eight of the ‘São Paulo’ page’s core contributors are Brazilian, while for the ‘Rome’ entry, five are Italian and at least two of the others (*Marek69* and *Theologiae*) have visited the city on a number of occasions.⁸⁶

However, there is another explanation for the prominence of locale-language proficient contributors in each core group. As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (Section 5.4), it is argued that this pattern is additionally due to the fact that in order to contribute meaningfully to these city articles, participants need to be able to understand the languages in which the majority of the information sources available are written. As Wikipedian *Thelmadatter* puts it, drawing on her own extensive editing experience, “writing and improving articles about Mexico in the English-language Wiki”, for instance, “requires the use of Spanish-language sources of information” ([User: Thelmadatter](#)). Editors who have no knowledge of the specific majority language(s) of each city are effectively limited in the extent to which they can make substantial improvements to these pages because of their inability to access and selectively appropriate many of the necessary raw materials. Multilingual editors, on the other hand, have the capacity – through their language skills – to search for, assess and extract relevant information from a far greater range of high-quality sources, and to bring this knowledge across in their narration of the city for the target-language edition of *Wikipedia*.

⁸⁶ The Paris article on the other hand would seem to be an exception here given that no mother-tongue French-speakers feature within the core-group of contributors to this page and, in fact, the majority of this group currently lives in the USA. That said, its development has been most significantly shaped by two North American contributors, both of whom have spent much of their professional lives in the French capital. The first is *SiefkinDR*, a retired American diplomat who continues to live in France having worked for the US embassy in Paris for many years ([User: SiefkinDR](#)), while the second, *ThePromenader*, is a Canadian photographer, tour guide, art director and web designer who has been a resident of the city since the late 1980s ([User: ThePromenader](#)).

5.3.3 Results from the French-language *Wikipedia*

If we now examine the core groups of contributors involved in editing articles written on the French-language *Wikipedia*, it is useful here to split the analysis of the results into two sections, according to whether or not English is one of the official or primary languages of each of the cities concerned. Let us begin with the article-focused communities for cities where English is widely spoken. Based on the ideas expressed above, it should come as little surprise that a very high proportion of these contributors are able to draw on English-language resources when constructing their encyclopaedia entry in French. Indeed, as Table 5.4 shows, all ten of the top contributors to the ‘Londres’, ‘Bombay’ and ‘New York’ articles are proficient English-speakers, while only one contributor within each core group for ‘Delhi’, ‘Hong Kong’ and ‘Singapour’ appears to be unable to contribute using his or her knowledge of English.

Table 5.4: Summary of results from analysis of core groups of editors active within French-language Wikipedia articles about cities where English is an official language.

City article:	Number of core group contributors proficient in English:	Number of core group contributors proficient in another language of the locale:	
		Language:	Number of contributors:
Delhi	9	Hindi	2
Hong Kong	9	Chinese	1
London (Londres)	10	-	-
Mumbai (Bombay)	10	-	-
New York	10	-	-
Singapore (Singapour)	9	Malay	1
		Mandarin	1

Table 5.4 also shows that within some of these top-editor groups there are a small number of contributors who are additionally able to draw on resources written in one or two of the other official or widely spoken languages of each locale. Most notably, within the core group of editors active on the French-language article about Delhi, two contributors are able to participate with a basic level of Hindi: these are *Bobsodium*, a young pharmaceuticals researcher born and raised in Brittany but currently working in India (see [User \(FR\): Bobsodium](#)), and *Inde*, another French native-speaker active on a number of India-related sites across the internet ([User \(FR\): Inde](#)). We will come back to discuss the extent to which they appear to actually make use of these additional language skills in the process of their content production in Section 5.4.

Analysis of the core groups involved in constructing articles about non-English-speaking locales within the French-language *Wikipedia* foregrounds a different dimension of the role of language in

structuring user participation within the crowd-sourced encyclopaedia. Put simply, while the data clearly demonstrates that the French-language *Wikipedia* here too depends heavily on the language skills of its contributors, it seems to suggest that these users are less frequently making use of materials written in one of the specific languages of the locales in question. Instead, and in many cases, they are using their understanding of English to construct articles on the subject of cities about which information is less readily available in French. More precisely, the data shows that these communities are more commonly dominated by editors with some level of proficiency in English, and less commonly by editors with one of the primary languages of that locale.

This is most clearly illustrated by the example of the French-language article associated with the city of Beijing ('Pékin'). Of the ten most active contributors to this page, only one appears to have a sufficient enough grasp of Chinese to be able to make use of Chinese-language sources in the construction of this French-language text. This is *Popolon*, a native French-speaker from the Creuse department of central France, who is able to contribute with advanced Chinese (as well as with advanced English and basic Japanese), having previously lived in China for a number of years (see [User \(FR\): Popolon](#)). In contrast, the rest of his colleagues in this core group have no more than a strong interest in Chinese society and culture, and very little in terms of locale-language proficiency: for instance, while the personal website of and photographs uploaded by *Peter17* show that this engineering student from Lille has travelled extensively in the country, he himself confesses he is only 'un petit débutant' ('very much a beginner') in Chinese and so cannot truly be taken into consideration for our purposes here (see [User \(FR\): Peter17](#)).

If we look at the group's proficiency in other languages, on the other hand, we see that all ten can contribute with at least a basic level of ability in English, and seven have English to an advanced level of proficiency or above.⁸⁷ Moreover, the most active contributor to this page (*Fuhraih*, a Parisian volunteer who has made over 50 edits to the page and added nearly 75,000 bytes worth of text) is quite open about the fact that he has no knowledge of Chinese, but that he frequently uses his 'intermediate-level' knowledge of English as part of his editing activity on *Wikipedia*. *Fuhraih* notes on his own userpage ([User \(FR\): Fuhraih](#)), for instance:

je contribue également en traduisant de l'anglais certains articles sur des thèmes que j'affectionne, notamment sur la Chine.

⁸⁷ Other languages do exist within the skill sets of each community of volunteers and the possibility that contributors also use their knowledge of languages such as German or Spanish as part of their editing activity within the French-language *Wikipedia* should not be ignored. It is nevertheless the case that the prevalence of German- and/or Spanish-speakers is statistically much less significant than is the case for the English-speakers, and therefore that the central focus of my analysis on the use of English is firmly supported by the data (see Appendix II).

[I also contribute by translating certain articles from English on subjects that I'm interested in; most notably, about China.]

In the French-language articles about Cairo ('Le Caire') and Jerusalem ('Jérusalem') too, just one contributor with knowledge of one of these cities' official languages features within the core group of editors to each page. Within the core group active on the Cairo page, for instance, *Esperanza* is alone in their ability to draw on Arabic-language resources when putting together this encyclopaedic text, and *Franckiz* is the only one out of the ten top editors for the 'Jérusalem' page to have an understanding of Hebrew.⁸⁸ Yet, in much the same way as with the 'Pékin' article mentioned above, there is a distinct predominance of Wikipedians who are able to contribute with at least some understanding of English. Indeed, on the Cairo page, it appears that only *Néfermaât* and *Sdenoix* are largely unable to make use of English-language sources to inform their French-language content production, while *Claude Valette* and *F8r6d4m2* are the sole non-English-speaking contributors to the 'Jérusalem' article.

The summary table (Table 5.5) shows that the situation in some of the other articles analysed as part of the dataset is perhaps more complex. Indeed, although it is certainly true that, as with 'Pékin', 'Le Caire' and 'Jérusalem', the construction of these other articles is still dominated in most cases by editors with the ability to at least read in English, the data collected also seems to suggest that some locale-language proficient contributors are nevertheless present within each core group. Seven out of the eight core-group members⁸⁹ for the 'Jakarta' community have excellent English, for instance, and so English-speakers far outnumber the two locale-language speakers on this page once again. That said, it should be noted that one of the two Indonesian-proficient editors is *Humboldt*, the contributor who has been by far the most active in shaping the development of this page, having made over 130 edits and added in excess of 8,500 bytes of text. Moreover, *Humboldt's* userpage reveals that he is in fact of Indonesian descent (although currently living in Paris) and speaks Indonesian with native proficiency. Equally, the other Indonesian-speaker on this page is the

⁸⁸ None of the core group members for the 'Jérusalem' page appear to be able to understand Arabic.

⁸⁹ As should be clear from looking at the figures listed earlier in Table 5.1, French-language articles receive strikingly much less attention from many times fewer editors than do English-language texts. This disparity at the article level reflects the relative differences in terms of the editing populations of each encyclopaedia as a whole: the English-language *Wikipedia* currently has 129,861 active editors, while the French-language edition has only 17,189. Similarly, 825,536,114 edits have been made to the English-language *Wikipedia*, whereas only 127,810,973 edits have been made to the French-language *Wikipedia* over the course of their respective histories ([Wikimedia: List of Wikipedias](#)). The outcome of this for the present analysis was that even the top ten contributors to any given French-language article may not have actually made very many edits to that page in comparison with their core-group colleagues on the English-language *Wikipedia*. Consequently, in some cases (e.g. Cairo, Jakarta, Sao Paulo), it was necessary to reduce the scope of the analysis to just eight or nine individuals, rather than the full ten, in order to avoid including in this core group contributors who had made perhaps only two or three edits to the page.

unregistered IP editor (81.64.52.183) sitting in fourth place in the aggregated list, a contributor who has personally added over 2,000 bytes of text (*i.e.* significantly more than all but three of his colleagues). Comments written elsewhere on another article Talk page ([Talk \(FR\): Bali](#)) show that this editor was born in Paris in the early 1950s to Indonesian parents, that he worked for many years as an engineer in an Indonesian firm and that he too can contribute with a native level of proficiency in Jakarta’s local language.

Table 5.5: Summary of results from core group analysis for editors active within French-language dataset.

City article:	Official language of locale:	Size of core group analysed:	Number of core group contributors proficient in a language of locale:	Number of core group contributors proficient in English:
Beijing (Pékin)	<i>Chinese</i>	10	1	10
Cairo (Le Caire)	<i>Arabic</i>	9	1	7
Istanbul	<i>Turkish</i>	10	4	6
Jakarta	<i>Indonesian</i>	8	2	7
Jerusalem (Jérusalem)	<i>Arabic</i>	10	0	8
	<i>Hebrew</i>	10	1	
Mexico City (Mexico)	<i>Spanish</i>	10	8	8
Moscow (Moscou)	<i>Russian</i>	10	5	7
Rome	<i>Italian</i>	10	6	9
São Paulo	<i>Portuguese</i>	9	6	3
Tokyo	<i>Japanese</i>	10	4	8

The most intriguing of these more linguistically diverse communities are those focused on constructing articles about Mexico City and São Paulo. On the one hand, the make-up of the core group of volunteers working on the French-language text about the Mexican capital seems at first glance to be once again very much dominated by English-speakers: eight of the core members of the editing community can contribute with at least some level of English. This includes *Urban*, the most active editor on this page, who is a self-declared and prolific English-French ‘wikitranslator’ (*i.e.* a contributor who translates content from other language editions of *Wikipedia* – [User \(FR\): Urban](#)). On closer inspection, however, we realise that at least four of this group are Mexican by birth and speak Spanish with native proficiency, and a further four individuals have at least an intermediate level of understanding with respect to this primary language of the locale. The results of the analysis are even more unexpected when we inspect the French-language community collaborating on the ‘São Paulo’ page. Here, just three of the core group of contributors are proficient in English, while six of them can make use of their knowledge of Portuguese when it comes to writing content for this article.

Although both of these examples still support the general hypothesis presented earlier about the significance of the role of language in shaping user activity, they also pose a strong challenge to the idea that the French-language *Wikipedia* community generally tends to rely much more heavily on the English-language proficiency of its editors than their ability to speak the locale-specific language. That said, it should be noted that there is no way of telling from this data which language(s) is/are actually used as part of their target-language content production and in what contexts. It is for this reason, as mentioned earlier in the introduction to this chapter, that the focus of the next section will shift to a more text-based model of analysis in order to attempt to elucidate these complex multilingual situations further.

5.4 REFERENCE LIST ANALYSIS

This next section of the analysis will make use of the ‘Reference Lists’ discussed in the previous chapter (Section 4.2.1) to explore the impact of the linguistic heterogeneity of the world’s knowledge on user production of *Wikipedia* content from a more text-oriented perspective.⁹⁰ Having established in Section 5.3 the extent to which those editors who are proficient in the principal languages of each locale dominate the construction of the texts in my dataset, Section 5.4 studies the collections of original materials on which they have based their article and investigates in which languages they were published. Through qualitative analysis of these results, it attempts to identify patterns within the types of information that tend to have been found in non-target-language sources, and discusses the extent to which the French- and English-language editions differ in these respects. Finally, this section will link these findings back to those of the ‘core group’ analysis.

⁹⁰ This stage of the analysis can only focus on the current version of each reference list as it would be a truly Herculean task to try to analyse the Reference Lists for every previous version of every article, despite what was discussed in the previous chapter about the instability of *Wikipedia* content (Section 4.2.2). It would certainly be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study on this subject in order to find out how the sources for each of the articles have changed over time, but such an analysis goes beyond the scope of this doctoral research project. The analysis in this section was carried out in the spring of 2016 and the precise date at which each of the Reference Lists were downloaded is included in the filenames of the *Microsoft Excel* files included in Appendices III and IV.

5.4.1 Results from the English-language *Wikipedia*

The first thing to note with regard to the Reference Lists connected to the English-language dataset is that each and every one of them includes links to non-target-language sources (*i.e.* material which is not written in English). This finding indicates that some form of translation activity must have been involved in the production of each of these encyclopaedic entries, clearly adding weight to the ideas put forward in Section 5.3. Specifically, it shows that the Wikipedians interested in contributing towards this set of city-related articles have made use of their diverse language skills to search beyond the bounds of the English-speaking infosphere, to identify relevant and up-to-date information sources available in other languages. They have then brought these together across linguistic barriers and synthesised them into target texts that reflect their narrative understanding of the world.

Moreover, in several of the articles, statistical analysis (see Table 5.6) appears to show that these kinds of translational activities have been involved throughout much of the production process. Of the 142 references provided at the foot of the ‘São Paulo’ article, for example, only 57 (40.1%) are linked to English-language information sources, while 85 (59.9%) cite webpages, newspaper articles or books written in another tongue. Likewise, in the ‘Paris’ article, 175 out of the 309 current references (56.6%) link to material published in languages other than that of the target text. For ‘Moscow’ and ‘Mexico City’, the ratio of English- to non-English-language references is slightly lower, but remarkable nonetheless: 82 of ‘Moscow’s 165 sources (49.7%) are in another language (*i.e.* not English), and we see a comparable percentage (48%) in the ‘Mexico City’ article.

Table 5.6: Statistical analysis of Reference Lists found at the foot of the English-language articles. (Articles ranked according to the proportion of non-English- to English-language sources cited.)

City article:	Total number of references:	Number of non-target-language sources:	Percentage of total:
São Paulo	142	85	60%
Paris	309	175	57%
Moscow	165	82	50%
Mexico City	152	73	48%
Rome	155	61	39%
Beijing	169	40	24%
Jakarta	151	33	22%
Tokyo	95	17	18%
Istanbul	344	52	15%
Cairo	119	9	8%
Jerusalem	426	7	2%

As Table 5.6 shows, while the other articles in the dataset do not contain quite as many links to non-English-language information sources, it is nevertheless clear that the language skills of each community of contributors have been put to considerable use in their search for and synthesis of suitable ‘raw materials’. That said, there is substantial variation in the dataset and the cases of ‘Cairo’ and ‘Jerusalem’ do seem to present an exception to this general rule. In these articles, just 8% and 2% respectively of all the references cited are written in a language other than English, suggesting that translation has perhaps played a more minor role in the construction of the current version of these articles than is the case elsewhere. This corroborates the findings of the first stage of analysis with respect to these two cities (see Section 5.3.2).⁹¹

Going back to the rest of the dataset, it is striking to note that contributors generally privilege original materials written in the primary language(s) of each locale when they do draw on non-target-language sources. Indeed, in some cases, the only language represented in the Reference Lists other than English is that of the locale: the list found at the foot of the ‘Paris’ article, for instance, contains only French as a source language for translation activity, and a similar situation is seen in

⁹¹ It is remarkable that, with the exception of Moscow, most of the cities whose primary language makes use of another (*i.e.* non-Roman) alphabet feature near the bottom of Table 5.6, indicating that they do not contain quite as many links to non-English-language materials as other texts in the dataset. Unfortunately, the reasons why this might be the case are not clear, and future research will be needed to investigate this phenomenon in more detail, perhaps with reference to a larger dataset.

the 'Mexico City' and 'Tokyo' articles. Furthermore, those articles that do make use of materials in other languages tend to do so on a much smaller scale in comparison with their use of locale-language sources: while the 'Moscow' page for example does certainly contain references in a diverse range of languages (including Portuguese, Czech, French, Polish, Slovenian and Turkish), it relies most heavily on Russian as a source language, as Table 5.7 clearly shows.⁹² This observed pattern would seem to confirm the hypothesis discussed earlier: namely, that a significant quantity of the most accessible information Wikipedians require to produce a detailed and up-to-date encyclopaedia article about these world cities exists only in the primary language(s) of the locale in question. Thus, the level of engagement that *Wikipedia* users are able to achieve in terms of the construction of these articles is shown to be dependent on their language skills.

⁹² The Reference List featured on the 'Rome' article page would at first glance appear to be an exception here, containing as it does a large quantity (16) of references to German-language sources. However, this finding is less anomalous when we consider that all of these German-language references not only link to the same work (a world history book tracing the development of European civilisation from Antiquity to the French Revolution by Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann), but also that they have all been added by the same individual, *Alessandro57* (as his edit at [07:45 on 8 February 2013](#) shows). Accordingly, while the use of such a text is still notable, the reliance of this article on German-language sources is perhaps not as heavy as the figures would otherwise seem to indicate.

Table 5.7: Breakdown of languages in which the cited source materials are written.

City article:	Number of English-language sources:	Number of sources written in the language of the locale:		Number of sources written in another language:	
		LANGUAGE:	#	LANGUAGE:	#
Beijing	129	Chinese	39	Finnish	1
Cairo	110	Arabic	3	French	4
				German	1
				Danish	1
Istanbul	292	Turkish	46	German	3
				French	3
Jakarta	118	Indonesian	26	German	3
				Dutch	3
				Danish	1
Jerusalem	419	Hebrew	3	Czech	1
				German	1
				Greek	1
				Turkish	1
Mexico City	79	Spanish	48	-	-
Moscow	83	Russian	75	Portuguese	2
				Czech	1
				French	1
				Polish	1
				Slovenian	1
				Turkish	1
Paris	134	French	175	-	-
Rome	104	Italian	37	German	16
				French	4
				Spanish	3
				Polish	1
São Paulo	57	Portuguese	84	Spanish	1
Tokyo	78	Japanese	17	-	-

Figure 5.1: Classification in Microsoft Excel of referenced sources for the English-language Wikipedia page about Rome.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
58	Administrative divisions	Italian	58. "Roma, sì all'accorpamento dei mur			
59	Historic administrative divisions	English	59. "The "Rioni" of Rome". Romeartlov			
60	Geography (physical setting)	Italian	60. Ravaglioli, Armando (1997). Roma a			
61	Climate (Köppen-Geiger Classification)	English	61. "World Map of Köppen-Geiger Clin			
62	Climate (Snowfall)	Italian	62. "Storia della neve a Roma". Archive			
63	Climate (Sea temperatures)	English	63. Rome Climate. Retrieved 9 August 2			
64	Climate (Average temperatures table)	Italian	64. "Tabelle climatiche 1971–2000 della			
65	Climate (Average temperatures table)	Italian	65. "Visualizzazione tabella CLINO dell			
66	Demography (Historical population)	English	66. Cornell (1995) 204–5			
67	Demography (Historical population)	English	67. Floods of the Tiber in Ancient Rome			
68	Demography (Historical population)	English	68. The History of Human Populations:			
69	Demography (Historical population)	English	69. Herreros, Francisco. "Size and Virtu			
70	Demography (Historical population)	English	70. http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2			
71	Demography (Historical population)	English	71. http://media.johnwiley.com.au/pr			
72	Demography (Historical population)	English	72. Cities and Economic Development:			
73	Demography (Historical population)	English	73. Jump up^ N.Morley, Metropolis and			

Bearing this in mind, it is worth taking a closer look at each article in turn in order to ascertain which kinds of knowledge tend to be sourced from non-target-language materials. To achieve this, we can make use of the section headings that divide and structure each *Wikipedia* text to classify every hyperlinked reference according to the type of information it provides. We can group together all the sources that link to text contained within the 'History' section of a city article, for example, and compare these (in terms of the language in which they are written) with those that link to its 'Economy', 'Religion' or 'Local administration' sections (see Figure 5.1). The full results of this source material classification analysis are provided in Appendix III.

As one might expect given the variety of article-specific situations described above, the findings of this analysis do vary from city to city and language to language. Those sections that rely most heavily on material published in the language of the locale in one article are not necessarily the same across the dataset as a whole. Even so, it is certainly true that a number of broad trends can be observed. For instance, the analysis shows that Wikipedians make most use of non-English-language sources when searching for and producing article content about the current demographic make-up of each urban area. In the 'Rome' article, for instance, English-language materials have been used to give the reader an idea of how the size of the Italian capital's population has grown over the centuries since its earliest origins. When, on the other hand, the article turns to discuss the situation in the twenty-first century, the editors have looked to the Italian official statistics agency (*ISTAT*) in order to source the relevant information and provide a detailed discussion of the figures (*e.g.* regarding the number of children, of pensioners and of non-Italian immigrants living in the city). A similar situation occurs

in the ‘Beijing’, ‘Moscow’, ‘Paris’ and ‘São Paulo’ articles, where Chinese-, Russian-, French- and Portuguese-language materials produced by the various national statistics agencies are brought together and translated to provide much of the content for the ‘Demographics’ sections of these texts.

The ‘Climate’ sections of these city articles too depend heavily on foreign-language resources. Indeed, it appears that while some meteorological information is available from English-language sources such as the *World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)* or the *BBC Weather* website, the most detailed, city-specific and up-to-date databases and climate descriptions are those published by the national weather agencies in the language of the locale. A good example of this is the ‘Moscow’ article which makes use of 13 Russian-language information sources (and just two English-language sources) to present an account of the city’s seasonal averages, record temperatures, sunshine hours, and the often striking difference in temperatures between Moscow centre and its suburbs.

The ‘Transportation’ and ‘(Local) History’ sections are two further areas which make particularly heavy use of non-English-language materials. In the ‘Mexico City’ article, for example, a comprehensive and informative sequence of paragraphs presenting the locale’s underground railway, bus network, airports and road-traffic problems has been put together by extracting information from 16 different Spanish-language sources, including newspaper articles narrating recent government plans to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion, and official reports concerning the number of ‘pesero’ minibuses operating in the city. This also occurs in the corresponding sections of a number of the other pages in the dataset, particularly the ‘Moscow’, ‘Istanbul’ and ‘Paris’ pages, which likewise present transportation-related content by collating, translating and combining locale-language resources into English.

The ‘Jakarta’ and ‘Paris’ entries, on the other hand, serve as useful illustrations of *Wikipedia* texts whose ‘History’ sections stand out as having benefitted most extensively from the translational activities of their volunteer contributors. Indeed, by combining elements drawn from three Indonesian-language history books and the website of the city’s planning board, the multilingual Wikipedians involved in creating the ‘Jakarta’ article have been able to provide an instructive narrative account of the city’s role as a major trading port in the Sunda kingdom, its colonisation by successive European powers and its expansion away from the port area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, the ‘Paris’ article draws on the work of nine French historians (such as Alfred Fierro and Thierry Sarmant) to narrate the French capital’s history from its Celtic origins through to the modern day. These sections could perhaps have been written using English-language

sources such as the brief accounts provided in tourist guidebooks or other encyclopaedias, but it seems that the *Wikipedia* community does tend to find locale-language materials to be the most useful in terms of the level of detail and authoritative weight they provide. As *ThePromenader* puts it in a comment on the ‘Paris’ article Talk page, such resources are after all “straight from the horse’s mouth” (16:24, 21 October 2014, [Talk: Paris/Archive 13](#)). We will come back to discuss this issue in Section 5.5 of this chapter.

As a final note, it is worth mentioning here the use of Chinese-language sources in the ‘Beijing’ article. While this page makes extensive use of Chinese-language materials in a number of sections, the most striking dependence on translation is seen in the ‘Nature and Wildlife’ paragraphs which describe Beijing’s parks, nature reserves, protected and endemic animal species, and local flora. As discussed in more depth in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3), this is interesting because it highlights the role *Wikipedia*’s multilingual users may sometimes play in presenting a side to a city which is not usually featured in the dominant narratives circulating within the target-language mediasphere.⁹³

5.4.2 Results from the French-language *Wikipedia*

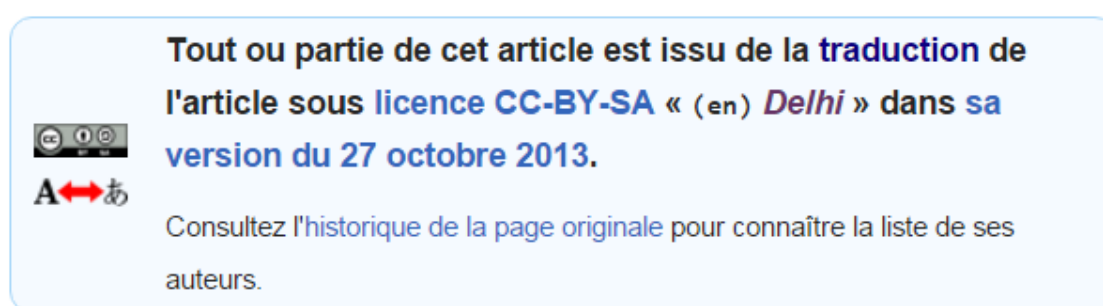
The results from my analysis of the French-language dataset once again reveal an alternative perspective on the importance of language in shaping user participation in the *Wikipedia* project. For a start, the Reference Lists featured on these article pages indicate that there is consistently more translation activity occurring within this language edition of the encyclopaedia, even than was the case in the English-language edition analysed in the previous sub-section. Indeed, as Tables 5.8.1, 5.8.2, 5.9.1 and 5.9.2 show, even those articles which cite the least numbers of non-French-language sources (‘Moscou’ and ‘Rome’) include more than 40% of materials requiring some form of translation.

In seeking to explain the large numbers of foreign-language sources referenced in these entries, we must note that several sections of these French-language articles have in fact been translated directly from another language edition of *Wikipedia*, along with the Reference Lists attached to these ‘original’ texts. Indeed, it is striking to note that, while little evidence can be found to suggest

⁹³ A notable exception to all of the above discussion is the ‘Tourism’ section of most city-related articles. Indeed, it seems that this area of knowledge tends not to require contributors to be proficient in any language other than English, given that many of the museums, art galleries, attractions and city landmarks mentioned in these sections of text generally maintain an English-language version of their website in order to attract and accommodate international visitors. This is particularly noticeable in the ‘Paris’ article which, as already discussed, otherwise depends very strongly on French-language sources.

that any of the English-language dataset has been expanded by drawing on content from another *Wikipedia*, the construction of every one of the French-language articles does seem to have involved forms of so-called ‘interwiki’ translation, mostly from the English *Wikipedia*.⁹⁴ Proof of this can be found either in the ‘banners’ (see Figure 5.2) that have been placed by Wikipedians on the Talk page of an article that has been improved through direct translation of another article (as is the case for the French-language entries entitled ‘Bombay’, ‘Delhi’, ‘Hong Kong’, ‘Pékin’, ‘Jérusalem’ and ‘Rome’), or by close analysis of the relevant Revision History archives.⁹⁵

Figure 5.2: Example of a banner placed on the Talk page of an article which has been translated from content in another language edition of Wikipedia.⁹⁶



Nevertheless, the data clearly suggests that this is never the only form of translation activity contributing to the construction of these texts. This observation is best illustrated through the example of ‘Pékin’ (Beijing). Created in April 2003, this article was for many years a so-called ‘stub’, a text dedicated to an important area of knowledge which had not yet been sufficiently developed by the *Wikipedia* community. In fact, it was not until the spring of 2010 that its content began to see significant improvements, largely thanks to the efforts of *Fuhraih* who took it upon himself to work on this article as part of that year’s ‘Wikiconcours’ competition ([Wikipedia \(FR\): Wikiconcours: Mars 2010](#)).⁹⁷ To do so, this Parisian contributor certainly did draw on the English-language article in order

⁹⁴ The one exception here appears to be the French-language ‘São Paulo’ article where the current versions of the ‘Demography’ and ‘Religion’ sections are largely the products of translations from the Portuguese-language *Wikipedia*, realised at [00:01](#) and [17:11](#) respectively on 5 January 2010 by a contributor called *Halfleaf*.

⁹⁵ It seems to be often the case that when we find a group of medium-sized edits (between 1,000 and 3,000 bytes each), all made to a number of different sections of an article by the same editor and all produced within a few hours of each other, these will turn out to be translations of content from another *Wikipedia* edition, given that such a rate of production would be very difficult for a single Wikipedian to achieve were they working ‘from scratch’ (i.e. not translating a single pre-existing source text). In a small number of cases, some editors may also note that their addition to the text is a translation of another *Wikipedia* text by writing something to this effect in their Edit Summary (see Section 4.2.2).

⁹⁶ The French text reads: “All or parts of this article are the result of a translation of the [English-language] article ‘Delhi’ on the 27 October 2013 under a CC-BY-SA licence.”

⁹⁷ A Wikiconcours is a competition held bi-annually within the French-language *Wikipedia* community to encourage high-quality editing amongst volunteers ([Wikipedia \(FR\): Wikiconcours](#)). Teams of one or more individuals nominate a small subset of articles which they intend to improve over a pre-determined length of

to expand a number of key sections of the French-language page. The ‘History’ section most notably was transformed from a brief few sentences on the city’s development over time into a far more detailed and informative series of paragraphs, mainly by translating the corresponding section of the English-language *Wikipedia* entry ‘Beijing’. Importantly, *Fuhraih* also transferred the original sources referenced in this content to his target text. However, when he came to improve the French-language article’s coverage of the city’s politics, rather than simply translating this section directly from the English-language *Wikipedia*, *Fuhraih* supplemented his target-language content with additional information found in alternative sources. Therefore, while the overall structure of this section is similar to that of the English-language page ‘Politics of Beijing’ ([Wikipedia: Politics of Beijing](#)), the French-language article contains numerous added details. It includes for instance discussion of the position of the Beijing Party Secretary, brought into the article from external sources, such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Asian Research* online journal, through the more diffuse, ‘multi-source’ forms of translation described in earlier sections of this chapter (see [Revision as of 10:36 on 1 June 2010](#)). In sum, it is not simply the case that the French-language *Wikipedia* articles analysed here have been created solely through the direct translation of content found in another language edition of the encyclopaedia. Rather, the two forms of translation (interwiki and multi-source) co-exist within this online environment and both may be deployed by the same contributors in the same articles as part of the *Wikipedia* production process.

In order to investigate this further, it is useful – as with the analysis in Section 5.3.3 – to split the French-language dataset according to whether or not the cities presented use English as one of their official languages, and to discuss each sub-group of articles separately. Beginning with the articles about English-speaking cities, the results here correlate strongly with those of the core group analysis (Section 5.3.3), indicating as they do that these pages draw very heavily on English-language materials. Most striking is the case of ‘Delhi’, in which every one of the 69 original sources cited is written in English, while on the ‘Londres’ page just one in ten references are in French, suggesting that some form of translation practice has been involved at almost every step of the construction process of this article so far. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the source texts are almost exclusively in English, as very few other languages feature among the Reference Lists connected to this set of articles: one Portuguese-language reference work is appropriated to explain the (possibly Portuguese) origins of Mumbai’s city name, and a Spanish-language source is used (in addition to a number of English-language sources) to back-up the ‘New York’ article’s claim that the city functions as the “capitale financière du monde” (‘the financial capital of the world’). Otherwise, the data

time (normally one to two months). The team that makes the most valuable contributions during the competition, as judged by a jury of experienced Wikipedians, is awarded a prize: a prestigious digital medal to display on their user-profile pages.

would imply that English is very much the primary source language for multilingual contributions and that, while some of the core group members for these pages may be proficient in other languages (Section 5.3.3), they have not made extensive use of them here.

Table 5.8.1: Analysis of references linked from French-language articles about English-speaking cities. (Articles ranked according to the proportion of non-target- to target-language sources cited.)

City article:	Number of references:	Number of non-target language sources:	Percentage of total:
Delhi	69	69	100%
Londres	102	92	90%
Bombay	36	28	78%
Singapour	29	19	66%
New York	201	131	65%
Hong Kong	41	25	61%

Table 5.8.2: Breakdown of the different languages in which the cited source materials are written.

City article:	Number of French-language references:	Number of English-language sources:	Number of sources written in another language:	
			LANGUAGE:	#:
Delhi	0	69	-	
Londres	10	92	-	
Bombay	8	27	Portuguese	1
Singapour	10	19	-	
New York	70	130	Spanish	1
Hong Kong	16	23	Chinese	2

Table 5.9.1: Analysis of references linked from French-language articles about non-English-speaking cities. (Articles ranked according to the proportion of non-target- to target-language sources cited.)

City article:	Number of references:	Number of non-target language sources:	Percentage of total:
São Paulo	31	28	90%
Pékin	91	75	82%
Jakarta	10	8	80%
Le Caire	49	39	80%
Istanbul	41	28	68%
Tokyo	52	30	58%
Jérusalem	79	44	56%
Mexico	43	20	47%
Rome	24	10	42%
Moscou	15	6	40%

Moving to look at the cities where English is not generally used as an official or vehicular language, we again find that ‘São Paulo’ tops the rankings as the article with the largest proportion of non-target-language sources: of its 31 cited references, only three are written in French. ‘Pékin’, ‘Jakarta’ and ‘Le Caire’ are not far behind though, with only around one in five of their listed source materials linking to a target-language text.

The extent to which locale- as opposed to English-language source materials are used varies from article to article and yet, again there is an intriguingly strong correlation between the results of this analysis and those of the core group analysis presented in Section 5.3.3. On the one hand, if we take those articles for which it was found very few core contributors were proficient in the language of the locale (‘Le Caire’, ‘Jakarta’, ‘Jérusalem’, Pékin’ and ‘Tokyo’), it appears that all make use of predominantly English-language sources, rather than materials written in Arabic, Indonesian, Hebrew, Chinese or Japanese. The French-language article about Cairo (‘Le Caire’) for instance contains only 39 English- and ten French-language sources, and none in Arabic. This is very much in keeping with the findings of Section 5.3.3 which showed that this page has so far been primarily put together by a core group of editors of whom only one individual (*Esperanza*) had any understanding of Cairo’s primary language. At the other end of the scale, the ‘Mexico’ and ‘São Paulo’ articles, both of which were shown to feature much higher numbers of locale-language-proficient core group

members, make comparatively little use of English-language materials, relying instead primarily on Spanish- and Portuguese-language sources of information respectively (see Table 5.9.2).

As with the analysis in Section 5.4.1, it is interesting to take a closer look at the individual references themselves and attempt to find patterns in terms of the languages in which they are written and the kinds of information they provide. Firstly, this analysis has highlighted the fact that many sections of the French-language articles are distinctly under-referenced. In some cases (e.g. ‘Jakarta’ and ‘Moscou’, most notably), no indication of the original sources being given for long stretches of content at a time.⁹⁸ This may be for any number of reasons: we might argue for instance that this is a result of a less strict culture of referencing within the French-language *Wikipedia*, combined with the fact that this edition has a much smaller editing population, and consequently a less rigorous system for quality control.⁹⁹ However, an additional and significant factor could also be the inability of the majority of contributors working on these articles within the French-language *Wikipedia* to access sufficient quantities of suitable source materials due to their individual linguistic constraints. In other words, given that most of the core contributors to many of these article-pages are not proficient in the language of the locale in question but are native French-speakers (see Section 5.3.3), they are having to rely on a much reduced range of ‘ingredients’ in order to produce their encyclopaedic texts.

⁹⁸ The difference in terms of the use of in-line references between the English- and French-language editions is particularly clear if we compare the total numbers of sources cited at the foot of the articles contained within each dataset. While all of the English-language texts contain at least 50 references and some of the articles (e.g. ‘Jerusalem’ and ‘Paris’) include many times more, only six of the 16 articles in the French-language dataset have more than 50 entries in their respective Reference Lists and ‘Jakarta’ contains just ten.

⁹⁹ As *Wikimedia’s* Sue Gardner (2013) writes in an article published in the *Los Angeles Times*, the fundamental premise of *Wikipedia* is that “[t]he more eyes on an article, the better it is.” Because the French-language edition has many times fewer active editors than the English-language community, it is a regrettable but well-documented fact that the quality of its content is often noticeably poorer than that contained within the English-language *Wikipedia*.

Table 5.9.2: Breakdown of the different languages in which the cited source materials are written.

City article:	Number of locale-language proficient editors in core group:	Number of French-language references:	Number of English-language sources:	Number of sources written in another language:	
				LANGUAGE	#
Istanbul	4	13	17	Turkish Turkish/English	8 3
Jakarta	2	2	7	Indonesian	1
Jérusalem	1	35	39	Hebrew Arabic	4 1
Le Caire	1	10	39	-	-
Mexico	8	23	4	Spanish	16
Moscou	5	9	4	Russian	2
Pékin	1	16	65	Chinese German Chinese/English	7 2 1
Rome	6	14	5	Italian Latin	4 1
São Paulo	6	3	6	Portuguese Portuguese/English Italian	18 3 1
Tokyo	4	22	25	Japanese	5

To explore this in more detail, this stage of the analysis took a slightly different approach to the data than that adopted in Section 5.4.1, instead following Heather Ford *et al.*'s (2013) method for classifying *Wikipedia* references in terms of whether they constitute 'primary', 'secondary' or 'tertiary' sources.¹⁰⁰ According to this schema (discussed previously in Section 4.2), sources are grouped in relation to "the distance the author is from the subject" (Ford *et al.* 2013: 4). 'Primary' sources include 'raw' forms of information: statistical data, public announcements and presentational materials directly created by institutions, companies or individuals themselves, without much in the way of discussion or analysis. 'Secondary' sources, in contrast, consist of news reports, scholarly interpretations and opinion pieces, where the focus is much more on explaining rather than simply showing. The 'tertiary' category, finally, comprises knowledge resources (such as

¹⁰⁰ As a direct consequence of the under-referenced nature of the French-language *Wikipedia*, categorising the individual source-materials according to the subsection of the article to which they were linked (as in Section 5.4.1) did not reveal any significant insights, given that large 'holes' were present in many areas across the dataset.

encyclopaedia articles) that constitute archives of information published elsewhere, that summarise, contextualise and synthesise primary and secondary sources (Ford *et al.* 2013: 4).

A clear pattern emerges from the dataset when viewed through this lens. Indeed, it appears that the primary sources of information used tend to be published in the language of the locale, and that although in some cases an English-language version may also be available, this is only rarely the case for French. This explains at least in part why there seems to be so much translation activity occurring in the French-language *Wikipedia*: it means that when the contributors working on the French-language articles need to draw on primary data relevant to each of these cities, some form of translation is almost always required. It also means that editors who are not proficient in these languages are often restricted to the information contained within secondary and tertiary resources.

This is best demonstrated through a couple of examples: in the ‘Pékin’ article, for instance, a selection of French-language newspaper articles (published on the website of the French daily *Libération*) provide materials on which to base the discussion of the city’s growing environmental problems, from the effects of desertification in the surrounding countryside to Beijing’s world-renowned air pollution. Conversely, when producing a detailed survey of the changing demographic composition of the Chinese capital, the French-language article’s Chinese-speaking contributors have found the most useful information sources to be the population reports produced in Chinese by the Beijing government. A similar situation occurs in the ‘Tokyo’ article, where again secondary sources in the target language (newspaper reports written for *Libération.fr*) provide the necessary information for Wikipedians to discuss such issues as the high-cost of property in the city compared with other global centres. However, it is chiefly through the collation, translation and synthesis of Japanese-language primary sources that the volunteer editors involved on this page have been able to include information regarding local-government whitepapers on new urban planning initiatives, official definitions of the city boundaries and its administrative sub-divisions, and a detailed breakdown of the most up-to-date census figures.

This is not to suggest that secondary and tertiary sources of information are in some way inferior to primary resources. Indeed, the above analysis clearly reveals that many different kinds of information are required to produce a comprehensive and useful encyclopaedia article, and that secondary and tertiary sources often provide invaluable summaries and explanations of complex historical, political, economic and geographic realities for each locale. Nevertheless, the point is that, were it not for the diverse translation practices of *Wikipedia*’s multilingual volunteers, the content of the user-generated encyclopaedia would be significantly lacking in many key areas of knowledge and much less valuable as an information resource. Moreover, those users who do not have the requisite

language skills will be significantly limited in the extent to which they can participate in producing content within these areas of the *Wikipedia* space. Thus, and to paraphrase Maria Tymoczko (2006: 16), while conventionally it has been translators who are cast in subservient roles in terms of their cultural participation and competence, *Wikipedia* would seem to present a situation in which it is often “the turn of the monolingual to be marginalised and relegated to restricted and impoverished domains” of activity.

5.5 USER COMMENTS ANALYSIS

A third source of insights into some of the principal ways in which language structures the *Wikipedia* space can be found in personal experience-based narratives told by participants regarding the construction of each text, either within the space of each article (in Edit Summaries and Talk pages) or elsewhere in the *Wikipedia* environment (most notably on User Profile pages). As the analysis below will show, this data serves as a useful complement to the discussion of the previous sections because it helps explain not only *how* language shapes user experience of the *Wikipedia* space, but it also allows us some further understanding of *why* this might be the case.¹⁰¹ Moreover, while Scott Hale (2015: 7-8) in his quantitative analysis of the construction of Okinawa-related *Wikipedia* articles (see Section 1.2) was able only to suggest that multilingual users might be involved in “updating out-of-date information” and “fixing incorrect romanizations of Japanese words and/or adding Japanese characters for terms”, this next section is able to provide much more detailed insight into the kinds of roles they play within the site.

5.5.1 Availability, currency and accuracy

The most straightforward answer to the question of why linguistic issues influence so significantly the article production process boils down to the fact that the world’s knowledge does not exist in any one language alone. Certainly, it is undeniable that English and French are leading world

¹⁰¹ The analysis in this section draws exclusively on comments made within the English-language *Wikipedia* and does not feature comments made by users of the French-language edition. This is not a deliberate choice but merely a result of the fact that the Talk pages connected to the French-language articles in my dataset are significantly less active than those in the English-language *Wikipedia*. Indeed, it seems that because less people are involved in writing the French-language pages (as identified in Section 5.3.1), there is in most cases proportionally less discussion occurring between them. Accordingly, no French-language user comments of relevance to this section could be found within the articles contained within my dataset.

languages, spoken by hundreds of millions of people across the globe and used as international *lingua francas* in many areas of business, tourism and academia (Ronen *et al.* 2014). That said, it is also true that the linguistic heterogeneity of humanity means a significant proportion of the information about any given subject simply will not be available in these two languages.

Wikipedia's contributors make frequent reference to this issue in their article-focused discussions. In the English-language article about Paris, for instance, fluent French-speaker *Hardouin* notes that figures relating to “the distribution of the [Parisian] workforce across economic sectors [...] are hard to find outside of France” and therefore that non-French-speaking people interested in the Paris economy “will be glad to see them”, translated and summarised in the English-language *Wikipedia* (03:00, 3 December 2005, [Talk: Paris/Archive 1](#)). Similarly, on the ‘Tokyo’ Talk page, user *alkora* explains in September 2008 that information regarding crime rates in the city is only available via the Tokyo Metropolitan Police website and consequently in Japanese (23:00, 12 September 2008, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)). In response, fellow contributor *C S* comments that “[i]t would be good if someone could translate this”, reflecting on the fact that without the intervention of a Japanese-speaking contributor, this interesting and valuable resource is largely inaccessible to the wider *Wikipedia* editing and reading community, *C S* included (05:04, 15 September 2008, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)).

In several cases, Wikipedians also note that, while some information on certain subjects is available directly in the language of the encyclopaedia they are constructing, there is often a significant time-lag between the information being made available in the language of the locale and the same information finding its way into English- or French-language resources. Thus, being able to access these foreign-language sources as soon as they are published is vital to being able to keep the encyclopaedia up-to-date. User *Shb103b* (15:02, 5 October 2009, [Talk: São Paulo](#)) comments on the ‘São Paulo’ Talk page for instance that

[t]he Brazilian stats agency (IBGE) just put out updated data for the metropolitan and extended urban area of Sao Paulo. The inner city pop[ulation] is estimated to be 12,000,000+, metro area 16,000,000+, and extended urban area (equivalent to the urban area used by US Stats to define NYC) @ 24,000,000+ inhabitants.

As *Shb103b* (15:02, 5 October 2009, [Talk: São Paulo](#)) then relates, it is important that the English-language text incorporates this new information because “[t]his actually makes Sao Paulo the second largest urban area in the world, and not the 7th, as written in the article.”

Likewise, when contributing to the English-language entry on the subject of Moscow in September 2012, user פארוק discusses how, although the city boundaries were recently expanded to include new areas to the south-west, no mention of this change is made in the article (15:55, 4 September 2012, [Talk: Moscow/Archive 3](#)). This contributor states that they have found some references to the expansion in “English media reports” but that, because they are unable to speak Russian, they have been unable to ascertain the reasons behind this decision. פארוק argues that such information might well be of interest to readers of the English-language *Wikipedia*, given that this development marks a break with the distinctive circular shape of the capital beyond the “Road Rings that exist around the city since the days of Stalin” (20:56, 5 September 2012, [Talk: Moscow/Archive 3](#)). In replying to his request for help, Russian American contributor *Ezhiki* explains that, in his experience, “things like this seldom make it into English-language sources” (13:27, September 6, 2012, [Talk: Moscow/Archive 3](#)) but that “in Russian, there are plenty of news and sources about various plans and proposals” (21:01, September 5, 2012, [Talk: Moscow/Archive 3](#)). Accordingly, *Ezhiki* suggests that translating, collating and combining these locale-language sources is the only way of keeping the article abreast of Moscow’s changing cityscape.

A desire for high levels of accuracy also dictates that Wikipedians frequently find it necessary to make use of locale-language resources. On the English-language Talk page associated with the article about Tokyo, for example, we find the following personal experience-based narrative told by user *Prozzaks* (03:09, 20 March 2008, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)):

I was looking at the page List of cities by population and I was confused since I remembered seeing a much lower number for the density on this page. Since the List of cities by population page has a reference, I went looking for the correct answer. The latest data I found dates back to 2005 and is available in Microsoft Excel 97 format at the following address:

<http://www.toukei.metro.tokyo.jp/tnenkan/2005/tn05qytia0210.xls>.

In that spreadsheet there are different values given. There is Tokyo-to that appears to be a total of all the districts that gives a population of 12576601 people and a land area of 2186.96 km² which gives a density of 5750.7 people/km². What confuses me is that they list different values for "All-ku", "All-shi", "All-gun", "All-mura", etc... According to my limited knowledge of Japanese, mura means village and ku means something close to neighborhood. I don't know what "Tokyo-to" means exactly. Is there

someone with better knowledge of Japanese that can confirm that "Tokyo-to" means "all of Tokyo" and correct the articles accordingly?

Figure 5.3: Screenshot of the Tokyo population density resource cited by Prozzak.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1									II Population 51
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
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25									
26									
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28									
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31									
32									
33									
34									
35									
36									

Looking at the spreadsheet to which *Prozzak* is referring, we see that this document has clearly been written with a Japanese-speaking audience in mind. As Figure 5.3 shows, although some text (such as the title) is already translated into English, the majority of the administrative terminology used in the table remains either in Japanese characters or in 'romaji' (Japanese transliterated into Latin script).

Based on their ability to interpret the English-language text contained in this resource alone, the contributor is unable to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within the English-language *Wikipedia* entry. Improvement of the article in this respect requires instead the involvement of proficient Japanese speaker *Fg2* who is able to help clarify the meaning of the locale-language administrative terminology. Indeed, this Boston-born contributor, now living and working in Tokyo, is able to explain that

"All-ku" probably means the population of the 23 special wards divided by the area of those wards; these collectively make up the former Tokyo City. For "all-shi" it would be the cities of Western Tokyo; these are the

populous suburbs within the boundaries of Tokyo but west of what was once Tokyo City. For "all-gun" it's the total of the districts (which are sparsely populated) divided by their area; "mura" are villages. These are breakdowns of the major components of Tokyo. Tokyo-to is Tokyo Metropolis, including the 23 special wards, plus the cities, plus the districts. Much more extensive than the former Tokyo City. (Fg2, 04:29, 20 March 2008, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#))

5.5.2 Authority and impartiality

Other discussions held elsewhere within the dataset hint at additional reasons why users might find resources published in the target language insufficient for the purposes of writing an encyclopaedia article. A number of conversations reveal for example the extent to which contributors regard the locale-language sources to be more 'official', and hence more reliable and authoritative. This is particularly clear in a comment made by user *Hardouin* when the community is deliberating whether the English-language 'Paris' article should concentrate solely on what is administratively defined as the city of Paris or on the wider conurbation that includes important suburbs within the Paris Region such as the La Défense business district. *Hardouin* believes the article should cover the greater metropolitan region as a whole and in order to support this argument, he cites (and translates) a section from "the Grand Larousse Universel, perhaps the most trusted French encyclopedia [...] the number one reference checked by French people when they look for authoritative information" (12:24, 9 May 2006, [Talk: Paris/Archive 7](#)):

Here is yet another source showing the emphasis on the whole conurbation [sic]. It comes from the Grand Larousse Universel, perhaps the most trusted French encyclopedia. I translate for non-French speaking readers the first lines of their Paris article (page 7830):

It is impossible, from the points of view of demography and economy, to separate the city and its suburbs, which constitute altogether an agglomeration approaching 2000 km² and hosting nearly 10 million people.

[...] Larousse is the number one reference checked by French people when they look for authoritative information.

The fact that this reference work is written in French, the official language of the Parisian population itself, is seen to add authoritative weight to its value as a resource on which to base the *Wikipedia* article. As mentioned previously, it is “straight from the horse’s mouth” (*ThePromenader*, 16:24, 21 October 2014, [Talk: Paris/Archive 13](#)), straight from those who have the closest connection to the subject of the article. By translating this paragraph, *Hardouin* is able to put forward strong arguments in favour of his narrative conception of the city.

A final reason why locale-language sources are seen as so valuable within the community has to do with the core *Wikipedia* principle of impartiality or ‘Neutral Point of View’ (see Section 3.5). In an exchange between *E4024* and *Alex2006* on the Talk page connected with the English-language ‘Istanbul’ article, for example, *E4024* (09:11, 10 September 2012, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 6](#)) suggests that it would be impossible to gain a full and fair impression of the city without reading and making use of resources produced locally in the local language(s):

people should read [...] more than writing and neither they should ever forget that one has to read about a country all the major books written in the language of that country, to be able to claim some knowledge on it. Some of our best writers and academicians still wait for translation, however, even those who have also written in other languages have yet to be recognised and given their deserved place.

Alex2006 (09:29, 10 September 2012, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 6](#)) agrees ‘absolutely’, stating that he finds it

frankly annoying that here on wiki:en [*i.e.* the English-language *Wikipedia*] a lot of articles about Istanbul (and Turkey) are written by people which have no knowledge of Turkish sources, and so get (and transmit) a partial and misleading picture on these subjects. That’s why the support of Turkish wikipedians here is highly needed (although not always welcomed by all :-))

An insight into what these Wikipedians might feel to be so ‘misleading’ about sources which are not written in the language of the locale can be found most clearly expressed elsewhere in the dataset, in a comment made by an anonymous user on the ‘Paris’ Talk page. This contributor notes their

“frustration at finding little in the English language of value or even relevance [sic] about Paris on the web[:] anything "Paris" is literally swamped with spam by tourist-fleecers. I do like Wikipedia [sic] and it has been a great help in my research [so] it is sad for me to see the same happen here” (64.34.168.70, 06:33, 29 August 2005, [Talk: Paris/Archive 1](#)). This remark would suggest that the use of materials written in the language of the locale is seen to serve as a useful counterbalance to the marketing language of many English-language presentations of the city. Much of the material on Paris written for Anglophone readers, the anonymous contributor implies, tends to attempt to sell the French capital to potential visitors, rather than simply tell them about it. Locale-language resources are thus used to provide an alternative perspective on the urban space. We will come back to discuss the influence of such tourist-centric narratives of Paris and the ways in which they are both challenged and promoted within the *Wikipedia* environment in the next chapter (Section 6.3).

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

By analysing the English- and French-language datasets from three different perspectives, this chapter has explored some of the ways in which language shapes users’ participation in and lived experience of the *Wikipedia* space. Starting with the English-language texts, Section 5.3.2 has indicated that proficiency in the primary languages of each locale would seem to be an important prerequisite for significant involvement in the construction of these articles. The second stage of analysis (Section 5.4.1) has then demonstrated that locale-language resources make up a significant proportion of the Reference Lists found at the foot of each article page. This suggests that substantial portions of almost every article have been pieced together through a combination of partly overlapping practices including translation, paraphrase, summary and synthesis (most notably, the ‘Demographics’, ‘Climate’, ‘Transport’ and ‘Local History’ sections of many of these texts). Finally, I have drawn on user comments to provide insights into some of the reasons why this might be the case, *i.e.* why Wikipedians find they do not rely exclusively on resources already published in the language of the content they are writing. This has shown that much of the information required to produce an encyclopaedic text about the cities in my dataset is taken from locale-language resources because these are seen by the *Wikipedia* community as being more detailed, more up-to-date, more accurate, more authoritative and more impartial than those found in the English-language information sphere.

My investigations into the French-language dataset have added further weight to this argument. Firstly, the core group analysis in Section 5.3.3 has indicated that almost all of these contributors are

proficient in at least one additional language other than French, and that foreign language skills appear to be an important requirement for substantial participation in the production of these pages. In many cases, users rely on their knowledge of English as part of their editing activity and, consequently, knowledge of the language(s) of the locale is less common amongst the members of these communities. That said, evidence has been found indicating that content written in these languages may still be used as source texts for forms of translation activity in some articles (particularly in the 'Mexico' and 'São Paulo' entries). Examining the Reference Lists connected to these pages has confirmed this general pattern whilst further highlighting the extent to which translation has been a significant element of the compositional histories of each text to date.

To conclude, the dominant institutional and theoretical narratives of *Wikipedia* have been shown to mask the complexity of the platform as a social space, a lived space, a human space. Specifically, while these stories have presented each version of the site as a uniformly open, flat and essentially monolingual environment, this chapter has provided strong evidence to suggest that the English- and French-language editions of the online encyclopaedia are in fact heterotopic contact zones of multilingual interaction, structured to a large extent by the linguistic diversity of human knowledge and society. Indeed, as I have tried to show here, translation cannot be considered merely as a minor activity that contributes only by enabling the transfer of content between different *Wikipedias*. Rather, it is an integral part of the processes through which knowledge is produced and disseminated within each volunteer community.

6 'NOT-SO-COLLABORATIVE' COLLABORATION

“The problem is that there is not one Paris, but a different Paris for everyone & each one of us sees it with different eyes.”

- *Blue Indigo*, Talk: Paris/Archive 16 (21:19, 27 November 2014)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

While in the previous data analysis chapter I have sought to demonstrate the significance of language and translation for the construction of *Wikipedia*, this next chapter aims to explore how the complex nature of this online environment shapes the collaborative processes of multilingual knowledge production that occur within the platform. It foregrounds Michel Foucault's (1967/1986) notion of the heterotopia as a valuable 'conceptual method' (Johnson 2013: 791) with which to draw attention to *Wikipedia* as a site of discordant juxtaposition and creative simultaneity, and with which to highlight the constellation of diverse narrative positionings that individual members hold within the community. Drawing on detailed examples from the Talk page exchanges included in my dataset, I show that while Wikipedians are united in their shared commitment to the *Wikipedia* cause and the belief that knowledge should be free¹⁰², there is almost as much pulling them apart (centrifugal forces) as there is pulling them together (centripetal forces). Not only do different factions within the group subscribe to opposing narratives of the cities they are writing about, but many of them also hold different views regarding the purpose and function of the *Wikipedia* space itself, what it has to offer and what it has the potential to be. Consequently, and as will become clear in the course of this chapter, the heterotopic qualities of the online environment make for a co-production process which is fraught with dispute and discord, a 'not-so-collaborative' form of knowledge

¹⁰² As argued in Section 5.2, this forms the 'gravitational core' of the group.

production across linguistic and cultural borders which progresses through complex negotiations between advocates of many and opposing points of view.

To give a sense of the overarching structure of the analysis that follows, the chapter is broadly organised by theme, with each sub-section using a different case-study to explore each of the most significant sources of tension and friction that I have identified in my dataset. Section 6.2 begins by exploring disputes arising from the difficult juxtaposition of traditional and more popular forms of expertise and knowledge. Highlighting examples from both the English-language entry on Tokyo and the French-language page about Jerusalem, I show how the community negotiates the oppositions between official narratives produced by elite knowledge institutions and a range of alternative accounts of the socio-spatial reality that also circulate in society at lower levels of narrativity. In Section 6.3, we will then turn to analyse how, in this new space of consensus-based expertise and horizontal structures of knowledge production, we find major disagreements caused by *Wikipedia's* nature as simultaneously a local and a global space. Specifically, this section investigates the 'edit wars' that have broken out within the English-language article about Paris between advocates of local narratives of the city on one side, and proponents of 'Hollywood' accounts of Paris popular the world over on the other. Thirdly, in Section 6.4, the analysis is dedicated to examining the oppositions that occur between spatial narratives circulating within this geographically diverse community at a more regional level. It focuses on *Wikipedia* as both neutral and occupied territory with respect to offline, 'real-world' conflicts between Greek and Turkish nationalists by discussing the co-production of the English-language 'Istanbul' article. Finally, Section 6.5 draws on discussions regarding the French-language article on the city of Mumbai to emphasise the fact that all these different points of friction are rarely distinct from one another, and that they frequently become (con)fused in the processes of knowledge production across linguistic and cultural borders within *Wikipedia* articles.

6.2 WIKIPEDIA AS A SPACE FOR THE PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF EXPERTISE

Perhaps the most significant source of division between *Wikipedia's* multilingual contributors is caused by the contradictory nature of the platform as a heterotopic space for both the production and reproduction of expertise. To explain what I mean by this, it is useful to begin by citing comments made about *Wikipedia* by Larry Sanger. Having been heavily involved in the early

development and management of both *Nupedia* and *Wikipedia* from their very inception (see Section 1.1), Sanger quit both projects in March 2002, later attributing his frustration to the fact that

[f]or months I denied that *Wikipedia* was a community, claiming that it was, instead, only an encyclopedia project, and that there should not be any serious governance problems if people would simply stick to the task of making an encyclopedia [...]. In fact, *Wikipedia* was from the beginning and is both a community and an encyclopedia project. (Sanger 2005)

This observation is important because it highlights a key difference between *Wikipedia* and many other knowledge resources, and one of the principal contradictions lying at its heart. On the one hand, there is the fact that *Wikipedia* is an encyclopaedia and that encyclopaedias have conventionally (since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century¹⁰³) tended to privilege the contributions of experts and expert forms of knowledge (Hartelius 2010: 510). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for instance boasts on its website that its content has been contributed by “thousands of eminent experts, scholars, and leaders [...] [including] more than a hundred Nobel laureates, four presidents of the United States, countless Pulitzer Prize winners and others of international renown” (*Britannica* website: About/Contributors). Indeed, the list of “prominent people who have written in their field of expertise” for *Britannica* comprises such distinguished individuals as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (*Britannica* website: About/Contributors). These contributors are carefully selected, we are told, in order to maintain the highest degree of ‘accuracy’ and ‘reliability’ (*Britannica* website: About/Today). In other words, it is the means by which *Britannica*’s publishers ensure the “quality which is the hallmark of [their] name”; it is the means by which they achieve what they see as the main objective for the encyclopaedia production process (*Britannica* website: About/Today).

This approach necessarily produces a clear hierarchy that divides non-experts from experts, readers from writers (Hartelius 2010: 506). It separates the general public from those individuals who have a sufficiently deep understanding and comprehensive skillset to provide “accurate, reliable information [...] you can trust” (*Britannica* website: Trusted information) in the areas of knowledge that are considered appropriate for an encyclopaedia, *i.e.* those that are privileged within academic institutions: science, history, geography, the Arts, linguistics, philosophy and religion. In this way, it establishes a top-down model for the production and distribution of expertise and knowledge,

¹⁰³ As Johanna Hartelius (2010: 509-10) notes, although the very earliest encyclopaedists were generalists, well-educated and broadly knowledgeable in a wide range of subjects, publishers quickly began to invite expert contributors, specialist in a specific field of knowledge, to author the encyclopaedic content. This model has dominated the production of mainstream knowledge resources ever since.

according to which encyclopaedias are conceptualised as spaces for public pedagogy, for the education of the masses by a small elite (Hartelius 2010: 513).¹⁰⁴ This aim of ‘democratising’ scientific knowledge by sharing it with a more general readership can be traced back in history to the grand ideals of the European Enlightenment (Yeo 2001: 12), and the founding principle of improving access to information in order to help people “make rational choices and lead a more enlightened life” is a valuable one (Haider & Sundin 2010). As Johanna Hartelius (2010: 513) notes, however, it is deliberately ‘monological’ and exclusionary: the power to assert information as fact, to decide what is and what is not worth knowing, lies primarily with the expert writers, reviewers and editors employed by the encyclopaedia’s publisher, while the reader is more or less excluded from the process of knowledge production (see also Swarts 2009: 282).

Within *Wikipedia*, this top-down approach and the traditional values on which it is based run into direct conflict with the culture of *Wikipedia* as a community (Reagle 2010). Specifically, this is a community that, as Reagle (2010: 77) notes, emerged primarily out of the Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) movements of the mid-1990s.¹⁰⁵ Not only were Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger both active contributors to the group discussion fora at the heart of these global collectives (in fact, it was via these chatroom discussions and interactions that Wales and Sanger became acquainted – Schiff 2006), but it was also through such networks (*Slashdot* and *Kuro5hin*, most notably) that *Wikipedia* was first launched and promoted (see *e.g.* *Slashdot* 2001). Therefore, many of the first Wikipedians to get involved in the project already belonged to these internet groups (see *e.g.* [User: Lee Daniel Crocker](#)) and, for this reason, the encyclopaedia platform as a community has inherited many of the cultural values associated with the FOSS movement. As Reagle (2010: 77) explains, this includes most notably the use of *GNU* free documentation copyright licences¹⁰⁶ and a strong emphasis on radical openness, on the importance of breaking down hierarchical divisions and structures to encourage greater popular participation.

The prominence of this anti-hierarchical culture is particularly noticeable in documents such as the ‘Statement of Principles’ that Wales produced in October 2001 to guide the community through its

¹⁰⁴ This function is also clear in the etymological origin of the word ‘encyclopaedia’ which, as the Oxford English Dictionary informs us, derives from “pseudo-Greek ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία, an erroneous form [...] for ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία ‘encyclical education’, the circle of arts and sciences considered by the Greeks as essential to a liberal education” (OED website: Encyclopaedia).

¹⁰⁵ As Stacy Schiff (2006) writes, the open source movement is “a group of programmers who believed that software should be free and distributed in such a way that anyone could modify the code.” Wales frequently attributes his initial interest in the idea that ‘knowledge is free’ (one of the founding principles of the *Wikipedia* project) to reading an essay by Eric Raymond (2000), one of the most outspoken proponents of the FOSS movement.

¹⁰⁶ As the name suggests, these licences assure the freedom of everyone to use and distribute the software and/or content to which they are attached (*GNU* website: Licences).

early development (01:34, 27 October 2001, [Wikipedia: User: Jimbo Wales/Statement of Principles](#)). Here, Wales argued that the project's "success to date is entirely a function of our open community" and that Wikipedians must ensure "[n]ewcomers are always [...] welcomed. There must be no cabal, there must be no elites, there must be no hierarchy or structure which gets in the way of this openness to newcomers." As Sanger notes (2005), while this approach does not necessarily exclude experts, it does mean that everyone's contribution must be considered equal, and that no special respect or privileges can be accorded to traditional sources of expertise. *Wikipedia* is built, in other words, on a rather different model of knowledge production and dissemination: it rejects the idea that expertise is an individually contained ability and insists that two minds are better than one, even if the one mind has a diploma (Hartelius 2010: 512; König 2013: 164). It appeals to the intersubjective authority of mainstream (and preferably peer-reviewed) publications rather than the personal authority of experts ([Wikipedia: Identifying reliable sources](#)), and contends that valid truths emerge through dialogue within horizontal structures of knowledge sharing, through the interaction of ideas, through conflict, argument and consensus.¹⁰⁷ It thus subverts long-established knowledge hierarchies by placing the power to assert information as fact, to decide which truth-claims are legitimate, in the hands of a much wider segment of the general population, of anyone who has the time, technical ability and inclination to contribute.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, with the increased participation of non-expert users and the dismantling of conventional distinctions between writers and readers, active educators and (relatively) passive learners, *Wikipedia* has also been at the forefront of attempts to blur the boundary lines between academic and popular forms of knowledge. Not only does this platform include knowledge that has historically been considered appropriate for encyclopaedias across the ages, but it also contains those knowledges and forms of expertise that have otherwise tended to be excluded (Hartelius 2010: 510). For instance, critics such as Dale Hoiberg, former editor-in-chief of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, have made much of the fact that the *Wikipedia* entry on the British television soap *Coronation Street* "is twice as long as the article on Tony Blair" (Hoiberg 2004, cited in Waldman 2004).¹⁰⁹ Countless other

¹⁰⁷ As I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, it is for this reason that *Wikipedia* is also inherently unstable. This consensus-based model can never produce fixed results: there is no 'last word', the truth-claims produced are always subject to change, and for as long as the community is still active, the dialogue will always be in progress, its representation of knowledge always under construction.

¹⁰⁸ As Hartelius (2010: 517) notes, this approach does not entirely remove all forms of hierarchy from the processes of knowledge production. Rather, it replaces the traditional hierarchies of academic expertise with a technocracy in which technology-savvy 'techxperts' dominate and "[t]hose who cannot master the necessary software or accept interactional norms are excluded."

¹⁰⁹ Although this was certainly true in 2004 when Hoiberg made this comment, it should be noted that the two articles are now of very similar length: at the time of writing (December 2016), 'Coronation Street' contains 136,904 bytes of information and 'Tony Blair' contains 141,168 bytes ([X! Tools: Coronation Street](#); [X! Tools: Tony Blair](#)). However, Hoiberg's point still holds, given that most encyclopaedias would conventionally include

examples abound: we might also cite the fact that the entry regarding the scientific concept of ‘half-life’ is four times shorter (14,962 bytes against 61,169) and has undergone a quarter of the number of revisions in its life-time (1,586 revisions against 6,491) than the article about the popular computer game *Half-Life 2*.¹¹⁰ It is striking to note finally that the article entitled ‘List of WWE personnel’, detailing all persons working for *World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc.*, is currently (January 2017) the second most edited entry within *Wikipedia* as a whole, surpassed only by the entry on George W. Bush ([Wikipedia: Database reports/Pages with the most revisions](#)).

In sum, new forms of expertise are produced within *Wikipedia* by the community at the same time as existing hierarchies of knowledge are imposed by the traditional encyclopaedia model. The distinction between what counts as encyclopaedic and non-encyclopaedic content is far from clear-cut and many conflicts within the platform revolve around issues associated with this ‘boundary work’ (Gieryn 1983), with negotiating whose expertise is to be trusted and what kinds of knowledge should take precedence (König 2013: 163). To illustrate and expand on this point with an example from my dataset, it is useful to turn to examine the problems negotiated by the community of multilingual contributors to the English-language article about Tokyo.

6.2.1 “Tokyo is not a city”

The reason why the ‘Tokyo’ article constitutes such an excellent example of this kind of conflict has to do with the city’s unique status in Japan and, specifically, the apparent disjuncture between official definitions of Tokyo within the Japanese administrative system as opposed to those conceptions circulating in lay narratives of the space. To contextualise this, we must begin by explaining – as Hoary does in May 2010 – that, “Japan is perhaps unusual [...] in demanding in many contexts (*e.g.* the writing of addresses on envelopes) that each meaningful element of a placename should be suffixed with its [administrative] status” (Hoary, 06:09, 8 May 2010, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)). Moreover, within this tightly defined system, there is technically no legal entity equivalent to ‘Tokyo city’ (‘Tokyo-shi’ - 東京市 in Japanese). As the Tokyo Metropolitan Government website (Tokyo

many fewer references to items of popular culture such as *Coronation Street*, and would unlikely present such a full and impressively detailed article. This editorial decision is partly for reasons of space and the cost of publishing a print encyclopaedia, but it also has to do with delimiting what constitutes knowledge worthy of an encyclopaedia. Indeed, it is worth noting that even the current online version (*i.e.* largely unbound by material considerations) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* does not include an article on *Coronation Street*, and only mentions the show in passing within a number of its (brief) entries about well-known British actors who have starred in the drama at some point in their career (*Britannica* website: *Coronation Street*).

¹¹⁰ This kind of comparison is known as ‘WikiGroaning’, a term coined by Jon Hendren in a post to his blog *SomethingAwful.com* (Hendren 2007).

Metropolitan Government website: ‘History of Tokyo’) notes, a municipality of this name did once exist, but only for a few decades before its city status (‘shi’ - 市) was abolished in 1943 by the war-time Prime Minister of Japan, Hideki Tojo. Tojo merged ‘Tokyo-shi’ with the larger prefecture (‘Tokyo-fu’ - 東京府) of which it had previously been a part, and created a new administrative region called ‘Tokyo-to’ (東京都). This contains a number of separate cities, such as Hachiōji-shi (八王子市) and Tachikawa-shi (立川市), several towns (‘chō’ or ‘machi’ - 町) and villages (‘son’ or ‘mura’ - 村), and the twenty-three, independently governed ‘special wards’ (‘ku’ - 区) that form the urban core of the region: *e.g.* Shinjuku (新宿区), Minato ku (港区) and Chuo ku (中央区).

As we will see in the discussion that follows, the problem is that this administrative entity (Tokyo-to) does not correspond with those everyday conceptions of ‘Tokyo’ that dominate in the personal, local and societal narratives circulating among the general lay public, both inside and outside of Japan. Consequently, the article-focused community has to decide whether to base their entry on official narratives of Tokyo, by translating into English governmental definitions of the space (‘Tokyo-to’ - 東京都), or whether to renarrate the city according to popular understandings of Tokyo that correspond more closely with common usage (*i.e.* Tokyo as a city).

Figure 6.1: Wikipedia: Tokyo: Revision as of 14:24, 19 February 2004.

Tokyo

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This is an **old revision** of this page, as edited by **Sekicho** (talk | contribs) at 14:24, 29 February 2004 (*reverted edit. see talk*). The present address (URL) is a **permanent link** to this revision, which may differ significantly from the **current revision**.

(diff) ← Previous revision | Latest revision (diff) | Newer revision → (diff)

Tōkyō (東京; lit. eastern capital) is the capital and largest city of [Japan](#), and the most populous [metropolitan area](#) in the world.

A little more than 12 million people live in the city while hundreds of thousands of others commute everyday from surrounding areas to work and do business in the city. Tokyo is the central place of politics, economy, culture and academics in Japan as well as the home of the [Japanese emperor](#) and the seat of the national government.

The city is well known for its highly modern skyscrapers, thousands of flashing neon signs, a bustling network of roads always filled with traffic, and a very extensive and complex [underground railway system](#).

Tokyo literally means "eastern capital" in [Japanese](#), to mean to oppose to an old capital in west, [Kyoto](#), which was renamed "Saikyo", meaning "western capital", for a period of time. It was previously alternatively spelled **Tokio** in [English](#), and is still spelled Tokio in some other languages like [Dutch](#), [Esperanto](#), [German](#), and [Spanish](#).



Debates regarding this issue start on the Talk page in the spring of 2005, when a number of contributors begin to contest the way in which “[t]he intro implies that Tokyo is a city” (*Photojpn.org*, 03:32, 16 April 2005, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 1](#)). Indeed, looking at the Revision History archives, we see that for much of the first four years of its existence¹¹¹, the article appropriated the popular societal narrative, stating that “Tokyo [...] is the capital and largest city of Japan.” It consistently foregrounded Tokyo as “the city” where more than 12 million people live and which is well known for its modern skyscrapers (*Wikipedia: Tokyo*: [Revision as of 14:24, 29 February 2004](#); see Figure 6.1 for screenshot).

Editors such as *Photjpn.org*, *Fg2* and *Rick Block* all point out that “the government abolished the city of Tokyo more than sixty years ago” (*Fg2*, 10:36, 23 March 2005, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 1](#)) and therefore that “Tokyo is not a city under Japanese law” (62.254.168.102, 14:46, 28 November 2005, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 1](#)). “[I]sn’t it time”, they ask, “to stop calling Tokyo a city?” (*Fg2*, 21:06, 28 November 2005, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 1](#)). They acknowledge that this might sound “really weird” to most readers, but they insist that “weird or not, it’s fact” (*Fg2*, 10:36, Mar 23, 2005, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 1](#)). Arguing that “[t]his is supposed to be an encyclopaedia”, they assert the need to “remain factual and technically correct” (*Photojpn.org*, 01:25, 16 Apr 2005, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 1](#)). As *Rick Block* will later note, this means re-focusing the Tokyo article on “the only existing geopolitical entity called Tokyo, which since the city and prefecture merged is Tokyo-to” (*Rick Block*, 05:03, 7 May 2010, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)). In sum, they argue that only institutional narratives of Tokyo can be considered reliable sources of expertise for the space of their encyclopaedia.

Beginning at 05:11 on 15 April 2005, *Photojpn.org* makes an attempt to ‘clean up’ the article, translating the term ‘-to’ (都) initially by ‘geographic and political area’ (*Wikipedia: Tokyo*: [Revision as of 05:11, 15 April 2005](#)) and then later by ‘prefecture’ and “‘metropolis’, similar to a prefecture” (*Wikipedia: Tokyo*: [Revision as of 01:36, 21 April 2005](#) – see Figure 6.2¹¹²). This second set of solutions (and the use of ‘metropolis’ in particular) follows ‘official’ translation policies, promoted for instance by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, as *Fg2* and *Endroit* both confirm in later comments:

Tokyo Metropolis [is] the official name Tokyo adopted for itself in English
(*Fg2*, 10:34, 16 August 2007, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 4](#))

¹¹¹ The article was created at 19:59 on 19 May 2001 by *Pinkunicorn* ([Wikipedia: Tokyo: Revision History](#)).

¹¹² Highlighted in yellow on the left-hand side are those sections of text that have been deleted by *Photojpn.org*, while those that have been added are highlighted in blue and are placed on the right-hand side.

Tokyo Metropolis is the official name, as well as the literal meaning of 東京
都 [Tokyo-to] (*Endroit*, 18:24, 19 August 2007, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 4](#))

Contributors such as *Oda Mari* (10:24, 9 May 2010, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)) do acknowledge that since “English doesn't have an equivalent word for ‘to’”, these translations are far from perfect, and some debate does ensue as to whether ‘prefecture’ or ‘metropolis’ is most appropriate.¹¹³ However, as *adamrice* explains (21:32, 22 May 2007, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 3](#)), using both terms more or less interchangeably in this article is acceptable, primarily because of the fact that a hyperlink can be inserted, connecting this page to the *Wikipedia* article ‘Prefectures of Japan’ where the exact definition of each element of the Japanese administrative system (including ‘-to’ - 都) can be explained at length.

In spite of this, many contributors do not agree with the idea that the *Wikipedia* article should privilege elite forms of knowledge and expertise, especially when they seem to stand so directly in opposition to popular understandings.¹¹⁴ Indeed, *D. Meyer*, *Hoary*, *Mdw0*, *adamrice* and *TAKASUGI Shinji* all argue at various points during the article construction process that the *Wikipedia* text should cover what most people think of as Tokyo, not what the Japanese government defines it as. *TAKASUGI Shinji*, for instance, notes early on in the discussion that “what Japanese call Tōkyō is usually the 23 special wards [*i.e.* the urban core of the region], not Tokyo Prefecture [*i.e.* Tokyo-to], even though the former has no single administration” (*TAKASUGI Shinji*, 14:59, 23 March 2005, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 1](#)). Later, in July 2006, *D. Meyer* is even more explicit in suggesting *Wikipedia* should reject official definitions of Tokyo in favour of those circulating in local and societal narratives: he posits that stating Tokyo is not a city “is a legal technicality. In common usage both inside and outside Japan Tokyo is thought of as a city, albeit an extremely large one with a unique governmental system” (*D. Meyer*, 23:00, 4 July 2006, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 2](#)). *adamrice* (15:57, 11

¹¹³ In June 2007, for instance, *LordAmeth* (19:50, 6 June 2007, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 3](#)) writes, “I really do think that Prefecture is best. 都 may translate as “metropolis”, but “metropolis” also implies a concentrated urban area, and is not used in any other contexts (any other cities or states or countries) to refer to something equivalent to a state or a province.”

¹¹⁴ This could be seen as an example of the rise of the ‘post-truth era’, of the de-valuing of fact among the general public within Western societies. As I argue above, however, it is more productive to view this conflict in terms of Wikipedians attempting to re-negotiate what kinds of expertise can be considered authoritative and reliable, to disrupt the hierarchies of knowledge that have shaped encyclopaedic production for centuries. In other words, it is not that *D. Meyer*, *Hoary*, *Mdw0*, *adamrice* and *TAKASUGI Shinji* are not interested in what is ‘true’, but that they consider both official and popular experience-based forms of knowledge to have equal value as truth-claims. They believe that the *Wikipedia* article should reflect this.

July 2006, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 2](#)) echoes the same idea later on that week, writing “Tokyo (IMO¹¹⁵, equivalent to the 23 区 [‘ku’ or ‘wards’]), [...] is a city in the sense that people identify it as their hometown, the city where they live, the big city where they go to shop, or whatever. Legal constructs and mental/societal ones don't always coincide perfectly.”

Figure 6.2: Wikipedia: Tokyo: Revision as of 01:36, 21 April 2005.

Tokyo: Difference between revisions

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

<p>Revision as of 04:49, 20 April 2005 (edit) Yipdw (talk contribs) m ← Previous edit</p>	<p>Revision as of 01:36, 21 April 2005 (edit) (undo) Photojpn.org (talk contribs) (Rewrote Intro) Next edit →</p>
<p>Line 30:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> Governor = [[Shintaro Ishihara]] </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> }} </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>""Tokyo"" (&#26481;&#20140;; "T&#333;ky&#333;" {{Audio ja-Tokyo.ogg listen}}, literally "eastern capital") is the capital of Japan located in the [[Kanto]] region on the island of [[Honshu]] in [[Japan]]. It is also Japan's economic and financial center, and the heart of the [[Greater Tokyo Area]], the most populous urban area in Japan and the world.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p>As a [[world city]], Tokyo ranks with [[New York City New York]], [[London]], and [[Paris]], and the neon lights and huge crowds of downtown Tokyo define Japan for many foreigners. The headquarters of many of Japan's [[Multinational corporation multinationals]], it draws in a steady flow of migrants from all parts of Japan, and more recently all over the world.</p> </div>	<p>Line 30:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> Governor = [[Shintaro Ishihara]] </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> }} </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>""Tokyo"" (&#26481;&#20140;; "T&#333;ky&#333;" {{Audio ja-Tokyo.ogg listen}}, literally "eastern capital") is located in the [[Kanto]] region on the island of [[Honshu]] in [[Japan]]. It is counted as one of the 47 [[prefectures of Japan]] and commonly referred to as the capital of Japan with the [[Japanese government government of Japan]] and the [[Emperor of Japan]] residing in [[Chiyoda, Tokyo Chiyoda Ward]]. With a population of over 12 million, or about 10 percent of Japan's population, it is by far the country's most populous and most densely populated prefecture.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p>Although Tokyo is considered to be one of the [[world city major cities of the world]], it is technically not a city. There is no city named "Tokyo." Tokyo is actually designated as a "metropolis," similar to a prefecture, run by the metropolitan government headed by a publicly-elected governor.</p> </div>

It is in May 2010 that the most forceful arguments in favour of this perspective are put forward. *Mdw0* for instance insists that “Tokyo IS a city in the simple, non-technical meaning of the word, and

¹¹⁵ IMO is an acronym here for ‘in my opinion’. As we will see later in this section, there is no clear consensus on the definition of ‘Tokyo as a city’.

thats what this article needs to refer to" (*Mdw0*, 03:59, 6 May 2010, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)).¹¹⁶ *Hoary* (15:08, 9 May 2010, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)) also voices a similar opinion when s/he pitches his/her expertise and knowledge of Tokyo as a local resident of this space against 'perverse' expert definitions of the Japanese government:

[o]f course it's a city. It exists. I'm in it right now. I crossed to its centre this morning and I crossed back this evening. No, I am not a solipsist, and so I believe an accumulation of sensory data that tell me that it's a city that in most ways resembles other cities I know, other than having a green hole in the middle [...] and being composed of boroughs that various government agencies perversely insist are themselves "cities". How is my conception of Tokyo as a city a misconception? How is it uncitlylike or not a city? Merely by governmental fiat? Sorry, [Oda] Mari, but the English language is not something that's legislated by the Japanese (or other) government. [...]

(*Hoary*, 15:08, 9 May 2010, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#))

As *Mdw0* sums up, the feeling among many members of the community is that while "official definitions of local government boundaries should most certainly be mentioned in an article, [...] they absolutely should not dominate an article about a whole city" (*Mdw0*, 08:57, 9 May 2010, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 5](#)). They believe that *Wikipedia* should represent the knowledge and expertise of the people, the definitions of the space on which most personal, local and societal narratives are based, and not focus solely on narrating the official narratives put forward by government elites.

While their arguments seem fairly compelling within the Talk page discussion, it should be noted that these editors have so far struggled to actually realise their vision within the body of the main article itself. As *Fg2* (06:32, 6 July 2006, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 2](#)) points out, this is primarily due to the fact that, unlike official definitions of the city, popular conceptions are infinitely more unstable and ambiguous, and the city of Tokyo may be defined differently by different people. "To some," *Fg2* (06:32, 6 July 2006, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 2](#)) suggests,

Tokyo is only the world city, the central wards: Chuo, Chiyoda, Minato. Others point out that the recently developed Shinjuku has the skyscrapers, and Shibuya has the center of youth culture. To many, the "real" Tokyo is the Shitamachi area: without Shibamata, or tatami- and tofu-makers,

¹¹⁶ In order to clarify what s/he means by 'non-technical', *Mdw0* later points to the dictionary definition of 'city' as an "inhabited place of greater size, population or importance than a town or village" (08:57, 9 May 2010, [Tokyo: Talk/Archive 5](#)).

nothing can be a worthy successor to Edo. Komae has never been part of the city of Tokyo, but Nerima, with its daikon [Japanese radish] farms, was. Should we really consider it part of the city of Tokyo? Should we trim Itabashi and Suginami, making Tokyo smaller than the historical city? [...] Maybe Tokyo the modern city is synonymous with its old borders. But does that really make sense six decades later? Since the boundaries were drawn, Kawasaki has swollen right up to the Tokyo line, and if we were going to establish a new city of Tokyo, reversing Tojo's act, wouldn't we include it? Let's annex Yokohama, too, and Mitaka to the west, Kawaguchi to the north, and some other formerly separate cities. Sure, everything from Omiya to Ofuna. If you're a sociologist or a geographer, you might have data on residence patterns, or transportation, or communications, to prove that all of these are part of Tokyo. (Fg2, 06:32, 6 July 2006, [Talk: Tokyo/Archive 2](#))

In short, the need to choose one, clearly defined 'Tokyo' in order to produce a coherent and readable encyclopaedic text has meant that official definitions of the locale have so far tended to dominate the *Wikipedia* article's coverage, albeit despite frequent protestations from certain factions within the community. This finding concurs with the results of Jakob Voß (2006) and René König's (2013) respective studies, both of which have concluded that traditional hierarchies are still largely re-enacted in this online context. As a result, while some evidence of a 'democratisation' of expertise is visible within *Wikipedia*, the platform ultimately tends to be rather more conservative than progressive in terms of its representation of human knowledge.

6.2.2 Originality and difference

Following König (2013: 169) and in close relation to this issue, it is important to recognise that the authority of conventional sources of expertise is also to some extent maintained within the community through *Wikipedia*'s core content policy of 'No Original Research' ('NOR' for short – [Wikipedia: No Original Research](#)). NOR has informed the process of *Wikipedia* content creation from the project's very inception (Sanger 2005)¹¹⁷ and, as the policy page states, it is intended to ensure that *Wikipedia* contains only information which is directly attributable to already published material

¹¹⁷ As Sanger (2005) notes in his memoir, this policy was even enforced in the project's *Nupedia* days.

([Wikipedia: No Original Research](#)). In a message to the *WikiEN-I* mailing list in December 2004, Jimmy Wales (2004a) explains the origins of this policy:

[t]he phrase originated [sic] primarily as a practical means to deal with physics cranks, of which of course there are a number on the web.

The basic concept is as follows: it can be quite difficult for us to make any valid judgment as to whether a particular thing is *_true_* or not. It isn't appropriate for us to try to determine whether someone's novel theory of physics is valid, we aren't really equipped to do that. But what we *_can_* do is check whether or not it actually has been published in reputable journals or by reputable publishers. So it's quite convenient to avoid judging the credibility of things by simply sticking to things that have been judged credible by people much better equipped to decide.

In other words, it was intentionally developed as a means of maintaining some degree of order and structure within a reference work that 'anyone can edit'. On the one hand, as Reagle (2010: 12) notes, the policy helps to define the scope of the project in terms of what can be considered appropriate for inclusion within the encyclopaedia. By ensuring that its articles may only cover subjects that are considered part of general knowledge, as opposed to the particular knowledge of individuals and small special-interest groups, NOR reduces the risk of the platform becoming swamped with self-promotion, advocacy and "vanity links", with articles that are of little interest and value other than to the people who wrote them.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the policy also provides some guidance on what can be included within *Wikipedia* articles themselves: it is intended to avoid letting *Wikipedia* become a 'soapbox' for every contributor's own personal narratives of the world, to ensure that the platform privileges mainstream narratives and the truth-claims of established voices over and above the theories and opinions of those Wales variously calls 'cranks' and 'POV pushing lunatics' (Wales 2004a; *Jimmy Wales*, 15:33, 15 August 2006, [Talk: Neutral Point of View/Archive 024](#)).¹¹⁹ In sum, NOR frames *Wikipedia* first and foremost as a space for the reproduction of expertise, a space in which all generally-accepted human knowledge is faithfully

¹¹⁸ If this policy requiring information to be sourced from previously published reliable material were not in place, any individual could for instance write a *Wikipedia* article about themselves, even if they were not 'generally notable'.

¹¹⁹ The apparent contradiction between this policy and the idea of *Wikipedia* as an anti-hierarchical space (discussed in the previous section) is best explained by considering NOR as a product- or encyclopaedic quality-focused policy, as opposed to other, more process-oriented policies within the community (such as 'Don't bite the newcomers' – see [Wikipedia: Please do not bite the newcomers](#)). This tension is inherent to the contradictory nature of the *Wikipedia* space as both a site for encyclopaedia-writing and community-building.

reproduced, rather than a space in which new, alternative accounts of reality can be created and circulated.

However, NOR also states that “[d]espite the need to attribute content to reliable sources, **you must not plagiarise** them or violate their copyrights” ([Wikipedia: No original research](#); emphasis in original). In other words, the content published in *Wikipedia* may not reproduce too closely information found elsewhere, but must be measurably different from these original materials. Thus, *Wikipedia* finds itself in the spaces between original production and faithful reproduction, and as we will see in the examples that follow, the need to ensure *Wikipedia*’s content does not stray too far towards either end of this same-different spectrum is at the core of several discussions within my dataset.

This is particularly interesting given our focus here on translation activities which themselves take place in these very same borderlands between the same and the new, between reproduction and production (Bassnett & Bush 2006; van Doorslaer 2010: 181). Indeed, we may note that in many of *Wikipedia*’s guidelines, ‘faithful’ translation appears to be seen primarily as a form of reproduction, as an activity that does not add anything new and so cannot fall foul of NOR: “[f]aithfully translating sourced material into English”, one policy page states, “is not considered original research” ([Wikipedia: No Original Research](#)). Consequently, at several instances within my dataset, and particularly with respect to the ‘History’ sections of these articles, contributors suggest that closely translating a previously published and well-respected historical narrative written in another language could constitute an excellent means of improving the quality of *Wikipedia*’s content. Within the Talk page discussion regarding the English-language ‘Paris’ article, for example, *Hardouin* writes that the

History section is quite hopeless, as it is the section most edited by people, who constantly add new info, most of the time irrelevant (such as Paris lost the 2008 and 2012 Olympic games, irrelevant in a quick summary of Paris history). Perhaps we could simply translate the Paris history section of a Larousse dictionary, which is both quite thorough and short. What do you think? I don't think translations of our own would expose us to copyright complaints, no? (*Hardouin* 15:10, 3 December 2005, [Talk: Paris/Archive 1](#))

He proposes, in other words, to exploit the ambiguous nature of the translational act itself to negotiate the difficulties posed by *Wikipedia* as a space for both the production and reproduction of expertise: by foregrounding translation as a re-creative activity, he argues it can be a valuable

strategy by which to dramatically enhance a weak section in this *Wikipedia* article. It means that the historical narrative presented by the expert team of professional historians and editors employed by a prestigious publisher such as *Larousse* can be brought into the article and that in this way, *Hardouin* suggests, *Wikipedia* can provide a reliable, coherent and concise account of the city's past. On the other hand, by framing translation as a productive activity, as an operation that creates something new, he appears to be suggesting that he and his fellow contributors can avoid any accusations of plagiarism or copyright violation.

For a number of reasons, including not least a major personality clash between *ThePromenader* and *Hardouin* which side-tracks the debate in another direction, this proposal is never followed through, nor does the Talk page discussion continue beyond this single comment.¹²⁰ Conversely, in the 'Jérusalem' article on the French-language *Wikipedia*, this issue is more extensively explored. Here, the discussion starts at [10:17 on 30 August 2008](#), when *Michel1961* replaces the history section of this article with a close translation of an English-language text written by the *Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies* at Bar-Ilan University, Israel (*IRCJS* 1997). Given that this original document has been compiled by professional academics as part of the course materials for an undergraduate module on the 'History of Jerusalem', this is clearly considered a reliable historical narrative by *Michel1961* and it would seem that it is for this very reason that the text was selected as a source. Not only does *Michel1961* adhere strictly to the structure of the text as a whole, translating each paragraph in turn with very few omissions, but he also follows to a large extent the sentence order and phrasing of the original. A comparison of an excerpt of *Michel1961*'s text and the English-language *IRCJS* text is provided in Table 6.1:

¹²⁰ The English-language 'Paris' article Talk pages are testament to the fact that, almost from the very day *ThePromenader* began his involvement in the article in September 2005, through to October 2009 when *Hardouin* left this article-focused community, the two contributors were engaged in a furious battle of wills and repeatedly attempted to get each other banned from *Wikipedia* for 'disruptive editing'. Although the two editors do subscribe to slightly different narratives of Paris and the role of the *Wikipedia* project, this ultimately seems to boil down to a fundamental clash of personalities which removes all possibility of either contributor accepting anything the other might suggest. We will come back to discuss the case of the 'Paris' article in the next section.

Table 6.1: Comparison of Michel1961's translation with the English-language IRCJS (1997) text.

IRCJS (1997) text:	Michel1961's translation:
Jericho, 35 kilometers from Jerusalem, is thought to be the oldest city in the world. Some 7-8,000 years ago in Jericho, for the first time in history, people began to farm and settle down in one location permanently. This agricultural revolution probably affected nearby Jerusalem, which was on the road between Jericho and the Mediterranean Sea. Ceramic shards found near the Gihon Spring are the earliest remains found to date at the site of ancient Jerusalem, the small slope east of the Dung Gate known as the City of David. They are from the Chalcolithic period, close to 5,000 years ago (fourth millennium BCE) the exact date is not known. It is not clear if the settlement then was continuous.	A 35 kilomètres de Jérusalem, Jéricho est réputée être la plus ancienne ville du monde. Il y a 7 à 8000 ans à Jéricho, pour la première fois dans l'histoire, les gens ont commencé à cultiver et s'installer dans un endroit qu'ils ont occupé en permanence. Cette révolution agricole a probablement touché Jérusalem, qui se trouvait sur la route reliant Jéricho et la mer Méditerranée. Des Fragments de céramique trouvés près de Gihon Spring sont les premiers vestiges découverts à ce jour sur le site de l'ancienne. Il n'est pas établi que l'occupation du site fut alors continue.

Michel1961 is an engineer by profession (living near Toulon, France – [User \(FR\): Michel1961](#)) and, while his target text is certainly comprehensible, he is clearly not a practiced translator, given that the French contains a number of awkward Anglicisms: although the verb ‘cultiver’ does correspond more or less as an equivalent to the English verb ‘to farm’, it is – in French – transitive and cannot thus be used, as *Michel1961* has done, without an object (see *Larousse Online Dictionary*: Cultiver). Coupled with other errors (such as the use of decimal points in “1.4-1.8 millions d'années” instead of commas as is conventional in French), one suspects that he may in fact have relied extensively on machine translation services (such as *Google Translate*) to produce this translation.

In spite of this, it is not with these errors that his fellow contributors take issue. Rather, it is the fact that *Michel1961*'s contribution would seem to reproduce all too faithfully the original text. At [22:44](#) that same day, for example, *Olevy* posts the following Edit Summary:

Ce texte est une traduction d'un texte de Bar-Ilan. Attention au copyright
(*Wikipedia* (FR): Jérusalem: Edit Summary [for Revision as of 22:44, 30 August 2008](#))

[This text is a translation of a text by Bar-Ilan. Be careful of the copyright]

At 23:48, he also makes a similar comment on the Talk page:

Texte intéressant [...] mais j'ai peur que le copyright force à effacer tout cela de l'article. (*Olevy*, 23:48, 30 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Jérusalem](#))

[Interesting text but I'm afraid that the copyright may force us to erase all that from the article.]

To which, *Michel1961* promptly replies:

j'ai voulu etre proche de ma source en traduisant pour ne rien dénaturer, mais du coup nous sommes actuellement trop proche du copyright. il serait dommage de supprimer des informations exactes mais il faudrait les modifier pour s'éloigner de ce risque . je souhaiterais que cela se fasse par quelqu'un plus expert que moi sur le sujet et spécialiste de "ce qui est tolérable ou non dans le domaine de la traduction synthèse d'une source" Peut etre vous ? (*Michel1961*, 08:55, 31 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Jérusalem](#))

[I wanted to be close to my source when translating in order not to misrepresent anything, but in fact we are now too close to the copyright. It would be a shame to delete accurate information but it will be necessary to change it in order to avoid running this risk. I was hoping that someone more expert than me on this subject and specialist in “what is tolerable or not in terms of the translation-synthesis of a source text” might be able to do this. Perhaps you?]

We see here then another clear example of the ways in which *Wikipedia* as an ambiguous, heterotopic space unsettles and subverts established norms and practices taking place in other spaces of translation, both on- and offline. Quite unlike the situation in most traditional translation contexts where some degree of (lexical, pragmatic, functional) equivalence is generally assumed to be the end goal of the activity (Baker 2004), faithful translation and the reproduction of the source text is here deemed a ‘risk’. Equivalence is not the ideal towards which this group of contributor-translators strive but something they fear (“j’ai peur que...” – “I’m afraid...”). Indeed, to resolve this issue the community (*Michel1961* included) makes considerable changes to the text over the following months, reworking whole sections in order to ensure the ‘newness’ or originality of their history of Jerusalem. Not only does this involve removing the most glaring Anglicisms from *Michel1961*’s initial translation,¹²¹ but also rearranging the order in which the narrative is presented, removing certain sentences and adding in additional information that is not present in the original English-language text from alternative resources. At [13:18 on the 31 August 2008](#), for example,

¹²¹ See for example *Olevy*’s edit at [14:15 on 30 August 2008](#) in which he replaces the phrase “s’installer dans un endroit qu’ils ont occupé en permanence” with the more natural “rester sédentaires” ([Wikipedia \(FR\): Jérusalem: Revision History archives](#)).

Michel1961 inserts a sentence providing the estimated population of the city into the paragraph narrating the early history of Jerusalem (see Figure 6.3¹²²), while at [18:11 on 21 September 2008](#), *Olevy* contributes information relating to the invasion of Jerusalem by the Persian army in 614 B.C.E., drawing on the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de judaïsme* ('Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Judaism' – see Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.3: Wikipedia (FR): Jerusalem: Revision as of 13:18, 31 August 2008.

Version du 31 août 2008 à 12:30 (voir la source)	Version du 31 août 2008 à 13:18 (voir la source)
Michel1961 (discuter contributions)	Michel1961 (discuter contributions)
(→Chalcolithique, 4ème millénaire avant notre ère)	(→Le royaume d'Abdi-Heba)
← Modification précédente	Modification suivante →
Ligne 45 :	Ligne 45 :
=== Le royaume d'Abdi-Heba ===	=== Le royaume d'Abdi-Heba ===
Jérusalem n'est pas mentionnée dans les textes datant des 500 années suivantes. Toutefois, l'archéologie montre que la ville est restée intacte, bien que très petite, ne couvrant que 3 à 4 hectares. Malgré sa taille, Jérusalem était une ville importante politiquement qui exerce une influence sur les villes des environs. Un morceau d'une stèle égyptienne de cette époque a été retrouvé au nord des murs de la ville actuelle. Ces découvertes montrent l'importance de Jérusalem pour l'Égypte. Au-delà des murs de la cité, le roi de Jérusalem contrôle une région qui s'étend de Sichem au nord à Jéricho à l'est, vers la plaine côtière à l'ouest et peut-être jusqu'à Hébron au sud. Elle devint si puissante que des villes-états aussi loin qu'Ashkelon ont uni leurs forces pour vaincre le puissant roi de Jérusalem. Jérusalem est	Jérusalem n'est pas mentionnée dans les textes datant des 500 années suivantes. Toutefois, l'archéologie montre que la ville est restée intacte, bien que très petite, ne couvrant que 3 à 4 hectares. La totalité de la population de royaume ne dépasse pas 1500 personnes. Malgré sa taille, Jérusalem était une ville importante politiquement qui exerce une influence sur les villes des environs. Un morceau d'une stèle égyptienne de cette époque a été retrouvé au nord des murs de la ville actuelle. Ces découvertes montrent l'importance de Jérusalem pour l'Égypte. Au-delà des murs de la cité, le roi de Jérusalem contrôle une région qui s'étend de Sichem au nord à Jéricho à l'est, vers la plaine côtière à l'ouest et peut-être jusqu'à Hébron au sud. Elle devint si puissante que des

¹²² In Figures 6.3 and 6.4, those sections of text that have been added are highlighted in blue and/or placed in a blue-bordered textbox on the right-hand side of the page.

Figure 6.4: Wikipedia (FR): Jerusalem: Revision as of 18:11, 21 September 2008.

Version du 21 septembre 2008 à 11:37 (voir la source)	Version du 21 septembre 2008 à 18:11 (voir la source)
Olevy (discuter contributions) (Phrase bancale) ← Modification précédente	Olevy (discuter contributions) (→La Période romaine et byzantine (6 av. J.-C. - 638) : prise par les Perses) Modification suivante →
Ligne 91 :	Ligne 91 :
En [[451]], le [[Patriarcat (église) patriarcat]] de Jérusalem est créé. La ville Ἱερουσαλὴμ ("Hagiapolis Ierusalem", Cité Sainte) ou "Hierusalem", est représentée sur plusieurs mosaïques chrétiennes du Ve aux VIIIe siècle, en particulier sur la "Carte de [[Madaba]]" (env. 560-565).	En [[451]], le [[Patriarcat (église) patriarcat]] de Jérusalem est créé. La ville Ἱερουσαλὴμ ("Hagiapolis Ierusalem", Cité Sainte) ou "Hierusalem", est représentée sur plusieurs mosaïques chrétiennes du Ve aux VIIIe siècle, en particulier sur la "Carte de [[Madaba]]" (env. 560-565).
	+
	Durant les guerres entre les Perses de [[Khosro II]] et l'empire romain d'Orient d'[[Héraclius]], Jérusalem est prise par les Perses et gouvernée par Juifs de 614 à 617, ce qui entraîne des persécutions antijuives dans l'Empire d'Orient<ref>Dictionnaire encyclopédique du judaïsme, Les Juifs dans le monde antique et médiéval, Babylonie.</ref>.
{{article détaillé Rite de l'Église de Jérusalem}}	{{article détaillé Rite de l'Église de Jérusalem}}

To conclude, direct translation in this heterotopic context appears to involve negotiating between the precise reproduction of the original narratives, on the one hand, and their re-interpretation and manipulation, on the other. For *Wikipedia's* multilingual contributors, this case-study would suggest that the need to produce something new and different is just as important as the need to represent accurately the account of the world presented in their source materials.

6.3 WIKIPEDIA AS A GLOBAL/LOCAL SPACE

In this space of consensus-based expertise and heightened ambiguity as to which kinds of knowledge should be presented, other points of friction arise, dividing each article-focused community into a constantly evolving maelstrom of opposing factions and rivalries. Indeed, at the root of much of the discussion within the English-language *Wikipedia* article on the subject of 'Paris' lies an issue that is usefully summarised by *ThePromenader* in the following comment:

Doing an English Paris page in a place such as Wiki is no easy task, namely for the reason that there will automatically be conflicting views (subject choice) between a) English-speaking French nationals with an education or

experience of Paris and its relation vis-à-vis the rest of its country [...] who will write about it much in the same way as, say, you would write about your own city or country, and b) Foreigners knowing much about Paris' "reputation" but little about its actual workings. (*ThePromenader*, 16:50, 5 December 2005, [Talk: Paris/Archive 1](#))

In this remark, *ThePromenader* highlights one of the most fundamental difficulties Wikipedians face: that of how to reconcile the contradictory pressures posed by *Wikipedia* as simultaneously a global and a local space. On the one hand, this is because *Wikipedia* is essentially what Foucault would have called a 'place without a place' (see Section 2.5). It is an immaterial space that is accessible anywhere in the world but that exists nowhere, in no one physical location.¹²³ Therefore, the individuals who enter into the article environment do not necessarily do so from the same material-world site, but may represent a diverse community located all around the world. Privacy issues prevent us from obtaining comprehensive data as to the actual geographical spread of this group, but recent analyses using the circadian patterns of editing activity (Yasseri *et al.* 2012), coupled with my own more anecdotal observations of information freely presented on *Wikipedia*'s User Profiles, are strongly suggestive of the global nature of this community.¹²⁴ User *Hardouin*, for instance, is based in London, *WhisperToMe* in Houston, Texas, *Stevage* in Melbourne, Australia, *Владимир Шеляпин* in Russia and *Nvvchar* in Delhi/Bangalore, India.

Also active in this article-focused community, on the other hand, are a significant number of "English-speaking French nationals". These we might term 'local' web users, contributors who perhaps either live and work in Paris itself or elsewhere in the surrounding area. Prominent contributors *Minato ku*, *Metropolitan* and *v_atekor* would constitute excellent examples of this kind of Wikipedian, residing as they all do within the Île-de-France region. Although *ThePromenader* excludes himself from this 'local' category, I would also add him (*ThePromenader*) and other editors like him – such as *SiefkinDR* and *Der Statistiker* – to this group. This is because, whilst not being of French nationality (*ThePromenader* is Canadian, *SiefkinDR* is from California and *Der Statistiker* is

¹²³ The server units on which *Wikipedia* is stored do of course have a material presence in a specific geographical location. However, even these are spread across multiple sites, with servers in Virginia, San Francisco, Texas and the Netherlands ([Wikimedia: Wikimedia servers](#)).

¹²⁴ Yasseri *et al.* (2012: 7) have shown that, although North America is by far the largest English-speaking region in the world (as well as constituting the continent in which the internet is most developed), only around half of edits (51%) to the English-language *Wikipedia* originate from this continent. Indeed, they suggest that, although Africa and South America are still severely under-represented within the editing community (as discussed in Section 5.2), tens of thousands of its members are based throughout Europe, Asia and Australasia. To provide this information, Yasseri *et al.* (2012) used a novel method, analysing the circadian patterns of editing activity to identify which international time zone contributions to the 34 largest *Wikipedias* were made from. This then allowed them to approximate the location of *Wikipedia* contributors the world over.

from Göttingen, Germany), they have all been living in Paris for most of their adult lives. Moreover, they frequently make prominent reference to this fact, using their 'localness' to frame their activity within this specific article, to claim some level of expertise in this subject area.¹²⁵

This matters, as Andrew Sayer (1985 – see Section 2.3) would affirm, because of “the difference that space makes”: depending on where each of these individuals lives, depending on their geographical location, they will adhere to a rather different set of narratives regarding the French capital.¹²⁶ ‘Local’ contributors, to begin with, will likely have significant first-hand experience of Paris and therefore will subscribe most strongly to a fluid, shifting set of personal and local spatial narratives in this respect. As suggested in Chapter 3, these stories will of course be shaped to some degree by the broader narratives told within the (French) media and through the national education system: *i.e.* the societal, official, institutional and meta narratives that circulate at higher levels of narrativity. Nevertheless, their understanding of the city will predominantly be based on their own personal perceptions, conceptions and lived experiences of the city, as well as those of their colleagues, friends and family. ‘Foreigners’, on the other hand, as *ThePromenader* puts it in the comment above, will be less influenced by personal and local spatial narratives about Paris, having had less interaction with them. Because of their geographical location, in other words, they will have an understanding of the space that is less dominated by individual perceptions and experiences and, as a result, they will subscribe more closely to an imagining of the city shaped by the more abstract narratives that dominate within their mediasphere.

This would seem to prove particularly problematic in the case of Paris due to the especially well-defined and widespread nature of its clichéd ‘reputation’ (to again use *ThePromenader*’s term) or ‘societal narrative’ (to use the typology presented in Chapter 3). As Colin Jones (2004: xvii) writes in the preface to his biography of the city, Paris has enjoyed a “mythical status” quite unmatched in the Western imagination from at least the eighteenth century onwards. This was partly a result of its pre-eminence as a major centre of intellectual and artistic activity during the late-Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, a fact which led to widespread conceptions of Paris as a ‘new Rome’ (Jones 2004: xvii). The importance of its role during the French revolution also contributed towards making the city a world-renowned symbol for democracy and political freedom, while Baron Haussmann’s

¹²⁵ In retaliation against a comment made by another user, *ThePromenader* writes, for instance, that “I’ve lived here since twenty-three years, so I know full well the what and the why of what’s trying to be imposed here” (13:32, 24 September 2014, [Talk: Paris/Archive 12](#)).

¹²⁶ Other factors such as gender, race, age and class will also have a bearing on determining the narrative location of any given contributor. As argued in Chapter 2 however, our focus in this thesis is on the importance of geography in shaping human activity.

radical re-development of huge swathes of the city centre, along with events such as the Exposition Universelle, established Paris' fame as the 'capital of modernity' (Higonnet 2002: 1).¹²⁷

That said, it was in the twentieth century that the most powerful societal narratives of Paris were formed, and this largely as a result of its prominence in American cinema. "In Hollywood movies," Antoine de Baecque (2012: 10) asserts, "Paris is by far the foreign city that appears most often. Some eight hundred American films have been shot in Paris or feature reconstructions of the city."¹²⁸ Given that many of these films were made at a time when Paris was still very much the cultural capital of the West, American filmic representations tended to foreground the city as "an enchanted world of culture and civilisation" (Schwartz 2007, cited in de Baecque 2012: 11), exploiting the clichés to add sophistication and romance to their fiction. These narratives reduced, in other words, the real-world site to "a stock set of sights", to a "postcard city" (Hayward 2000a: 68): Paris *was* the Eiffel Tower, Moulin Rouge, accordion players and café terraces. Anything that did not fit this image would simply be considered un-Parisian, not part of Paris: as one director – Ernst Lubitsch (cited in de Baecque 2012: 10) – is quoted as saying, "there is Paramount Paris and Metro Paris, and of course the real Paris. Paramount's is the most Parisian of them all."

Within the heterotopic space of *Wikipedia*, these different 'Parises', these opposing sets of mutually incompatible, local and global narratives are brought into direct contention. While many contributors belonging to the English-language community attempt to write an article by drawing on the countless resources that reflect the globally dominant narratives of the space, those individuals who have a more local perspective on Paris find this unsettling, upsetting and, in some cases, even insulting. The clichés jar with their own narrative understandings of their home town, of what they conceive of as its 'reality'. As a result, 'local' contributors will for the most part try to challenge this representation by selectively appropriating, collating and translating materials – written, as we will see below, predominantly in French (*i.e.* the language of the locale) – which might present a 'Paris' more in tune with their perceptions, conceptions and experiences of the space.

To illustrate this point with an example, it is interesting to highlight a period of conflict-ridden editing activity and heated discussion beginning in June 2013. The initial trigger for this quarrel,

¹²⁷ Testament to this reputation is the way in which other cities around the globe are frequently referred to as 'the Paris of South America' (Buenos Aires) or 'the Paris of the Middle East' (Beirut). It is almost as if the French capital is considered the gold standard of cities, the pinnacle of modern urban refinement by which all others must be judged.

¹²⁸ It is ironic that, especially in the early days of Hollywood, most films set in Paris, including for example scenes from Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942), were in fact filmed in huge Californian studios (de Baecque 2012: 12). If anything, this only further serves to illustrate the extent to which it is an imagined, stereotyped 'Paris' that we see in these films, a construction produced for a very particular purpose with a specific audience in mind.

analysis of the Talk page history would suggest, was when user *Gilderien* nominated the ‘Paris’ page for ‘Good Article’ (GA) status (*Gilderien*, 14:12, 16 June 2013, [Talk: Paris – see Revision History](#)).¹²⁹ *Gilderien* had been heavily involved in improving this page for several months previous to this date and so, considering that the entry was now up to an appropriate standard, he submitted a request (at the portal [Wikipedia: Good article nominations](#)) for an experienced Wikipedian to review the text according to the community-approved criteria. Administrator *Tim riley* quickly agreed to this task, but the nomination also attracted the attention of several other active members of the wider English-language *Wikipedia* community, eager to lend their time and effort to remedy any issues the review might raise. This included, most notably, *Dr. Blofeld*, a Welsh contributor from Barry. *Dr. Blofeld* is a prolific Wikipedian with well over half a million edits to his name at the time of writing ([Wikiscan: Dr. Blofeld](#)). He also “consider[s] GA to be one of the most important steps in *Wikipedia* development” ([User: Dr. Blofeld/Good articles/As reviewer](#)). In fact, on his User Profile page, he suggests that

Wikipedia should be largely about trying to make every single article in the encyclopaedia of a decent quality. As a reader, I believe there is nothing more important than reading an article which at least indicates it has been reviewed and read over and fully sourced so the information can at least be verified if you doubt it. ([User: Dr. Blofeld/Good articles/As reviewer](#))

It is important to note that *Dr. Blofeld* appears not to be motivated by any particular interest or expertise in this subject (Paris), but rather by the desire to see what he deems “an extremely important article” reach GA level (17:01, 23 June 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)).¹³⁰ This is particularly clear in an explanation he later gives *Superzoulou* on this user’s personal Talk page:

I certainly didn't edit the article to degrade anybody's work, in fact I would never have edited it but for the fact that *Gilderien* nominated it for GA and it would have failed and I wanted to see such an important city pass. [...] *Dr. Blofeld*, 17:37, 5 August 2013 ([User Talk: Superzoulou](#))

¹²⁹ In order to encourage the production of high-quality content, the *Wikipedia* community has developed a system of awards that can be granted to any article within the platform. ‘Good’ articles are not as comprehensive as the top level ‘Featured’ articles, but GA status is nevertheless seen as an important milestone in the article creation process. According to the designated project page, ‘Good’ articles are “well written, contain factually accurate and verifiable information, are broad in coverage, neutral in point of view, stable, and illustrated, where possible, by relevant images with suitable copyright licenses” ([Wikipedia: Good articles](#)).

¹³⁰ *Dr. Blofeld* is an excellent example of a contributor-translator who adheres most strongly to narratives of *Wikipedia* as a product, as an encyclopaedia, rather than to narratives of *Wikipedia* as a process, as a community (see Section 6.2).

In his first comment to the 'Paris' article Talk page, *Dr. Blofeld* writes that although he considers the majority of the entry's content to be good, the page needs "a major overhaul" before it might be considered ready for GA and that he is willing to undertake this task (17:01, 23 June 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). Therefore, over the following two months (23 June until 31 August), he proceeds to make 472 individual edits to the page, not only adding references to otherwise unsourced material (the main fault raised by the GA reviewer – *Tim riley*, 15:30, 17 June 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)), but also rearranging the structure of the text (see *e.g.* his edit at [17:45, 23 June 2013](#)), removing "unnecessary bloat" (*Dr. Blofeld*, *Wikipedia: Paris: Edit Summary for Revision as of 17:53, 23 June 2013*) and adding new sections that he felt were previously lacking. Significantly, at [06:55 on 4 July 2013](#), *Dr. Blofeld* begins work on creating a major new subsection within the text that he entitles 'Landmarks by district'. This recycles the small amount of content that had been placed in earlier versions of the 'Cityscape' section, whilst expanding substantially on this text and organising the descriptions of Paris' most famous historic buildings and sites by *arrondissement*.

The new content produced here by *Dr. Blofeld* draws on both English-language and French-language materials, and his activity thus involves a combination of partly overlapping processes, from paraphrasing and summarising English-language books and websites, to selecting, translating and synthesising multiple foreign-language materials. For example, while he combines content found in a selection of tourist guides to Paris sold by North American publisher *Frommer's* when writing about the sights of the second *arrondissement* ([Revision as of 10:44, 9 July 2013](#)), he loosely translates and summarises a section from the French-language travel guide *Petit futé* to inform readers about the Palais des Sports multi-use entertainment venue in the 15th *arrondissement* ([Revision as of 11:55, 9 July 2013](#); see Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: p.13 of Labourdette et al. (2009) *Petit futé: Paris sorties*.

<p>15^e arrondissement</p> <p>PALAIS DES SPORTS 1, place de la Porte-de-Versailles (15^e) ☎ 01 48 28 40 90. Site Internet : www.palaisdessports.com M° et T3 Porte-de-Versailles. Tarifs et horaires variables. Accessible aux personnes à mobilité réduite. Ce fut la première grande salle modulable de la capitale, avant Le Zénith et le POPB. Ouvert en 1960, le Palais des Sports a accueilli des événements importants dans le domaine de la boxe, par exemple, de même que les prestations des basketteurs des Harlem Globe-Trotters. Cet espace en forme d'arène pouvant recevoir entre deux mille cinq cents et quatre mille six cents spectateurs s'est également fait connaître en donnant à voir et à entendre les Beatles, Pink Floyd, Elton John, Johnny Hallyday... Et puis aussi en permettant la réalisation de spectacles king size comme ceux de Robert Hossein. C'est là aussi qu'ont été créées des chorégraphies de Maurice Béjart, Roland Petit, Rudolf Nouriev, des comédies musicales telles que Les Misérables et où</p>	<p>ont fait étape les troupes de Holiday On Ice ou du Cirque de Moscou. Nettement moins drôle : le Palais des Sports fut réquisitionné, de même que le stade Coubertin, pour que l'on y parque des ressortissants algériens interpellés lors de la terrible nuit du 17 octobre 1961. Certains y décédèrent. Au programme en 2009-2010 : Mozart l'Opéra Rock – à partir du 22 septembre –, Cléopâtre – à partir du 14 janvier –, Papa est en haut par Gad Elmaleh – du 9 mars au 24 avril –</p> <p>18^e arrondissement</p> <p>TREMPIN THÉÂTRE 39, rue des Trois-Frères (18^e) ☎ 01 48 60 66 05 / 01 42 54 91 00 – réservations. Site Internet : www.tremplintheatre.fr M° Abbesses. Du lundi au samedi à 20h30, dimanche à 15h30. De 11 € à 17 €. Auteurs, metteurs en scène, comédiens : les jeunes talents sont ici à découvrir. Ils œuvrent dans tous les domaines du spectacle : théâtre, mime, poésie, danse, musique et chanson française.</p>
<p>Close translation of first paragraph (underlined segments refer to those present in Dr. Blofeld's text):</p> <p>[...] This was the first multi-use event space to be built in the capital, before the Zénith and the POPB [Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy]. <u>Opened in 1960, the Palais des Sports has hosted many important events</u> such as boxing tournaments, for example, as well as shows by the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team. Because this arena-shaped space can accommodate between 2,500 and 4,600 spectators, <u>it has equally become known as a venue where people have seen and heard the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Elton John, Johnny Hallyday...</u> Its size also allows for the production of major 'king size' shows such as those of Robert Hussein. [...]</p> <p>Dr. Blofeld's translation (Wikipedia: Paris: Revision as of 10:51, 6 July 2013¹³¹):</p> <p>[...] The Palais des Sports was built in 1960 to replace the old Vel' d'Hiv and has hosted many notable music concerts over the years. [...]</p>	

¹³¹ The in-line reference for this section was added later by Dr. Blofeld at [11:55, 09 July 2013](#). Note that the fact that the Palais des Sports was built "to replace the old Vel' d'Hiv" is not present in the *Petit futé* text and so this information appears to have been taken from elsewhere. This other source is not referenced by Dr. Blofeld, so unfortunately we have no way of knowing what it might have been.

This series of changes in particular provokes a volley of angry comments by other contributors on the 'Paris' article Talk page. Parisian resident *Der Statistiker* writes, for instance,

Is this article meant to be a tourist guide? 20 subsections about the landmarks in the 20 arrondissements of the city proper. Are you guys serious?? (*Der Statistiker*, 17:38, 7 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#))

In response, *Dr. Blofeld* argues that he believes "it is important to give an insight into each district of the city" and that "the article is much better off having the information" (20:41, 7 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). This (perhaps rather weak) explanation does little to convince *Der Statistiker*. After launching a series of attacks criticising many aspects of *Dr. Blofeld's* overhauled article (e.g. "If obtaining a GA nomination means deleting informative content [...] then I'd rather we do not try to gain a GA nomination" – *Der Statistiker*, 19:33, 7 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)), *Der Statistiker* notes sarcastically:

I think Dr Blofeld (since he's now the owner of this article) forgot to mention the demimondaines, prostitution, French Cancan, Pigalle and the Moulin Rouge in [his re-write of] the lead of the article. It's not clichésque enough. Please add more. [...] On an air of accordion of course. (*Der Statistiker*, 13:45, 21 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#))

The suggestion is, in other words, that *Dr. Blofeld* has presented the city in a way that only serves to reproduce the clichéd societal narrative of the city. It seems that by selectively appropriating source materials written predominantly for visitors to the city (both in English and in French) and placing much greater emphasis on showcasing its 'postcard' features, he has created a text which mirrors the globally dominant 'Hollywood Paris'. Clearly, however, this clashes with the perceptions, conceptions and experiences of 'local' users such as *Der Statistiker*.

Another 'local' contributor, native French-speaker *Superzoulou*, also picks up on this theme when he too begins to critique *Dr. Blofeld's* work. Citing a sentence from the 'Culture' section of the article in which *Dr. Blofeld* has written

Although the classical Conservatoire de Musique de Paris was founded in 1795, the city is better known musically for its Bal-musette and gypsy jazz music, with the accordion being a musical icon of the city.

Superzoulou comments that

That could be relevant in a 1950 travel guide, but that does not convey a very accurate picture of the Parisian musical scene, to say the least. (*Superzoulou*, 16:06, 22 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)).

In reply, *Dr. Blofeld* (operating under his alternative pseudonym *Tibetan Prayer* – see [User: Tibetan Prayer](#)) acknowledges the article could do with “more on contemporary music” but essentially stands by his text, re-asserting that, from his perspective, the accordion is inarguably associated with Paris (16:15, 22 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). This only leads *Superzoulou* to ask

Associated by whom? Image of Paris in the mass media may be an interesting topic, but I do not think it should be given too much emphasis in a general article. Fortunately, French cuisine does not start with “French cuisine is known for its use of frogs and snails” :). (*Superzoulou*, 16:32, 22 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#))

Like *Der Statistiker*, *Superzoulou*’s problem with the article is that much of what *Dr. Blofeld* produced constructs a narrative of Paris which appears to echo those told in Hollywood movies and tourist marketing brochures. As he writes elsewhere, this “may sound reasonable to people who are not very familiar with the city” (*Superzoulou*, 18:04, 29 July 2013, [User Talk: Superzoulou](#)), with people whose understanding of the French capital has been shaped predominantly by these more abstract, if globally dominant stories of the space. For those readers and potential contributors who might have a more ‘local’ imagining of Paris, on the other hand, *Dr. Blofeld*’s English-language article is deeply “perplexing” (*Superzoulou*, 15:37, 21 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). In fact, many ‘local’ contributors seem genuinely upset by this state of affairs, and the tone of the criticisms quickly deteriorates: Paris resident *Minato ku* snaps angrily, for instance

The real question of all these talk is: what Paris should *Wikipedia* showcase?

The real functional and living Paris or the theme park that tourists imagine, you know, the romantic city where everything is old and everybody is white.

(*Minato ku*, 21:21, 21 August 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 11](#))¹³²

From late-July 2013 onwards, users *Der Statistiker*, *Superzoulou*, *ThePromenader*, *Minato ku* and others also begin to pull together in a more concerted effort to restore ‘balance’ to the article, to transform their Talk page criticisms into action and article-space text (*Der Statistiker*, 16:41, 29 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). For instance, on 25 July 2013, the ‘Demographics’ section that had

¹³² This comment was subsequently deleted from this Talk page.

previously been removed by *Dr. Blofeld* (he considered it “way too big and unnecessary” – 18:25, 25 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)) is revived from the archives and re-placed prominently in the article (*i.e.* just after the ‘History’, ‘Geography’ and ‘Administration’ sections, and before ‘Cityscape’ and ‘Culture’). When *Dr. Blofeld* and his ally *SchroCat* complain about the reappearance of this content, *Superzoulou* justifies this move by asking “what is more important about a city than who lives there?” (18:59, 25 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). “Frankly,” he continues later the same evening, “I think the bloated part is still “cityscape” (especially “landmarks by district”). It is an encyclopedia, not a travel guide” (19:29, 25 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). Nevertheless, *Superzoulou* does agree to rewrite the section in order to make it “more concise” in parts and to change the emphasis slightly to include more “about age, incomes, and perhaps also about professional activities, household size and this kind of things” (*Superzoulou*, 18:59, 25 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)). He wants, in other words, to present the city in a way that reflects his own narrative conceptions of the space as a modern, functioning metropolis, rather than the museum depicted in the clichés. This involves selectively appropriating, translating and combining content from a range of different French-language sources that present Paris from this more local perspective: information regarding the evolution of the city’s population over time, for instance, is taken from the website of a project run by Paris-based social science institute, *L’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)*, whilst a new paragraph on migration into and out of the city is informed by reports published by the *Institut d’Aménagement et d’Urbanisme (IAU)*. The reasons behind recent rises in birth rates in the French capital and the key points for a discussion of average wages in the Paris region, on the other hand, are found in articles provided by the *Observatoire Régional de Santé (ORS)* and the French national statistics agency (*INSEE*), respectively. *Superzoulou* then posts a draft of this revised ‘Demographics’ section to the Talk page at 13:17 on 7 August 2013 ([Talk: Paris/Archive 11](#)) and, when this is largely complimented by most of his colleagues, he publishes it within the main article at 10:30 on 11 August 2013 ([Wikipedia: Paris: Revision History](#)).

This small compromise is hardly an end to the matter, primarily because *Wikipedia* constitutes a global and a local space not only for its editing community but also in terms of its readership or target audience. In other words, because the online encyclopaedia can be accessed anywhere in the world, different people from different areas of the globe read the ‘Paris’ article with different expectations of what they hope to find there. We only have to look at the comments left by readers either on the article Talk page itself or during a pilot of the *Wikimedia Foundation’s* ‘Article Feedback’ tool in 2013 to find clear evidence of this fact ([Mediawiki: Wikipedia Article Feedback Corpus](#)). On the one hand, there are remarks such as that cited earlier in Chapter 5 (Section 5.5.2) from users who highlight their “frustration at finding little in the English language of value or even relevance

about Paris on the web anything "Paris" is literally swamped with spam by tourist-fleecers” and who urge the community not to let their article follow a similar trend (64.34.168.70, 06:33, 29 August 2005, [Talk: Paris/Archive 1](#)). In Table 6.2, on the other hand, we also see that despite *Superzoulou* and others’ attempts to challenge many of the stereotypes associated with Paris, “many people know it mostly for the Eiffel Tower and a handful of clichés, and just want more of that” when they read the *Wikipedia* article (*Superzoulou*, 15:57, 21 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#)).

Table 6.2: Examples of reader feedback for the English-language article on Paris (2013).

Reader location (based on IP address):	Feedback:
Sydney, Australia	Give some information about the monuments in France!
Perth, Australia	The city of love, it's not there!!
Kirkby, UK	i think you need more things like about the most beautiful things in paris
Belarus	More about attraction of Paris (palaces, churches, famous buildings)
Clayton North, Victoria, Australia	It needs to talk more about attractions
California, U.S.A.	It needed more information about why Paris is known as \The City of Love\"."
Utah, U.S.A.	add info about tourism to learn more about paris

Dr. Blofeld makes a similar point when defending his ‘Landmarks by district’ section:

I guarantee that many article visitors will find that [the ‘Landmarks by district’ section is] one of the most valuable parts of the article, I myself found it to be of tremendous use to myself in getting the basics of city layout, and *Wikipedia*'s function is undeniably as a travel guide to many people in an initial read for the background to the city. NOTTRAVEL [*i.e.* *Wikipedia*'s policy relating to the fact that *Wikipedia* is not intended to be written as a travel guide] doesn't change the fact that tons of people visit *Wikipedia* to get a background on the cityscape of a city. It has millions of tourists a year. I think the article does its job wonderfully. (*Dr. Blofeld*, 13:05, 22 July 2013, [Talk: Paris/Archive 10](#))

These comments suggest that, while those users that subscribe to ‘local’ narratives of the city might be outraged at what they see as an overly tourist-oriented article about Paris, other visitors to the

site may not feel entirely satisfied with an article that omits reference to the features of Paris that the globally dominant narratives of the space tend to foreground. Moreover, because the boundaries between the space of the writer and the space of the reader are blurred within *Wikipedia* (see Section 6.2), because the technology allows readers to become writers, consumers to become producers, any consensus or compromise achieved between the advocates of the different points of view will never endure, will always be unstable (Hartelius 2010: 512). As Ben Kovitz (one of the forefathers of wiki software) notes, “on wikis, there are no ‘completed’ articles, there is just endless chaos and conflict” (16:51, 19 May 2008, [User: BenKovitz](#)). Consequently, these same arguments and edit wars occur again and again within the Paris Talk page corpus (most notably, in October 2014 when a further group of readers-turned-contributors gets involved in the discussion – see [Talk: Paris/Archive 13](#)), and it is difficult to imagine how this conflict might ever be resolved.

6.4 WIKIPEDIA AS NEUTRAL/OCCUPIED TERRITORY

In discussing these oppositions that I see as inherent to *Wikipedia*’s heterotopic nature as both a global and a local space, I do not wish to suggest that the two factions of contributors that I have identified (‘local’ and ‘global’) are in any way two, wholly distinct and homogenous groups. Indeed, this is far from being the case, principally because the *Wikipedia* space is structured by far more than this single issue and because the global/local distinction represents only one of many points of difference and sources of division within each article-focused community. Among those contributors we have assigned to the ‘local’ category in particular, there seems to be a wide variety of narrative standpoints expressed with regard to the city. This is because, as *Blue Indigo* suggests, “there is not one Paris, but a different Paris for everyone & each one of us sees it with different eyes” (21:19, 27 November 2014, [Talk: Paris/Archive 16](#)); or, as Lefebvre would argue, because social space is multiple, fluid and heterogeneous, because it is produced through personal experience and practice just as much as it is constructed through representation and narrative. All these different ‘Parises’ are juxtaposed within the *Wikipedia* environment, resulting in a further series of fractious negotiations over a broad range of topics.

This next section of the chapter seeks to show that *Wikipedia* functions as both a repository for and a site of conflict between narrative constructions of social spaces that circulate at other scales, other than at the level of the global and of the local. To do so, it will turn to examine the specific case of the English-language article that is (currently) entitled ‘Istanbul’ and the confrontations that take place there between advocates of both Turkish and Greek nationalist narratives at a regional level.

As we will see, both these groups have rather different understandings of this city and attempt to impose their 'Istanbul' on the *Wikipedia* article to the exclusion of all other constructions of the space. Thus, despite the wider volunteer community's shared commitment to maintaining the neutrality of the encyclopaedia space ([Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View](#)), they see the article space as territory to be claimed and defended from rival factions, as an online extension of offline, 'real-world' conflicts.

6.4.1 What's in a name?

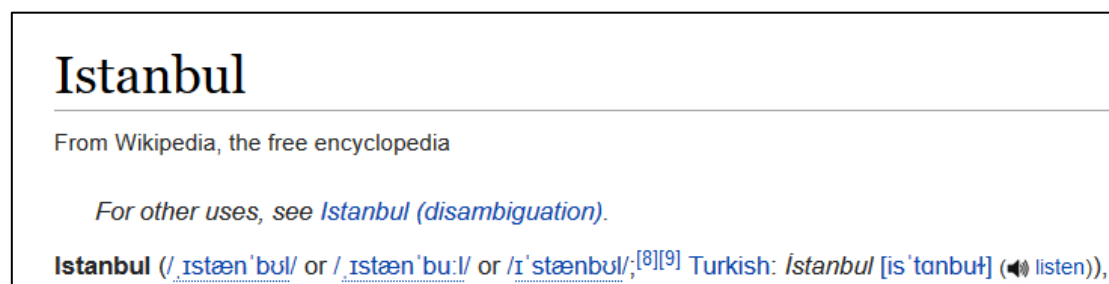
The incompatibility of these different 'Istanbuls' crystallises within the Talk page debate around the issue of the city's name. This discussion is particularly interesting, given our focus here in this thesis, for the reason that many of the contributors involved conceptualise this issue as being primarily "about Translation" (*Xsara*, 11:39, 20 October 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)). Specifically, the question is whether or not the city's name should be translated, which names can be considered legitimate 'source texts' for the target-language translation, and how to present this translation in the text.¹³³ This debate focuses predominantly on the article title, but also – as we will see later in this analysis – touches on what is variously called the 'Etymology', 'Toponymy' or 'Names of Istanbul' section.

To begin with the issue of the title, we should note that some support within the community is shown at various points over the years (most notably in January 2006 and in November 2012 – see [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 1](#) and [Archive 7](#), respectively) for a policy of 'transference' (Albin 2004), whereby the city's name would not be translated at all but left in its 'original' form. In other words, rather than translate the local endonym for the city ('Istanbul') by the English-language exonym

¹³³ That such a large amount of debate might revolve around such a small element of the article certainly seems quite bewildering at first glance. It becomes less surprising if we consider the issues discussed in Section 4.3.4 regarding the 'power-browsing' practices of many web-users. Indeed, the title and introductory sentences are by far the most prominent feature of the article that most readers will see as they skim the page and, consequently, Wikipedians pay particular attention to the precise wording of these sections of the text. It is also important to recognise, as Baker (2006: 122-3) reminds us, that names are never neutral. As with any kind of label used to point to a particular aspect of experience, they are imbued with narrative signification and the use of one name over another often signals adherence to a specific narrative or set of narratives. Baker (2006: 125) gives the example of what is most widely known as 'Northern Ireland' as a case in point: individuals and groups such as Sinn Féin that do not subscribe to a historical narrative in which the partition of Ireland in 1921 was legitimate and fair often signal their dissent by consistently referring instead to 'the Six Counties'. "These choices are not interchangeable, and none of them is 'neutral'", Baker (2006: 125) asserts: "[t]he choice of Six Counties clearly signals a specific narrative position, one that views the six counties of Ulster [...] as temporarily and illegally held under British rule" (Baker 2006: 125; see also Albin 2004 for further discussion of this issue).

‘Istanbul’, contributors such as *Infestor* suggest the article should refer only to ‘Istanbul’ (23:21, 20 November 2012, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 7](#)).¹³⁴ However, this is generally met with fierce resistance¹³⁵ and the consensus is largely behind a solution which presents the city’s name as ‘Istanbul’, as shown in Figure 6.6:

Figure 6.6: First solution to the naming problems raised in the English-language article entitled ‘Istanbul’.



The English-language translation for the city name (‘Istanbul’) is thus presented prominently in both the title and as the first word of the article, with the Turkish-language source text from which it is derived (‘İstanbul’) placed in parenthesis, *i.e.* in a position of secondary importance. This is justified, supporters of this solution assert, by the fact that “[a]ll governments in the world use Istanbul when corresponding in English, so as all the English media” (*DeliDumrul*, 14:50, 23 June 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)). The suggestion is that, in an English-language encyclopaedia, naming strategies should be brought into line with the dominant norms that exist within this target language and culture, and that any deviation from these policies would not be acceptable or understandable to the largely native English-speaking readership. The Turkish source text is included for the simple reason that this “would be what you see when you go to the city” (*DeliDumrul*, 14:50, 23 June 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)). It is provided, in other words, to inform the target-language reader of the difference between the English and Turkish names for the city.

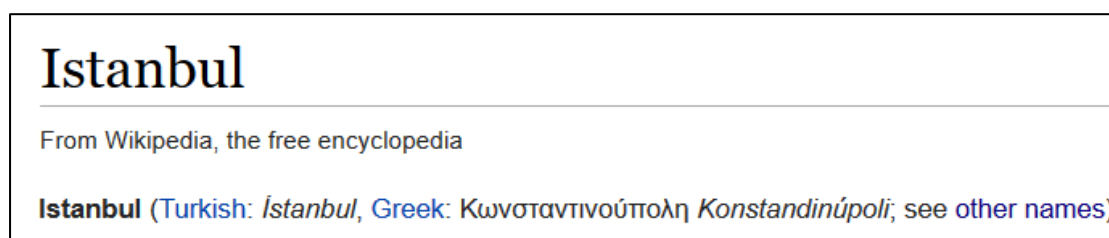
However, contributors such as *Khoikhoi*, *NikoSilver*, *Tēlex* and *Hectorian* take exception to this strategy: although they agree that the name should be translated (*i.e.* that the English-language name should take precedence in this English-language article), they argue that it is necessary to also

¹³⁴ Following Jordan, Adamič and Woodman (2007: 210), I use the terms ‘endonym’ and ‘exonym’ to designate, respectively, the name of the city as it is referred to officially and/or locally, and the name used for the same city by people living elsewhere in the world, speaking other languages.

¹³⁵ As *In ictu oculi* notes on Istanbul’s Talk page, the problem with this solution essentially derives from more general norms and expectations in the wider target language community: “[u]nfortunately there’s a certain something in the Anglo-Saxon psyche that sometimes accepts Noël Coward because he was British, but froths with “this is Britain/America/Australia!” when exposed to Noël Godin. However en.wp consensus accepts Llŷn Peninsula and Saint-Étienne so no reason other than İzmir not being in Wales or France to not spell İzmir correctly. [...] Anyway be interesting to see what following logical argument there is for accepting Besançon, and Göttingen but discriminating against Turkish place names” (*In ictu oculi*, 12:47, 21 November 2012, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 7](#)).

include the Greek name for the city as a source text for this translation. They propose solutions such as that provided in Figure 6.7:

Figure 6.7: Second solution to the naming problems raised in the English-language article entitled 'Istanbul'.



Taking inspiration from Wikipedians working on articles about “other areas which have been governed or populated by many different language groups over time” (*Khoikhoi*, 17:39, 9 October 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)), *Khoikhoi* supports this strategy primarily for historical reasons, comparing Istanbul with places such as Sibiu in Romania (German: Hermannstadt, Hungarian: Nagyszeben) and Lviv in Ukraine (German: Lemberg; Polish: Lwów; Russian: Львов, Lvov). In reaction to an attempt by an anonymous IP editor based in Turkey to remove the Greek source text from the opening sentence, they write

[t]he Greek name is there because for large parts of İstanbul's history, it was an important name used officially (under the Byzantine Empire) or by the local Greek population (under the Ottoman Empire). [...] I think it is a good thing to represent all the history of a place, not just its recent history. (*Khoikhoi*, 17:39, 9 October 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#))

Khoikhoi thus signals their adherence to a narrative of the city which foregrounds the importance of the Greek language and culture in the history of this locale. They do not want, in other words, to allow the current dominance of the Turkish language in the modern day city to obscure the fact that Istanbul was once home to a predominantly Greek-speaking population, and they act accordingly within the *Wikipedia* environment to ensure that this narrative viewpoint is reflected in the article content.

Greek-national *Tēlex* appears to subscribe to a similar narrative and so he too attempts to convince others within the community to support the inclusion of the Greek name, noting that this city has “been known by its Greek name since before the first Turk set foot on Anatolia” (*Tēlex*, 15:05, 23 June 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)). Interestingly, *Tēlex* also argues that ‘Κωνσταντινούπολη’

warrants a prominent position in the article because the city remains an important centre in modern Greek culture. Although he admits the local Greek population now constitutes only a small minority, mostly made up of just a few thousand ‘old-age pensioners’, he makes the point that “the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church is based in Istanbul” (*Tēlex*, 15:05, 23 June 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)). Thus, he foregrounds the fact that Istanbul has special religious and symbolic significance for modern Greek culture, functioning as the equivalent of the Vatican for the Eastern Church. A fellow Greek compatriot *NikoSilver* agrees, insisting that the Greek name be made visible as a source text because this is the name used currently by many Greeks to refer to a city with which they still feel a strong cultural connection (*NikoSilver*, 22:29, 19 October 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)).

The discussion gets particularly heated in the Talk page debate surrounding this proposed solution when *Hectorian*, another Greek contributor, attempts to frame the activities of editors who oppose the inclusion of the Greek name within wider narratives of the Greco-Turkish War. Indeed, he explicitly blames ‘Turkish nationalists’ for actively seeking to remove “info linked to Greeks/Greek language from the lead [*i.e.* the introduction]” (16:45, 19 October 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)) and argues that Turkish contributors would thus seek to downplay the importance of Istanbul to Greek history and culture. In retaliation against this “clear example of nationalistic turkish pov¹³⁶”, *Hectorian* states that

if the greek name will not be added here as the turkish is in Alexandroupoli, Komotini, Xanthi, Thessaloniki, Symi, etc etc, i will begin by removing the turkish name from all those articles and many more... If this article has become "protected" by turkish nationalists and the admins are not interesting in intervening, that's the only semi-solution ... I've spoken and i will do it. Regards Hectorian (15:02, 20 October 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 2](#)).

Hectorian is not alone in suggesting that *Wikipedia* has become a new battleground between Greek and Turkish nationalists, a virtual extension of contested real-world spaces such as Cyprus. For instance, in a comment left on this Talk page in January 2008, an anonymous IP editor based in Ontario, Canada, suggests that “Constantinople is the true name of the city” and that this *Wikipedia* page is a clear demonstration of the fact that “history is written by the victors (or invaders in this

¹³⁶ ‘pov’ (or more properly ‘POV’) is a widely used acronym in *Wikipedia*, standing for ‘Point Of View’. Contributors regularly accuse other members of the community of ‘POV-pushing’, of attempting to promote content that reflects their individual and subjective views, and that stands in direct contravention of *Wikipedia*’s central policy of ‘Neutral Point Of View’ (NPOV).

case)" (207.210.51.222, 12:37, 9 January 2008, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 4](#)). In response, *Jsc1973* simply replies, "I guess he's still upset about how the Battle of Sakarya turned out" (*Jsc1973*, 04:31, 24 April 2009, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 4](#)), linking the previous contributor's remark directly to a significant turning point in the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) when the Greek army's advances into Turkish territory were finally stopped (*Britannica: History of Turkey*).¹³⁷

6.4.2 Rival etymologies

Interestingly, similar struggles between these conflicting imaginings of Istanbul also emerge in relation to the construction of the 'Etymology' section of this article. Drawing on their knowledge of the relevant languages and various different foreign-language sources to support their claims, both camps attempt to provide a different account of the etymological derivation of the city's names, a coherent story about how the current toponym came into existence and developed across languages and over time.

Most editors within this article-focused community would seem to support the dominant theoretical narrative circulating in the English-language infosphere, namely, that 'Istanbul' derives from the Greek phrase 'Eis tin Polin'. For example, "[t]he name Istanbul", *Adamgarrigus* writes in June 2005, "comes from the late Greek words stin Poli (στην Πόλι), from Classical Greek eis tēn Polin (εις τήν Πόλι(v)) meaning "to/at the City" (the City/Polis being Constantinoupolis)" (*Adamgarrigus*, 15:22, 2005 June 16, [Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#)). This is certainly the most frequently repeated explanation: *metb82* (23:08, 2 March 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 1](#)) tells a similar story albeit with a little more historical detail:

[the] name of istanbul came from Eis tin poli, which means to the city in greek. the galata quarter, which is right at the north of the historic peninsula has always been the largest residential area specially for the

¹³⁷ The use of this frame (*i.e.* describing the *Wikipedia* editing process and its accompanying Talk page discussion as a battleground) is also used later in Archive 4 of the Talk page, when *Pristinick* comments on the removal of several images illustrating the article by a contributor known as *El Greco*: "El Greco, you are the only person who is disturbed by Istanbul's beautiful images and I know the reason why your "frustration" suddenly appeared towards May 29: The 556th anniversary of a very special day for some people. But alas, the Turks are here to stay, and Istanbul still ***** shines ***** - unlike in the popular myths of Greece that "Constantinople today is a destroyed city in darkness, infested by barbaric Mongoloids from the east." It disturbs you to see that this popular Greek myth is far from the truth. Learn to live with the fact that Istanbul "by far and large outshines" any city in Greece and Cyprus, including Athens" (*Pristinick*, 08:20, 31 May 2009, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 4](#)). Further investigation into the selection of images within these *Wikipedia* articles is unfortunately beyond the scope of this doctoral research project.

greek inhabitants of the city because the historic peninsula was reserved for the sultan. Thats why the old istanbul was a passage way "to the city" which turned into istanbul in hundreds of years. (*metb82*, 23:08, 2 March 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 1](#))

Moreover, *Wikipedia* administrator and etymology-enthusiast *Future Perfect at Sunrise* (a.k.a. *Fut.Perf*) also subscribes to this derivation and draws on his extensive knowledge of Turkish, Greek and linguistic principles to demonstrate how this hypothesis is linguistically plausible. On a separate page of *Wikipedia*, specially set up to discuss this issue of the etymology of Istanbul ([Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#)), he argues:

Turkish had no articles and no prepositions. A native Turkish speaker would therefore have difficulties analysing "istinpoli", when heard from a Greek speaker: they wouldn't expect grammatical morphemes to be at the beginning of the string, but at the end of it. Therefore, they would be prone to misconstrue the "(i)stin-" part as part of the name proper (and possibly the final "-i" as being not part of it). (*Future Perfect at Sunrise*, 13:07, 13 September 2006, [Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#))

A Greek contributor, *Hectorian*, also makes the important point that this is the derivation included in well-respected sources such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

it is a fact, at least according to the verifiable sources provided (and Britannica is considered quite a 'strong' source!). (*Hectorian*, 11:59, 13 September 2006, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 1](#))

However, this explanation jars with narratives subscribed to by other members of the community. Indeed, for some – predominantly Turkish – contributors, the idea that the current Turkish name derives from Turks misinterpreting a Greek phrase is difficult to accept. Instead, they posit alternative narratives for the derivation of the city name, stories that better fit with their own narrative location. Istanbul resident *DragutBarbarossa* (a.k.a. *Shuppiluliuma*) goes so far as to suggest that “the Eis tin Poli theory was first invented by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and has become famous through the past decades, even taking its place in Encyclopaedia Britannica” (16:45, 15 February 2007, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 4](#)). “When a claim/definition is repeated time and time again and appears in multiple resources through decades,” *DragutBarbarossa* (21:53, 15 February 2007, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 4](#)) continues, “it evolves into a fact. History is largely a narration. This, I believe, is the case for the *Eis tin Poli* theory.” The implication of this counter-narrative is that the

Greek Church has sought to undermine the 'purity' of the Turkishness of Istanbul and to highlight the closeness of the relationship between the city and Greek culture by inventing a Greek etymological derivation for the city name.

DragutBarbarossa is by no means alone in taking this stance. A little later in the discussion, *Mseyis* (08:17, 30 November 2008, [Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#)) lends support to this counter-hypothesis by insisting upon an alternative narrative told predominantly within the Turkish mediasphere and which attributes a purely Turkish etymology to the name. Translating from and summarising a selection of Turkish-language resources, he argues that

Istanbul name comes from Turkish Roots. I won't say too much, just will explain the Turkish roots. There are 2 words: ASTANA and BALIQ. ASTANA means royal and also heavenly. Pure Turkish word. During Ottoman Empire it is called as "Asitane" and Ottoman highness did say "ASITANE" for ISTANBUL. And BALIQ or BALIGH means "CITY", it is also pure Turkish word.

ASTANA-BALIQ or if you say in Turkish ASTANA-BALIGH (we have a special latter and sound for "GH" and people from other cultures have great difficulty with that sound). [...] So it comes to ASTANA-BALIK then ASTANBALIK then ASTANBAL and then ISTANBAL. It is clear that during 10th century a Turkish historian "MESUDI" says that Turks says "ASTEN-BULEN" to Istanbul in his book "Efembih Vellishref". (*Mseyis*, 08:17, 30 November 2008, [Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#)).

Just over twenty minutes later, and before *Mseyis* makes any change to the main article content (either on the 'Istanbul' or the 'Names of Istanbul' page), *Future perfect at Sunrise* (08:38, 30 November 2008, [Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#)) rejects this hypothesis entirely, labelling it as "[u]nsourced amateur speculation" and "personal guesswork" which has "no place" in *Wikipedia*. He thus makes it very clear that he will not allow any mention of this alternative word-history to be incorporated into the text, and any attempt to do so will be instantly reverted. This provokes *Mseyis* (at 11:21) to retort that, despite *Future Perfect's* claims, this information does come from reliable sources and that, in any case, there should be space within *Wikipedia* for alternative narratives and views that do not necessarily fit with the dominant (and often implicitly Western) account of events:

please notice that I say I have references like MESUDI and IBN BATUTA who also says Turks says ISTANBUL, ASITANE or ASTANA BALIN etc. Also *Wikipedia* must include all wievs, except "exact rules". The ethymology is

not exact science. Nobody can say exact says. For some time ago, most people accepted what westerners said. But now we also research and also find new things. Now this is very serious thesis about the origin of Istanbul'. So you can verify these names like IBN BATUTA and also what his called... And one more, Arabs also says "Al Asitanah" which also derivated from ASTANA, a Turkic word. I think it is the best way also publish this approach. Best regards.. (Mseyis, 11:21, 30 November 2008, [Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#))

Clearly angered, *Mseyis* also suggests that the 'Eis tin poli' etymology is ultimately a reiteration of the metanarrative of Western civilisation and culture:

If you have an approach; "there is a pure, magnificent, western, Christian culture and it's origins goes to Greeks because they are also Christian and the rest are barbarians and they can't create anything only we can do and they adopt", it is very easy to accept "is tin poli" ethymology. And it is very easy to make jokes and laugh other approaches. And call them "imagination" or speculation is just an easy way. (Mseyis, 13:01, 30 November 2008, [Talk: Names of Istanbul/Archive 1](#))

Despite these accusations, however, no attempt is made to alter the main article content either by *Mseyis* or any of his allies in the debate until October 2014, when Turkish contributor *Bbaskbas* makes the edit featured in Figure 6.8:

Figure 6.8: Wikipedia: Istanbul: Revision as of 13:31, 21 October 2014.

<p>Etymologically, the name "İstanbul" ({{IPA-tr isˈtanbuɫ}}), colloquially ({{IPA-tr ɯsˈtambuɫ}}) derives from the [[Medieval Greek]] phrase {{lang grc ἑὶς τὴν [Polis] Πόλιν}} (pronounced {{IPA-el is tim ˈbolin}}), {{cn date=August 2014}} which means "to the city". This reflected its status as the only major city in the vicinity, much in the same way people today often colloquially refer to their nearby urban centres as "the City". An alternative view is that the name evolved directly from the name "Constantinople", with the first and third syllables dropped.<ref name="roo177"/> In modern [[Turkish language Turkish]], the name is written as "İstanbul", with a dotted İ, as the [[Turkish alphabet]] distinguishes between a [[dotted and dotless I]]. Also, while in English the stress is on the first syllable ("İs"), in Turkish it is on the second syllable ("tan").<ref>{{harvnb Göksel Kerslake 2005 p=27}}</ref> "İstanbul" was officially adopted as the sole name of the city in 1930.<ref name="Room">{{harvnb Room 2006 pp=177–8}}</ref><ref name="Gokturk">{{harvnb Göktürk Soysal Türel 2010 p=7}}</ref> A person from the city is an "İstanbullu" (plural: "İstanbullular"), although "İstanbulite" is used in English.<ref>{{harvnb Keyder 1999 p=95}}</ref></p>	+	<p>The name "İstanbul" ({{IPA-tr isˈtanbuɫ}}), colloquially ({{IPA-tr ɯsˈtambuɫ}}) was supposed to derive from the [[Medieval Greek]] phrase {{lang grc ἑὶς τὴν [Polis] Πόλιν}} (pronounced {{IPA-el is tim ˈbolin}}), {{cn date=August 2014}} which means "to the city". This reflected its status as the only major city in the vicinity, much in the same way people today often colloquially refer to their nearby urban centres as "the City". An alternative view is that the name evolved directly from the name "Constantinople", with the first and third syllables dropped.<ref name="roo177"/> On the other hand, according to a recent research the origin of the name is not Greek but Turkish, Astanbolıq.<ref>Tarcan Halûk, "İstanbul'un Kökü Tartışması", <i>Aydınlık</i>;62,63. ISSN 1301-6679</ref> In modern [[Turkish language Turkish]], the name is written as "İstanbul", with a dotted İ, as the [[Turkish alphabet]] distinguishes between a [[dotted and dotless I]]. Also, while in English the stress is on the first syllable ("İs"), in Turkish it is on the second syllable ("tan").<ref>{{harvnb Göksel Kerslake 2005 p=27}}</ref> "İstanbul" was officially adopted as the sole name of the city in 1930.<ref name="Room">{{harvnb Room 2006 pp=177–8}}</ref><ref name="Gokturk">{{harvnb Göktürk Soysal Türel 2010 p=7}}</ref> A person from the city is an "İstanbullu" (plural: "İstanbullular"), although "İstanbulite" is used in English.<ref>{{harvnb Keyder 1999 p=95}}</ref></p>
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This small alteration significantly re-aligns the article section content with the narrative favoured by *DragutBarbarossa*, *Bbaskbas* and *Mseyis*, promoting the idea of a Turkish derivation for Istanbul, whilst relegating the Greek hypothesis to past history: the present tense verb "derives" becomes "was supposed to derive", while the Turkish etymology is presented as the result of "recent" research.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, this is once more rejected here, along with the Turkish-language 'recent research' on which it is based. *Future Perfect* again leads the opposition, framing this etymology as a 'fringe claim' on the Talk page (13:45, 22 October 2014, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 9](#)) and arguing that the alternative view is neither reliably sourced nor sufficiently 'mainstream' to warrant mentioning within the *Wikipedia* page:

I have twice reverted [19] an edit by User:Bbaskbas that inserted a claim sourced to a person called Haluk Tarcan (incidentally misquoted as "Tarcan Haluk"), about an alleged original Turkish etymology of Istanbul as

¹³⁸ In Figure 6.8, sections highlighted in blue on the right-hand side are those that *Bbaskbas* added to the main article text of 'İstanbul'; those in yellow on the left are sections of text that *Bbaskbas* removed.

"Astanbolıq". Tarcan (personal website here: www.haluktarcın.com) is a person who promotes pseudo-scientific fringe views about Turks having been at the root of all great historic civilizations (quote from his site: "Türk kimdir? Türk, Evrensel Uygarlıkların kökenini oluşturan kişidir" – "Who are the Turks? The Turks are the people who created the foundations of global civilization"). This is evident WP:FRINGE stuff and as such an object of WP:UNDUE weight. Especially, of course, when presented the way Baskbas tried to do, with his claim given not just equal but predominant weight as opposed to the established mainstream view, which he tried to relegate to a past and obsolete view. Edits like this are unacceptable tendentious editing and won't be tolerated. (*Future Perfect*, 13:45, 22 October 2014, [Talk: Istanbul/Archive 9](#))

This last point gets to the heart of what I have sought to demonstrate in this section: while in principle *Wikipedia* is meant to be a neutral space, a no-man's land belonging to no one culture or social group, a significant number of contributors to the encyclopaedia do conceive of the space as a territory to control and defend, much like the 'real-world' spaces that have been at the centre of countless wars and conflicts across the ages. In the 'Istanbul' article, this includes both Greek and Turkish nationalists who struggle for dominance over the representation of this city within the English-language encyclopaedia, each attempting to impose their narrative of the city on the article text. These divergent 'Istanbuls' are mutually incompatible, fuelled as they are by extreme nationalistic ideology, and yet they are brought into direct opposition within the heterotopic space of *Wikipedia*. This results, as we have seen, in an article production and translation process that progresses only through tense dispute, argument and discord.

6.5 (CON)FUSION

The analysis in this chapter has so far referred to each point of conflict separately, using a different case study to illustrate each theme in turn. Although it brings a certain degree of clarity and coherence to the argument, this mode of presentation is perhaps rather misleading. In reality, all the issues discussed so far are closely (con)fused with one another, each shaping the construction of the articles in my dataset in different ways depending on the specificities of each city, language combination and article-focused community. Therefore, in this last section of this chapter, I focus on

how many of these points of conflict mix and muddle in a discordant cacophony of creative juxtaposition, using the French-language *Wikipedia* article currently entitled ‘Bombay’ as an example.

6.5.1 Bombay or Mumbai?

As with many of the articles contained within my dataset, a significant amount of the Talk page discussion connected to this French-language entry revolves around issues associated with naming policies: specifically, it deals with whether or not to translate the name of the city into the target-language (French), and how this translation (or non-translation) should be presented.¹³⁹ To set this in context, we must note that the city formerly known as Bombay was officially renamed ‘Mumbai’ by the local government in August 1996 (Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai: History of MCGM). This change has been acknowledged and largely adopted in many Anglophone countries around the world, both in official and popular societal narratives of the city (Bailey 2006; Racicot 2009).¹⁴⁰ In France, however, as the *Larousse* encyclopaedia (*Larousse Online Encyclopaedia* website: Bombay) explains, “la ville est encore souvent désignée sous son ancien nom de Bombay” (“the city is still often referred to under its former name of Bombay”) and many French-speaking Wikipedians would seem to agree with this verdict. In August 2008, for example, *Markov* and *Pik* both post similar explanations:

A ma connaissance, les dictionnaires français et l'usage est encore très majoritairement "Bombay". [...] (*Markov*, 14:05, 14 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))

[To my knowledge, French dictionaries and common language are still very much in favour of “Bombay”.]

Le nom lexicalisé en français est Bombay (*Pik*, 20:34, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))

¹³⁹ This observation (that much of the discussion about translation revolves around naming and the translation of proper nouns) is supported by the results of Ari Hautasaari and Toru Ishida’s (2011) analysis of the different types of communication and collaboration observed to be occurring between *Wikipedia*’s article translators within the platform’s Talk pages. They suggest that over half (54.21%) of all the discussion contributions within their French-language dataset concerned issues associated with “resolving the proper form for the title of the article, section or sub-section, names or proper nouns, and transliteration in the corresponding article” (Hautasaari & Ishida 2011: 128).

¹⁴⁰ As anecdotal proof of this, we might note how the English-language *Wikipedia* article about the city has seen relatively little discussion and disagreement over whether the text should refer to Mumbai or Bombay.

[The lexicalised name in French is Bombay.]

In spite of these comments, there is no clear consensus on this matter among Wikipedians and the article community has changed its translation policy with respect to this city name several times over the past fifteen years (see Table 6.3). By examining the text's Revision History we may note for example that, although initially the French-language *Wikipedia* entry did refer to the city as 'Bombay', this lasted only about six months at the beginning of the article's history ([Wikipedia \(FR\): Bombay: Revision History](#)).¹⁴¹ Indeed, following a series of edits starting at 21:16 on 17 June 2003 in which *Nataraja* inserted content translated directly from the corresponding English-language article (*Wikipedia*: Mumbai: [Revision as of 22:45, 29 May 2003](#)), the text discussed only 'Mumbai'. For example, and in accordance with his source text, *Nataraja* opened his revised version of the article with the phrase "Mumbai - nommée Bombay jusqu'au milieu des années 1990 - est la plus grande ville et la capitale du Maharashtra" ("Mumbai – known as Bombay until the mid-1990s – is the largest city and capital of Maharashtra" – *Wikipedia* (FR): Bombay: [Revision as of 21:16, 17 June 2003](#)). *Nataraja* chose, in other words, not to translate the new English-language (and locally official) name for the city, but to transfer this across into his target-language text.

¹⁴¹ The article was first created at 22:10 on 26 December 2002 ([Wikipedia \(FR\): Bombay: Revision History](#)).

Table 6.3: Summary of major changes in naming policy for the French-language article ‘Bombay’.

Date:	Contributor:	Action:
22:10, 26 December 2002	<i>Yann</i>	Article created under ‘Bombay’
21:16, 17 June 2003 to 12:38, 18 June 2003	<i>Nataraja</i>	Article content is replaced with a direct translation of the corresponding English-language <i>Wikipedia</i> article. New text refers only to ‘Mumbai’.
14:57, 15 July 2006	<i>86.72.31.100</i>	Opening sentence is modified to read “Bombay, aussi appelée Mumbai (मुम्बई) depuis 1995, est la capitale du Maharashtra” (“Bombay, also called Mumbai (मुम्बई) since 1995, is the capital of Maharashtra”)
20:11, 17 July 2007	<i>Sroulik</i>	Article renamed ‘Bombay’
12: 17, 29 April 2008	<i>Alexandre.brooks</i>	Contributor asks on Talk page whether it would be better to rename the page ‘Mumbai’ “Etant donné que la ville de Bombay s’appelle maintenant Mumbai” (“given that the city of Bombay is now called Mumbai”).
10:10, 15 July 2008	<i>Tieum512</i>	Article renamed ‘Mumbai’
14:16, 14 August 2008	<i>Piksou</i>	Article renamed ‘Bombay’
14:29, 17 August 2008	<i>Tieum512</i>	Article renamed ‘Mumbai’
07:33, 20 August 2008	<i>Piksou</i>	Article renamed ‘Bombay’
12:42, 2 November 2008 to 22:57, 5 November 2008	<i>Susuman77</i>	Article expanded by translating sections from the corresponding English-language <i>Wikipedia</i> article. ‘Bombay’ used throughout.
13:29, 14 May 2011	<i>Superbenjamin</i>	Contributor files a request for an administrator to change the name of the article to ‘Mumbai’
09:12, 31 May 2011	<i>Hercule</i>	Contributor standardises all references to the city, changing all uses of ‘Mumbai’ to ‘Bombay’.

As Table 6.3 summarises, this was only the beginning of a long negotiation between contributors about which version of the name should be adopted. Advocates of ‘Bombay’ such as *Piksou*, *Pik*, *Markov* and *Sroulik*, on the one hand, argue that this is the French word that is used to refer to the city and that it has been “[l]exicalisé ainsi en français depuis plusieurs siècle[s]” (“lexicalised in this way in the French-language for many centuries” – *Sroulik*, *Wikipedia* (FR): Bombay: Edit Summary for [Revision as of 20:11, 17 July 2007](#)). Supporters of this solution write that

[i]l semble assez évident que le Wikipédia français doit être écrit en français... Et en français, on dit Londres (alors que les anglais disent London), Rome (pour les Italiens, Roma), Bucarest (pour les roumains,

Bucuresti) etc, etc... (83.204.218.32 [unsigned], 01:40, 14 January 2009, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))

[it seems quite obvious that the French-language *Wikipedia* must be written in the French language... And in French, we say Londres (while the British say London), Rome (Roma, for the Italians), Bucarest (Bucuresti, for the Romanians) etc etc...]

‘Mumbai’ is seen by this group as the English-language name for the city and not an appellation that the French should be obliged to accept (*Pik*, 22:04, 17 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#)). However, this argument is countered by proponents of keeping the source-culture name ‘Mumbai’ who make the point that, while it may be common to translate ‘Mumbai’ by ‘Bombay’ in France, this policy is not universal to every corner of the Francophone world:

si nous sommes sur *Wikipedia* en français, ce n'est pas *Wikipedia* France: les Français continuent d'utiliser Bombay, mais au Canada, pour ne citer qu'un exemple, c'est Mumbai qui est prédominant en français. (*Superbenjamin*, 14:11, 14 May 2011, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))¹⁴²

[if we are on the French-language *Wikipedia*, it is not *Wikipedia* France: the French continue to use Bombay, but in Canada, to cite just one example, it's Mumbai that is used most commonly in French.]

This user is implying that, although most of the contributors to the French-language *Wikipedia* are based in France, the readership for this text constitutes a far more globally diverse group, with many different language practices, expectations and translation norms. In contrast to Section 6.3 where the simultaneously global and local space of the platform was at the heart of tensions between contributors to the English-language ‘Paris’ article, with rival factions seeking to impose their own narrative conception of the city on the text, it would seem that in this article, this global/local issue has more bearing on an apparent disjuncture between the space of the editors of this encyclopaedia and that of their audience. In other words, it means that, even though the majority of the most prominent authors of this article appear to be located in the same national space (France), their

¹⁴² Although certain users question the veracity of this claim, the resources that *Superbenjamin* and others provide to back up their argument do seem to suggest this is the case. Most compellingly, an article published in the Canadian government’s own translation department journal confirms that ‘Mumbai’ is much more prevalent (and increasingly so) in Canadian news and public discourse than in France where it remains uncommon (Racicot 2009).

audience is not necessarily so, and may be accessing the encyclopaedia platform from anywhere in the world.

This discussion is also confused with *Wikipedia's* ambiguous position as a space for both traditional and popular forms of expertise. Supporters of the 'Mumbai' solution such as *Tieum512* suggest, for example, that

Les deux nom sont utilisés [en français] et l'un est plus correct que l'autre
puisque officiel. (Tieum512, 01:21, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))

[The two names are used [in French] and the one is more correct than the
other because it is official.]

The implication of *Tieum512's* argument is that, while 'Bombay' is perhaps more commonly used in the popular conceptions of the general French public, only 'official' expertise can be considered as worthy of inclusion within *Wikipedia's* representation of human knowledge because only official bodies such as the Indian local government have the 'authority', as he puts it, to decide the city's true name (*Tieum512*, 10:37, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#)). Later that same day, he continues to argue his point at greater length. In response to the suggestion raised elsewhere that "the rule on *Wikipedia* is to conform to the name that is most commonly used" ("[l]a règle sur Wikipédia est de se conformer à l'usage"), he agrees that this is in many cases true "but only if the common usage is clearly defined, only if it is 'accurate' and if it can be considered an authoritative name" ("si tant est que l'usage est clairement définit, qu'il est "juste" et dans la limite d'une appellation faisant autorité" – *Tieum512*, 10:37, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#)). In the case of this article, on the other hand, he insists *Wikipedia* should not "provide false or dated information just because anything else would surprise the reader" ("donner une information fausse ou daté parceque le contraire "surprendrait" le lecteur" – *Tieum512*, 10:37, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#)). Instead, he reasons that the article should aim to educate its audience about the new reality by reflecting the fact that "[l]a ville se nomme Mumbaï, elle a été renommé ainsi" ("the city is called Mumbai, it has been renamed in this way" – *Tieum512*, 10:37, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#)).

Many contributors challenge *Tieum512* and his argument by questioning the extent to which a foreign government can be said to have authority over another language, over how French-language speakers choose to translate the name of the Indian city. In January 2009, for example, one anonymous IP editor posts that it is up to the (French) people to decide how they refer to the locale:

Chaque peuple est (ou devrait être) maître de sa propre langue. [...] Il me
semble que nos amis indiens n'ont pas de raisons de se formaliser outre

mesure si nous continuons à utiliser Bombay et souhaitons conserver cette appellation” (83.204.218.32 [unsigned], 01:40, 14 January 2009, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))

[Every people is (or should be) master of its own language [...] It seems to me that our Indian friends have no reason to take too much offence if we continue to use Bombay and if we wish to keep this name]

Others go even further by drawing attention to the political motivations lying behind Mumbai’s official name change.¹⁴³ Specifically, contributors such as *Phso2* and *Pik* highlight the real-world context of ideological and, at times, violent conflict in which this renaming has emerged:

il faut mentionner que le cas est différent d'autres renommages de «décolonisation» comme en Afrique ou ailleurs, car le nom "Mumbai" n'est pas le nom "vernaculaire indien" par opposition au nom colonial, mais le nom *marathe* de la ville, ce qui témoigne de la volonté du parti nationaliste marathe à l'origine de ce renommage de donner à cette ville très cosmopolite (dans le sens qu'elle réunit de nombreuses ethnies indiennes ne parlant pas forcément la même langue) une sorte d'identité «marathe» sujette à caution. (*Phso2*, 13:56, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))

[it should be mentioned that the case is different to other renamings carried out for the purposes of ‘decolonisation’ as in Africa or elsewhere, because the name ‘Mumbai’ is not the ‘vernacular Indian’ name as opposed to the colonial name. Rather, it is the Marathi name of the city which bears witness to the desire shown by the Marathi nationalist party who initiated this renaming to give this very cosmopolitan city (in the sense that it brings together many Indian ethnicities that do not speak the same language) a suspect sort of ‘Marathi’ identity.]

Or as *Pik* puts it,

¹⁴³ Interestingly, in her discussion of the translation of proper nouns, Albin (2004) also draws our attention to the political implications at play for translators having to choose between Bombay and Mumbai. She notes that, although it has been widely adopted, “the name change is scorned and mourned by many” because of the way in which the Shev Sena party and its fundamentalist supporter base has succeeded (sometimes through violence) in imposing this non-secular and politically partisan name.

là c'est une tentative pour des raisons politiques d'imposer le nom en langue local contre l'usage séculaire qui est en vigueur dans les autres langues. (*Pik*, 11:37, 18 August 2008, [Talk \(FR\): Bombay](#))

[this is an attempt for political reasons to impose the local-language name over the secular name that is used in other languages.]

The authority of the local government to impose 'Mumbai' is undermined, in the eyes of certain factions within the *Wikipedia* community, by the extreme Hindu nationalist narratives associated with the 'new' name. These individuals argue that rather than reproducing the recently imposed official narrative of the city, the French-language article should instead maintain its neutrality and help resist the growing global prominence of the new name, by maintaining the use of what they perceive as the less partisan, more secular appellation, 'Bombay'.

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In sum, the analysis of this last article within the French-language *Wikipedia* emphasises the fact that, although some general patterns can be observed within the dataset as a whole, each article-focused community is presented with its own unique set of challenges that shape the collaborative production of knowledge across languages and cultures. *Wikipedia* functions simultaneously as a global space, a local space, a neutral space, an occupied space, an expert space, a non-expert space, a space of production and a space of reproduction, but the process by which these conflicting pressures are negotiated is determined largely by the particular characteristics of the different languages, cultures, narratives and participants involved throughout the multilingual knowledge production process for each individual text.

7 CONCLUSION

*We are not in a post-fact world. Facts matter, and we
are committed to this now more than ever.*

- Wikimedia Foundation blog (2016)

In this concluding chapter, the aim is to discuss the broader implications of this thesis, of its approach to the dataset and of its findings. In Section 7.1, I will reflect on the results of my investigation to answer directly the third research question outlined at the beginning of this thesis: namely, to what extent does the collaborative production of content by multilingual *Wikipedia* users challenge traditional conceptualisations of translation developed to account for the production and circulation of knowledge in other (largely offline) environments? Later in this chapter (Section 7.2), I will also consider the value and limitations of other aspects of the analytical approach developed in Chapters 2 and 3, and provide suggestions for future research in this field.

7.1 EXTENDING TRANSLATION

To summarise briefly the argument so far, this doctoral research project has investigated the people and processes involved in the collaborative production and dissemination of spatial knowledge across linguistic and cultural borders in the context of *Wikipedia*, the user-generated encyclopaedia. In the Introduction, I have argued that previous analysis of *Wikipedia* from a translation studies perspective (Désilets *et al.* 2006; Hautasaari 2011; 2013; McDonough Dolmaya 2012; 2015) has so far been rooted all too narrowly in the classical binarisms of the discipline and, as such, it has offered only a blinkered view of the translational activities of *Wikipedia's* multilingual volunteers. Their

approach sees translating and writing as two entirely distinct practices, and translator and author as two wholly separate roles (see Section 1.3). Therefore, I have emphasised the need to expand the scope of study in this area, to show the ‘bigger picture’ of knowledge production and dissemination across languages and cultures in this online context. Indeed, following similar arguments to those put forward by Reine Meylaerts and Maud Gonne (2014: 146), I have reasoned that in order to apprehend the full complexity of the object of study, it is necessary to transgress the traditional translational metalanguage and to expand our analysis beyond such binary distinctions to reflect the much broader range of the multilingual activities involved.

To this end, I have developed in Chapters 2 and 3 an analytical approach that combines an understanding of narrative theory with insights drawn from the work of Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) and Michel Foucault (1967/1986). This framework conceptualises translation as a form of renarration and thus facilitates analysis of a wide diversity of the multilingual practices implicated in the collaborative production and dissemination of spatial knowledges within the heterotopic, conflict-ridden environment of *Wikipedia*. Then, having discussed the methodological possibilities and challenges presented by the *Wikipedia* platform in Chapter 4, I have examined a dataset of city-related articles published within the English- and French-language editions of the site (Chapter 5 and 6). In Chapter 5, I have concentrated on highlighting the conceptual black holes engendered by the volunteer community’s ‘*Wikipedia* as public space’ narrative by exploring the ways in which the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of human knowledge shapes *Wikipedia* content creation. This has involved: (i) analysing the language skills of the core contributors within each article-focused community; (ii) examining the Reference Lists placed at the foot of each article as traces of intertextual flows of knowledge across linguistic and spatial boundaries; and (iii) investigating user comments about their experience of the multilingual dimensions of the content production process. This has shown: (i) that those editors who are proficient in the principal languages of each locale tend to dominate the construction of these article texts; (ii) that *Wikipedia* volunteers make abundant use of materials published in languages other than that in which they are writing; and (iii) that locale-language source materials are seen by many contributors to be invaluable to their work, not only because they contain information that is unavailable in the target language, but also because they are viewed as more accurate, more reliable and more up-to-date. This analysis has also highlighted a number of intriguing differences between the English- and French-language datasets. Most notably, it has demonstrated that the French-language communities draw even more heavily on foreign-language resources during the construction of their articles than their English-language counterparts, but that these are not necessarily materials written in the language(s) of the locale. Indeed, in a number of cases, French-language contributors make regular use of English-language

sources, exploiting their knowledge of this global *lingua franca* in order to create their target-language content.

In Chapter 6, I have then examined in more detail the collaborative processes of multilingual knowledge production within *Wikipedia*. This analysis has focused on the Talk pages associated with each of the encyclopaedia entries in my dataset and the multi-faceted negotiations that occur between the different participants involved. Viewing these discussions through the combined lenses of Henri Lefebvre's (1974/1991) writing on the social production of space, narrative theory and Michel Foucault's (1967/1986) concept of the heterotopia has highlighted *Wikipedia* as a site of discordant juxtaposition and creative simultaneity, and foregrounded the cacophony of diverse narrative positionings within each article-focused community.

In my view, the phenomena that I have described above challenge current theorisations of translation in three key ways. Firstly, my results provide clear evidence of a form of translation which involves much more than a single source text and a single target text, but rather a shifting constellation of interconnected texts and fragments of texts, written in a variety of different languages. As I have demonstrated in Section 5.3, Wikipedians frequently make abundant use of foreign-language materials during the construction of their target-language content, and the number of source texts often reaches into the hundreds. This is significant because, as Luc van Doorslaer (2010: 181) notes with respect to the world of news translation in the journalistic field, "this multiplication of source texts [...] problematizes the existence and status of the source text as commonly understood in a "normal" translational relationship." In other words, because we are dealing with multiple 'originals', the possibility and traditionally assumed importance of a tight connection between source and translation is fundamentally disturbed. Moreover, the conventional cultural hierarchy which has long placed the latter in a position of inferiority to the former (Bassnett 2014: 1; Littau 1997: 82) would seem to be wholly irrelevant in this context: in *Wikipedia*, it is the text created by bringing together and translating many tens, if not hundreds, of 'originals' that potentially has more use-value as a cultural product, even than the sum of its sources. While translation is still widely seen as a communicative act which inevitably involves the loss of meaning (e.g. Newmark 1988), *Wikipedia* presents a form of translation that can only be interpreted as a value-adding process.

Indeed, translation in this context has been shown to be inextricably integrated into a host of other processes of text creation: as illustrated at many points throughout the discussion of Chapters 5 and 6, the construction of target language content simultaneously involves the selective appropriation, summary, paraphrase and synthesis of the wealth of multilingual materials and information available.

Much as in the field of international newsroom journalism, translating and writing are brought together into “one process that is creative and re-creative at the same time” (van Doorslaer 2010: 181). The editorial procedures by which Wikipedians draw on multilingual materials to create their content do not differ significantly from those involved in the monolingual production of encyclopaedia texts, and therefore any attempt to distinguish between their translatorial and authorial functions in this context is both meaningless and misleading. Thus, my findings signal the importance of redoubling our efforts as translation scholars to assert “non-traditional enlarged definitions of translation” (van Doorslaer 2010: 179) in a way that foregrounds its creative and culturally productive dimensions, particularly in fluid online contexts and horizontal structures of knowledge creation such as those we observe in *Wikipedia*. Through further research into the diversity of real-life examples we may find of translation, we must aim to contest the prevailing conceptualisation of our object of study, which frames the activity in terms of its “ingrained subservience” to an original author and text (Bielsa & Bassnett 2009: 64). We must seek to engender greater appreciation for the decisive and complex role translation plays in the social construction of reality.

Secondly, the phenomena examined in this thesis challenge widespread conceptions of the translator as impartial mediator between cultures. As Baker (2013: 23) has written, this is another of the “unexamined assumptions” that continues to underlie many discussions of translation and interpreting, particularly among lay members of society, but also within the academic field. The results of my analysis dispute the idea “that the individuals who produce translated texts and utterances are neutral, disinterested, apolitical creatures, mere conduits who take no sides and have no stake in the outcome of any interaction they mediate” (Baker 2013: 23). In other words, this thesis has demonstrated the extent to which framing the role of *Wikipedia*’s multilingual volunteers as ‘information bridges’ (Hale 2014: 100 – see Section 1.2) seriously overlooks the active, interventionist and political nature of their practices. As we have seen, the members of the article-focused communities on which my study has focused are heavily invested in the process and products of their work, and care deeply about communicating their understanding of the city in question with the wider *Wikipedia*-reading public. To paraphrase Baker (2013: 23-4), these translator-contributors do not simply mediate *between* cultures or facilitate encounters that exist outside of the act of translation, but rather participate in producing these encounters. Their translation work “does not reproduce texts but constructs cultural realities” (Baker 2013: 24). While Hale (2014; 2015) endows multilingual Wikipedians and their activity with purely positive properties (as participants who ‘enable’, ‘share’, ‘facilitate’ – Hale 2015: 1), the approach followed here has allowed us to complicate this picture. It has demonstrated what Michael Cronin (2013: 65) has

described as the ‘profound ambiguity’ of translation as a process that involves both openness and closure, comprehension and incomprehension, bridge-making and wall-building.

The conceptual framework provided by narrative theory has proved an incisive tool for deepening our understanding of *Wikipedia*’s multilingual users in this way. Following Baker (2013: 24), it has helped emphasise that their translation activity is “not an innocent act of disinterested mediation” but a process which inevitably intervenes in “the processes of narration and renarration that constitute all encounters”, in the practices of story-telling and re-telling by which we come to know and make sense of the social world. What is more, through this approach, I have been able to develop the analytical tools required for disentangling the various actors and influences implicated in the processes of collaboration by which the city-related texts of my dataset are produced. The analysis has shown multilingual content creation within *Wikipedia* to be a complex process of negotiation involving translator-advocates of many different and often opposing points of view. It has demonstrated that this climate of conflict is not simply a result of the sheer size of each article-focused community, nor can it be attributed purely to the virtual, ‘faceless’ nature of online communication.¹⁴⁴ I have argued instead that it is primarily due to the wide diversity of narrative standpoints involved: otherwise unaffiliated individuals from all over the world with divergent understandings of each city are brought through networked digital technologies into close juxtaposition within the heterotopic space of *Wikipedia* and asked to collaborate through debate and discussion towards a text which might be acceptable to all.

This is the third way in which my approach challenges dominant conceptions of translation practice and of collaborative translation practice in particular. While much of the current discussion within translation studies regarding other volunteer translation collectives has tended to focus on what brings individuals together to participate in such projects (see Section 1.3), the case of *Wikipedia* appears to foreground an alternative perspective on this co-creation process. As the analysis has clearly demonstrated, although Wikipedians are for the most part united in their belief that knowledge should be free and committed in their desire to construct an openly accessible knowledge resource, there is rarely consensus on what knowledge should and should not be

¹⁴⁴ In much discussion of online interaction, it is frequently suggested that it is essentially the virtual nature of online communication that makes for particularly difficult and aggressive interactions between participants. Floridi (1999: 40, cited in Drugan 2011: 112) writes for instance that, because of the ‘remoteness’ and ‘facelessness’ of the process, many internet users experience cyberspace as a ‘dream-like’ environment “so a person may wrongly infer that her actions are as unreal and insignificant as the killing of enemies in a virtual game.” This remoteness does of course play a major role and it is certainly likely that many Wikipedians would not behave as they do within *Wikipedia*’s Talk pages if they were working face-to-face. That said, the findings of this study suggest that this facelessness is only partly to blame, and that conflict within the platform is most significantly fed by the diversity of positions held by different individuals and factions within the heterogeneous community.

included in their encyclopaedia, and how this task might best be approached. Thus, *Wikipedia* can be seen as an example of a site in which individuals compete at least as much as they collaborate, in which they push against each other just as much as they pull together. This suggests that it is important for translation scholars not to neglect the fact that, although multi-agent volunteer projects are certainly driven forward to large extent by forces of affinity, the processes by which the different participants collaborate is seldom smooth. Indeed, the situation in *Wikipedia* would suggest that both consensus and dissensus play equally important roles in the dynamics and success of volunteer co-production (cf. Reagle 2010: 46). Future research should recognise that it can be just as valuable to pay attention to that which divides volunteer communities, as that which brings them together.

The concept of heterotopia has provided an insightful means of exploring and explaining this facet of the user-generated encyclopaedia. Through its focus on simultaneity, juxtaposition and discord, it has allowed me to concentrate on the points of friction and narrative dissonance that cause dispute within the community. Specifically, I have examined the conflictual interactions that occur when proponents of local narratives of a given city come to collaborate through networked technology with individuals subscribing to more abstract, societal accounts of the place; the clashes that arise between expert and lay understandings of the urban environment; the hostilities between opposing nationalist narratives regarding real-world conflict zones and contested territories. Heterotopia has helped to highlight the manner in which these divergent accounts of each of the cities in my dataset are brought together in the space of *Wikipedia*, and therefore how the specific geography of this online space shapes the production and dissemination of knowledge across languages and cultures within this context.

It is suggested that such an approach could usefully be applied to the analysis of many other contexts for translation activity as a method for further developing our understanding of what Italiano (2012) has termed “the geography of translation” (see Section 2.3). As discussed in Section 2.3.1, Sherry Simon’s (2012) theorisation of the city as a ‘translation zone’ has successfully problematised the traditional emphasis on translation as it is performed between the distinct cultures of geographically distant nation states, and opened up new avenues for research into the different functions and meanings of translation in these urban spaces. The concept of heterotopia, on the other hand, has been shown in this thesis to serve as an invaluable tool for promoting analysis of translation practice at even lower strata of our social spatiality, at those ‘micro-level’ spaces that form the immediate arena of experience for much of our everyday lives (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 366).

Having said this, it is important to mention one significant drawback of the heterotopic approach, namely, the fact that it tends to present the characteristics of the space studied as fixed and unchanging, unresponsive to social dynamics. It does not provide a means of accounting for the ways in which the *Wikipedia* space has changed over time. This has led me to emphasise features of the encyclopaedia and its community that seem relatively stable, that appear inherent to the wiki production process. This perspective is clearly contrary to Lefebvre's (1974/1991) conception of social space as something that is being continually produced, of space as a process, and it is likely that there are many, more transitory features of the *Wikipedia* space that have significant bearing on particular articles at particular moments in their history. Future research could explore in more detail the fluidity of *Wikipedia*'s environmental characteristics (cf. Faraj *et al.* 2011). We might look for instance at the extent to which the English- and/or French-language *Wikipedia* communities have become more geographically diverse as internet penetration rates have risen over the past sixteen years, and how this is changing the nature of the online space and the production of content across linguistic borders within it.

7.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE CHOICE OF DATASET

By choosing to examine the construction of city-related articles, this thesis has additionally contributed to the under-researched field of study we have called the "translation of geographies" (Italiano 2012). In Section 2.3.2, I have argued that translation scholars have yet to investigate sufficiently the ways in which translation is involved in the social production of space and that the writings of Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) could provide an important theoretical foundation on which to base such analysis. Lefebvre's work, I have posited (Section 2.4), helps us to understand that the space in which we live is produced not given, part of social practice not external to it, heterogeneous not homogenous, relational not constant, dynamic not static, and that it exists just as much in the imagination and in lived experiences as it does in its physical materiality. Through my analysis of the multilingual activities of *Wikipedia* volunteers, I have then demonstrated how these ideas can be developed to explore the key role translator-contributors play in constructing and contesting the multitude of different narrative conceptions that circulate with regard to the cities in my dataset. Moreover, while the typology of spatial narratives outlined in Section 3.5 was constructed with the specific case of *Wikipedia* in mind, it is proposed that this could also be applied to the analysis of other phenomena as a means of gaining further insights into translation as "a cultural activity that creates 'new' spaces, [...] new 'imaginative geographies'" (Italiano 2012: 1).

As noted in the introduction, my findings also hold implications for research taking place in other areas of the humanities into what is known as ‘neogeography’ (Goodchild 2007/2011; Graham 2010a). Indeed, my research clearly demonstrates the fact that, through the development of ‘dispersed’ or ‘many-to-many’ systems of communication and archive such as *Wikipedia*, significant layers of the palimpsest of place are now generated, manipulated, circulated and re-negotiated by hundreds of thousands of ordinary internet users, creating content that can be accessed anywhere in the world. Most significantly, however, this thesis has emphasised the otherwise overlooked importance of translation in the production and dissemination of such geographical representations within the global flows of the internet. I have shown that spatial knowledge is not created and communicated in one language alone and therefore that the creation of city-related articles within *Wikipedia* involves various forms of translation and the negotiation of linguistic and cultural barriers. This clearly demonstrates the need to acknowledge that those who engage in these multilingual practices occupy decisive roles in constructing understandings of the world in which we live, both in their own societies as well as on a global scale.

As a final note, it is important to reflect on the decision to concentrate on a dataset drawn from the English- and French-language editions of *Wikipedia*. To begin with Chapter 5, the analysis and comparison of both these language versions has provided insights into the similarities and differences between the two encyclopaedia versions, and added further weight to the hypothesis that English acts as a particularly dominant ‘hub’ language within *Wikipedia* as a whole (Hale 2014; Ronen *et al.* 2014). Indeed, I have been able to show that, while the French-language articles tend to make proportionally more use than the English-language *Wikipedia* of materials written in other languages, its community typically choose (or are forced to choose) English-language resources rather than texts published in the languages local to the city they are presenting. Coupled with the analysis of the language skills of the core group members within each article-focused community, this would suggest that the French-language edition depends significantly on the position of English as a *lingua franca* for producing its textual presentations of the world cities in my dataset, rather than sourcing this content directly in local languages and societies. This finding corroborates from a more qualitative perspective the results of recent quantitative analyses (*e.g.* Hale 2014; Ronen *et al.* 2014) that have highlighted the current centrality of the English language in global networks for the flow of culture and knowledge.

On the other hand, in Chapter 6, it may be noted that I have attempted no such comparison between the English- and French-language *Wikipedias* and that I have tended to draw most closely on case-studies found within the English-language portion of my dataset. This is largely a reflection

of the fact that the French-language Talk pages are significantly less active as discussion forums than those present in the English-language *Wikipedia*. This feature can be clearly demonstrated with a few statistics: for example, while at the time of writing (November 2016) the Talk page connected to the English-language article on Beijing has received 839 comments by 236 different editors ([X! Tools: Talk: Beijing](#)), the corresponding page within the French-language *Wikipedia* has seen just 60 posts made by 40 individuals ([X! Tools: Talk \(FR\): Pékin](#)). Consequently, in constructing my argument, I have found that there was significantly less ‘raw data’ in the French-language dataset to draw on, and that many of the points that I am interested in are discussed in much more detail by a larger number of contributors within the English-language article forums. It was decided that it would be unproductive to compare the two editions without sufficient information on the French-language *Wikipedia*.

The smaller amount of Talk page conflict is likely due to the smaller size of the French-language editing community. Indeed, as Kittur and Kraut (2010: 233) have shown with respect to collaborative wiki-software platforms more generally, a smaller size commonly results in a lower rate of conflicts because the “density of the information space” is significantly reduced. Another explanation could also be that the French-language community is less geographically dispersed than is the case with the English-language edition of the site, and therefore more homogenous in the sets of spatial narratives to which it subscribes. Yasseri *et al.* (2012: 6) suggest for instance that perhaps as many as 85% of contributions to the French-language *Wikipedia* are made by volunteers living in the time-zone local to metropolitan France and West Africa. Given that internet penetration rates are significantly higher in metropolitan France than in West Africa (Internet Society: Global Internet Maps), we can surmise that France-based editors dominate the production of the French-language *Wikipedia*.¹⁴⁵ Location is of course only one factor shaping the narratives we tell and to which we are exposed, but the possibility that the French-language community is less geographically diverse would seem to help explain why conflict is less extreme here than in the corresponding English-language pages. Whatever the reasons, further research should aim to find ways of working around this issue, perhaps by selecting a larger number of articles as part of the initial dataset or by using databases such as the ‘[Wikipedia \(FR\): Rapports/Pages avec le plus de modifications](#)’ (‘Reports/Pages with the most revisions’) to identify French-language articles that seem to have proved particularly controversial within this community.

¹⁴⁵ This suggestion is additionally supported by the data collected for the analysis in Chapter 5 of this thesis (Appendices I and II): out of the 126 core-group members within the French-language dataset whose geographical location can be identified on a User Profile or Talk page, 97 (77%) are currently resident in metropolitan France. This contrasts sharply with the situation in the English-language dataset where just 15% (12 out of 82 core-group members) of those whose locations can be identified are based in the U.S.A. i.e. the largest English-speaking and *Wikipedia*-contributing nation.

7.3 CLOSING REMARKS

In focusing throughout this thesis on the linguistic barriers that divide humankind and the sources of discord that provoke dispute across the *Wikipedia* platform, I have perhaps constructed a rather pessimistic narrative of the community, one that foregrounds the site as an environment of constant conflict, a battleground of opposing ideologies. However, it should be noted that high levels of dissensus and disagreement are not necessarily negative attributes for an online community and information resource. Indeed, while *Facebook* and *Twitter* have been shown to create ‘filter bubbles’ and ‘echo chambers’ in which users are exposed only to the viewpoints of individuals they already agree with, leading to greater ideological segregation (Gentzkow & Shapiro 2010), the process of contributing to *Wikipedia* forces advocates of many different and opposing points of view into a space of dialogue, negotiation and exchange. In other contexts – as Sunstein (2001: 4-5) predicted – people are increasingly able to “restrict themselves to their own points of view – liberals watching and reading mostly or only liberals; moderates, moderates; conservatives, conservatives; Neo-Nazis, Neo-Nazis”. In *Wikipedia*, on the other hand, these groups are brought together, made to compromise, asked to ensure that all sides of the story are respected and represented.

Moreover, after a year marked by an unprecedented rise in the circulation of ‘fake news’, and the insinuation that we now live in a ‘post-fact’ society, *Wikipedia*’s bold commitment to ‘verifiability’ and multi-subjective knowledge production would seem to be more important than ever before. Both as a community and as a technology, *Wikipedia* encourages users to question each other’s assumptions, to ask and search for evidence, and to go to the depth of detail required to convince themselves and others of the veracity of the encyclopaedia’s truth-claims ([Wikipedia: Verifiability](#)). It emphasises that “[f]acts matter” ([Wikimedia Foundation blog 2016](#)) and that – even if the process of deliberation is difficult, even if the arguments get heated – this is all justified if guided by the pursuit of truth and understanding. Therefore, despite its flaws, *Wikipedia* should be championed as a prototype for a more responsible model of knowledge production; its core values must be promoted more generally if we are to safeguard and improve our democracy in the twenty-first century.

Finally, as Sue Gardner (2013) has written, “[a]n encyclopedia is one of humankind’s grandest displays of collaborative effort”, and there is no doubting that *Wikipedia* represents one of the grandest yet. In a world of rising sectarianism and worsening (all too real, all too violent) conflict, the fact that hundreds of thousands of otherwise unaffiliated individuals from all around the world can and do join together in relative peace to create something of intrinsic value to the rest of humanity is surely a sign of hope and a cause for optimism. The community may have its problems and the

encyclopaedia's content may have its biases, but *Wikipedia's* fundamental goal of collecting and sharing the world's knowledge with every single person on the planet for free is inarguably a positive one. Long may it continue.

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Note: Below are listed all of the texts and databases that I have analysed directly as primary sources in addition to my investigations into the core dataset of Wikipedia articles.

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APPENDICES

There are four appendices attached to this thesis:

- APPENDIX I contains detailed tables providing the results of the core group analysis for the English-language dataset (see Section 5.3.2);
- APPENDIX II contains detailed tables providing the results of the core group analysis for the French-language dataset (see Section 5.3.3);
- APPENDIX III contains detailed *Microsoft Excel* tables providing the results of the reference-list analysis for the English-language dataset (see Section 5.4.1). A PDF download of each of the corresponding *Wikipedia* articles is also included;
- APPENDIX IV contains detailed *Microsoft Excel* tables providing the results of the reference-list analysis for the French-language dataset (see Section 5.4.2). A PDF download of each of the corresponding *Wikipedia* articles is also included.

Appendices I and II are included below as the final section of this document.

Appendices III and IV have been uploaded to the accompanying CD-ROM.

APPENDIX I: Core group analysis for English-language dataset

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		BEIJING CHINESE 18 MARCH 2016			Total number of contributors: 3108 Total number of edits: 7475 Total number of bytes added: 444,157		
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
TheLeopard	574	1	27,185	3	2	English (N), Chinese	
Ran	150	2	22,982	4	3	English (N), Chinese (N)	Chinese ethnicity, now living in Canada. Administrator on Chinese Wikipedia too.
DF08	117	4	19,025	5	4.5	English, Chinese	Knows Beijing well. Nationality unclear.
Arbor to SJ	126	3	9,902	7	5	English, Chinese	Lives in California. Chinese ethnicity.
ContinentalAve	79	6	15,601	6	6	English, Chinese	
Marek69	87	5	9,210	8	6.5	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.
Nggsc	60	8	5,154	12	10	Chinese (N), English	Chinese editor living in or near Beijing.
Balthazarduju	51	13	7,842	9	11	?	
ASDFGH	48	15	6,008	11	13	Chinese (N), English	Cantonese editor living in Los Angeles (US).
BsBsBs	52	12	3,641	16	14	German (N), English, ?Chinese	Has lived and worked for many years in Beijing. No evidence of Chinese proficiency.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:					7+		

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		CAIRO ARABIC 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 2625 Total number of edits: 5790 Total number of bytes added: 302,670		
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):	
Realman208	258	1	84,546	1	1	Arabic (N), English	Egyptian contributor. Also active on Arabic Wikipedia.	
Tariqabjotu	96	4	17,315	2	3	English	From Boston (USA). Has spent several months in Cairo.	
Marek69	158	2	9,459	6	4	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.	
Aymantarek24	35	8	11,304	5	6.5	English Arabic	Has uploaded several camera phone photos of buildings in Cairo.	
Casual Builder	29	11	11,609	4	7.5	English		
Omar1989	34	9	4,818	8	8.5	English Arabic	Currently lives in Denmark but originally Egyptian.	
SimonP	26	16	5,066	7	11.5	English	Highly prolific Canadian contributor.	
Thutmoselll	32	10	2,005	15	12.5	English, Arabic	Egyptian contributor.	
Arab Hafez	29	13	1,482	22	17.5	Arabic (N), English	Egyptian contributor.	
Ahmed Mohamed	16	33	1,006	11	22	Arabic (N), English	Lives in Cairo.	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:					6			

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		ISTANBUL TURKISH 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 3,261 Total number of edits: 10,970 Total number of bytes added: 779,431		
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):	
Shuppiluliuma	1068	1	113,776	1	1	Turkish (N), English	Native resident of Istanbul.	
Tariqabjotu	936	2	91,291	2	2	English	From Boston (USA).	
Metb82	110	12	26,125	4	8	Turkish (N), English	Lives in Antalya, Turkey.	
Marek69	169	6	15,101	12	9	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.	
OttomanReference	184	4	12,667	14	9	Turkish, English		
Elmalili	92	14	10,755	18	16	Turkish, English	Turkish contributor.	
Cavann	77	19	8,579	24	21.5	Turkish, English	Lives in Canada. Turkish ethnicity.	
CeeGee	68	21	8,035	25	23	Turkish, English	Turkish contributor.	
El Greco	162	7	3,523	41	24	Greek, English, Spanish		
Alessandro57	152	9	2,589	52	30.5	Italian (N), English, German, Turkish (1)	Has lived in Turkey, now lives in Switzerland. Italian contributor.	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:					7			

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		JAKARTA INDONESIAN 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 1,829 Total number of edits: 5,376 Total number of bytes added: 268,541	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Gunkarta	255	2	26,116	1	1.5	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
Merbabu	378	1	8,815	5	3	Indonesian, English	Lives in Australia. Indonesian ethnicity.
125.166.40.132	120	3	8,725	6	4.5	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
Rochelimit	55	10	17,980	3	6.5	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
Afandri Adya	45	14	19,493	2	8	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
Hkurniawan	102	5	3,439	12	8.5	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
Farhan Literary	56	9	4,851	9	9	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
Dennisadriann	65	7	2,823	19	13	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
Gsarwa	34	23	10,071	4	13.5	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia. Indonesian ethnicity.
118.136.179.218	37	21	4,454	10	15.5	Indonesian, English	Lives in Indonesia.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						10	

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		JERUSALEM ARABIC/HEBREW 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 3,267 Total number of edits: 11,204 Total number of bytes added: 632,640	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Tariqabjotu	467	2	62,478	1	1.5	English	Lives in Boston (USA).
LamaLoLeshLa	256	4	24,860	3	3.5	English	Despite multilingual name, no evidence of locale-language proficiency.
Gidonb	237	5	11,237	10	7.5	Hebrew, Arabic (1), English	Dutch nationality. Lives in Illinois (USA).
Reenem	179	7	13,066	8	7.5	Hebrew, English	Israeli nationality.
Gilabrand	328	3	9,485	14	8.5	Hebrew, English	
IZAK	101	12	14,754	7	9.5	Hebrew, Yiddish (N), English (N)	
Hertz1888	588	1	6,343	21	11	Hebrew, English	Lives in USA.
Jayig	127	10	9,614	12	11	Hebrew, English	
Okedem	203	6	8,386	17	11.5	Hebrew, English	Israeli nationality.
Marek69	129	9	7,689	18	13.5	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						7	

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		MEXICO CITY SPANISH 11 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 4,257 Total number of edits: 10,037 Total number of bytes added: 905,512	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Dúnadan	442	1	44,415	4	2.5	Spanish, English, Catalan, French	
Tbhotch	129	3	19,301	8	5.5	Spanish (N), English	Native resident of Mexico City
75.80.58.122	101	5	19,519	7	6	Spanish, English	San Diego-based IP address
Marek69	173	2	8,572	14	8	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.
69.235.210.194	48	16	21,851	6	11	Spanish, English	Los Angeles-based IP address.
Dlbra	50	15	9,794	12	13.5	Spanish, English	
ElEditordeWiki	56	12	7,690	16	14	Spanish, English	
TheImadatter	35	22	12,707	10	16	Spanish, English	An American English-as-a-foreign-language teacher who has lived in central Mexico for over 12 years.
Benz65	112	4	4,834	31	17.5	English	
Ssbbplayer	88	7	4,303	36	21.5	Spanish (N), English	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						9	

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		MOSCOW RUSSIAN 18 MARCH 2016					Total number of contributors: 3,479 Total number of edits: 8,810 Total number of bytes added: 384,799	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):	
Nixer	613	1	27,026	2	1.5	Russian, English	Most likely Russian, but not confirmed.	
Texmon	535	2	29,781	1	1.5	Russian, English	Lives in Moscow.	
Tariqabjotu	162	5	24,499	3	4	English	Lives in Boston (USA).	
Dojarca	205	4	9,703	6	5	Russian, English	Most likely Russian, but not confirmed.	
Marek69	114	6	8,898	7	6.5	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.	
Ghirlandajo	112	7	6,118	8	7.5	Russian, English	Lives near Moscow.	
Fisss	109	8	5,151	11	9.5	Russian, English		
Simonides	31	18	17,779	4	11	English	Has lived in Moscow for an extended period of time.	
Ezhiki	229	3	2,594	25	14	Russian, English	Russian-American (native Russian)	
Elk Salmon	89	9	2,467	28	18.5	Russian, English	Lives in Russia	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						7		

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		PARIS FRENCH 11 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 5,556 Total number of edits: 15,683 Total number of bytes added: 2,037,252	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
SiefkinDR	825	2	163,102	2	2	French, English	Lives in Paris.
ThePromenader	881	1	116,705	3	2	French, German, Japanese, English (N)	Lives in Paris.
Dr. Blofeld	518	3	102,621	4	3.5	French, English	Lives in Wales. Founder of Intertranswiki.
Hardouin	340	4	85,267	5	4.5	English (4), French (4), Spanish (4), Chinese, German, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, Japanese, Khmer, Vietnamese	
Gilderien	287	5	20,238	10	7.5	French (1)	British student
Der Statistiker	139	10	22,693	8	9	German (N), English, French	Lives in Paris.
Blue Indigo	139	11	20,674	9	10	English, French, Spanish, German, Russian.	
Marek69	87	16	12,540	12	14	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.
Green Giant	183	7	7,109	22	14.5	English (N), French, Spanish.	North American contributor.
Coldcreation	116	12	8,736	20	16	English French (4), Spanish (4), Catalan.	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						10	

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		ROME ITALIAN 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 3,276 Total number of edits: 8,795 Total number of bytes added: 515,767		
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):	
Theologiae	191	3	58,538	1	2	English (N), Italian (5), French (3), Spanish (1)		
Alessandro57	354	2	21,458	4	3	Italian (N), English, German, Turkish (1)	Native Italian contributor.	
Panairjdde~enwiki	189	4	47,112	2	3	Italian (N), English	Native Italian contributor.	
Conte di Cavour	372	1	16,074	7	4	Italian (N), English	An Italian student of political sciences at Bologna University	
Nehwyn	157	5	23,887	3	4	Italian (N), English, Latin		
Attilios	128	6	21,374	5	5.5	Italian (N), English	Native Italian contributor.	
Marek69	107	7	14,846	8	7.5	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.	
Blue-Haired Lawyer	97	8	7,724	15	11.5	Italian (N), English		
Subtropical-man	52	18	9,815	10	14	Polish (N), English, Italian (1)		
Alec74	53	15	8,000	14	14.5	English	Clearly knows Rome well from his edits, but no evidence of Italian proficiency.	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:					9			

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		SÃO PAULO PORTUGUESE 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 3,369 Total number of edits: 9,195 Total number of bytes added: 445,607	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Marek69	244	1	19,982	2	1.5	English (5), Polish (N), French (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	Originally Polish, but now lives in Britain. Very active on many city articles.
Hentzer	230	2	12,647	5	3.5	Portuguese, English	Brazilian contributor.
Opinoso	177	4	13,719	3	3.5	Portuguese, English, Spanish, Italian	Brazilian contributor.
Edson Rosa	147	5	12,965	4	4.5	?Portuguese, English	Probably a Brazilian contributor, but no strong evidence available.
Thiagoreis leon	226	3	12,088	6	4.5	Portuguese, English	Brazilian contributor.
189.105.172.99	86	11	23,804	1	6	Portuguese, English	Brazilian contributor.
87.194.40.73	104	8	10,098	7	7.5	Portuguese, English	Brazilian contributor.
Chronus	93	9	7,875	11	10	Portuguese, English	Brazilian contributor.
189.105.132.243	48	18	8,175	10	14	Portuguese, English	Brazilian contributor.
Wfgiuliano	47	20	9,704	8	14	Portuguese, English	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						9+	

English-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		TOKYO JAPANESE 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 4,003 Total number of edits: 9,373 Total number of bytes added: 300,976	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Fg2	362	1	28,876	1	1	Japanese, English	American contributor, lived most of his life in Japan. Professional translator.
Ichtrinken	272	3	8,741	5	4	Japanese, English (1)	Japanese contributor.
Sekicho	73	8	13,070	2	5	Japanese, English, Spanish, Chinese	Native speaker of English
Photojpn.org	68	9	12,944	3	6	Japanese, English	Native speaker of English
Rick Block	209	5	7,651	7	6	Japanese, English	
WhisperToMe	181	6	6,985	8	7	English	US-based contributor (Houston, Texas). Has visited Japan and is active member of WikiProject Japan.
DAJF	356	2	2,979	15	8.5	Japanese, English	Native speaker of English
TakuyaMurata	38	15	11,921	4	9.5	Japanese, English	Japanese contributor.
Oda Mari	212	4	1,808	25	14.5	Japanese, English	Japanese contributor.
ASDFGH	25	24	3,720	11	17.5	Chinese, English	Chinese native speaker.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						8	

APPENDIX II: Core group analysis for English-language dataset

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		BOMBAY (MUMBAI) ENGLISH, HINDI 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 460 Total number of edits: 905 Total number of bytes added: 50,265	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Nataraja	19	4	6,791	2	3	French, English (2)	French native speaker. School teacher. Loves India and has visited many times
Susuman77	14	5	13,107	1	3	French, English	Parisian history teacher.
Nikkul~frwiki	21	2	1,612	5	3.5	English (N), French (1)	Lives in Princeton (USA). Of Indian ethnicity.
Steff	10	9	2,050	4	6.5	French, English (3), German (2)	French native speaker.
Piksou	13	6	1,100	8	7	French, English (3), German (3), Spanish (1)	French native speaker.
Tieum512	13	7	1,498	7	7	French, English (3), Croatian (1)	French native speaker.
88.181.79.199	8	17	955	9	13	French, English	French IP address
Superbenjamin	22	1	289	28	14.5	French, English (nN), German (2), Hindi (0)	French native speaker from Marseille.
The Titou	9	11	415	20	15.5	French, English (2), German (1), Esperanto (1)	French native speaker.
Urban	5	28	859	10	19	French, English (2)	French native speaker.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						10	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		DELHI ENGLISH, HINDI 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 224 Total number of edits: 500 Total number of bytes added: 70,832	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Bobsodium	58	1	16,493	3	2	French (N), English (nN), Japanese (2), German (2), Dutch (2), Hindi (1), Chinese (1), Russian(1)	Lives in India. French native speaker.
Superbenjamin	43	2	19,605	2	2	French (N), English (nN), German (2),	Has lived in India (Punjab). French native speaker.
69.142.114.141	14	4	22,515	1	2.5	English (N), French (1)	= Nikul~frwiki. Lives in Princeton (USA). Of Indian ethnicity.
Mikani	14	3	3,012	4	3.5	French (N), English (3), Spanish (1)	French native speaker.
86.215.209.31	6	8	627	5	6.5	French (N)	Ile de France-based IP address.
88.181.79.199	6	7	463	8	7.5	French (N), English	Paris-based IP address.
Pj44300	8	5	279	12	8.5	French (N), English (3), Spanish (1), German (1), Italian (1), Portuguese (1), Dutch (1)	French native speaker from Nantes.
Inde	5	13	126	20	16.5	French (N), English (5), Spanish (2), Hindi (1)	French native speaker.
Askwhyhale	4	22	273	13	17.5	French (N), English (3)	French native speaker.
TED	3	35	624	6	20.5	French (N), English (3), German (1)	French native speaker.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:					9		

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		HONG KONG ENGLISH, CHINESE 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 698 Total number of edits: 1,392 Total number of bytes added: 104,275	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Tarlatata	49	1	11,203	2	1.5	French, English	
Boeb'is	24	2	8,159	3	2.5	French, English (2)	French native speaker from Paris.
Takima	14	5	29,198	1	3	French, English (N)	Japanese ethnicity, lives in Canada.
Xylophone	15	4	4,638	4	4	French	
Chrono1084	13	7	911	16	11.5	French, English	
Olivier	13	9	635	22	15.5	French, English	French native speaker.
Mike-tango	9	19	1,063	13	16	French, English (3)	French native speaker, living in Lyon.
Sebjarod	11	14	823	18	16	French, English (2), German (1)	French native speaker.
Langladure	7	31	1,250	12	21.5	French, English (1)	French native speaker from Paris.
Popolon	6	38	1,543	9	23.5	French, English (3), Chinese (3), Japanese (1)	French native speaker from Paris.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						9	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		ISTANBUL TURKISH 18 MARCH 2016			Total number of contributors: 842 Total number of edits: 1,890 Total number of bytes added: 90,924		
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
JX Bardant	59	1	4,777	3	2	French (N), Turkish (2), German (1)	Lives in Turkey for part of the year.
194.27.192.252	40	4	5,173	2	3	Turkish (N), French, English	Lives in Istanbul.
Tibo29	25	5	2,145	6	5.5	French, English (1)	
81.67.29.180	19	10	1,927	7	8.5	French	French IP address
Salsero35	15	14	2,632	5	9.5	French, English (2)	French native speaker.
Bouarf	44	2	735	23	12.5	French, English (3), Spanish (1), Armenian (1)	French native speaker from Yvelines.
Pj44300	42	3	715	26	14.5	French, English (3), Spanish (1), German (1), Italian (1), Portuguese (1), Dutch (1)	French native speaker from Nantes.
Ayazma	9	26	1,438	12	19	French	French native speaker.
Nicoleon	24	6	549	36	21	French, English (2), Italian (1), Turkish (1), German (1).	French native speaker from Strasbourg.
213.44.235.116	10	24	607	31	27.5	French, Turkish	French IP address.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT					MEMBERS: 4		
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT					MEMBERS: 6		

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		JAKARTA INDONESIAN 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 254 Total number of edits: 637 Total number of bytes added: 34,279	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Humboldt	131	1	8,586	1	1	French, Indonesian (N), English (3), Malay (2), German (1), Italian (1), Dutch (1)	Indonesian ethnicity. Lives in Paris.
Monsieur Fou	28	2	5,199	2	2	French, English	French native speaker from Mulhouse.
PJ44300	22	3	731	8	5.5	French, English (3), Spanish (1), German (1), Italian (1), Portuguese (1), Dutch (1)	French native speaker from Nantes.
81.64.52.183	6	16	2,223	3	9.5	French, Indonesian	Indonesian ethnicity. Lives in Paris.
Aaker	6	15	585	12	13.5	French, Swedish (N), English (3), French (3), Spanish (2)	Swedish contributor.
Rémih	6	14	537	14	14	French, English (2)	French native speaker.
Poulpy	5	18	447	16	17	French, English (3), German (1)	French native speaker.
HenriDavel	3	36	2,043	4	20	French, English	French native speaker.
81.56.220.127	7	9	108	34	21.5	Vandal	
194.254.207.114	4	24	81	37	30.5	Vandal	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:				2	
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:				7	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		JÉRUSALEM ARABIC, HEBREW 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 649 Total number of edits: 2,259 Total number of bytes added: 195,020	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Alt0160	65	3	17,713	2	2.5	French, English (3), Spanish (1)	French native speaker from Hauts de Seine.
Claude Valette	62	4	19,674	1	2.5	French	French native speaker from Paris.
Michel1961	85	2	15,366	3	2.5	French, English (3)	French native speaker from Toulon.
Olevy	169	1	7,090	7	4	French, English (3)	
Franckiz	53	6	9,154	5	5.5	French, English (3), Spanish (2), Hebrew (1)	
Godix	58	5	8,744	6	5.5	French, English	
Mikani	21	14	10,203	4	9	French, English (3), Spanish (1)	
Fugazy	45	8	4,716	11	9.5	French, English	
Pj44300	45	7	2,939	16	11.5	French, English (3), Spanish (1), German (1), Italian (1), Portuguese (1) Dutch (1)	French native speaker from Nantes.
F8r6d4m2	21	13	4,374	14	13.5	French	French native speaker.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						1	
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						8	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		LE CAIRE (CAIRO) ARABIC 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 566 Total number of edits: 1,110 Total number of bytes added: 82,839	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Esperanza	42	1	4,558	3	2	French, English (3), Arabic (3)	
Martinalbert	31	3	19,978	1	2	French, English	
Néfermaât	39	2	16,830	2	2	French	French native speaker from Ile de France. Has lived for a significant amount of time in Egypt.
Sdenoix	13	8	3,663	4	6	French	
Bouchedl	8	15	3,430	5	10	French, English (nN), Spanish (1)	Quebecois French native speaker.
Nonopoly	13	7	865	15	11	French, English (3), Chinese (1)	French native speaker from Lyon.
69.70.144.34	14	6	395	23	14.5	VANDAL	Quebecois French native speaker.
Ediacara	12	9	415	20	14.5	French, English	
Xofc	16	5	386	24	14.5	French, English (1)	
82.225.12.189	5	38	1,753	8	23	French, English	French native speaker from Paris.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:					1		
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:					7		

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		LONDRES ENGLISH 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 1,472 Total number of edits: 3,080 Total number of bytes added: 162,140	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
128.232.246.96/ 131.111.100.155	157	1	79,653	1	1	French, English	Native French speaker, living in Cambridge.
Steff	70	3	10,703	3	3	French, English (3), German (2)	Native French speaker.
Lynntoniolondon	40	6	1,180	10	8	French, English	
Mightymights	25	8	1,273	8	8	French, English	
Gafia	37	7	1,090	11	9	French, English (3)	Native French speaker from Lille.
Aurevilly	7	48	4,386	5	26.5	French, English	Native French speaker from Paris.
Pontauxchats	10	25	315	35	30	French, English (2)	Native French speaker from Strasbourg.
Mkaczor2000	6	58	497	22	40	French (N), English (nN), Portuguese (nN), Polish (3), German (2), Italian (2), Catalan (1)	Native French speaker from Switzerland.
Cédric Boissière	67	4	166	78	41	French, English	
Goliadkine	12	18	189	64	41	French, English (nN), German (3), Italian (1)	Native French speaker from Switzerland.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						10	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		MÉXICO (MEXICO CITY) SPANISH 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 737 Total number of edits: 1,740 Total number of bytes added: 108,749	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Urban	51	2	21,085	1	1.5	French, English (2)	French native speaker from Normandy.
Polmars	48	4	10,812	3	3.5	French, English, Spanish, Italian (2), German (1)	French native speaker from Provence.
El Comandante	39	5	3,346	7	6	French, Spanish (3), English (2), Italian (1)	French native speaker.
Pixeltoo	50	3	2,369	10	6.5	French, Spanish (N), English (3)	Mexican but living in France.
Altavista	18	9	3,594	6	7.5	French, Spanish	
Lachaume	19	8	2,662	9	8.5	French, Spanish, English, German (3)	French native speaker living in Michoacán (Mexico).
Michel wal	30	6	1,446	12	9	French, English, Spanish	French native speaker from Brussels.
J-nam2	13	17	15,380	2	9.5	French, Basic English	
189.140.166.240	14	16	7,452	4	10	French, Spanish English (1)	Mexican IP address.
Sinaloa	22	7	743	16	11.5	Spanish (N), French (nN) Catalan (1)	Mexican but living in Paris.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:		8					
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:		8					

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		MOSCOU (MOSCOW) RUSSIAN 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 669 Total number of edits: 1,713 Total number of bytes added: 93,866	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Lj.6177	49	5	15,847	1	3	French, English	
MostCult	50	2	1,908	8	5	French, Russian	
Gregoirtchik	18	14	3,654	4	9	French, Russian	
(:Julien:)	95	1	1,178	19	10	French, English	French native speaker.
70.26.195.79	50	3	1,231	18	10.5	French, English	French native speaker from Canada
Stolichnaya	13	19	9,673	2	10.5	French, English (3), Russian (2), Spanish (1)	French native speaker from Paris.
Goliadkine	44	6	1,362	16	11	French, English (nN), German (3), Italian (1)	
Levochik	18	13	1,390	14	13.5	French, English (3), Russian (3), German (2), Farsi (1)	French native speaker. Has lived in Moscow.
Monsieur Fou	14	17	1,405	12	14.5	French, English	French native speaker from Mulhouse.
Voyageur~frwiki	25	8	973	22	15	French, Russian	French native speaker from Choisy-le-Roi. Has visited Russia four times.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		MEMBERS:			5		
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		MEMBERS:			7		

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		NEW YORK ENGLISH 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 2,084 Total number of edits: 5,253 Total number of bytes added: 528,874	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Jonathan71	218	1	38,340	3	2	French, English (nN), Spanish (3), Dutch (3), Italian (2), German (2), Turkish (1)	French native speaker living in Amsterdam.
Urban	188	2	90,824	2	2	French, English (2)	French native speaker from Normandy
Luna04	77	6	28,465	4	5	French, English	French native speaker.
92.103.162.252	110	5	14,909	6	5.5	French, English	Ile de France IP address.
Valentinois26	141	4	3,384	16	10	French, English (2)	French native speaker from Valence
Valeriant	57	8	7,731	12	10	French, English	French native speaker. Has lived in New York City.
Ulfer	31	17	9,725	8	12.5	French, English (nN), Spanish (2)	French native speaker from Bordeaux.
Jajane	23	18	8,745	10	14	French, English and Spanish	French native speaker.
Strikehard	32	15	4,251	15	15	French, English	French native speaker from Flanders.
L'amateur d'aéroplanes	23	19	5,729	14	16.5	French, English (1)	French native speaker from Languedoc-Roussillon.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						10	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		PÉKIN (BEIJING) CHINESE 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 626 Total number of edits: 1,335 Total number of bytes added: 127,700	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Fuhraih	50	1	74,799	1	1	French, English (2)	French native speaker from Paris
Croquant	39	2	4,390	2	2	French, English (3)	French native speaker from Orléans
Tarlatata	14	7	2,588	5	6	French, English	
Binabik	12	10	2,787	4	7	French, English (3)	French native speaker.
Peter17	23	5	672	19	12	French, English (3), Spanish (2) Chinese (0.5)	French native speaker from Val d'Oise
Zhonghuo	28	4	484	24	14	French, English (1)	
Popolon	11	14	826	16	15	French, Chinese (3), English (3)	French native speaker.
2514	11	13	603	20	16.5	French, English (3), German (2)	French native speaker.
Ji-Elle	6	36	2,936	3	19.5	French, German (Nn), English (3), Spanish (3), Italian (1), Portuguese (1)	
Langladure	6	33	1,981	6	19.5	French, English (1)	French native speaker from Paris
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:		1					
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:		10					

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		ROME ITALIAN 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 1,310 Total number of edits: 2,734 Total number of bytes added: 101,700	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Ulfer	19	7	12,665	1	4	French, English (nN), Spanish (2)	French native speaker from Bordeaux
Pj44300	78	2	1,563	12	7	French, English (3), Spanish (1), German (1), Italian (1), Portuguese (1) Dutch (1)	French native speaker from Nantes
Wrangel	18	12	3,292	4	8	French, English (3), German (1)	French native speaker from Paris
Cinerama14	13	16	2,884	6	11	French, English (3), German (2)	French native speaker from Alsace
Jastrow	13	15	2,678	7	11	French, English (3), German (1), Romanian (2), Italian (1)	French native speaker from Paris
Jpm2112	21	5	1,230	18	11.5	French, English (2), German (2), Spanish (1), Italian (1)	French native speaker from Yvelines
Ludovitalia	11	19	2,211	8	13.5	French, Italian (3), English (2)	French native speaker from Switzerland, living in Minturno (IT)
LPLT	18	10	999	24	17	French, English (3), Spanish (1), Italian (2)	
77.196.30.116	10	21	1,335	15	18	French	French native speaker.
Polmars	18	9	654	29	19	French, English (2), Spanish (2), Italian (2), German (1)	French native speaker from Provence.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		MEMBERS:				6	
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		MEMBERS:				9	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		SÃO PAULO PORTUGUESE 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 483 Total number of edits: 943 Total number of bytes added: 70,587	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Pmoulin	25	1	4,305	3	2	French, Portuguese	French native speaker from Paris. Has a Brazilian wife and so visits Brazil often.
Linan	14	4	936	11	7.5	French, English (3), Portuguese (3), Spanish (2), German (2), Italian (1)	French native speaker from Lyon
200.232.137.206	9	12	1,193	9	10.5	French, Portuguese	Brazilian IP address
85.10.69.21	11	7	692	14	10.5	French	Belgian IP address
Halfleaf	6	29	24,037	1	15	French, Portuguese	Brazilian
85.171.64.117	7	24	1,406	8	16	French	Ile de France IP address
Jibi44	14	5	323	32	18.5	French, En(3), ES(2), PT(1)	French native speaker from Nantes
JLM	4	38	4,509	2	20	French, English	French native speaker.
Ferf10	5	31	949	10	20.5	French, Portuguese	
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						6	
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						3	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		SINGAPOUR (SINGAPORE) ENGLISH, MALAY, CHINESE, TAMIL 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 686 Total number of edits: 1,527 Total number of bytes added: 96,499	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Marek2	69	2	4,095	4	3	French, English, Polish	French native speaker from Paris. Has family in Singapore.
Pj44300	94	1	3,689	6	3.5	French, English (3), Spanish (1), German (1), Italian (1), Portuguese (1) Dutch (1)	French native speaker from Nantes
Klodo6975	24	3	4,075	5	4	French, English (nN), Spanish (2), Japanese (1)	French native speaker from Boulogne-Bilancourt
Takima	14	10	11,979	1	5.5	French, English (N)	Canadian contributor with Japanese ancestry.
Humboldt	20	5	2,430	8	6.5	French, Indonesian (N), English (3), Malay (2), German (1), Italian (1), Dutch (1)	French native speaker from Paris. Indonesian ethnicity.
62.88.8.74	14	9	2,342	9	9	French	Belgian IP address
Chrono1084	12	13	1,031	15	14	French, English	
Lionel bravard	8	25	8,120	3	14	French, English	Singaporean contributor.
Gauchiste Eudaimonique	10	19	1,489	13	16	French, English, Mandarin	Singaporean contributor.
Pabix	9	20	1,078	14	17	French, English (3), German (2), Spanish (2)	French native speaker from Grenoble
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT 'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:						9	

French-language article: Language of locale: Date of data collection:		TOKYO JAPANESE 18 MARCH 2016				Total number of contributors: 860 Total number of edits: 2,043 Total number of bytes added: 175,142	
Username:	Number of edits made:	Position in list of contributors according to number of edits made:	Number of bytes added:	Position in list of contributors according to number of bytes added:	'Score' (average position):	Language skills (with level of proficiency, if known):	Other details (if known):
Tharkun	93	1	34,155	1	1	French, English (3), Spanish (2), Italian (1)	Originally from New Caledonia, now living in the south of France
08pb80	37	6	11,719	2	4	French, English (nN), Japanese (2), German (2), Italian (1)	French native speaker. Used to live in Tokyo.
Abrahami	43	4	7,693	4	4	French, English (3)	French native speaker.
PP Tom	65	2	6,595	6	4	French, English (3), Japanese (2), German (1)	French native speaker.
DDD DDD	39	5	6,653	5	5	French, English (N), Japanese (2)	Canadian contributor now living in Tokyo
Verdy p	60	3	6,164	8	5.5	French, English (nN), PT(3), German (2), Spanish (2), IT(2), Occitan (2), Catalan (1), Breton (1), Dutch (1), Greek (1)	French native speaker.
2514	18	9	5,548	10	9.5	French, English (3) [TR], German (2)	French native speaker.
195.220.252.125	17	13	1,347	24	18.5	French	Paris IP address.
83.204.220.219	11	22	782	34	28	French	Ile de France IP address.
Tensaibuta~frwiki	15	14	462	46	30	French, Japanese (nN), English (nN)	French native speaker now living in Tokyo.
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCALE-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:		4	
TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENT		'CORE GROUP' MEMBERS:		8	