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Resisting State Terror: Theorizing Communities of Activist Translators and Interpreters

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Since its inception, translation studies has arguably situated itself within structures of authority¹ and continues to describe the role of translation largely from the point of view of dominant groups and constituencies.² This is particularly evident in frameworks such as skopos theory, which prioritizes the role of the commissioner in a typically affluent industrial setting, and norm theory, which privileges mainstream values as realized in sanctioned, repeated patterns of behaviour. It is also evident in the overwhelming attention given to dominant Western and European communities in theorizing translation, notably Venuti's focus on the Anglo-American context and feminist theorizing in North America. Where translation scholars have adopted the perspective of the colonized or of resistant groups in society, this has largely been in the context of historical studies, with temporal distance ensuring that no 'spillage' of risk or serious political controversy can contaminate the orderly world of scholarly research.

Alongside its historical alignment with structures of power and the mainstream, the discipline has also tended to create its own narratives that revolve around rigid, idealized communities. Most importantly, and problematically, it continues to thematize cultural difference and invest in the idea of more or less discrete cultural communities, largely drawn along national lines.³ Reified differences between these idealized communities implicitly provide the *raison d'être* for the very activity of translation. Society needs translation, the disciplinary narrative goes, because translators can bridge *significant* cultural differences, can allow people belonging to different cultures to communicate smoothly and effectively.

The thematization of cultural difference is not a feature of translation studies alone; Said argued more than a decade ago that '[t]he fetishization and relentless celebration of "difference" and "otherness" ... [is] an ominous trend' across the humanities (1989: 213). In translation studies, especially in the context of political conflict, this fetishization tends to suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that the two parties on either side of the translator are

almost always predictably (perhaps even inherently) different, and that the difference has to be managed by the translator. The translator, on the other hand, is portrayed in some disciplinary narratives as 'neutral', with no stake in the interaction other than upholding professional standards; in others as inhabiting the no-man's land of idealized intercultural agents, together with 'diplomats and traders through to spies and smugglers' (Pym 1998: x);⁴ and in others still as painfully struggling with his or her various conflicting allegiances and affiliations, with these generally being portrayed as static, given, inevitable – based on ethnicity, religion, gender, national affiliation, and so on.

Being 'neutral' is of course an illusion of theory; indeed, given the impossibility of being neutral and the nature of power relations, one might ask who the translator or interpreter is expected to be neutral *against* when they are fed the disciplinary narrative of neutrality.⁵ Theorizing translators as intercultural agents, on the other hand, places them either outside cultures (however defined), and hence outside historical and moral commitment, or in some discrete and privileged space that represents an overlap between two otherwise separate cultures.⁶ The preoccupation with positioning the translator in an 'in-between' space⁷ obscures the more important issue of the political and social process whereby translators as a group and an individual translator in a given context may come to affiliate – professionally, emotionally, ideologically – with different agendas, accounts of some aspect of the world, cultural or political communities. Moreover, it is simply untenable to imagine that anyone, translators included, can stand outside the societies in which they live, outside the global order that shapes these societies, or in some abstract interstices between cultures. Narrating ourselves outside or between cultures, I would argue, allows us to downplay commitment to real people caught up in real contemporary conflicts, and to avoid the responsibility of using language and translation as a tool for political change.

As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, translators, like other human beings, are neither outside individual cultures nor slaves to the cultures into which they were born. They negotiate their identities, beliefs and loyalties as we all do on the basis of various aspects of the context and their own developing judgement of the issues involved in any given interaction. But they are never outside the interaction, and are never outside, nor 'in between', the constellations of beliefs, values and activities we variously call cultures, societies or ideologies. The same holds for scholars of translation, who similarly cannot stand outside the research they are conducting, even as they admonish others for being 'ideologically motivated' in their research or practice (see Baker 2006a: 128–9 for a detailed example).

Assumptions of interculturality and neutrality aside, one negative consequence of investing in discrete cultural groupings in translation studies, and particularly of the tendency to thematize cultural difference, is that

'individual participants are considered to represent their respective "cultures" and thus cease to be individuals in their own right' (Sarang 1994: 411); the individual is automatically disempowered, the political agent is turned into an abstract representative of a typified category. Another problem, and one to which we must be particularly alert given the climate of heightened political conflict in which we are all now caught up, is that the 'cultures collide' model of the world which relies on theorizing such discrete groupings is insensitive to issues of power and manipulation. It obscures the real questions in situations of conflict by assuming that conflict arises because of cultural differences, and that the well-trained and well-intentioned translator at the centre of a mythical world of goodwill and equality can 'iron out' such differences and make the world a better place simply by 'enabling dialogue'.⁸ Such thematization of cultural difference thus ignores the frequent and deliberate will to misunderstand and 'slights activities of social exclusion and other ideological strategies deployed by the powerful in intercultural communication' (Meeuwis and Sarangi 1994: 312), and particularly in political conflict.

And yet, we have to accept that there is ultimately no doing away with categories altogether, including cultural categories of the type I have just critiqued. Elaborating categories and drawing up boundaries between idealized entities, including cultural communities, are part of an admittedly unnatural and yet heuristically necessary process in which the researcher attempts to pin down and make static for the purposes of analysis an inherently shifting and fuzzy set of relationships. Scholarly research cannot completely avoid drawing on some form of categorization, and patterns of differences in expectations and values among individuals embedded in specific societies are relevant and cannot be ignored. The question, ultimately, is where the categories we work with come from and how rigid we perceive them to be. One option is to refrain from using categories which pre-exist the research or analysis and instead allow such (temporary) categories to emerge from the analysis itself. Thus, we could attempt to identify those features of identity or cultural affiliation that the participants themselves (including the translator) seem to be attending to during the interaction under analysis, to observe how the participants themselves mobilize certain aspects of their identity. Identity, in this approach, is understood not as a static concept but as a complex and porous narrative, one that is politically constructed by the participants in an exchange rather than 'delivered' from above by God, nature or the analyst.

To operationalize such a flexible and open-ended approach to cultural and other categories of analysis, we need to adopt theoretical frameworks that recognize and allow for shifting boundaries, intersections, and ongoing negotiability of positions. The social brand of narrative theory I have tried to apply in my recent work (Baker 2005, 2006a, b, 2007) seems to me to be particularly suited to this task.

Theorizing narrative communities

Narrative theory is ultimately a theory of how communities are formed, how they grow and change but nevertheless maintain their 'identity', how they attract individuals (or 'adherents' in the case of social movements), and how these ultimately disparate individuals come to share and identify with a set of broad narratives that can draw them together as a community and still accommodate endless variation at the individual level. While acknowledging that our embeddedness in space and time means that we cannot but be influenced by whatever public narratives circulate within that social or political space and at that particular historical moment, narrative theory assumes that we are not passive 'absorbers' of narratives; that we are able to reason about narratives even as we remain firmly embedded in them; and that individuals continually renegotiate their position in relation to the narratives that circulate in their environment.

The narrative approach consequently treats identity as a temporary location in relation to a set of ongoing negotiable narratives to which an individual subscribes at any moment in time. A narrative identity approach, as Somers and Gibson explain (1994: 67), 'assumes that social action can only be intelligible if we recognize that people are guided to act by the relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories with which they identify'. Like Walter Fisher (1987/1989), whose ideas I have drawn on in earlier work to assess the ethics of communities of professional translators and interpreters (Baker 2006a: 141–64; 2006b), Somers and Gibson acknowledge that 'interest' is not the only nor even prime motive for behaviour at the individual or group level, and that individuals are not just 'born' into narratives but can choose to situate themselves within a variety of stories, to narrate themselves in alternative ways (*ibid.*, emphasis added):

The 'narrative' dimension of identity ... presumes that action can be intelligible only if we recognize the various ontological and public narratives in which actors *put* or *find* themselves. Rather than by interests, narrative identities are constituted by a person's temporally and spatially variable 'place' in culturally constructed stories comprised of (breakable) rules, (variable) practices, binding (and unbinding) institutions, and the multiple plots of family, nation, or economic life.

Somers, Gibson and Fisher are not alone in recognizing *values* rather than interest or purely rational behaviour as central in the construction of narrative communities. Pratt (2003: 17) similarly argues that all political movements revolve around 'people living through periods of rapid change and dislocation who forge an identity and an interpretation of history which makes their own values and experiences central in a narrative of how society should be, and forge a political strategy to make that happen'.

Narrative analysis: core concepts

The literature on narrative theory is vast, with different theorists elaborating a diverse range of analytical concepts. For the purposes of this study, and as I have done in earlier work, I propose to focus on a specific subset of these concepts: the typology of narratives discussed by Somers (1992, 1994, 1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994), and a set of features which describe how narratives are constructed and how they function in concrete situations (Bruner 1991; Somers and Gibson 1994; Baker 2006a).

Based on Somers and Gibson (1994), I distinguish between personal,⁹ public, disciplinary and meta narratives.¹⁰ *Personal narratives* are narratives of the self, typically stories which locate the narrating subject at the centre of events. Translators, and particularly interpreters, often have to mediate such personal stories and can find them quite traumatic: an autobiography of a Holocaust survivor, for instance, or a court testimony of a rape victim. *Public narratives* are shared, collective narratives which circulate among several individuals (anything from the family to the nation or even larger), and where the main protagonist in the narrative, the centre of attention, is not the narrating self. Public narratives are the bread and butter of the translation and interpreting business. Every time we translate an article for the media, a novel, a religious sermon or a political text of any kind we automatically give currency to the set of public narratives encoded in it, irrespective of how or why we translate it.

Personal and public narratives are highly interdependent: individuals cannot narrate themselves in a vacuum but must draw on public narratives to develop and legitimize their sense of self; and public narratives can only persist and gain legitimacy if enough individuals are willing to subscribe to them and narrate themselves in line with the values and beliefs embodied in such narratives. As we will see shortly, groups of activist translators and interpreters (like many other activist groups in society) are increasingly refusing to narrate themselves in line with corporate and imperial narratives of the type promoted by the neo-cons in the White House and Downing Street. Their activities and the work of other groups of activists around the world continue to undermine the dominant public narratives of our time, and in due course, one hopes, may well succeed in bringing to an end at least some of the concrete instances of oppression sustained by these narratives.

Disciplinary narratives have at their centre the object of enquiry in a scholarly discipline: the human body and its interaction with the environment; the notion of history; gender; the cosmos, English literature, etc. Like other fields of scholarship, translation studies elaborates a variety of narratives about its own object of enquiry: narratives of neutrality, interculturality, faithfulness, transparency, professional standards, and so on. These narratives are evoked again and again and 'fleshed out' in our interaction with each other, in the interaction between professionals and clients, and in

the interaction among professionals who position themselves differently in relation to a variety of public and other narratives.

Finally, *meta narratives* are particularly potent public or disciplinary narratives that transcend spatial and temporal boundaries. The boundary between public and meta narratives, like the boundaries between all heuristic categories, is difficult to draw, but good candidates for meta narratives might include the narrative of evolution (which of course started out as a disciplinary narrative), the narrative of progress and the narrative of globalization. The so-called war on terror is another obvious example of an emerging and particularly vicious meta narrative.

The typology of narrative briefly outlined above is useful in allowing us to explore the various ways in which individuals and groups position themselves in relation to specific types of stories that circulate in their environment, as I will attempt to demonstrate in discussing activist communities of translators and interpreters later in this chapter.

How narratives are constructed

Of the various features of narrativity that I discuss at length in Baker (2006a), four seem to me to be particularly relevant for the purposes of elaborating a set of questions to underpin research into the emergence and functioning of activist communities of translators and interpreters; these are questions that I discuss later in this chapter. The four features are temporality, causal employment, selective appropriation, and particularity. Other features, not discussed here, include relationality, genericness, normativity and narrative accrual. Like all categories, these features have very porous boundaries: they overlap with each other and are heavily interdependent.

Temporality, or the embeddedness of narrative in time and space, means that narratives are temporally constituted – they have a timeline and project a series of events in a sequence; it also means that narratives derive much of their meaning and impact from their location in a specific temporal and spatial context. Temporality is particularly relevant in studies of activist communities and social movements. As Polletta argues, the 'temporally configulative capacity' of narrative 'equips it to integrate past, present, and future events and to align individual and collective identities during periods of change' (1998: 139). Activist communities, including those formed by translators and interpreters, narrate themselves, and the movement with which they identify, within a specific historical moment and along a temporal line that lends the group a historicity not accorded to it by the personal narratives of the individuals who constitute the community.

Causal employment means that narratives have to be causally constituted in such a way as to allow us to moralize about them. We cannot take an ethical position in relation to an undifferentiated chronology of events that does not indicate which events followed from which other events and why, but we do continually make moral decisions about conflicts such as those raging in the

Middle East on the basis of what we perceive to be the cause(s) of conflict and the pattern of emplotment that characterizes whatever narrative we subscribe to at any point in time. In terms of social movements and the way they attract adherents, Polletta interestingly argues that '[n]arrative's reliance on emplotment rather than explanation ... engages potential activists precisely by its *ambiguity* about the causes of collective action' (1998: 139).

Selective appropriation is a feature of all narratives – the term 'appropriation' here is not meant to be pejorative. No narrative can be constituted without a degree of selective appropriation, since no narrative can incorporate every element and detail of experience. Inevitably, in constructing¹¹ any narrative we privilege some elements of experience and downplay others. We weave our pattern of causal emplotment for any given narrative by selectively foregrounding some elements and ignoring others.

Finally, *particularity* means that all narratives ultimately derive from and can be reduced to a set of skeletal storylines. These storylines, together with the values they encode and the practices they implicitly subsume, contribute to the way in which we interpret and evaluate specific narratives. Different storylines have resonance for different social and political groups. McAdam (2004) discusses one such storyline that has considerable resonance in the American context, what he calls the story of redemption: 'a story about an innocent protagonist in a dangerous world who sticks to simple principles and overcomes suffering and hardship in the end' (2004: B14; see also Baker 2006a: 82–3). This protagonist is born blessed in some way, advantaged, whereas others around him or her have to endure suffering and pain, and he or she must come to their rescue. Particularly in times of crisis and extreme adversity, McAdam explains, 'the good American protagonist must call upon the deepest reservoir of unwavering conviction and hope' and 'will fight the good fight' (ibid.). This is the storyline to which the neo-cons appeal again and again in promoting their 'war on terror', as is evident in this short extract from one of George Bush's radio addresses to the nation (21 October 2006):¹²

The terrorists are trying to divide America and break our will, and we must not allow them to succeed. So America will stand with the democratic government of Iraq. We will help Prime Minister Maliki build a free nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself. And we will help Iraq become a strong democracy that is a strong ally in the war on terror.

...
The last few weeks have been rough for our troops in Iraq, and for the Iraqi people. The fighting is difficult, but our Nation has seen difficult fights before. In World War II and the Cold War, earlier generations of Americans sacrificed so that we can live in freedom. This generation will do its duty as well. We will defeat the terrorists everywhere they make their stand, and we will leave a more hopeful world for our children and our grandchildren.

As I attempt to demonstrate below, the features discussed above can help us formulate concrete research questions to enable us to begin exploring how the growing number of activist communities of translators and interpreters narrate themselves, and how they elaborate their position in relation to the various public, disciplinary and meta narratives that circulate in the global arena, irrespective of the cultural, religious, gender or national affiliations of individual members of these communities.

Activist communities of translators and interpreters

In arguing against the tradition of identity politics and in favour of narrativity as a way of understanding human and social behaviour, Somers and Gibson (1994: 53) explain that theories of identity politics assume that 'persons in similar social categories and similar life-experiences ... will act on the grounds of common attributes', and that these theories therefore 'posit that "I act because of who I am", not because of a rational interest or set of learned values'. Like Somers and Gibson, Fisher (1997) also argues that human beings act, and form communities, on the basis of either interest or shared values, rather than shared attributes or even shared life experiences. Fisher describes communities based on rational interest as created by 'concession or conformity' and those based on shared values – values encoded in narratives that provide 'an honored perception of oneself' (1997: 223) – as created by 'election or conversion' (ibid.; see also Baker 2006b: 471–2). The growing number of activist communities of translators and interpreters that I discuss here can be understood as created by election or conversion in Fisher's sense.

What appears to be a process of spontaneous but nevertheless structured conversion of professional and amateur groups of translators and interpreters into political/activist communities started as early as 1998 but gathered considerable momentum from 2002 onwards. This is the year that saw the birth of Babels,¹³ the largest, most visible and most diverse of these communities. Babels was conceived in August 2002, three months before the first European Social Forum was held in November 2002,¹⁴ and works specifically in the context of the World Social Forum. It is one of the most politicized communities in the field to date, explicitly describing itself as a 'player in the "anti-capitalist" debate' (see Baker 2006b).¹⁵ Although ECOS (Traductores e Intérpretes por la Solidaridad)¹⁶ was established earlier, in 1998, it seems to have originally been conceived in less politicized terms, explicitly defining its mission as 'to work for and with people who require translation and interpreting services, within the ambit of NGOs and other social organizations, which, lacking economic means, cannot afford professional translation and interpreting'.¹⁷ Unlike groups established later, especially Babels, ECOS was also originally conceived as a 'local' group of volunteers working with regional NGOs. It is still based at the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Granada and still describes itself as working 'en un ámbito

geográfico limitado' ('in a limited geographical ambit', Manuel Jerez et al. 2004), but it now seems to engage more extensively with the political issues of the day and since 2003 has been collaborating with Babels in some international venues. Its current site includes a whole section entitled ECOS-Babels. Julie Boéri, a member of ECOS and a Babels coordinator, confirms my assessment of the way ECOS has reoriented itself recently and of the significance of the years 2002/3 as follows:

I think you are right that ECOS has taken a more radical stance in the sense that it is not just about volunteering for the good cause but above all about engaging actively in the political issues at stake. It is very interesting that you point out 2002 as significant. I have the feeling that 2003 was, at least for me, ECOS and Babels, a big turning point, for several reasons: the war in Iraq, the 2nd European Social Forum in November 2003 where Babels gathered 1000 volunteer translators and interpreters (unprecedented!!!) and much more than in Florence which was only a first attempt), and the fact that ECOS participated actively in the coordination tasks and many members went there to interpret. I think that this was the turning point in ECOS. The feeling that we were not isolated, that many other translators and interpreters, or any person keen on helping with translation tasks, was thinking that translation could play a much more important role than it has done so far. (Personal communication, 28 January 2007)

Traduttori per la Pace,¹⁸ or Translators for Peace, was founded in 1999, at the start of the war with Kosovo (Andrea Spilla, personal communication), but was 'formally constituted' on 21 March 2004. Traductores sen Fronterias (TSF) was founded in April 2005 by a group of professors of translation and interpreting at the University of Vigo.¹⁹ To the best of my knowledge, the most recent community of activist translators to be formed is Tlaxcala.²⁰ According to its 'manifesto', Tlaxcala was founded in December 2005 by 'a small group of cyberactivists who knew one another through Internet and discovered that they shared common interests, common dreams and common problems'.²¹ However, it was later announced, by email circular, as having been 'officially born' on 21 February 2006:

Tlaxcala, the network of translators for linguistic diversity, is born! Today, 21 February 2006, Tlaxcala, the network of translators for linguistic diversity, is pleased to announce its birth. To discover who we are, what we seek to accomplish and the things we do, you can read our Manifesto and the pieces we translate at our site <http://www.tlaxcala.es>. To contact us, write tlaxcala@tlaxcala.es.

Ha nacido Tlaxcala, la red de traductores por la diversidad lingüística. El día de hoy, 21 de febrero de 2006, Tlaxcala, la red de traductores por la diversidad lingüística, tiene el placer de anunciar su nacimiento. Para saber quiénes somos, qué queremos y qué hacemos, pueden leer nuestro Manifiesto y descubrir nuestros trabajos de traducción en el sitio <http://www.tlaxcala.es>. Si desea contactarnos, escriba a tlaxcala@tlaxcala.es.

In attempting to understand the emergence of such groups within the field of translation and interpreting at the turn of the century, and their continued commitment to a range of political and social causes, it is important to begin to elaborate a set of specific questions to guide our analysis of their discourses and activities. Drawing on the theoretical framework I outlined above, these questions might include the following:

- What public and meta narratives provide the impetus for individuals with quite different backgrounds and 'personal attributes' to come together and form communities of resistance? In other words, what narratives are they resisting? What narratives do they set out to discredit? And what alternative public narratives do they broadly subscribe to as a community and attempt to make available to others in their own languages?
- What disciplinary or professional narratives do they subscribe to? Given that many of the individuals who make up these communities are professional translators and interpreters, and some are students of translation or lecturers in translation and interpreting departments, how do they position themselves in relation to the various narratives that circumscribe their behaviour as professionals or academics?
- How do they construct the larger narratives they aim to promote through translation? What features of narrativity – selective appropriation, particularity, etc. – do they specifically exploit, and how do they exploit them?
- How do the communities in question narrate themselves as communities? What features of narrativity does each community draw on to construct itself as a cohesive group and to position itself in relation to other communities of activism and to the various discourses of globalization, militarization, etc.?
- Apart from broad features of narrativity (such as selective appropriation and temporality), what specific textual, visual²² and other strategies are available to these communities to pursue their objectives? How do they frame the narratives they elaborate to attract adherents? This is a particularly important question in view of the growing complexity and fluidity of new social movements, and the significant differences between them and traditional NGOs. As Chesters and Welsh argue, new social movements do not work within 'the prevailing political opportunity structure'

(2004: 316), as NGOs do. Consequently, they do not focus their energies on winning over the media or the politicians; instead, they elaborate narratives that can resonate within the movement itself and among (sectors of) the public.

- What types of individual are attracted to these groups? This question may be addressed from a variety of perspectives. What is the spatial and temporal location of activists belonging to these communities? Are they mainly located in Europe, for instance, as they currently appear to be? What is the composition of the communities (collectively or individually) in terms of gender? What role do students and/or academics play in these communities?

- Finally, how do members of each community interact among themselves, and how do the various communities interact with and relate to each other? I have already mentioned that ECOS has collaborated with Babels on some occasions, and there seems to be an attempt to create a forum for the various groups to come together and debate common issues: the first conference on Translation and Activism, organized by members of ECOS in Granada (28–30 April 2007),²³ is a step in this direction. For although the Internet provides an obvious forum for the various groups to connect with each other, it is clearly not sufficient for them to exist and interact in a virtual mode. As Carty and Onyett explain, 'although computer mediated systems ... can strengthen and maintain existing networks, in order to mobilize new members personal forms of interaction are required' (2006: 239). We might therefore expect to see more conferences and similar initiatives aimed at bringing these communities together in the immediate future. At any rate, the answer to this question would constitute a contribution to our understanding of what Chesters and Welsh describe as an 'ecology of action', defined as 'the system of relations between differing groups and individuals who are engaged in producing collective action within a context determined by fixed temporal, spatial and material constraints which are themselves a product of contingent social, political, and cultural forces' (2004: 317).

Given that these questions are being elaborated and addressed for the first time – with the exception of work by Julie Boéri, who focuses on Babels (Boéri 2008, in progress) – I can only begin to explore here how one or two of these questions might be addressed; it is clearly not possible to conduct a comprehensive study of these groups nor address any specific question exhaustively, let alone all the above questions, within the space of a relatively short contribution. In what follows, I attempt to look briefly at the narratives that these groups set out to challenge and those they seek to elaborate about themselves, rather than the composition of the group or the textual and other

strategies they may employ to attract adherents. The latter will have to be addressed separately in future studies.

Who they are and what they (re)narrate: Tlaxcala as a case study

Some of the communities surveyed here were initially formed in response to a specific situation of conflict and in order to intervene in the public narratives circulating about that conflict. Traduttori per la Pace, for instance, state that the initial motivation for forming the group was to challenge and undermine the set of public narratives associated with the war in Serbia. These narratives, they argue, were distorted by the official media:

L'associazione, nata nel 1999 durante la guerra in Serbia come risposta alla distorsione delle informazioni operata dai media ufficiali, mira a diffondere, in tutte le lingue e attraverso qualsiasi canale, ogni messaggio contrario alla guerra. In modo particolare intende opporsi all'utilizzo della guerra come mezzo di risoluzione delle controversie internazionali, sostenere e diffondere esperienze di costruzione di pace, di alternativa ai conflitti armati e di attivismo nonviolento, con particolare riferimento a quelle espresse dalla società civile.

(Gloss: The association, born in 1999 during the war in Serbia as a response to the distortion of information by official media, aims to spread, in all languages and through all channels, every message against war. In particular, it seeks to oppose the use of war as a means of resolving international controversies, to support and spread peace building experiences as an alternative to armed conflicts and (as) non-violent activism, with reference in particular to those (experiences) resulting from/promoted by civil society.)

However, most of these communities now attempt to challenge dominant public narratives associated with a relatively wide range of current conflicts. The most central of these conflicts – judging by the statements and translations available on the various websites – are the war in Iraq, the Palestine/Israel conflict, the war in Lebanon, and the mounting tension with Iran. Darfur also features prominently on the Traduttori per la Pace website, and Tlaxcala's site features a section entitled *SOUTH OF THE BORDER (Latin America and the Caribbean)*. Interestingly, however, none of these communities seem to engage with other pressing issues that do not receive as much coverage in the media, for example the conflict in Chechnya and the Caucasus, or Kashmir.

Some of the translations undertaken by members of these activist communities and posted on their websites consist of very painful personal narratives or testimonies, including blogs by individuals reporting on their immediate experience of war. This brief extract is from the 'War Diaries of a 30 Year Old Woman ... With Love from Beirut',²⁴ written on 6 August 2006, at the height

of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and translated by Nora Tigges Mazzone of Traduttori per la Pace on 9 August 2006:

i have not given up on hope or life. i still believe in humanity. i have not yet learned to hate. i never will.

i am ok health wise ... the anxiety attacks have lessened. at least when i get them now, i know exactly what is going on ... and i know that it will pass. it makes a big difference. i try and breath deep breaths ... sometimes i can control it, sometimes i can't. sometimes i break down into tears ... being taken over by a fearful hysteria ... resulting in cold sweats and vomiting ... sometimes i am able to snap my fingers, yell out loud to myself 'stop it!!' and then move on and try and do something productive or distracting ...

Non ho rinunciato alla speranza né alla vita. Credo ancora nell'umanità. Non ho ancora imparato a odiare. Non imparerò mai.

Di salute sto bene ... gli attacchi di panico sono diminuiti. Almeno ora quando mi vengono so esattamente cosa mi sta succedendo ... e so che mi passerà. Fa una grande differenza. Cerco di respirare a fondo ... a volte riesco a mantenere il controllo, a volte no. A volte mi vengono crisi di pianto ... mi lascio invadere da attacchi isterici tremendi ... che finiscono in sudori freddi e vomito ... ma a volte riesco a schioccare le dita, gridarmi ad alta voce 'smettila!' e poi passare ad altro, cercando di fare qualcosa di costruttivo o di distrarmi ...

The vast majority of the translations provided by members of the various activist communities, however, are of public rather than personal narratives (insofar as the two can be separated). Rather than attempt to piece together material from various activist communities, in what follows I focus specifically on Tlaxcala. Tlaxcala is a particularly interesting community to use as a small test case for addressing some of the questions I outlined above, especially since it seems to be the most radical in some respects and – apart from Babels – the community that has the strongest connections with activist projects outside the world of translation and interpreting. Tlaxcala features, for example, as an affiliate on the Axis of Logic website (under Alliances). The Axis of Logic is an activist website that describes its 'mission' as 'publishing news and commentary that is often not presented in the major news outlets', and what it describes as 'The Enemy' – and its position relevant to it – as follows:²⁵

We identify 'Corporate Global Empire' as our common foe and the enemy of the people. We believe that all current, viable political parties in the U.S. are in service to the empire and do not represent the people. We are not to be identified as 'Democrats', 'Republicans', 'Capitalists', 'Communists'

or 'Socialists', 'Progressives' or with any label that can be reduced to a religion, organization or any other 'ism'. We offer no such target for attack by the enemies of the truth.

Tlaxcala's translations are also occasionally circulated among activist lists such as Academics for Justice, either by their own members or by activists who receive them via members of Tlaxcala. One such translation, circulated to members of the Academics for Justice list on 14 January 2007, was a 'Hand-written letter from President Saddam Hussein to the American people. 7 July 2006'. The original letter itself, available on Al Basrah website,²⁶ is of course in Arabic; the English translation is by Alexandre Mounbaris.

Unlike Traduttori per la Pace and ECOS, who post translations on their site into Italian and Spanish only, respectively, Tlaxcala posts translations from and into a range of languages, though typically from and into Spanish, and mostly into Spanish. This reflects the linguistic composition of the group: although the largest single group consists of Spanish speakers, the 'Who Are We' section of the site also lists Italians, French, Americans, Palestinian Americans, Brazilians, Tunisians, Romanians, Germans and Austrians, among others. The 50 translations listed on the Tlaxcala home page on 2 February 2007 deal with a variety of topics and regions, the most prominent being the Middle East, especially the Palestine/Israel conflict. The brief selection below of titles (originals and translations) and their sources gives a good indication of the range of dominant public narratives that Tlaxcala sets out to challenge, the resistant narratives it attempts to promote, and the way it positions itself in relation to the mainstream institutions in society. The latter can be seen from the range of sources it draws on:

(1) 'Les avocats et les diamants au cœur d'une campagne sud-africaine de boycott anti-Israélien', traduit par Marcel Charbonnier et révisé par Fausto Giudice

Translation of: 'SOUTH AFRICA: Avocados, Diamonds at Core of Anti-Israel Trade Campaign', by Moy'ga Nduru. 26 January 2007

Posted: 31 January 2007

Source: Inter Press Service News Agency

(2) 'Le problème, cher Benny Morris, c'est le sionisme', traduit de l'anglais par Marcel Charbonnier et révisé par Fausto Giudice

Translation of: 'The Problem, Benny Morris, is Zionism', by Yakov M. Rabkin, 29 January 2007

Posted: 31 January 2007

Source: *The Jerusalem Post*

(3) 'Dehors et dedans: G.W. Bush en guerre contre tous les peuples du monde, y compris le sien', traduit par Gérard Jugant et révisé par Fausto Giudice

- Translation of: 'Afuera y adentro', by Juan Gelman, 28 January 2007
 Posted: 31 January 2007
 Source: *Página 12*
- (4) 'Les USA s'approprient à attaquer les sites nucléaires iraniens à partir de bases en Bulgarie et en Roumanie', traduit par Dany Quirion et révisé par Fausto Giudice
 Translation of: 'America "poised to strike at Iran's nuclear sites" from bases in Bulgaria and Romania', by Gabriel Ronay, 28 January 2007
 Posted: 30 January 2007
 Source: *The Sunday Herald*
- (5) 'Nubarrones sobre las buenas obras de la Fundación Gates', traducido por Beatriz Morales y Vicente Romano, revisado por Caty R.
 Translation of: 'Dark Cloud over Good Works of Gates Foundation', by Charles Piller, Edmund Sanders and Robyn Dixon, 7 January 2007
 Posted: 30 January 2007
 Source: *LA Times*
- (6) '«Rayé de la carte»: la rumeur du siècle – Ce qu'a vraiment dit Mahmoud Ahmadinejad', traduit et présenté par Xavier Rabilloud
 Translation of: "'Wiped off the Map": the Rumor of the Century', by Arash Norouzi, undated
 Posted: 29 January 2007
 Source: website of Mohammed Mossadegh, the ex-Prime Minister of Iran (1951–53)
- (7) 'Panorama irakien: «un confessionnalisme sans religion», traduit de l'arabe par Ahmed Manai et révisé par Fausto Giudice
 Translation of an Arabic article by Nouredine Lachhab (link no longer operative), 2 December 2006
 Posted: 28 January 2007
 Source: *Al-Quds Al Arabi*
- (8) 'Bush menace de détruire Bagdad', traduit par Michèle Mialane et révisé par Fausto Giudice
 Translation of: 'Bush droht mit Zerstörung Bagdads', by Knut Mellenthin, 13 January 2007
 Posted: 28 January 2007
 Source: website of Knut Mellenthin (journalist, author, editor)
- (9) 'Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, Addresses the 2007 World Social Forum in Nairobi', translated by Manuel Talens and revised by Les Blough
 Translation of: 'Espero que de este Foro salgan propuestas que permitan terminar con el modelo neoliberal', 25 January 2007

Posted: 26 January 2007
 Source: Rebelión (the same English translation, by Manuel Talens, is also available on the Axis of Logic website)

Given that the media is one of the most important venues for elaborating and reinforcing dominant narratives, an activist community such as Tlaxcala clearly cannot ignore it. It is, however, interesting to see that the media sources it draws on are varied (from *Al Quds Al Arabi* to *LA Times*, *The Sunday Herald* and *Página 12*²⁷ above and, for articles not cited here, *Le Monde Diplomatique*) and are mostly regarded as 'progressive' and 'independent'. What this small selection of titles and sources also suggests is that the main public narratives that Tlaxcala sets out to challenge include Zionism; the so-called war on terror; American hegemony; the dominant narrative of Iran as a threat to Israel and the world; and the various narratives of Iraq circulated by Western politicians and the media. The sources that Tlaxcala chooses to draw on are varied but consistent in their positioning outside the mainstream. Articles are translated from sites such as the Inter Press Service News Agency, Rebelión, and (for articles not cited above) the Electronic Intifada and Gush Shalom. These are all groups who position themselves outside the mainstream and who work to undermine the same or similar sets of public narratives. For example, the Inter Press Service News Agency describes itself as 'civil society's leading news agency ... an independent voice from the South and for development, delving into globalisation for the stories underneath. Another communication is possible.'²⁸ The last sentence is of course an allusion to the World Social Forum motto: 'Another world is possible.' Rebelión²⁹ is an activist website that features alternative news not considered important by the mass media and hopes to contribute to a radical transformation towards a more egalitarian and just world.

The choice of sources and public narratives to disseminate or challenge are both in line with Tlaxcala's own narrative of itself as a community, and resonate within that description.³⁰

Tlaxcala, the network of translators for linguistic diversity, is born as a post-modern homage to the unfortunate city-state of the same name which committed the tragic mistake of trusting an empire – the Spanish one – in order to fight against another less powerful one – the Nahuatl – just to find out only too late that nobody should trust empires – none of them – because they use their subordinates only as a lever for their own purposes. The global translators of Tlaxcala seek to redress the ancient Tlaxaltecan's lost destiny.

The basis that Tlaxcala uses for text selection is that it reflects the core values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, aiming for full respect for the rights and dignity of the human person. The translators of Tlaxcala are anti-militarists, anti-imperialists and stand against 'neoliberal'

corporate globalisation. They yearn for peace and equality among all languages and cultures. They believe neither in a clash of civilisations nor in the current imperial crusade against terrorism. They oppose racism and the building of walls or electrical fences – either physical or linguistic – that prevent the natural free movement and sharing between people and languages on the planet. They seek to promote esteem, recognition and respect for the Other, as well as to express the desire that she/he ceases to be an object of history and becomes a subject of it with full equality. This effort is voluntary and free. All the translations carried out by Tlaxcala are on Copyleft, i.e. free for reproduction for non-commercial purposes, as long as the source is cited.

This extract resonates with several references to the public narratives Tlaxcala sets out to challenge: 'racism' and 'the building of walls or electrical fences' may be taken as a direct reference either to the electric wall along the US/Mexico border (given the group's choice of name, *Tlaxcala*, and the fact that it maintains a section entitled 'south of the border') or to Zionism and the Wall erected by Israel to isolate the Palestinian population (given the many translations they post on this theme); 'clash of civilisations' and 'the current imperial crusade against terrorism' evokes the George-Bush and Samuel-Huntington speak used to justify America's ongoing war against the Arab and Islamic worlds. Setting itself up in opposition to these narratives, and to militarists, imperialists and neo-liberal corporate globalization, allows Tlaxcala and similar groups to narrate themselves as communities bound together with a set of common values; communities that have a common history, a starting point and a projected future.

Much more can be said about the way in which these emerging groups of activist translators and interpreters project themselves, and the narratives they subscribe to, both textually and visually (Tlaxcala's website is particularly interesting in this respect). But this brief exploration of some of the questions outlined above in relation to Tlaxcala will hopefully raise interest in these communities and encourage others to look at some or all of the questions outlined above in some detail, in relation to one or more of the groups discussed here. And indeed to elaborate additional or different questions.

Concluding remarks

Individual translators and interpreters will continue, as they have done in the past, to make a variety of choices in relation to who or what they align themselves with. Some will continue to opt for dominant institutions and work for organizations such as the FBI or CIA in the US, M15 or GCHQ in Britain, or the Coalition Authority in Iraq. Others will continue to distance themselves from organizations that are actively involved in unethical or suspect agendas (for example refusing to translate for the Ministry of Defence in Britain

or the IDF in Israel), opting instead to work with or for less questionable institutions: academic journal publishers, commercial organizations, welfare departments, etc. A growing number of translators, however, are choosing to go beyond this passive form of resistance by actively setting up and/or offering their services to networks of activists who unequivocally reject dominant narratives of the sources of conflict and seek to elaborate an alternative discourse of peace and justice that cuts across national and other boundaries. As with other activist movements in society, for these communities 'success is not measured in terms of the achievement of absolute concrete goals or concessions from those in power, but rather [in terms of] a transformation of consciousness and a source of moral vision and voice' (Carty and Onyett 2006: 229).

I have tried to argue here that narrativity offers a more productive means of theorizing these emerging networks of activists, or narrative communities as I prefer to call them, than any set of concepts associated with the notion of culture. It remains to be seen whether other scholars of translation will find the narrative framework similarly productive in conducting this type of research, can combine it with other theoretical frameworks to address similar questions, or indeed propose a different framework altogether for pursuing the same or a similar research agenda. What is important is that we make a serious effort to engage with developments in the real world of translation and interpreting that have clearly now outstripped any attempt at political engagement we have seen in the discipline thus far. As Dr Robert Müller, the former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations puts it, 'All around the world, people are waging peace' (in Carty and Onyett 2006: 230). Translation studies needs to take part in this peace-waging enterprise. It can begin to do so by engaging with the growing number of activist communities in the field, whose practices and commitment arguably provide a much needed moral vision for the discipline.

Notes

1. Cf. Pratt's critique of linguistics several decades ago (Pratt 1987).
2. Much work on signed language translation and interpreting and on community interpreting, however, is reassuringly focused on the needs of marginalized groups in society, without idealizing these groups. This is especially true of work on communities of the deaf and hard of hearing. See, for instance, Turner (1994) and Silverman Kleinfield and Warner (1996).
3. For example, the index in Katan (1999/2004) includes entries such as 'Arab cultures', 'Asian cultures', 'American compared with British', etc.
4. For a recent critique of Pym's 'romantic myth' of translators as inhabiting intercultural spaces, see Krebs (2007: 26), who argues that '[f]latter than acknowledging the importance of the cultural and political context and focusing on translators as members of social groups who formulate, experience and participate in power relations, this myth ... invites a biased translation history, blinkered in its view

- and understanding of ideology, power relations and political agendas, where the insistence on loyalty to the translator obstructs and discourages an analysis of broader cultural and political issues'.
5. As Mattsons (2003) argues in relation to guidelines issued by her university (California State University, Sacramento) on discussing the Iraq war with students, 'When you support the war, neutrality in the classroom may feel like the way to go. But when you are against the war, then not speaking out against it suggests complicity with an unjustified mass murder.'
6. Pym's working definition of intercultural (1998: 177), which he prefers to frame as a hypothesis, 'smuggles' a 'symbolic translator' into this discrete space. The examples he gives (ibid.) suggest that this space is essentially conceived geographically: 'The overlap in the middle could perhaps be the Absatian *Reichsland* of Henri Albert's youth, the twelfth-century Toledo of the Jewish and Mozarab intermediaries, the island of Pharos where 72 rabbis apparently produced the Septuagint, the Central Asian regions where 176 equally legendary monks transmitted the Buddhist sutras from India to China, even the Brussels that now houses the world's largest ever translation bureau.' Pym nevertheless goes on to declare that 'it [the notion of intercultural] may have no geographical basis at all' (ibid.).
7. See Tymoczko (2003) for an excellent critique of the metaphor of 'in-betweenness' in translation studies.
8. Cf. Cronin (2000: 41), who rightly argues that 'the duplicitous nature of translation can be a strategy that both obstructs and promotes communication'. A recent example of how this romantic and naive view obscures the fact that translators and interpreters often participate consciously and willingly in colonial and highly pernicious enterprises comes from the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In an interview with the Danish daily *Dagens Nyheder* on 11 April 2003, Khalid Bayomi, an academic from the University of Lund who travelled to Baghdad to act as a human shield in the early days of the war, recounts how interpreters working for the American military actively participated in encouraging the plundering of Iraqi buildings and monuments: 'The entire morning, everyone who had tried to cross the road had been shot. But in the strange silence after all the shooting, people gradually became curious. After 45 minutes, the first Baghdad citizens dared to come out. Arab interpreters in the tanks told the people to go and take what they wanted in the building'; see Rothenborg (2003).
9. Somers and Gibson use the term 'ontological', but following advice from colleagues who are well versed in philosophical debates over the notion of ontology, I am opting for 'personal narratives'. I am grateful to Carlos Machado and Angelo Botome for drawing my attention to this debate and alerting me to the undesirable connotations of the term adopted by Somers and Gibson.
10. See Baker (2006a: 28–49) for a more detailed discussion of the different types of narrative discussed here.
11. By definition, *all* narratives are constructed. In narrative theory, there is no room for entertaining the possibility of totally objective or natural narratives that simply reflect the world around us. Narratives constitute reality; they do not represent it.
12. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061021.html>.
13. <http://www.babels.org/indexen.htm>.
14. Babels' 'About Us' page describes the process of its 'birth' as follows: 'The first European Social Forum was held in Florence, in November 2002. Just three months before this event, a self-organized process was started to find volunteer interpreters and translators for the forum.' See <http://www.babels.org/article4.html>.

15. Babels Charter, <http://www.babels.org/article21.html>.
16. <http://ciccode-gcubo.ugr.es/ecos/>.
17. <http://ciccode-gcubo.ugr.es/ecos/artecos/articuloingles>.
18. <http://www.tradutoripetapace.org/>.
19. <http://webs.uvigo.es/h06/webas573/tst.html>.
20. <http://www.tlaxcala.es/>.
21. <http://www.tlaxcala.es/manifiesto.asp?section=2&lg=en>.
22. For a fascinating example of a visual strategy that was used very creatively by activist groups protesting against the IMF and World Bank meetings in Prague in September 2000, see Chesters and Welsh (2004).
23. www.translationactivism.com.
24. <http://beirutupdate.blogspot.com/2006/08/beirut-mon-amour.html>.
25. <http://www.axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/axismission.shtml>.
26. http://www.albasrah.net/ar_articles_2006/0706/sadam_o70706.htm.
27. *Página 12*, a newspaper based in Buenos Aires, is described in Wikipedia as 'left leaning'. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%A1gina/12>.
28. See <http://www.ips.org/>.
29. See <http://www.rebelion.org/nosotros.php>.
30. <http://www.tlaxcala.es/manifiesto.asp?section=2&lg=en>.

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Conclusion: Globalization, Political Violence and Security

Christopher W. Hughes

Introduction: connecting globalization, political violence and security

Globalization's complicity in the generation of international security issues clearly demands academic and policy investigation. For sure, there have been a number of initial studies that have attempted to link the effects of globalization with insecurity (Clark 1999; Cha 2000; Hughes 2001, 2002; Kaldor 1999; Coker 2002; Scholte 2000: 279–315). This volume has now added to this emerging literature by providing key insights into the 'globalization-political violence–security nexus' from the pioneering and interdisciplinary perspective of translation studies. The objective of this concluding chapter is to offer some further political science/international relations takes on the interlinkages between globalization and political violence, and to consider some areas of crossover with translation studies as revealed in this volume.

Arguably, globalization's impact on security can be elucidated through three interrelated themes. Firstly, this chapter seeks to investigate the concept and inherent qualities of globalization; for it is only by attempting to discover the very essence of globalization as a social force can its more amorphous aspects be dispelled, and it then be rendered into a useful analytical lens that focuses our understanding on the potential linkages with political violence and security. This chapter offers a definition of globalization that includes but is more than economic interdependence, interconnectedness, liberalization and integration, and stresses the character of globalization as a trans-sovereign phenomenon which therefore carries fundamental implications for contemporary security structures founded upon national sovereignty. Hence, it views globalization not only as a quantitative change in the degree of social and economic interaction on a global scale, but most importantly as a qualitative change in the nature of these flows among and across national boundaries, and in state capacities to respond to them.

Secondly, this chapter understands the interconnections between globalization defined in these ways and security by looking at the concept of