TRANSLATION 'GOING SOCIAL'? CHALLENGES TO THE (IVORY) TOWER OF BABEL

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Abstract

The discussion of "turns" or "paradigmatic shifts" which we can witness in the last few years in Translation Studies undoubtedly testifies to the discipline's increasing establishment and recognition within the scientific community and of the increasing practice of a transdisciplinary research. These shifts also include what has been called the "sociological turn", which comprises the cluster of questions dealing not only with the networks of agents and agencies and the interplay of their power relations, but also the social discursive practices which mould the translation process and which decisively affect the strategies of a text to be translated.

This paper seeks to foreground some of the reasons which conditioned the upcoming of this "sociological turn" and will critically discuss if we can talk of a "turn" in its own right. A case study on the issue of interpreting in the World Social Forum will illustrate the necessity to broaden both traditional concepts, and, consequently, the domains of teaching and research once we take a shift towards a social perspective on the translatorial activity seriously.

Zusammenfassung

Die Diskussion über "Turns" oder "paradigmatische Wenden", die in den letzten Jahren in der Translationswissenschaft geführt werden, ist zweifellos ein Zeichen sowohl für die Etablierung und Anerkennung der Disziplin innerhalb der *scientific community* als auch für die verstärkte Interdiszplinarität in der Forschung. Zu diesen Paradigmenwechseln zählt auch die so genannte "soziologische Wende", in deren Kontext Fragen bezüglich Netzwerke von AkteurInnen und das Zusammenspiel ihrer Machtverhältnisse ebenso abgehandelt werden wie die sozialen, diskursiven Praktiken, die den Übersetzungsprozess im Allgemeinen und die diesbezüglichen Übersetzungsstrategien im Besonderen bedingen.

Mein Beitrag versucht einigen der Beweggründe nachzugehen, die für das Aufkommen der "soziologischen Wende" verantwortlich sind und diskutiert auf kritische Weise, ob in diesem Zusammenhang von einer eigenen "Wende" gesprochen werden kann. Wenn die gesellschaftliche und soziale Perspektive auf die Übersetzungstätigkeit tatsächlich verstärkt in den Blick genommen wird, so ist eine Erweiterung traditioneller Konzepte in Forschung und Lehre unabdingbar. Eine Fallstudie zum Thema Dolmetschen im Weltsozialforum illustriert diese Notwendigkeit.

Keywords: Translation sociology. "Sociological turn". Methodology. Ethics. Translation and activism.

Schlagwörter: Übersetzungssoziologie. "Soziologische Wende". Methodik. Ethik. Übersetzung und Aktivismus.

1. Introduction

In a recent thematic issue of *Hermes*, "Translation Studies: Focus on the Translator", Chesterman claims that the increasing number of recent research tendencies which in one way or another focus on the figure of the translator rather than on translations as texts, would justify the introduction of the term "Transla*tor* Studies" (Chesterman 2009: 13, emphasis in the original). He takes James Holmes' "map of translation studies" (1988) as a starting point and suggests to re-map it by including the agents involved in the translation process with their own history, interests and approaches to their profession. According to Chesterman, the relevant branches of this subfield of Translation Studies are cultural (dealing with values, ideologies, traditions, etc.), cognitive (tackling mental processes, decision-making, attitudes to norms, etc.), and sociological (covering the agents' observable behaviour, their social networks, status and working processes, etc.) (see ibid.: 19). This is not the place to discuss the conceptualisation of such a subfield of Translator Studies, and especially its danger to excessively subjectivize the translation process by focusing on the particular agents' perspective. What seems relevant to the purpose of this paper, however, is Chesterman's emphasis on the activity of the agents involved in the translation process, which ultimately implies a shift in the viewpoints on translation beyond those dealt with in the last decades.

In what follows I would like to shed some light on the reasons and conditions responsible for such a shift, or "turn". In particular, I will discuss the potential achievements of a "sociological turn" and its implications on the ethical and societal essence of the translator's activity. My main claim is that taking the view on the translator as a constructed and constructing subject in society seriously entails a shift in the view of both the translation concept and the research domain of Translation Studies.

2. A "sociological turn"?

The discussion of a scientific discipline's shifts of paradigm might be seen as a sign of its establishment within the scientific community and a stage in the scientific branch's "evolution" which allows for questioning its results and

conquests also from outside. Recently, this question has been asked by various Translation Studies scholars, among which by Snell-Hornby in her volume *The Turns of Translation Studies. New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* (2006). A shift of paradigm or "turn" undoubtedly designates – up to a certain degree – a break-up with traditional views on a certain subject, in this case on translation in the widest sense, and the introduction of new perspectives which of course not necessarily discard once and for all long-lasting perceptions, but take established approaches as a basis for both a starting point for sketching new horizons and further developments in a specific area.

In her book *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (2006), Bachmann-Medick asks how "turns" generally come about in the humanities. Her initial point is that disciplines which in a way or another have to do with culture or which can be considered part of the cluster of domains within Cultural Studies, are not involved in the "impassioned discussion of scientific 'revolutions'" (ibid.: 18, my translation). Thus, she insists on distinguishing between "paradigms" and "turns", and in doing so, draws on Marcus and Fischer: turns are "relatively ephemeral and transitional between periods of more settled, paradigm-dominated styles of research" (1986, quoted in ibid.: 18). According to her, a turn moves through three stages that characterize "turns" in general. The first stage is the expansion of the object or thematic field: this implies a shift from the level of object of new fields of research to the level of analytic categories and concepts. Secondly, the dynamics of turns is characterized by the formation of metaphors, such as "culture as translation". Metaphorization is transcended once its potential of insights moves across disciplines as a new means of knowledge and into theoretical conceptualisation. The third stage is that of methodological refinement, provoking a conceptual leap and transdisciplinary application (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 26-27, 2009: 4).

It seems as if Translation Studies is particularly inclined towards the shift of paradigms, or "turns". This results partly from the fact that its subject is by nature located in the contact zones "between cultures", and is therefore exposed to different constellations of contextualisation and structures of communication, but also from the make-up of the discipline itself. The multifaceted forms of communication which mould the issues undertaken within Translation Studies call for us to go beyond disciplinary boundaries. In such a view, the "cultural turn" is without doubt the most decisive turning point the discipline has taken since its rise in the Sixties of the twentieth century. All major approaches, in one way or another, had taken into consideration cultural factors in translation – be it the linguistic ones (Nida 1964),

the functional ones (Vermeer 1986) or the descriptive ones (Toury 1995). But none of them had extensively focused on the implications the text's surroundings would have on the text production, and the "outdoor" factors which shape the translation's deeper impact were hardly discussed. In 1990, Bassnett and Lefevere took a decisive move when they stated:

> There is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed. [...] [T]ranslation as an activity is always doubly contextualized, since the text has a place in two cultures. (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990: 11)

Translations thus always reflect the historical and cultural conditions under which they have been produced. This also means that the object of study since then has been redefined: what is studied is basically the "text embedded within its network of both source and target cultural signs" (ibid.: 12). This broadened perspective opened up new methodologies which were developed to shed light on the translation process revealing the power relations underlying any translation activity and therefore pointing to the fact that translation can never be neutral (see Bassnett 1998: 136). Additionally, new approaches to translation studies were given a boost, often in a common interdisciplinary effort to widen the discipline's horizon. As a consequence, the years that followed saw an enormous increase and refinement in publications on feminist translation, postcolonial translation and ethnographic approaches, among others.

About one and a half decades later, the insights gained from this newly developed perspective lead into a view of translation as a social practice which, among others, foregrounded the role of the agents involved in the translation process. Gradually, the conviction took shape that any translation is necessarily bound up within social contexts: on the one hand, the act of translating, in all its various stages, is undeniably carried out by individuals who belong to a social system; on the other, the translation phenomenon is inevitably implicated in social institutions, which greatly determine the selection, production and distribution of translation, and as a result the strategies adopted in the translation itself. At this point, the question arises whether we can talk about a "sociological turn" (or "social turn", see Wolf 2006). Snell-Hornby doubts that we can talk about a "sociological turn":

> As the topic [of social implications on translation] has been around for so long, it is debatable whether it is now creating a new paradigm in the discipline: at all events translation sociology is a welcome alternative to the purely linguistic approach, and it is an issue of immense importance with a wealth of material for future studies. (Snell-Hornby 2006: 172)

In terms of Bachmann-Medick's criteria for the existence of a "turn" in the humanities, the stages outlined above seem to have already been taken by what has been labelled a "sociological turn": the categories developed, partly drawing on approaches elaborated in sociology, testify to refined methodological tools enabling the conceptualisation of the social conditions underlying the translation process also in a transdisciplinary perspective. This is proven by a number of works which have contributed to the emergence of a "sociology of translation" and have delivered valuable insights into the functioning of the translation process, the construction of a public discourse on translation and of the self-image of translators, among other crucial issues (see e.g. Gouanvic 1999; Wolf & Fukari 2007; Pym, Shlesinger & Simeoni 2008).

3. **Potential implications of a "sociological turn"**

I have sketched elsewhere the milestones which marked the development of a "sociology of translation" (see particularly Wolf & Fukari 2007 and Wolf, forthcoming; see also Chesterman 2006). Here, I rather want to point to the consequences of a sociological viewpoint on translation: What can we gain when adopting a sociological perspective? Which insights can we expect once we apply sociologically oriented methodological tools to the translation process at its various stages? Of course we should be aware that, despite the growing interest in possible sociologies of translation, sociology does not always have all the answers, and it will not provide any immediate panacea for the problems of Translation Studies, as Pym rightly points out (Pym 2009: 30).

This said, foregrounding the benefits of sociologically oriented analyses is on the agenda. My focus will be on two issues: one is the question of ethical decisions which govern the translation practice and the translator's behaviour, the other is the socio-political awareness as a key feature in viewing translation as a social practice. Dealing with the agents' ethical and socio-political responsibilities undoubtedly challenges traditional perspectives on the translator's role in society.

3.1. The role of ethics in sociologically oriented Translation Studies

With reference to the globalization context, Michael Cronin asks whether translators have the task to counteract global asymmetries, at least in the translation field, in order to promote a democratic cultural exchange:

> The consequences for the development of different cultures of the serious imbalance in translation traffic lead to an extended notion of what constitutes the translator's responsibility in the era of globalization. The translator's responsibility is conventionally thought of in textual terms. […] Accurate

> rendering of social, political and cultural contexts is implicit in the textual transformation, though generally noted in its absence rather than in its presence. However, the question might be asked whether, in the present circumstances, this is enough. (Cronin 2003: 134)

Cronin makes a plea in favour of "an activist dimension to translation which involves engagement with the cultural politics of society at national and international level" (ibid.) and particularly emphasises the significance of translation training institutions and their pedagogical programmes for promoting the translator's responsibility.

Since the mid-nineties of the 20th century several scholars have made ethics an issue in varying contexts. Traditional discussions of ethics have been concerned primarily with the duties of translators or with their rights, as Chesterman has critically revealed. According to him, the typical issues have been the general concept of loyalty to the various parties concerned; the acceptable degree of freedom in the translating process, plus the issue of whether translators have the right or duty to change or correct the original; linked to these, the argument about the translator's invisibility, understood as an ideal of neutrality; and finally, what are the translator's rights in terms of intellectual property (Chesterman 1997: 147). Chesterman proposes a different view of translation ethics, based on that of value and argues that, also in the context of translation, duties and rights are secondary notions depending on notions of value. The values he discusses in relation to translation norms are clarity, truth, trust, and understanding, which he considers a fairly comprehensive framework for the analysis of translation ethics.

For decades, the study of translation has widely been a speculation about ethics, largely inspired by the desire to arrive at a general set of principles that would be morally acceptable for the organisation and evaluation of the translator's task. This is the claim made by Arrojo (1997: 5). She and a variety of other authors (Pym 1997, Koskinen 2000, and others) agree, however, that the discussion of ethics in translation cannot be restricted to the notion of fidelity or other related issues. In a not so remote history, the translator was expected to have an "ideal ethical behavior and attitude towards the so-called 'original' and its language, author, context and cultural environment, as well as to her or his own language and culture" (Arrojo 1997: 5). The consequences for the translator's general behaviour from such a set of expectations are obvious and constitute the main concerns of translation specialists throughout the centuries, such as: Who should be primarily served by the translator's task – the "original" author, text and culture, or the priorities of the target culture? Is the translator entitled to make such decisions and to determine the

limits and the goals involved in her or his task? Who should be in charge of these decisions? A general, allegedly universal theory of translation (ibid.: 6)?

When ethics therefore cannot be seen only in the realm of the fidelity paradigm, which are the other elements which make up for the construction of the issue?

Venuti argues against the conventionally limited view of ethics and focuses on a view of translation which indisputably constitutes an interpretation of the foreign text; in addition he stresses that "canons of accuracy are articulated and applied in the domestic culture and therefore are basically ethnocentric, no matter how seemingly faithful, no matter how linguistically correct" (Venuti 1998: 82). It seems a truism that "canons" as used by Venuti are closely related to – and conditioned by – norms. The ethical values inherent in such norms are generally professional or institutional, and they are constructed by a range of persons involved in the translation procedure: agencies, academic specialists, publishers and reviewers, and readers. Subsequently, they are assimilated by translators, who adopt varying attitudes, ranging from acceptance to ambivalence to interrogation. Consequently, "any evaluation of a translation project must include a consideration of discursive strategies, their institutional settings, and their social functions and effects" (ibid.). The social aspect involved in ethical questions therefore cannot be ignored: Social figurations play a major role and not only shape the discursive strategies adopted in the course of the translation process, but are also responsible for the make-up of the settings in which the various agents operate.

Under a different perspective this idea has also been developed by Pym: In his book *Pour une éthique du traducteur* (1997) he stresses, among other things, that translators are not primarily responsible towards the original author, neither to the commissioner nor to the readers, but mostly towards the profession and thus to their fellow translators. This claim not only results in multiple questions regarding its implications for the translation process, but also calls the translator's role to action. Consequently, the translator's ethics concerns primarily the way in which he or she establishes the social and intercultural relationships that determine his or her practice. The translator is thus a professional with a range of responsibilities and the duty to carry out an intercultural task.

The concepts of ethics illustrated so far seem to imply that there exists a global translatorial ethics. Under the condition that such a global ethical stance exists in relation to translation, the question arises if such an ethics is desirable and practicable. In Translation Studies we can witness opposing opinions on these questions. Arrojo, for instance, in the context of her

discussion of an ethics in terms of translation, criticizes any universalistic claim:

> No single conception or law of translation can ever be unanimous, immortal or universal for the simple reason that it will always belong to a certain time and space and, thus, cannot avoid being a reflection of the circumstances, interests, and the priorities of those who formulate and accept it. (Arrojo 1997: 10)

And, as a logical consequence, Arrojo is of the opinion that "the only sound universal principle to maintain is exactly that of the refusal of any absolute universal" (ibid.: 22). Even if such a plea against a universalistic view of ethics seems plausible and acceptable for the context of translation, it is without doubt that on a national scale we can witness a considerable lack in professional and ethical codes which regulate the translators' ethical behaviour and their responsibility. Prunč admits in this context that the very addressees of such codices as a rule are the users of translation products, which implies that usually these codices are no reference points for the actual translatorial work (Prunč 2004: 168). Universalistic claims in the context of categories such as ethics are of course not only a problem to Translation Studies, but touch upon any field where human agency is involved. Factors like space and time – as mentioned by Arrojo – are crucial in the discussion of translatorial ethics, as will be shown in the case study below.

Despite divergent opinions on the question of ethics in translation, it remains true that translators – in whatever labour setting they are operating – should be in the position to pursue their work in a self-confident and self-critical way. Simultaneously, they should have the right to dispose of the same rights as other social agents in the communication process and consequently put in the position to abandon their traditional position of (supposed) neutrality and invisibility – as long as they are willing to assume responsibility. Such a responsibility is additionally conditioned by socio-political features. When Cronin points to the fact that "[t]ranslation makes us realize that there have been and are other ways of seeing, interpreting, reacting to the world" (Cronin 2003: 70), such a view of the translating activity has serious consequences for the translator's professional, social and political position in society. The era of globalization – and last, but not least, the present financial crisis with its yet unexplored consequences for the translation activity – has additionally shaped the translator's role:

> In a world where individual nation-states are increasingly enmeshed in financial and information networks, where multiple linguistic and national identities can inhabit a single state's borders or exceed them in vast diasporas, where globalization has its serious – and often violent – discontents, and

> where terrorism and war transform distrust into destruction, language and
> translation play central, if often unacknowledged, roles. (Bermann 2005: 1)

As a result, translators, but also translation training centers or professional
associations should be aware that in a situation where political control and its
accompanying regulatory mechanisms have been ruling economic, social and
cultural production and exchange, they not only have a role of crucial impor-
tance, but also have to engage with questions relevant for the past, present
and future of humanity. Translation not only reflects and transfers existing
knowledge, but continuously creates new knowledge, thus revealing its often
neglected political and ideological dimension. Yet translation can both pro-
mote asymmetrical power relations between languages or cultures and offer a
form of resistance as can be seen in the postcolonial context, among others.
Tymoczko, too, engages in the question how to move forward in understand-
ing the ethics and ideology of translation and in developing an approach to
the political empowerment of translators (Tymoczko 2007: 206). The activist
dimension of the translation activity connected to this claim brings us to the
second central point of a view of translation as a social practice: the agents'
socio-political responsibility and its implications for their position in society.

3.2. *Translation and activism in a socio-political context*

The characteristics of a "politics of globalization" (see Bourdieu 2002: 3) such
as the weakening of the nation-state, the formation of multinational corpo-
rations, and the rise of new information and communication technologies
have brought about not only the destruction of the welfare state and the rein-
forcement of the security state, but also led to the continuing exclusion of mil-
lions of people from participating in the wealth produced within globalized
structures. As pointed out and theorized by Hardt and Negri, the scrambling
sovereignty of traditional political and economic configurations has resulted
in decentred and deterritorializing patterns which lack centres of power as
well as fixed boundaries or barriers (Hardt & Negri 2000: XII). Yet, power
relations are still a constituting feature of global circulations.

Against this background, the developments of routines in a globalizing
world have had a serious impact on the translator's profession. On the one
hand, the profound transformations in global exchange have brought about
new labour settings; on the other, new codes of reference have been created
for the translatorial activity which additionally bear a potential of change for
traditional views on the translator figure and his or her translatorial prac-
tice, ultimately questioning (Eurocentric) concepts of translation. First and
foremost, the transformations in the global arena bring to the fore an aspect

widely neglected in the operating zones of translators, and also interpreters: their political agenda. In what follows, I would like to discuss this political agenda in the context of the World Social Forum, which challenged tradition- al roles and triggered off a newly shaped kind of responsibility of translatorial agents, primarily characterized by a radical commitment to change in society.

Social Forums in particular are "conceived as an open meeting space for deepening the […] democratic discussion of ideas, the formulation of pro- posals, the free exchange of experiences and the articulation of civil society organizations and movements that are opposed to neoliberal globalisation and the domination of the world by capital and by any other form of imperialism" (World Social Forum India 2006). "Another world is possible", the leitmotiv of the Social Forums on various geographic scales, obviously involves differenti- ated communication strategies in order to allow for a permanent political and social process, substantiated in the forum events and its projects, campaigns and proposals. Consequently, the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2002 and subsequent meetings with the aim to discuss and challenge neo- liberal practices of exchange have not only drawn the attention to the impor- tance of social movements and NGOs as powerful actors in global politics, but have also called to action the mediators between the cultures involved.

In such a context, volunteer translators and interpreters and their vari- ous networks give evidence of the concrete political agenda manifest in this field.[1] One of these networks of volunteer interpreters and translators, Babels, subscribes to "the right of everybody to express themselves in the language of their choice" (Babels charter 2004). The commitment of Babels, however, is not at all limited to the activity of interpreting and translating. Rather, as one of those transnational social movements which, in general terms, strive at ad- vancing global change and at building a radically new social order (Cohen & Arato 1992: 4) by deploying resistance strategies which aim at challenging the existing global exchange of production, its members see themselves explicitly as Social Forum organisers with the particular emphasis to promote discus- sion on cultural domination and the circulation of ideas between the various movements of civil society. Babels aims at giving a voice to all persons partici- pating in the Social Forums with the objective to offer the broadest possible arena for inter- and transcultural communication. Yet, the political stance of the Babels activists came soon under scrutiny. The conflict was initiated – and made public – by the German interpreter Peter Naumann, who had worked in

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1. These networks cannot be dealt with in detail in the context of this paper; the most important ones are Babels, ECOS, Tlaxcala, Translators for Peace, among many others.

various World Social Forums as a professional interpreter and in 2005 severe-
ly criticised Babels in the electronic journal *Communicate!*, edited by AIIC,
the International Association of Conference Interpreters, by denouncing the
"barbarizing of communication at the 2005 World Social Forum" (Naumann
2005a). His major criticism focused on the lack of professionalism of Babels's
interpreters in the 2005 World Social Forum as well as on the "misuse of vol-
untary activities" and the "selling out of established standards of quality". The
most problematic aspect of his critical comments, however, is the sarcastic
rhetoric of Naumann's remarks, denouncing that Babels "thoughtlessly sent
the babelitos to the front and to the slaughter", and labelling Babels interpret-
ers as "the innocents, the dilettantes, the semi-professionals, the perfect fools
and an army of the well-intentioned" (ibid.). Though not member of AIIC,
the standards of the "code of professional ethics" elaborated by AIIC implic-
itly are referred to by two AIIC members in their messages posted in *Com-
municate!* in the wake of Naumann's article. AIIC brings together more than
2600 "professional conference interpreters" in over 80 countries and claims
to uphold professional standards of behaviour and performance (AIIC 2009).[2]

   The conflict between Babels and Naumann of course cannot be seen as a
dispute on a personal scale, but rather on a more global scale which involves
ideological and ethical questions and also concerns issues like the existence
or/and shape of a "culture of conflict". It has to be stressed, however, that
like any other social movement, Babels is affected by internal disagreements
and cannot be considered a space where members continually collaborate in
mutual respect and harmony. This is not so much due to communicative rea-
sons which result from the great variety of languages and discourses adopted
between Babels members, but particularly to reasons pertaining to different
forms of protest, varying relationships to political parties, among many other
reasons. It is obvious that the more conflicts are brought about by intensive
transnational cooperation, the more activism is confronted with differences
in interpretations and conceptions of appropriate collective strategies (Smith
2002: 507; see also Gerlach 2002). The struggle for shared strategies and lan-
guage of resistance is as old as resistance. The role of language in global social
transformation is undoubtedly crucial, and beyond communication skills,

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2. For the context of this paper, it is not meant to give an exhaustive account of the con-
troversy Babels – Naumann. This section should rather illustrate the significance of
political and ideological issues in the realm of the so-called "sociological turn". For
further reading on the Babels – Naumann issue see Pöchhacker 2006 and Boéri 2008.
See also some of the articles on the ECOS website http://www.translationactivism.com/
ArticleIndex.html.

technology and above all resources necessary for a smooth communication in a Social Forum setting, politics are heavily involved. This has been particularly stressed by Altvater, one of the key persons of Transcultural Development Studies, in the wake of the interpreting problems which arose in the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre:

> The question of translating is much more than a technical question. It is a major political issue. The open area of a World Social Forum can be filled politically only […] if the communication between 150.000 people from 135 countries is established (Altvater 2005, my translation).

The divergent views between Naumann and Babels – and presumably other movements engaged in alter-globalization organizations – are thus heavily marked by politically and ideologically diverging opinions.

The reconstruction of this "struggle field" with the help of Bourdieu's theory of symbolic forms will deliver the groundwork to better understand the mechanisms underlying this struggle and to constitute the basis for a thorough critique of this specific field. Additionally, it will detect the social and political responsibilities of the agents involved and identify the conditions which shape this particular field.

First, the distribution of the various Bourdieusian capitals which are put at stake in the field seems to be revealing for the understanding of the field's functional mechanisms. Naumann's cultural capital is obviously based on his long experience as conference interpreter (nearly three decades), although he does not seem to have an academic degree in translation or interpreting studies (Naumann 2009). In his comments, he explicitly points to the various features which make up his cultural capital: professional experience, traditional knowledge of European thinkers set wittingly throughout his "observations", knowledge of the history of conference interpreting, especially of the "founding fathers", knowledge of interpreting training curricula with particular reference to "classical standards of quality". These features are diplomatically invested in the field. Naumann's symbolic capital is primarily shown in the array of domains where he had interpreted, whereas his social capital is reflected, on the one hand, in the obviously close relationships he proves to have with some prominent professional conference interpreters in the field, and, on the other, in the manifestations of solidarity attributed to him by two colleagues involved in AIIC who joined the discussion list with some supporting comments, substantiated by several "rules of [professional] conduct" (Naumann 2005a).

Babels, many of whose members discussed Naumann's letter in the weeks following its publication in *Communicate!*, invests much less capital in the

struggle field. To start with, cultural capital concentrates on a specific commitment to the Social Forum agenda, validated by experts of knowledge and the determination to exchange knowledge and experience between the culture specific agents involved in the Social Forums. Babels' social capital is very strong due to the very nature of the movement, but also in relation to the partly very prominent "clients" they serve and they interact with. Especially in view of these clients it seems contradictory that symbolic capital in this particular struggle field is invested only on a quite low level.

As far as the *habitus* of these agents is concerned, Naumann's *habitus* is closely linked to his cultural capital and is particularly shaped by the setting he is working in. This can best be seen in some of his remarks: "[In Social Forums] professionalism becomes unavoidable, for it is the best interpreters of the old school who are needed" (Naumann 2005a), or "militancy and ultrazealous views are no guarantee of intelligence" (ibid.), or "Babels hardly appears to be capable of developing and thus also not of learning, and therefore any pedagogical efforts would be futile" (Naumann 2005b). Babels' *habitus*, on the other hand, seems much broader as a combination of various secondary forms of *habitus* – those acquired through practices throughout the life, and particularly in one's specific profession – and are not more or less exclusively linked to the practice of interpreting.

In addition, it is emphasized by some Bourdieusian scholars, that the *habitus* can only incorporate and assimilate features which guarantee a certain "linkage" (Krais & Gebauer 2002: 64): this implies a sort of blockage which prevents the subject from absorbing "everything which is in the world" (ibid.). This seems to partly explain why an understanding between the parties involved happens to be particularly difficult: the conditions underlying this "blockage" are of complete different nature for both parties. Naumann and many of his colleagues have incorporated norms and conventions elaborated by professional associations like AIIC, while Babels – not least due to its network character and in particular as a result of its political claim – sets different priorities and thus other strategies in order to "get the message across". This argument might be proven by having a look at the key terms detected throughout the discussion: while Naumann and his AIIC colleagues put terms like "professionalism", "standards" or "processional competence" in the center of their comments, Babels rather uses notions like "horizontality", "solidarity", or "equality".

The relevance of the *habitus* in the context of translating and interpreting becomes obvious once it is realized that the *habitus* is primarily shaped in translation and interpreting training institutes, the main socializing factor

for the agents' future community practice. What seems necessary in such a context is a clear statement in favour of a shift from training translators and interpreters for the market – as practiced in the great majority of established departments of Translation Studies – to training them for society. Such a claim implies a series of profound transformations in existing curriculum programmes with a particular focus on the inclusion of issues related to politics, ideology and sociology, among others, and thus constituting issues pertaining to any transcultural activity.

4. Conclusion

Recognizing the relevance of translation in shaping cultures and societies reveals the importance of its ethical and political agenda and challenges traditional views on translation concepts. With reference to ethics, it seems as if recently established ethical codes have been challenged through volunteer interpreting. As has been discussed in a previous chapter of this paper, it is a truism that ethics never concern the individual's consciousness only. Slavoj Žižek points out that ethics is nourished through what Hegel calls "objective mind" ("objektiver Geist"), a "collection of non-written rules, which build the basis of the individual's activities and which tell us what is acceptable and what is not acceptable" (Žižek 2007: 39, my translation). Yet, present-day neoliberal and oppressive politics tend to undermine what seems one of our highest achievements, that is – in Žižek words – "the growth of our spontaneous moral sensibility".

With reference to translation and interpreting, this means, among others, taking a clear position: When the already mentioned Altvater calls for an "international campaign" in order to "politically confront and hopefully resolve the political issue of translation" (Altvater 2005, my translation), it seems obvious that not only the interpreters of the Social Forums are called to action, but, if we want to take the issue of "translation and activism" seriously, scholars are called to actively involve themselves and contribute to shaping such a campaign. Within the context of this commitment to engaging and involving in the political agenda, translators, interpreters and scholars are both called to interfere in the debate and to help "creating the collective structures of a collective spirit", to say it with Bourdieu's words (Bourdieu 2002: 3), in order to develop the analytical tools for contesting the symbolic (and non-symbolic) effects, generated by the neoliberal multinational arena.

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