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# **Entering the Translab: Translation as Collaboration, Collaboration as Translation, and the Third Space of ‘Translaboration’**

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## **Abstract**

Collaborative translation practices have been receiving increased scholarly attention in recent years and have also given rise to attempts to conceptualise translation as an inherently collaborative phenomenon. In a parallel movement, though to a lesser extent, research from disciplines with a stake in collaborative processes has utilised translational thinking to interrogate collaboration afresh, both conceptually and practically. This paper charts the development of these two strands of research and discusses its potential, as well as the pitfalls arising from an as yet insufficiently linked-up approach between the various disciplines involved. It proposes the blended concept of ‘translaboration’ as an experimental and essentially ‘third-space’ category capable of bringing translation and collaboration into open conceptual play with one another to explore and articulate connections, comparisons, and contact zones between translation and collaboration, and to reveal the conceptual potential inherent in aligning these two concepts in both theory and practice.

**Keywords:** translation, translatorship, authorship, agency, collaboration, collaborative translation, translaboration

## **1. Translation as Collaboration**

Collaboration has become a buzzword in translation circles of late.

Discussions usually centre on recent technological advances and the expanded potential for collaborative translation that they afford (cf., among many others, Risku and Dickinson 2009; O'Hagan 2011; Jiménez-Crespo 2017). Indeed, collaborative translation is a key concept in fields such as games localisation, audio-visual translation (particularly web-based fansubbing), and crowdsourced translation, all of which directly depend on modern technology in their collaborative translation efforts (cf. O'Hagan 2009; O'Brien 2011; Lesch 2014; as well as Sadaat in this issue).

However, collaboration not just between multiple translators but also between translators, authors, clients, project managers, editors, and myriad other (both human and textual) stakeholders in the translation process is anything but a recent, let alone new phenomenon. Bistué (2013; 2017), for example, provides compelling insights both into medieval and early modern collaborative translation practices and, perhaps even more importantly, into the concerted effort on the part of Renaissance writers such as Leonardi Bruni to effectively

“exclu[de] [...] collaborative translation” from an emergent concept of translation that is centrally concerned with “negotiat[ing] an exclusive space for the individual-translator model and for the single-version text” (Bistué 2017, 35; 34). Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017, 9) trace this move towards “valorizing [...] unity in style and intention” in direct and explicit parallel to emergent notions of authorship from the Renaissance, through the Enlightenment and “the powerful Romantic mythologizing of solitary genius” (10), to the present day and diagnose, along Foucauldian lines, a progressive “map[ping] onto dominant collaborative practices an ideology of individual authorship” (6).

Authorship thus conceived also figures as a prominent template for Jansen and Wegener’s introduction to their two-volume collection on collaborative relationships in translation, *Authorial and Editorial Voices in Translation* (2013). Intervening at a point in time where the critique of our modern desire for a “return to the origin” (Foucault 1998 [1969], 219), embodied in the single author figure, has, or course, long become conventionalised, they develop their notion of “multiple translatorship” in close analogy to Stillinger’s (1991) concept of ‘multiple authorship’. Stillinger, they write, “coined the term ‘multiple authorship’ to deflate the ‘individualistic concept of authorship,’ the idea of a single author ‘as sole controlling intelligence in a work’” (Jansen and Wegener 2013, 4). Seeking to effect a similar deflation of

the “individualistic concept of translatorship,” Jansen and Wegener thus explicitly “draw on Stillinger’s insight to coin the concept *multiple translatorship* to signal the reality that, for better or worse, translation is frequently collaborative in nature” (5).

Given the much bemoaned and debated but nevertheless enduring conception of the translator as a secondary and all too often “invisible” (Venuti 1995) figure vis-a-vis the “solid and fundamental unit of the author and the work” (Foucault 1998 [1969], 205), it seems a little surprising that most recent discourses on collaborative translation do not subject their basic premise of a more or less perfect alignment between the figure of the (single) translator and that of the (single) author to closer conceptual scrutiny. Jansen and Wegener (2013, 2) do address this issue in passing:

For Venuti, the translator’s invisibility was determined in part by an individualistic concept of authorship that on the one hand defined translation as a second-order representation while on the other hand required the effacement of its second-order status with the illusion of transparency.

If the “individualistic concept of authorship” is a prominent culprit in the construction of the translator as a second-order and simplistically

representational agent, its *deconstruction* into multiplicity along Stillinger's line of argument does indeed present a promising way forward. The notion of "multiple translatorship" emerging from this deconstructive or deflational move nevertheless ultimately relies on a basic conceptual alignment between (single or multiple) authorship and translatorship that perhaps fails to account fully for the discrete constellations of textual agency and power at work in the construction of either. Undoubtedly, such alignment allows us, in one fell swoop, to critique the performative individualisation of both author and translator, but it perhaps also carries, in a tacit and somewhat paradoxical reversal of the critique of the "ideological imperative to sustain the myths of singular authorship" (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017, 5), largely unexamined undertones of staking the translator's claim to at least a share in the authority, authenticity, and power of attribution traditionally invested in the single author. We may, in the end, not be able to have it both ways.<sup>1</sup>

Be that as it may, "the reality that, for better or worse, translation is frequently collaborative in nature" (Jansen and Wegener 2013, 5) is certainly worth investigating further. An even more interesting question, it seems to me, is why this interest in collaborative translation is surging at this particular point in time. The high visibility and sheer volume of technology-aided collaborative translation practices, and the conceptual challenges these pose to traditional 'single translator' notions, certainly provide part of the explanation.

More generally, the steadily growing interest in translational agency (cf., among others, Wolf and Fukari 2007; Milton and Bandia 2009; Buzelin 2011) must necessarily, at some point, lead us to confront the question of whether such newly formulated agency should be conceived as singular or plural, and not just because of “the multiple ways in which the translator’s agency is intertwined and entangled with that of other active parties to the translation in the publication process” (Jansen and Wegener 2013, 3). As Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017, 23) state,

we are never alone when translating, [...] conversing – virtually or otherwise – with an always hypothetical author and a necessarily imagined reader, while making translation decisions based on cultural worlds which possess us and are possessed by us. We are ourselves vectors of actions, discourses, influences, which pervade us, and which themselves intersect at ambivalent and moving junctures within the many discourses of the self.

At the same time, however, this social and discursive embeddedness

cannot preclude solitude. In many cases, on the contrary, the translator’s feelings of loneliness might precisely be increased by his or her presence within a group – where he or she might, moreover, be



alone in defending a position shared by no one else. (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017, 23)

It is on this basis, and in an extension of Nancy's (2000) notion of 'shared ontology', that Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017, 22, emphasis in original) ultimately contend that "*translating is singularly plural and plurally singular.*"

Arguably, not just the act of translating but translation itself is always-already singularly plural and plurally singular, "an endlessly unfinished business" of perpetual "appropriation and disappropriation" (Kearney 2007, 154) playing out across an ecosystem of fundamental semantic indeterminacy embodied in the translator's "engagement with the multidimensionality of texts, languages and cultures" (Cronin 2009: 218). Such multidimensionality, or singular plurality/plural singularity, is not least reflected in the actuality of multiple translations of a given source text (itself, of course, never quite the singular entity it purports to be).<sup>2</sup> These multiple translations can and do exist synchronically, and even successive translations do not form a palimpsest-like structure, where each new translation overlays or rubs out existing ones, as if only one translated form could exist for the source at any one time. Even more crucially, translations do not cancel out the source text but instead produce a potentially infinite number of "multiple perspectives [that] need not betray the

concrete specificity of” (Kearney 2007, 156) the shared source but rather perpetually shape the way this source *is* in the world.

Taken together, the multiplicity, multidimensionality and relationality of the translation event (Chesterman 2007, 13), the translator, and translation as a process, a product, and a concept suggest collaborative translation as a particularly rich site for further investigations into the ontological, sociological, semantic, discursive, and disciplinary status of translation and its agent(s). Such investigations have acquired a new sense of urgency in recent years as ‘translation’ has become an increasingly widely used metaphor across a variety of disciplines to describe broader processes by which knowledge is generated, shared and applied. As a progressively itinerant concept (see Zwischenberger in this issue), ‘translation’ assumes different shapes and is applied to a diverse and divergent range of phenomena. However, the resulting ubiquity of the ‘translation’ concept (Blumczynski 2016) is, in translation studies circles at least, perceived as a bit of a mixed blessing. On the one hand, there is undoubtedly reason to rejoice in the fact that translation studies’ call for an interdisciplinary “pooling of resources” (Bassnett and Lefevre 1998, 138), both institutionally and intellectually, is finally being heeded. On the other hand, however, translation scholars are acutely, and perhaps singularly, aware of the erosive potential of the use of ‘translation’ as an increasingly loose metaphor for change, travel, and shape-shifting – indeed, as an

etymologically rather tautological metaphor for metaphoricity itself and, as such, a potentially rather redundant figure of thought. Such loose translation talk is perceived to threaten the linguistically, institutionally and technically anchored specificities of translation both as an act and as an object of intellectual enquiry and commerce. Trivedi (2005, unpaginated) goes as far as diagnosing “an urgent need [...] to protect and preserve some little space” for an “old and old-fashioned” notion of translation, warning that, if the specificities of translation’s “bilingual bicultural ground [are] eroded away, [...] translation itself [will] come under erasure [...] and the value it possess[e]s as an instrument of discovery and exchange would [...] cease to exist.”

Zwischenberger’s contribution to this volume surveys the issues raised by this state of affairs in some detail and highlights the conceptual, communicative, and cultural gaps, as well as, crucially, the lack of transdisciplinary collaboration, that, taken together, are so far preventing the effective translation of the ‘translation’ concept across the various disciplines involved. These quandaries notwithstanding, the spotlight that the proliferating use of (an often rather bewildering range of versions of) the ‘translation’ concept on the part of disciplines as diverse as anthropology and organisation studies<sup>3</sup> is currently shining on translation studies’ master concept seems occasion for a number of translation scholars to go back to basics and examine afresh the fundamental tenets as well as some as yet unexamined facets and dimensions

of translation as both a concept and a practice. The question of what translation actually *is*, what (and whom) it involves, what characterises it, what distinguishes it from neighbouring concepts, and what untapped conceptual potential it may yet possess seems relevant to the precise extent to which “the broad use of the concept of translation” proliferates across the humanities and social sciences yet remains conceptually “separated from ‘real’ translation” (Nergaard and Arduini 2011, 8). For some, like Trivedi (2005, unpaginated), “worry[ing] about the very meaning of the word ‘translation’” is borne out of an essentially defensive reflex “to protect and preserve some little space” for a linguistically anchored notion of translation in the face of what he perceives to be the “abuse or, in theoretical euphemism, [the] catachrestic use, of the term translation” by (mostly monolingually Anglophone) cultural studies theorists.<sup>4</sup> For others, like Nergaard and Arduini (2011), “thinking about what translation is today and where translation occurs” is a response to what they perceive as an “epistemological crisis” (8) within translation studies itself, made apparent by “the larger, contemporary world of scholarship, outside of translation studies, understand[ing] translation in a much broader sense” (13) while “contemporary translation studies” (13) is, in Nergaard and Arduini’s view, stuck at the level “repetiti[ve ...] theories and a plethora of stagnant approaches” (8) and thus “unable to determine what translation actually is” (13). The considerable reductiveness with which a somewhat underspecified “traditional concept of translation” (13) is invoked here to

proclaim, simultaneously, “the death of translation studies as a discipline” and the new dawn of “post-translation studies” (9) is something Zwischenberger’s contribution to this special issue retraces, in a slightly different context, in some detail. What is more interesting in our immediate context is that ‘traditionalists’ like Trivedi, ‘revolutionaries’ like Nergaard and Arduini, and ‘moderates’ like Blumczynski all ultimately make the case for rethinking received notions of what translation is<sup>5</sup> in order to establish translation as a credible “instrument of discovery and exchange” (Trivedi 2005, unpaginated), as “an interpretive as well as operative instrument for deeper analysis and a more profound comprehension” of a range of epistemological concerns (Nergaard and Arduini 2011, 14), and as a “key epistemological concept as well as a hermeneutic, ethical, linguistic, and interpersonal practice” (Blumczynski 2016, 4) that is capable of making visible an already existent ubiquity of translational phenomena in a wide range of intellectual pursuits and spheres of human action.

In other words, there seems to be an increasing appetite for (re-) engaging with fundamental or ‘pure’ research questions in translation studies as the discipline comes of age (or, as Nergaard and Arduini would have, is in its death throws). Having built a respectable track record of, in particular, empirical research into translation’s manifold processes and products to consummately prove the discipline is worth its scientific salt, this may simply be a natural next step, but

this interest in the fundamentals is, at this point in time, undoubtedly also fuelled by, on the one hand, the perception in some quarters that other disciplines are rather running away with an increasingly loose and baggy notion of ‘translation’, and, on the other, the desire for a transdisciplinary reaching out into the wider academic universe that may allow translation scholars to claim their place as the next generation of paradigm-providers. Put in more neural terms, “[w]e would like to know more about the nature of the concept of translation” in order “to be able to say more about its (permeable) boundaries” (Tymoczko 2005, 1086), whatever our view on the desirability or otherwise of this permeability.

Tymoczko herself has, of course, long argued in favour of translation studies embracing conceptual and thus also disciplinary openness (cf. Tymoczko 2005, 1083-1086, as well as, more fully, Tymoczko 2007). In order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of “the range of forms and practices that translation has assumed throughout the world over the centuries” (Tymoczko 2005, 1087), she argues that “basic premises that have been generally accepted heretofore in translation studies must also be re-examined” – among them, notably, “the nature of [...] translation as an individualistic endeavour” (1088). It is thus not surprising that “the definitional impulse inherent in trying to characterise aspects of the activity of translation or of actual translations and then to generalize these aspects to translation as a whole” (1084) is also

clearly discernible in much of the emerging literature on collaborative translation. We have already seen that Jansen and Wegener's introduction to their two-volume collection on collaborative relationships in translation offers "multiple translatorship" as a conceptual linchpin that aims to "reveal patterns and regularities – if only the very fact that behind every translation is a multiple translatorship" (Jansen and Wegener 2013, 30). Cordingley and Frigau Manning, in the introduction to their collected volume *Collaborative Translation: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*, go one step further and utilise their exploration of the posited "singularly plural and plurally singular" (2017, 22) nature of translation not only to conclude that, ultimately, "all translation is collaboration" (14), but also, and most importantly, to establish "collaborative translation as a critical concept" whose "real potential [...] lies not in its drawing attention to the different roles played by actors in a process, but in its capacity to complicate our assumptions about translation" (24) as such.<sup>6</sup>

If we view the translation event as both the site of, and the trigger that activates translation's inherent multiplicity into a productive coming together – what Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017, 24) call, in a slightly different context, a "dialectics of imbrication and fusion" – of both textual and agentive forces, there is indeed a compelling case to be made for translation being an intrinsically collaborative endeavour. What is more, positing collaboration as

an integral dimension of translation, both conceptually and practically, does undoubtedly hold out the promise of enabling us “to know more about the nature of the concept of translation” (Tymoczko 2005, 1086) and thus to say more about it. However, as Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017, 23) caution, even “[i]f all translation is collaborative, not all collaborators are translators.” Their argument here is mainly concerned with delineating truly collaborative relationships and translation practices from more loosely assembled networks of actors involved in the production process of a translated text, each with a different role or at least “primary function” (ibid.). More broadly, however, their cautionary note also raises a further important question: what *is* collaboration, and what is it *not*?<sup>7</sup>

## **2. Collaboration as Translation**

Collaboration, even more so than translation, is a ubiquitous concept in a whole range of disciplines, including, as we have seen, translation studies. What is more, collaboration may be said to suffer (as much as, potentially, benefit) from a similar “semantic effervescence” (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017, 4) and indeed definitional openness to translation, with interpretations of collaboration ranging from highly regulated contractual alliances to just about any relationship between two or more entities. Regardless of its protean nature, however, collaboration involves a number of



core conceptual and practical components, of which process, structure, purpose, interpersonal communication and equality of participation are among the most salient (Gajda 2004; Gray 1989).<sup>8</sup> Gray (1989, 5), writing from an organisation studies point of view and with a specific interest in problem solving and consensual decision making in institutional and organisational contexts, defines collaboration as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible.” Furthermore, as Zwischenberger points out with reference to Wood and Gray (1991: 148), collaboration also involves

a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain [...] and the fundamental aspect is that stakeholders of a particular problem domain are and remain autonomous. Thus, collaboration is a process cutting across autonomous and independent groups but which offers a new vision of reality which is complementary. (Zwischenberger 2016, unpaginated)

If any of this – the constructive exploration of difference, solutions that reach beyond singular points of view and indeed beyond singular linguistic and discursive spheres, processes that cut across autonomous and independent

domains, new and complementary visions (or versions) of reality – sounds familiar to those of us who have spent any time following our definitional impulses in translation studies, the analogy with translation (however reductively drawn here) is not lost on disciplines with a stake in the concept of collaboration either. Scholars with an interest in multi-agent knowledge transfer and decision making processes in particular have, though certainly not in their droves, turned to translational models to advance theorisations of co-creative knowledge generation and decision-making processes. Carlile (2004), for example, brings translational thinking to bear on “managing knowledge across boundaries in settings where innovation is desired” (Carlile 2004, 555) and “describes translation as a process of creating meaning and overcoming semantic boundaries by means of sharing knowledge” (Zwischenberger in this issue, who also provides a helpful discussion of the limits of both Carlile’s and Czarniawska and Joerges’ exploitation of the translation concept). As Cranfield has pointed out, “the ways in which people work together within and across boundaries” (Cranfield 2016, unpaginated) is pivotal to this enquiry into overcoming what Carlile calls, by progressive degrees of complexity, ‘syntactic’, ‘semantic’, and ‘pragmatic’ boundaries in innovation processes, though it is, as Zwischenberger (in this issue) notes, somewhat curious that the translation concept deployed in this endeavour is not credited with pragmatically transformative potential. Instead, it remains arrested at the ‘semantic’ stage of Carlile’s tripartite model of “sharing and assessing

knowledge across boundaries,” where it is credited, at least, with “creating shared meanings” and “communities of practice” by way of “cross-functional interactions” of the various actors involved (Carlile 2004, 560). Czarniawska and Sevón’s collected volume *Translating Organizational Change* (1996), meanwhile, homes in on the translation concept’s ability to respond to language’s role in codifying ideas that can then be ‘translated’ into action, thus empowering members of a given organisation to enact collective change. Collaborative action, in these schemes, thus seems to occur at the point of intersection between, on the one hand, the emergence of shared knowledge (and, as such, widened participation in that knowledge) as a result of ‘translating’ “unclear” “differences and dependencies” and “ambiguous meanings” (Carlile 2004, 558) by way of a process of interpretive negotiation (559), and, on the other hand, such shared knowledge, codified into (and temporarily externalised as) “linguistic artefacts” (Czarniawska and Joerges 1996, 32), moving across domains and then being ‘translated’ into transformative action.

Cranfield and Tedesco, in their contribution to this special issue, rightly caution against the instrumentalising impulses underlying such models of knowledge transfer and dissemination, and with them the instrumentalisation of a reductive translation concept, and instead take Schwimmer’s (2017) argument as their starting point for framing their case study of a community of

practice in the field of literary, and specifically poetry, translation – thus, interestingly, also ‘translating’ knowledge generated in a different discipline (Schwimmer is an education studies academic) back into the realm of translation. Schwimmer is one of the few non-translation scholars who explicitly engages with (the philosophical end of) research from translation studies in transposing the translation concept to her own field in terms of “teaching as translation” (Schwimmer 2017, 54). Translation “understood as an accumulation of meaning” (58), that is, as a paradigmatic site for the perpetual articulation of polysemy as an irreducible condition of language, forms the basis of her alternative vision of co-creative knowledge generation and dissemination, and it is translation’s inherent (semantic and agentic) multiplicity to which she attributes its “transformative dimension” (58) in this scheme. Concerning models of knowledge transfer, Schwimmer writes: “Traditional networks of knowledge dissemination or transfer [...] are generally hierarchical and often encourage subordination and compliance.” By contrast, in the “interstitial networks” she advocates, “knowledge is not conceived as something detached and transferable, but as a living thing that develops through interrogation, reflection and conversation with others” (60). Collaboration here becomes a productive practice to the precise extent to which it succeeds in rendering the collaborators translators “destabilised by the complexity of their task” (60).

### **3. A Third Space: Translaboration**

The case for a translational dimension to collaboration is undoubtedly more tentative than the one for a collaborative dimension to translation set out above, and the relatively low frequency with which translational arguments crop up in discussions of collaboration outside of translation studies, as well as the danger on the part of translation scholars of succumbing to cognitive bias of the ‘Maslow’s hammer’ variety here, should ring a cautionary note against forcing circular arguments. As Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017, 23) rightly noted, “[i]f all translation is collaborative, not all collaborators are translators.” Some, however, are or at least can, as we have seen, be conceptualised as such – and with productive potential for further investigations of both translation and collaboration.

To foster such continued investigations and, more broadly, to bring translation and collaboration into open conceptual play with one another rather than prematurely circumscribe the field of enquiry by reductively equating the two notions in a closed and circular fashion, I would argue that an experimental and essentially ‘third-space’ category is needed, one that my colleagues Steven Cranfield (Westminster Business School), Paresh Kathrani (Westminster Law School) and I termed ‘translaboration’ when we first started exploring the practical and conceptual confluence of translation and collaboration a few

years back. Conceived essentially as a ‘blended’ concept, ‘translaboration’ constitutes a ‘generic space’ (Fauconnier and Turner, 1998) that, we hope, will not only allow us to explore and articulate connections, comparisons, and contact zones between translation and collaboration, but also reveal the conceptual potential inherent in aligning these two concepts in both theory and practice. As allied and equally widely applied notions, both translation and collaboration raise, as we have seen above, “questions of power, equality of participation, and mutuality of influence as intrinsic aspects of practice” (Alfer 2015, 26), as well as more fundamental question about the nature of labour, its relationship with language, the conditions of (textual) production, and the inherent textuality of “the nexus at which the power and influence of different networks and agents intersect” (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017, 14). ‘Translaboration’, we believe, adds value not only to these questions but also to the answers they may generate. This added value, however, does not arise from what Iveković (2010, 47) critiques as “late capitalism[’s]” capacity to “absorb [...] and merg[e] all sorts of different thinking traditions,” but is rather “a matter of operating multiple entry points into systems in order to be able to converse and translate from one episteme to another.” As such, ‘translaboration’ both foregrounds translation as a practice that hinders, slows down, requires detours, and acknowledges human labour as the linguistically bound “cooperation of minds in networks” (Iveković 2010, 59).

The papers gathered in this special issue attempt to explore ‘translaboration’ in a variety of ways, from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and with diverse sets of questions in mind. Cornelio, for example, homes in on the ethics of decision-making in negotiating acts of translation and uncovers translaborative synergies with ‘care theory’ through Ricœur’s emphasis on “the *work* of translation [...] carry[ing] a double duty: to expropriate oneself as one appropriates the other to oneself” (Kearney 2007, 150-151, my emphasis). Zehrer, meanwhile, explores “how a method rooted in [translaboration] can reveal practices of organisational decision-making” in commercial and political contexts not only be accounting for multimodal negotiation practices but, crucially, by bringing to the fore the fundamentally (hetero)linguistic and (pluri)textual nature of these processes.

Translational communities of practice are similarly explored from a variety of angles. In Cranfield and Tedesco’s account of their co-translatorship’s situatedness within a wider translaborative community, ‘translaboration’ describes both “an approach to collaborative translation as socio-cultural learning” and “social praxis,” and a “tool [...] for developing insights into and further questions about the nature and conditions of collaborative translation.” These conditions are also explored in Sadaat’s contribution on web-based fan-translation projects in post-revolutionary Iran, where lay ‘prosumer’ translation communities provide Iranian readers with crowdsourced

collaborative translations of popular fiction as alternatives to official, state-sanctioned translations of, in this case, the *Song of Ice and Fire* series of novels. Tracing the structuration of both the volunteer translator community and the environment in which they operate, Sadaat not only conceives of “translaboration [...] in cyberspace [as] a response to [...] structurally imposed constraints, and an attempt to take control of discourse and to resist the state rules which instrumentalise translation to perpetuate the dominant discourse,” but also as “a useful notion to view social practices as translation of contextual structures and as part of collective collaboration of social agents in the structuration of society.” Yet another facet of translaborative communities of practice is discussed in Kathrani’s contribution to this special issue, which, incidentally, also offers a practical echo of Schwimmer’s (2017, 59) proposal of a pedagogical “posture of translation: a sensibility to the opacity of meaning, an acceptance of the uncertainty of meaning and action, a capacity to transpose knowledge creatively [...], a commitment to an open future.” Exploring the pedagogic value of intersemiotic translation between legal language and abstract art as a tool for collaborative knowledge formation in the undergraduate classroom, he identifies a “translaborative space” within which the “legal ecosystem can [...] be explored” in a way that articulates an affective dimension that is indispensable for “giving full voice to the orchestra of law and logic that resides within” each individual participant in this endeavour.



Zwischenberger's contribution, already extensively referenced across this paper, brings the discussion back to what she sees as the conceptual tug of war between translation studies and its neighbouring disciplines and takes 'translaboration' as the basis on which "translation studies can help co-construct the translational turn that has evidently not completely unfolded yet" in the various disciplines interested in adopting the translation concept as an investigative and/or interpretative category. At the same time, and by virtue of the openness and mutuality inherent in blended concepts,

translaboration, which, of course, depends on the willingness of all to actively participate in it, could not only bring about the conceptual refinement [of the translation category]. It would also have the advantage that a conceptually and methodologically refined translation concept could ultimately travel back to and thus advance translation studies.

The 'translab' has only just opened its doors as an experimental space for thinking about the ways in which translation and collaboration can be seen to intersect and flow into one another, and the papers brought together here provide, both individually and taken together, a (by no means exhaustive) set of entry points into this space. Given the increasing emphasis on

transdisciplinarity and collaboration in policy, research, and practice, 'translaboration' should provide both an intellectual horizon and a practical platform against and from which both scholars and practitioners from a range of fields can, in an extension of Jansen and Wegener's (2013, 3) notion of translation as "united labour," develop a mutually enriched understanding of the potential as well as the boundaries inherent in conceiving of translation as intrinsically collaborative and of collaboration as displaying an as yet underexplored translational dimension.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017, 4) raise (but do not systematically follow up on) similar concerns in a section of their introduction to *Collaborative Translation: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age* primarily devoted to definitional probings of collaborative translation. They write: “[m]ight the recognition of the collaborative aspect of translation, however, threaten the hard-won recognition of the translator’s creativity? And while some voices in translation studies aspire for translators to be considered in terms comparable to those used for single authors, this has occurred at a moment when the very model of single authorship is being called into question.”

<sup>2</sup> “Originals are not simply givens or precursors; they too are created through translation in the first place. This destabilizes all notions of origin as well as concepts based on authenticity” (Bachmann-Medick and Buden 2008, unpaginated).

<sup>3</sup> See Zwischenberger in this issue for a more detailed account of the use of the translation concept in these and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as well as Gambier and van Doorslaer (2016) for a systematic attempt to explore, in a set of explicitly interdisciplinary dialogues, the intersections of translation with the concerns of academic fields are diverse as biosemiotics, cognitive neuroscience, sociology, gender studies, and military history, to name but a few.

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<sup>4</sup> Trivedi's critique is specifically aimed at "cultural translation in [a] non-textual non-linguistic sense" (Trivedi 2005, unpaginated) as first advanced by Bhaba (1994) and since refined and widely promulgated by cultural studies scholars such as Bachmann-Medick (2007; 2009; see also Bachmann-Medick and Buden 2008). As Zwischenberger explains in her contribution to this volume, Trivedi takes specific issue with "cultural studies scholars usually operat[ing] in one language only, namely in the lingua franca of English, when doing their 'translations'." Against such monolingually "colonised" translation concept, Trivedi (2005, unpaginated) pits "translation involving two texts from two different languages and cultures" as the basis for utilising translation "as an instrument of discovery and exchange."

<sup>5</sup> Blumczynski, it has to be said, explicitly cautions against what Tymoczko has, sounding a similarly cautionary note, called "the definitional impulse of translation studies" (Tymoczko 2007, 53; qtd. In Blumczynski 2016, x) and declares that "at the center of my approach is the conviction that when it comes to all things translational, what I prefer to call the HOW matters no less than the WHAT – and oftentimes rather more. This strongly qualitative and processual character of the translation concept – its inherent HOW-ness – provides a much needed corrective to the predominantly declarative, WHAT-centered epistemological model that in many places still prevails as a legacy of substance metaphysics" (Blumczynski 2016, x). Nevertheless, his focus on

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processual characteristics and the conceptual “HOW-ness” of translation ultimately also serves the aim of reconceptualising translation as “a transdisciplinary epistemological paradigm” (4).

<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that, while positing, in their respective introductions, the notion of collaboration as an integral dimension of the *concept* of translation, both collections of essays nevertheless ultimately squarely focus on surface-structure explorations of collaborative translation *practices*. Jansen and Wegener’s discussion of the notion of “multiple translatorship” primarily serves to frame a rich panoply of concrete case studies of translator and theatre practitioner collaborations, translator-author collaborations, as well as editorial and publisher interventions in the translation process; Cordingly and Frigau Manning’s exposition of their translational “poetics of collaboration” (2017, 24), meanwhile, introduces a volume that brings together essays on and case studies of collaborative translation practices past and present, focussing in particular on collaborations between multiple translators and translator-author collaborations (and occasionally both).

<sup>7</sup> Cordingly and Frigau Manning (2017), exploring this question firmly within the conceptual parameters of ‘collaborative translation’, propose a relational model, which “offers [...] the possibility of multiple definitions of the term to evolve from changes in its elements and the relationships between them at a given moment” and “includes its relations to its external world and the relational reflexivity of that world with it” (3). At the same time, they

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recognise that “collaborative risks becoming a synonym for notions such as social, transaction, production, or even relation itself” (4).

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Steven Cranfield for pointing me in the direction of Gajda (2004) and Gray (1989) here, and to Cornelia Zwischenberger for the Gray quote that follows, as well as for the reference to Wood and Gray (1991).