Translation Studies in Europe – reasons for it, and problems to work on

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> "What have the Romans ever done for us?"
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> Monty Python, *Life of Brian* (1979)

Abstract: As a social and political context for research on translation, the European Union offers pertinent commitments to multilingualism, inclusive territorial democracy, transparent governance and the welfare state, with enough public funding to pursue these aims seriously. All these features concern translation, not only to the extent that they create social demands for translations but more importantly in that they give our research an ethical and political dimension, in addition to the demands of various markets. However, when the consequences of these commitments are compared with actual European research and public policies concerning translation, several shortcomings become apparent. The comparison suggests that future tasks for Translation Studies in Europe should include: 1) serious attention to far more than the large territorial languages; 2) enhanced exchange with neighboring disciplines, especially with scholars working on language acquisition, 3) an acceptance that translated communication should concern involvement and interaction, in addition to public information, 4) a questioning of the Western translation form as the model best suited to interactive cross-lingual governance, and 5) experimentation with technologies that stimulate citizen involvement.[1]

For better or for worse, I write as President of the European Society for Translation Studies. The adjective "European" is thus an inherited embellishment or burden, perhaps one I could have refused simply by joining an alternative society. I also write as a cultural extra-European, as someone who was born in Australia and who now spends half the academic year working in the United States. So, on the personal level, the "European" part was and remains elective; it is thus worth reflecting on from a personal perspective. Further, institutionally, when the European Society for Translation Studies was founded back in 1992 (although the Constitution was registered in 1993), there was some talk about whether it should be "European" at all. The Constitution, written in German, says nothing about Europe and explicitly mentions that the Society "shall be active on an international level" (Article 1.2) – and we do indeed have numerous members from non-European countries. Rumors have it that the adjective "European" was originally put there in the prospect of attracting subsidies for research, a hope that went unrequited for most of the Society's history.[2]

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[1] This text is based on a talk given at the EST symposium *Same place, different times*, University of Vienna, September 2013. 2 In 2012 I was contracted to do two research projects for the European Commission's Directorate General for Translation, one on *The Status of the Translation Profession*, the other on *Translation and Language Learning*. The adjective "Europe" might thus have helped us attract, not exactly subsidies, but money paid for research done. Note that the connection between the European Commission and translation research was instigated

Converts tend to be the greatest enthusiasts, so beware: I will say why I think it is good to study translation (in a wide sense) in Europe, and I will try to outline some of the particularly European problems that I think our discipline should be working on.

Five reasons for studying translation in Europe

There can be no suggestion that whatever we do in Europe is going to be immediately beneficial or transportable to any other part of the globe. We cannot argue that "we lead the way", in anything. Quite the contrary: in an age when many call for more non-Western approaches in Translation Studies, and where Europe is legitimately seen as part of a Western hegemony governing the globalization of things cultural, any attempt to defend Europe requires playing the role of devil's advocate. The intellectual exercise might nevertheless be instructive.

So here are some reasons for studying translation in Europe, rather than in some other place:

1. Europe invests financially in the model of a multicultural and multilingual society

Certainly at the level of the European Union (a polity currently with 23 official languages), Europe has not just paid lip-service to the model of a society that is both multicultural and multilingual, but it has also formulated serious policies to this end, and has put serious money behind those policies. This involves, among much else, a general political desire for each European citizen to speak more than their mother tongue (variously from the "Barcelona Objective" of 2002, where the aim was to have each citizen speak two languages in addition to the mother tongue), as well as laws to ensure language services, notably in criminal proceedings (Directive 2010/64/EU). There are many problems with these aims and laws (we will discuss them in a moment), yet their formulation at the highest level of policy is relatively exceptional and generally admirable.

Part and parcel of this political and social investment is the long-term development and depth of translator training in Europe. The current large translation schools were created around the edges of a defeated Third Reich (some actually before that), our international organizations (FIT, AIIC, CIUTI) were founded in Europe and in French, and I estimate that about 43% of today's 500 or so university-level translation schools are in Europe.[3] All this may be a sign of investment in translation. (Yes, it is also a response to globalizing economies and youth unemployment – but those factors alone could have led to everyone studying commerce in English.) And that investment, with high enrollment numbers and the proliferation of new programs, is fundamentally what keeps our research going: more students mean more demand for university teachers, and those teachers need doctorates and publications (usually as a prerequisite for tenure), and that ignoble pecuniary machine is what has driven the institutional success (and scientific precariousness) of Translation Studies. We should not forget it.

by the Directorate General for Translation itself (not by academics!), which put out specific Calls for Tenders for research on translation.

[3] The list of translator-training institutions at http://isg.urv.es/tti/tti.htm names some 503 institutions (in 2013), although this figure should certainly be higher, given the rate of growth in China, where some 10 new programs are opened each year.

Other parts of the world, particularly the United States and the People's Republic of China, have not made similar investments in a multicultural and multilingual model of society. They have thus come to Translation Studies relatively late, and in rather different ways: recently as a mode of theorization stemming from Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies in the United States, and as a correlative of an export-driven economy in China.

2. Europe has developed a workable model of territorial democracy

Thanks to its long and not wholly pleasant history, Europe is governed in terms of the nation state. As a democratic unit, this model might even be a European invention, given to disastrous consequences when foisted on other parts of the world (it ideally requires universal education and limited tribalism). Despite all its ills, the nation state still has its virtues. There is a Habermasian argument to be restated in favor of a territory where citizens have the right and obligation to participate in political processes, such that "[t]he addressees of law must be in a position to see themselves at the same time as authors of those laws to which they are subject" (Habermas 1995: 852). Despite a thousand challenges, this might still be our best bet for a workable democracy.

Why should the nation state be important here? One consequence of Habermas's ideal is that all citizens in a multilingual society should not only be able to *understand* the laws to which they are subject (in which the role of translation is obvious) but they should also have the languages necessary to *feel they participate* in the processes by which laws are authored. In a polity of more than a handful of languages, some modes of linguistic access must come via translation, minimally of the laws but more importantly at many points of real or potential public involvement (on which, Pym 2012).

The territorial principle, coupled with the commitment to multilingualism, creates a strong political need for access to texts in a variety of languages, and thus for translation (along with language learning, still erroneously seen as some kind of opposite of translation). The territorial principle is important because it means that, within whatever definition of citizenship is operative, no one should be excluded because of questions of language. That simple principle should create a social demand for translations, and thus for our research.

3. Europe has relatively transparent public administrations

Say what you will about how badly things work in Europe, our countries score consistently well on the various "corruption" indices, more formally expressed as degrees of public transparency. This is not to say that European countries are the only ones with relatively clean administrations (far from it, as should be clear from Table 1); and it is not to suggest that the whole of Europe is entirely in the same boat (highly unlikely, considering that in the rankings below the top 20, Spain is at 30, Portugal at 33, Italy at 72, and Greece at 99). All in all, though, the European average is still high, thanks to our relative wealth, high levels of education, and capacity to pay administrators something like what they are worth. We can thus rejoice in the likelihood that public policy might actually be turned into action, merit will perhaps win out, and efficiency could count for something somewhere. Those combined factors (promoting action based on policy, on

ideas and on measurements of success criteria, rather than just personal contacts) should mean there is a real need for research, and the results of research might actually have an effect on public action.

Table 1. *Corruptions Perceptions Index 2012*: Twenty countries with the highest scores (from Transparency International: http://www.transparency.org/).

1	Denmark
1	Finland
1	New Zealand
4	Sweden
5	Singapore
6	Switzerland
7	Australia
7	Norway
9	Canada
9	Netherlands
11	Iceland
12	Luxembourg
13	Germany
14	Hong Kong
15	Barbados
16	Belgium
17	Japan
17	United Kingdom
19	United States
20	Chile

4. *Europe has developed a workable model of the welfare state*

There is much that can be said for and against welfare states, but the point that concerns me here is quite specific: when we work on the provision of language services, with and within governmental institutions, we are not doing so exclusively for profit. Research can thus serve aims that are not narrowly driven by markets; we can attach our motivations to things like linguistic rights (if we can define what they are), and we can present arguments that are not wholly to be judged on the basis of commercial success. To be sure, that kind of argument can also be made on the basis of defending languages via non-translational means, but that is not in any way a specifically European concern. Here, I propose, our more particular and functional connection with rights is through the model of the welfare state operative in a multilingual society – not only should everyone in a given territory feel they are authors of the laws, but they should also actively care for each other's basic welfare, at least to the extent that it is in their mutual interest to do so, and some of that feeling and caring is going to have to happen through translation. Our knowledge about translation, and about the things it can be used for, thus concerns more than a short-term market.[4]

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[4] How far this mentality extends might be illustrated by example: there is something decidedly un-European in an association for interpreters that is in fact a company owned by two people, as currently happens in the United States (see http://www.interpretamerica.net/). On the other hand, one might rejoice in an International Association of

5. Europe is relatively rich, still

Despite recessions of various magnitudes, European countries are among the top in the world in per capita income (especially once you strip out the wealth that comes from oil, gambling and offshore banking in other parts of the world). Our countries, individually and collectively, can make serious investments in forward-looking projects – they have money for research and technology. This means, in part, taking basic risks: you invest in expensive trials and technologies in the hope and belief that, in the long run, they will make our communications significantly cheaper, more elegant, and even more exciting.

Without such relative wealth, and without the long-term risks that wealth allows, it is difficult to connect the field of language services and new technologies in any serious way. To be sure, the kinds of investments we are talking about are also made in other relatively rich countries, notably the United States and Canada. In Europe, however, (and yes, in Canada too), those investments are made in conjunction with the other factors I have mentioned: multilingual rights, transparency, democracy and the welfare state. In sum, the investment can connect with ethical social perspectives, rather than solely financial rewards.

Those, then, are five good reasons for working with and within Europe. Clearly, they do not involve excluding any other part of the world. The appropriate attitude might be more like this: Here is where I am, this is where I work, these are the kinds of issues I want to help deal with, and if others can benefit at all from what I do, then so much the better. I am by no means convinced that this is enough to constitute an ethical positioning, but it is at least a realistic standpoint, and one that many of us work from every day.

Five reasons why Translation Studies has to be improved in Europe

Now, as I thought about those five relative virtues of Europe, it occurred to me that there is a lot to be done with respect to each of them. So now I propose to return to those same five heads and to suggest just how far we are from any ideal. Although it is perhaps possible to interpret the five potential virtues directly in terms of things we should be studying (language rights, community translation and interpreting, and the use of translation technologies, for example), I have no desire to legislate such things: people should do research on whatever most motivates them. Instead, I want to be a little more adventurous – I am more intrigued by the kinds of research methods we use, how we communicate our knowledge, and particularly with whom we communicate. Along the way, there might be a few ideas on how we should be doing Translation Studies in Europe.

Professional Translators and Interpreters that makes much symbolic use of ethics and openly criticizes an Argentinian translation company that "is notorious in the professional translation community for paying low rates to its free-lance translators" (http://www.aipti.org/eng/speaks-out/art6-iaptis-official-protest-against-prize-awarded-to-translation-back-office.html). Indeed, this would be exemplary if the President of the association, who signs the protest, were not the owner of a rival translation company in the same country.

1. A multilingualism for whom?

The European commitment to multilingualism is worthy of much praise, yet the practice of multilingualism as we find it in the European Union institutions, and indeed in the Directorate General for Translation, is very much geared to the defense of Europe's large languages, the ones that are official over the whole of a Member State's territory. To be sure, that list now comprises 23 official languages, which is bureaucratic nightmare in itself. But the economic impossibility of providing anything like complete services in all those languages (and this is indeed where translation comes in) must raise basic questions about what is meant by multilingualism.[5]

In 2002 the European Council, meeting in Barcelona, called for all European citizens to be taught at least two foreign languages. Implicitly, although not necessarily, this policy objective accepted that people who speak several languages (hence "polyglottism", or "plurilingualism" in another jargon) were necessary for mobility in Europe, and indeed that Europeans would have to be mobile – an economy where capital moves and labor does not is sentenced to inequalities and economic injustices. Without policy intervention, this would become a Europe of 1+1 polyglottism (everyone has a home language plus English); with intervention in favor of 1+2, the colonial languages other than English might retain historical dignity. So the "Barcelona objective" can be seen as a tacit compromise. It then became the basis for a long series of planning and policy documents on the teaching of languages: the 2003 Action Plan *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity*, where the improvement of language teaching was recognized as a major element in achieving that aim; the 2006 report on *The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners* (Edelenbos et al. 2006), which offered a review of current research on language learning; the 2007 *European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*, which mentioned language proficiency in terms of the four traditional basic language skills; and the 2007 report on *The diversity of language teaching in the European Union* (Strubell et al. 2007). Meanwhile, data on progress in language learning has been collected in the Eurydice reports on *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe* (2005, 2008, 2012), in the Eurobarometer reports *Europeans and their Languages* (2006, 2012), which include information on the most common and effective ways of learning a language, and in the *First European Survey on Language Competences: Final Report* (European Commission 2011a). Ten years after the formulation of the 1+2 objective, the 2012 Eurobarometer survey reported that there are only eight EU Member States, mostly countries with smaller populations, where more than half the population actually achieve the objective.[6]

Those documents, tedious, repetitive and idealistic as they are, represent a great deal of political and economic investment in a polyglot Europe, with only mediocre success. Remarkably, none of those documents (covering the ten-year period from 2002 to 2012) mentions translation, not even as a way of learning, teaching or testing a language.

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[5] In the following paragraphs I draw on material studied for the research project Translation and Language Learning (http://www.est-translationstudies.org/research/2012_DGT/tll.html).

[6] Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Malta, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. See: *Special Eurobarometer 386. Europeans and their Languages* (2012: 13): http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-of-europe/eurobarometer-survey_en.htm.

In parallel to the official discourse on language learning, there have been general policy documents on multilingualism (here understood as the use of multiple languages within the one society), and those documents are remarkably full of references to translation. In the 2005 *New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, the provision of translation and interpreting services, and particularly the development of electronic translation technologies, are seen as important elements in the promotion of multilingualism. The 2007 report of the High Level Group on Multilingualism affirmed that multilingualism should be enhanced by increased training of professional translators and more translations of literary works. The role of translation was further elaborated in the 2008 policy document *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment,* which stressed that "[t]he media, new technologies and *human and automatic translation services* can bring the increasing variety of languages and cultures in the EU closer to citizens and provide the means to cross language barriers" (2008: 12; emphasis ours).

Now, the strange thing in these documents on multilingualism is that none of them relates translation to language learning in any clear way. Translation is certainly mentioned, but always in sections that remain quite separate from the comments on improving language teaching. Language learners learn languages; professional translators translate; and those are seen as complementary opposites. People should learn languages, and when they cannot, then translation is necessary. By the same logic, the more people learn languages, the less translation is needed; and the more translations are provided, the less people are obliged to learn languages. Unfortunately, a cursory glance at any of the big numbers should indicate that the world is not working this way: as language learning expands (notably for the use of English as a lingua franca), so to does the use of translation (Pym 2006, 2008). Something is not being seen in the policy documents.

There is, however, a third kind of policy available. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* concerns not just the acquisition of the four basic language skills, but also envisages what learners will do with their skills in a multilingual world: "Learners are also enabled to *mediate*, *through interpretation and translation*, between speakers of the two languages concerned who cannot communicate directly" (2001: 43; emphasis ours). In effect, translation and interpreting here become parts of a fifth major language skill (in addition to speaking, listening, writing and reading), and that logic is potentially enlightening. Rather that replace or compensate for language learning, translation is now one of the very aims and applications of language learning itself.

So has everyone seen that light? Not at all. In our research on attitudes to translation in the language class (in the project *Translation and Language Learning*, 2012-13), numerous experts and teachers, particularly in Germany, replied that they were increasingly using "mediation" activities, but not "translation", since the latter is seen as a sentence-level replacement exercise. An extreme is reached in a report on *Cultural mediation and the teaching and learning of languages* (Zarate et al., 2004), where translation is equated with "a reformulating activity that obscures all the challenges to intercultural communication which conceal the dysfunctions of a type of communication between partners based on different value systems"[7] (2004: 12).

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[7] One takes careful note of the absurdly literalist way this sentence was translated from French, in Austria. At least the translator practiced what the document preaches!

What has happened here? First, none of these experts, teachers and policymakers seems at all aware of the work that has been done in Translation Studies over the past three decades or so, notably with respect to the widening of the translation concept so as to include virtually all the social and cultural knowledge that the various commentators want to see as part of language learning. Even Nida would be new to these people, not to mention *Skopos*, cultural things, and the general acceptance that translation is a mode of transformation.

Second, the key term that the language-learning experts prefer is these days "mediation", especially in German (*Sprachmittlung*). The strange thing is that, at least since 1940, the term *Sprachmittler* ("language mediator") has been used with reference to translation and interpreting[8], and the concept of *Sprachmittlung* ("language mediation") was then used as a general term for crosslingual communication in the Leipzig school of Translation Studies in the 1970s (cf. Kade 1968, 1977), as a superordinate that explicitly included translation and interpreting (which were grouped together as *Translation*, as a German term). In this terminological system, "mediation" would be the general term for everything that can be done to communicate between languages, while "translation" and "interpreting" would be specific forms of mediation that are constrained by equivalence. At the same time, however, the term "mediation" was taking on a slightly different meaning within the field of research on bilingualism (cf. Pöchhacker 2006: 217). Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff (1985) used the term *Sprachmitteln* ("linguistic mediating") to describe the performances of untrained bilinguals in face-to-face communication. This is what Translation Studies had been calling "natural translation" (after Harris 1976).

And so we have reached a situation where the term "translation" has gained a very restricted (and restrictive) sense in language learning, at the same time as it has become virtually synonymous with "mediation" in German-language Translation Studies.

When we talk with language acquisition experts, we are using the same words to refer to different things. And that means we are not really talking with them – hence the historical failure to connect translation with language learning, and the consequent failure to have translation recognized in the policy documents as anything except a second-best option, a *pis-aller*, something to call on when the teachers have not been able to produce enough polyglots.

2. *Whose territory?*

I mentioned the relative virtues of territorial democracy, for which communication is needed between all the citizens in the given geographical space, all of whom are subject to the same laws. The problems with this principle begin when we ask what relation there is between land and language, and we start to see that there should probably be none.

Some fundamental doubts about the territorial principle were voiced by Florian Coulmas at the beginning of the 1990s, when he claimed that "the [then] European Community has been used by member states to defend their languages' privileged position rather than being given the chance to produce a language policy of its own" (1991: 8). That is, the languages spoken over the most territory, perhaps by the most

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[8] Monnien, Otto. 1940. "Dolmetscher – Sprachmittler". In *Der Sprachmittler. Mitteilungen der Reichsfachschaft für das Dolmetscher- und Übersetzerwesen in der Rechtsfront* 1(1): 1-2. Cited from Salevsky 1998 (cf. Wilss 1999: 11; Pöchhacker 2006: 227).

people, were destined to be used more as working languages, and would thus be the ones most translated. From the Treaty of Rome (1957), the official European Union languages are those that are official over the entire territory of a Member State. This in effect means that the Union does not have its own selection of official languages, and that territory is the principle according to which subsidiary is enacted in this field. It also means that official translation services at the European Union level take place between the languages thus selected.

In the 1990s, this principle was seen as being problematic because of the rising status of many languages that are co-official within parts of Member States, such as Welsh, Basque or Catalan. While official translation does not enhance the status and stability of these languages, it does so for Maltese, for example, which has fewer speakers. The formulation of that problem, however, was still based on the territorial principle. Indeed, the *Universal Declaration of Language Rights*, published in Barcelona in 1998, enshrines the territorial principle in a precarious and difficult distinction between a "language proper to a territory"[9], spoken by a "language community", and a language used by "language groups" such as "immigrants, refugees, deported persons and members of diasporas" (Article 1). The *Universal Declaration* affirms that the "groups" must integrate into the "communities", so there are more rights for languages in their territory than for those that are outside of their territory. For example (and it is an example close the hearts of those that drew up the document), the Catalan language should be used in the territory of Catalonia, and in the courts (hence significant translation), whereas there is no such obligation for the same rights to be accorded to the Arabic spoken by many immigrants. According to the territorial principle, some languages are translated much more than others (although one can have fun calculating the centuries during which Arabic was indeed territorial in parts of Catalonia). In court, for example, a non-territorial language has no rights as such, although "[e]veryone has the right, in all cases, to be tried in a language which he/she understands and can speak and to obtain the services of an interpreter free of charge" (Article 20/2). If a Moroccan immigrant can speak some Spanish or French, they can be tried in those languages. The rights concern the person, not the languages.

What is mere ideology in the *Universal Declaration* becomes legal obligation in Directive 2010/64/EU[10], which seeks to ensure access to quality translation and interpreting in criminal proceedings. The Directive states that the accused must be able "fully to exercise their right of defence and safeguarding the fairness of the proceedings" (17). It does not specify into *what languages* those services should be provided (i.e. there is no reference to an L1 or mother tongue), so there is no attempt to safeguard or protect non-territorial languages as such. Further, the Directive has very little to say about who is qualified to translate: "In order to promote the adequacy of interpretation and translation

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[9] A "language proper to a territory" is the language of a "linguistic community", defined as "any human society established historically in a particular territorial space, whether this space be recognized or not, which identifies itself as a people and has developed a common language as a natural means of communication and cultural cohesion among its members". *Universal Declaration*, Concepts, 1.

[10] Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings. : http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:280:0001:0007:EN:PDF. The Directive states that interpreting and/or translation services should be provided free of charge to suspected or accused persons. The only criterion of quality is that the suspected or accused person be able "fully to exercise their right of defence and safeguarding the fairness of the proceedings" (17).

and efficient access thereto, Member States shall endeavor to establish a register or registers of independent translators and interpreters who are appropriately qualified" (5/2). The directive does not refer to any signal of what "appropriately qualified" might mean.

The point is this: European language policies, based on the nation state, require translation services between the territorial languages of Europe, but are at best vague about services in the very numerous immigrant languages. The problem is that those languages are precisely the areas where our translation services are failing. There is little formal education in them; the translators and interpreters tend to have little training in the provision of these services; and in Spain and the United Kingdom the translation and interpreting services for the justice systems have been outsourced to private companies, for profit, with disastrous results in both cases.

Territorial democracy creates a social need for translation services, and that is a very good thing. Yet there remain many doubts about the application of the territorial principle, where some privileged languages are the prime receivers and senders of translations, and other languages are the object of little training, scarce professionalism, and little research in Translation Studies.

3. Transparent to whom?

I posited that Europe's relative transparency in its governance means that research might be able to affect public policy. The connection here assumes a brave belief in meritocracy – the belief that a good idea will float to the top, on the strength of its own virtues, since all ideas have a chance of being recognized for their intrinsic worth. That logic is certainly idealistic and naïve, yet not necessarily misplaced as an aspiration.

The main problem here is that an administration that aims for maximum transparency also becomes a system of extensive public information: decisions are no longer made on the basis of one person's whim or brother-in-law, they are the result of countless forms, rules, committees, deadlines, in short, numbers and complications of numbers. Power effectively shifts from groups of inherited privilege to what Hobsbawm (1990: 111ff.) provocatively identified as "the lesser examination-passing classes", the people who got where they are by filling out forms in the correct way and making and obeying countless minor rules, usually in official national languages, which they then defend. Bureaucracy rules, and dynamic meritocracy flounders.

Anyone who has had dealings with European bureaucracies will know what I am talking about. The price we pay for relative transparency is a series of complicated decision-making processes, long delays, and a decided lack of inspiration. All of that could nevertheless be worthwhile if good questions are asked, good information is collected, and good decisions are made, ideally in an environment where "good" involves creative problem-solving.

An example of what looks like enlightened bureaucracy is remarkably close to us. For the past few years, the European Commission's Directorate General for Translation has been actively doing Translation Studies: they pose interesting questions about the uses of translation and related language services in Europe; they commission research on the questions or carry out the documentation in-house; they make the findings publicly available through online publications and open conferences in Brussels (which are also

online). The result is now an impressive series of book-length publications and corresponding video materials,[11] all of which present considerable knowledge and insight. The publications not only ask about professional and training issues that affect the internal translation needs of the European institutions, they also assess the European translation industry in general, the problems of translator certification, crowdsourcing, and major apparent alternatives to translation such as the use of English as a lingua franca and "intercomprehension" (where two speakers have a passive knowledge of each other's language). In all, this could be an example of a progressive bureaucracy, striving for maximum transparency in its decision-making process and producing a lot of intriguing data along the way. In fact, they could be doing more or less what academic translation scholars should be doing.

My own occasional involvement in this initiative has left me with nothing but praise for the people who have decided to invest resources in this way: there is real intelligence behind the formulation of short, cheap research projects that address very specific questions and do not always lend themselves to automatic ideological answers. Further, some of the topics are decidedly courageous in their institutional context: the study on English as a lingua franca (European Commission 2011b), for example, does not shy away from the intelligent arguments in favor of a restricted monolingualism, and the survey of crowdsourcing (European Commission 2012a) recognizes that all translation professionals can learn from new interactive modes of text production.

So what could possibly be wrong? As much as transparency requires an abundance of information, decision-making also demands a simplification of alternatives, and the transition from the complex to the simple is never easy – things get lost along the way, and there is always the temptation to grasp hold of the first answers that fit in with established policy orientations. There are several cases where convenient arguments are turned into apparent truths, and there is little empirical evidence or causal logic to be found. Here are some examples:

- A report in which the input data point to problems with immigrant languages has a series of recommendations that apparently only concern official EU languages (European Commission 2010; reviewed in Pym 2011).
- The same report lists all the advantages of translation, without considering any disadvantages or alternatives.
- The report on intercomprehension (European Commission 2012b) skillfully points out how the proximity of cognate languages can and does generate efficiencies in the translation process, and indeed in communication generally, but somehow avoids the central empirical question: to what extent does intercomprehension constitute a psychologically valid alternative to a lingua franca? Easy enough to check: If Danish executives want to read about a subsidy and the information is not available in Danish, will they select the information in Swedish, German or English?
- The same report assumes that machine translation is easier between cognate languages, without asking whether the performance of statistical machine translation depends more on the size and quality of the databases available.

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[11] See: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/publications/studies/index_en.htm. Accessed February 2013.

-   A report on certification systems for translators (European Commission 2012c) was actually commissioned *after* the policymakers had decided how a certification system might be constructed.

And so on. The most entertaining example is perhaps from a different neck of the European woods, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which commissioned a report on "the contribution of multilingualism to creativity" (European Commission 2009a). It is a great question to ask. Unfortunately the report can only state that there is no empirical evidence that multilingualism leads to greater creativity, but not to worry: the report then fills up 20 or so pages to say why there *should* be a connection anyway. This would be funny, if we weren't paying for it.

In such a context, there is an inevitable temptation for researchers to provide the policymakers with whatever they want. This may be in small, innocuous ways, such as the politeness convention of saying you are building on the Commission's previous research in the field, or it can assume quite mystical proportions, as in the repeated claim that a society with several languages is more efficient, productive, creative and/or happier than one that has just one language. (I'm still trying to figure that one out.) Or the not unrelated claim that the development of a large language industry can be equated with the creation of wealth. (Would a fire brigade create wealth if there were no fires?) The politics of European Union language policy, which frame translation, are so sensitive that it is sometimes hard to think straight.

European Translation Studies, at least the academic varieties of it, has struggled to move beyond a positivistic insistence on descriptivism. Following some puerile debate, it is now generally recognized, I hope, that researchers can and must discuss success conditions, and that one of the things research can be used for is the probabilistic prediction of the success or failure of a translator's action. We also generally recognize that the researcher is inevitably positioned within the research, and that there is thus no easy neutrality to be found in the mechanisms of science. That is all good and progressive. And yet here, in this particular European context, at this particular moment when research is at last called on to play a role in the field of translation policy, some weight must be given to data, and to the courage it takes to point out that the world is not entirely shaped in the image of European Commission ideology. A basic commitment to empirical inquiry may yet be required, as an act of resistance, even if no longer as an article of faith.

4. *Information or action?*

I posited that the development of the welfare state means that translation concerns more than the free market – we are dealing with issues of public rights and obligations, as a part of citizenship, and that is a very appealing thing.

Some of the major linguistic problems of the welfare state can be gleaned from the points made above. At the risk of repetition: we are well prepared to provide translation services in the European territorial languages, but not so well in most of the immigrant languages. And the provision of services is shackled by bureaucratic procedures at every step along the way, including the steps that involve translation.

Since the important thing for bureaucracies is that information be equally available in the official languages, official texts are translated for the information, not for the possible

interaction. Examples include the *acquis communautaire* into Finnish or Turkish, where the numbered sentences all have to match up, regardless of different syntactic rules or cohesion patterns. The Commission is certainly aware of its almost universally anodyne prose, its incapacity to make the idea of European citizenship even remotely motivating, and the corresponding disinterest of most European citizens. In a 2005 Action Plan of the Directorate General for Communication (European Commission 2005b: 2) we read: "Communication is more than information: it establishes a relationship and initiates a dialogue with European citizens, it listens carefully and it connects to people. It is not a neutral exercise devoid of value, it is an essential part of the political process." That is very well said. Yet the actual communicating is something quite different. The most obvious result of all the action plans are, well, more action plans, processes and regulations – information.

I want to suggest that official translations are not a solution here – they are more likely to be part of the problem. Interactivity and involvement require speed; they pertain to the performative aspect of communication, to its nature as event. When the parts of a dialogue have to be translated, be it into one, three or 23 languages, the workings of interaction and involvement are inevitably slowed down, made more precarious, and provide more information than motivation. This is particularly so when "translation" is equated with the Western translation form, which requires quantitative similitude and a discursively absent intermediary. One senses that creativity along the edges of that form, with more multilateral interaction and greater dialogic speed, might move us closer to a sense of shared involvement. Without any attempt to break the translation form, or to make it more dynamic, citizen involvement is likely to remain at the level of nations, and mostly in national languages.

To question the translation form in this way is to question an entire profession, and that is not going to be easy. The main retort will be that citizens need trustworthy access to the exact texts of the laws; officialdom requires accuracy. Yes, indeed, that is not wrong. But without active involvement, without communication that is properly dialogic, there can be no sense of shared responsibility, and thus little democracy in the laws.

Comparing Australian and EU translation policies, Podkalicka (2007) observes a "disjunction between the official EU language policies and lived cultural and linguistic heteroglossia" (249), and that is certainly part of what I have noted above. She also points out, very correctly, that policies need to operate "at the level of populations rather than political and economic elites" (249), and that European Union policy-making thus requires "greater diversity of sources, including voices of 'real' people rather than 'experts'" (253).

At the moment, the people who need translation services are not anywhere near the policymakers – they are rarely translated, they are seldom heard. They are represented by politicians, bureaucrats, and academics like us, who write the anodyne official prose that requires the boring official translations. We should be doing more to explore alternative forms of communication.

5. *Technology to look backwards or forwards?*

And wealth? What are we to make of Europe's relative abundance? Part of the money masks over the scandalous cost of the rising numbers of official translations within the

European institutions, but the bureaucrats are aware of this and are striving to make savings. Perhaps more interesting is the way in which available resources are invested in translation technologies, which should create greater productivity, hence increased multilingual communication and a more lively democracy, one might hope.

Translation services at the European Union institutions, however, do not have a great track record in the creative use of technology. They have backed the transfer-based machine translation system Systran, following rather than leading the integration of statistics-based systems, and a lot of the research funded by the European Union bodies is still on the linguistics of language-pair machine translation. The institutions in Brussels and Luxembourg have maintained use of the Trados translation-memory suite, which is a great tool but caries an artificially high price-tag thanks in part to its use in the official institutions. Strangely, I have not seen any numbers that suggest these technologies have actually reduced the cost of translations. The effect of the technologies is more likely to be seen in greater consistency of terminology and phraseology, plus acts of public goodwill such as offering the DGT's translation memory to the general public.[12]

All these technologies are based on the availability of electronic memories, that is, records of past bitexts. Memory, by definition, looks backwards. The DGT's translation memory does indeed basically include the texts of the *acquis communautaire*, the laws of the past, which have to be translated but do not necessarily have to be understood in any dynamic way. At the same time, interactive technologies now allow us to do a lot more than just reproduce the bitexts of the past – translation can become a social and socializing activity, adapting and creating meanings, instead of just reproducing the past. Bureaucrats and private companies would like to know more about how this can be done, and we should be able to help them find out.

A glorious example of backward-looking technology is the official website of the European Union (http://europa.eu/), where you can indeed find all the information you want, in a great many languages, but you will not find excitement, user-friendliness, user-involvement or things to do. The website serves the legal purposes of the administration, and little else. It is then peculiar to see a publication like *Web translation as a genre*, put out by the Directorate General for Translation (2009b), where occasional mentions of the need for interactivity, complete with references to Web 2.0 and Barack Obama's election campaign, clash so obviously with the translation strategies actually in use on the Europa website. Or for a more direct comparison, just take a moment to compare Obama's website with the site of the President of the European Council (if you can remember who he or she is).

Our wealth gives us the means to do more exciting things, and the desire is certainly there in certain niches. But we are by no means in a society where translation technologies point to the future.

En guise de conclusion

The above five points certainly overlap, and the differences between any conclusions are thus very forced – in the end, they all sing the same tune. Our lessons for Translation Studies in Europe are: 1) we should be considering far more than the large territorial languages of Europe; 2) we must talk more with neighboring disciplines, especially

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[12] See: http://ipsc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.php?id=197#c2742. Accessed February 2013.

language acquisition (the people probably just down the corridor from you), 3) we must be prepared to ask unpopular questions, beyond the policy commitments of our various administrations, 4) we must be prepared to question the communicative viability of the Western translation form itself, and of the profession that maintains it, and 5) we should seek technologies that stimulate involvement and interaction, rather than the repetition of past information.

There is enough criticism and debate within European Union institutions for none of these propositions to be new. In fact, the very organization that I might appear to be criticizing – the Directorate General for Translation – has been asking precisely these kinds of questions, in an extended moment of critical self-reflection that may turn out to be exceptional.

Are these questions, these areas for research and reflection, somehow unique to Europe? In themselves, individually, probably not. But taken as a whole and with respect to their relative importance, perhaps they are: most other parts of the world have far more basic and urgent problems to attend to (in the United States we would be talking more readily about security issues and war; in China we might have more to say about export markets as a major facet warranting study; in the Middle East we could be seeking more immediate forms of liberation). In Europe, we can work from the relative luxury of trying to perfect a territorial democracy that aspires to be multilingual, multicultural, transparent and socially just. And that is not a bad place to be.

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