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Translating Cultures

Based on a conversation conducted in Glasgow, 18th July 2019

Present: Charles Forsdick (CF), Alison Phipps (AP), Angela Creese (AC), Charles Burdett (CB), Barbara Spadaro

CF: Thank you very much everybody for agreeing to join in this conversation in the context of the special issue of *The Translator*. The aim is to give an overview of the important work that you've carried out as part of your 'Translating Cultures' large grants, but also to reflect on its contribution to debates on translation and specifically in the field of translation studies. To set the scene, what did you do in your respective projects over the three or four years of their lifetime?

AP: The project I was leading was entitled 'Researching Multilingually at the Borders of the Body, Language, Law and State', or 'RM Borders' as we all came to know it. It asked fundamentally epistemological and methodological questions about how it is we go about our research, looking at languages as a social construct, but also language as a social category: how it informs the different disciplines across the academy and how we research using different languages. Central to the work was interrogating internally our disciplinary and methodological concepts, but also learning from each other's disciplines in order to practise other ways of researching within different disciplinary traditions and professional understandings. So I think within the education, law and medicine fields, we found different kinds of resistance to researching multilingually or to questions of translation than those that we found within the literary, the applied and the artistic and the anthropological, sociological fields – and that divergence interested me greatly at the end.

We worked with five case studies: the Gaza case study looked at pedagogy and teaching Arabic online in the context of siege; the law case, in the Netherlands and in Scotland, considered the way in which what were initially convergent became divergent practices of law, as immigration

law practice changed, particularly last appeal rights; we looked at an anthropological project in reception centres and reception areas of civic life in Romania and Bulgaria; we developed a more literary and representational understanding of translation in Mexico and in the resettlement areas of southern Arizona; and then we worked in the area of global mental health, with unaccompanied minors in Glasgow and with child soldiers in Uganda. We interrogated all these areas with our two hubs, on arts and applied linguistics, and then we made stuff. We did a lot of hands-on research as well as more traditional empirical research, bringing a very strong strand of practice-led research from the start.

My sense is that in this project, we did translation in many different modes. Some of it we did in the mode of translation studies, particularly in the Arizona case study with David Gramling and Chantelle Warner, who were interested in different forms of literary studies and then in translating those metaphorically and also physically into spaces of exhibitions, spaces of indigenous languages and into refugee spaces. I think we did translation in the sense of physically training people to speak other languages that they may not have been able to speak before in order to teach them, so skilling people up to actually do work, which is translating in that more literal or functional sense of the word. We also did translation according to the anthropological understanding of it. I'm thinking particularly of work by Robert Gibb and Julien Danero Iglesias, which was anthropological but also involved learning other languages or using them deliberately, consciously deploying and reflecting on that process but actually bringing a different understanding of the reflexivity in translation. I think this is what we did particularly in the law case study and the mental health case study, which were about justice in translation and the political economy of translation. These were areas where, professionally, the use of translators was done by people who were trained and paid very good money to do that work in order to come to correct diagnoses or correct judgements. We weren't seeing ourselves as translators in the professional sense or necessarily in these metaphorical senses either. Through the interrogations both of the artists who were translating us metaphorically and the applied linguists who were looking at how we used and deployed language as researchers, we

ended up building in a reflexivity about translation, and out of that trying to broaden it out as an impact and as a metaphor for impact, across arts genres and then across languages, and also bringing many more languages to bear than I had originally thought we would when we first started out.

CF: I think what's really helpful there is the sense of the geographical and disciplinary breadth and reach of your project, but also the way in which translation, as you've described, it operates as an elastic notion, ranging from the traditional and the professional to the much more metaphorical understandings, allowing you to bridge those very different contexts and to make them speak to each other. What about your project, Angela?

AC: Our project asked questions about how people communicate in contexts of linguistic and social diversity in four UK cities: London, Leeds, Cardiff and Birmingham. It took sites such as markets, libraries, sporting halls, venues and community centres to look at how languaging happens in social practice, in social life. Basically, we're interested in how people get along with one another or not when there's a range of different languages and proficiencies in play. So, we're very interested in languaging and languages in a range of different social contexts. The title was 'Translation and Translanguaging', with the subtitle 'Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in 4 UK Cities'. So, translation was in the title and therefore very much informed the project.

I think I want to start though with a more methodological orientation to translation because we were a multilingual team. There were 33 researchers speaking many different languages – and so understanding one another in a collaborative team project also involved thinking about translation as part of knowledge construction. In which languages did we write our field notes? How did we either represent different languages on the page as we both transcribed and listened in to the multilingual interactions in the city contexts that we were interested in? Translation was both a methodological issue for us but also a theoretical question because, we had to think about

translation and translanguaging, and their interaction. There were four themes that we developed. One was business, the second heritage, the third sport and the last one law. It was in the law phase that translation became really empirically important to us as we thought about an advisory worker in the Chinese community centre giving advice on benefits and advocating for her clients. There translation really came to the fore as an empirical issue. Like Alison, I would say that translation was a really important concept in terms of working across disciplines within the team and also thinking about how our data could be translated into other kinds of outputs and engagement, which were beyond the typical academic outputs. It's because we adopted a methodological approach called 'linguistic ethnography' that we let the data drive the arguments we were making. It was in phase four when we dealt with the law in community settings that translation became most important.

CF: That's really helpful, thank you. You've illuminated the ways in which your project engaged with translation and translanguaging in multidimensional ways. Charles, tell us about 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages.'

CB: The project is entitled 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages, Mobility, Translation and Identity in Modern Italian Cultures.' It has mostly been about looking at forms of mobility that have defined the development of what we might call, with all sorts of caveats, 'Italian culture' and it's concentrated on exemplary cases that look at the geographic, historical and linguistic map of Italian mobility. So, what has that involved in terms of translation? Well, the team of researchers have been looking at different exemplary cases, whether that's in Scotland, in England, Wales, Australia, the United States, Africa, all spaces of Italian mobility -- and they've been looking at cultural associations in many cases and exploring the publications, materials, representations associated with those instances of mobility, and therefore looking at processes of translation which are evident at every level of those communities in question. I'll say more about what we understand by 'culture' when we come to discuss 'translating cultures', but just generally speaking we've been looking at how concepts, traditions, modes of perceptions that are present in modern cultures are transposed into

terms of other systems. Translation is about change. So, to a degree each of the large team of researchers has been very much concerned with talking about processes of linguistic and cultural translation and seeing the way in which practices, cultures, ways of being in the world change as a result of that transposition, that translation movement. Through our subsequent Global Challenges Research Fund follow-on grant, we've taken some of what we've been doing through the different context of Namibia, discussing, learning from, and co-producing with colleagues based in the University of Namibia. We are interested in how we can enrich what we've been talking about with groups in Namibia and in particular looking at the way in which we can develop ideas about multiculturalism and transnationalism within the educational framework and the health sector, reflecting on how translation and multilingualism play a part within professional practice.

CF: You've given a really strong sense of the breadth, the complexity and the reach of the work you've been doing, and also how your three projects have been very distinctive. Yet working with you across the past four, five years, I've seen at the same time a complementarity as you have come at similar questions from often very different perspectives. What interests me is how engaging with the question of 'translating cultures' has allowed you to do this work. Translating cultures never belonged to the AHRC. It was a term that was coined by anthropologists in the 1980s. Then the AHRC, with some foresight, adopted it in 2010 as one of its themes. The first time you would have engaged with the theme would have been when you saw the call, I suppose, or maybe seeing the call led you to recognise earlier engagements. I'd be interested to hear about what 'translating cultures' has meant for you and what it means now. Angela?

AC: Well, I suppose it's been an umbrella term really that has allowed us to ask questions about languaging and social practice in superdiverse city contexts. I think it has been important again in allowing us to take an interdisciplinary perspective. Through 'translating cultures', I have become a huge advocate of interdisciplinary approaches to research and to learning and teaching. The term has brought together people in translation studies, people in modern languages, sociolinguistics,

applied linguistics – all of those disciplines are very close but they're also very far from each other; we get into our silos and probably even now I'll still write for particular journals, speak to those that we've worked with previously – but I think that 'translating cultures' as a theme has made possible conversations that wouldn't normally have happened. I still find problematic the letter 's' on 'cultures' because it points still to large cultures, static cultures, culture as a 'thing' rather than dynamic, changing allegiances and processes which as a sociolinguistic I'm so interested in.

CF: I might anticipate what Alison's going to say here but I'm really interested in what you're suggesting. I think that with 'translating cultures', most of the interrogation has been on the 'translating' and not enough on the 'cultures', and what you evoke there is a whole hinterland of work, a lot of it anthropological as well as linguistic, which allows us to do that. On the one hand, I'm thinking of Brian Street, and in particular that brilliant piece of his, 'Culture is a Verb'. On the other, Tim Ingold's work on translation, to which Alison introduced me, says that one of the problems with the concept is that it perpetuates that idea of cultures that you've just been talking about. Charles, do you want to come in on that?

CB: I remember being present at some of the discussions with the AHRC when they had debates in 2010 amongst subject communities on what some of the themes were going to be. One of the pragmatic reasons for adopting 'translating cultures' was to encourage the disciplinary communities of modern languages to apply more to the AHRC because at that time there was an imbalance in the number of awards that were going to them. So 'translating cultures' emerged, in a way, as a signal that this was something that modern languages could get into, though of course it was not a steer, it was more of an indication. There is a pragmatic basis to these terms, as there should be as these emerge from the disciplinary communities as a whole that the AHRC covers. Regarding 'translating', I agree absolutely with what's been said. I think we would all very much agree that cultures are not distinct separate entities. What we refer to as 'cultures' one might think of as sets of practices, modes of understanding reality, organisations of space and time, investments in collective

narratives, but they are continually in movement, they are by their very nature hybrid and subject to the continual process of mobility as they are in touch with other cultural practices, technological change, conflict mobility. So I think the word 'translating cultures' implies that there is a transposition between two separate things. 'Italian culture' is a shorthand that refers to a whole series of overlapping, indistinct cultural processes that are linked by language and are linked by practices that are very much in movement. What we've been concentrating on is the contact zone and thinking about examples when you can see some of the basic movements within a culture, both the way in which they determine exterior reality, but also the way in which one can see how the internal subjective reality of the individual is very much part of that contact zone. So, I suppose we need to explore these processes, how they're present in literary and non-literary texts, photographic records, material and visual culture, in representations that enhance our notion of cultures, and its hybridity, its mobility, its porosity, its susceptibility to change.

AP: I think this is my favourite question because I remember it being raised at the interview we all had, and I remember saying 'because I think neither term cuts it'. Just as you were saying Angela, the term 'cultures' is problematic for me, and equally the term 'translation' is problematic. I could sketch out the bibliographic genealogy by which I came to my critical consciousness of those terms, rooted very much in the essays in Clifford and Marcus's 1986 collection *Writing Culture*. That was the year I started university and it was one of the first books I read and I could kind of drop most of literature because that was just telling a very different story to what I was experiencing in my French and German degree at Durham University. That was very much what David Gramling has just called a 'slat washing', an essentialised way of presenting modern language in order to teach it. French was taught through baguettes and strings of onions at university even at that stage, and Germany was taught through Friede, Freude, Eierkuchen. It was just intellectually moribund, for someone as intellectually eager as I was, one of the few people ever to go to university from my school, desperate for the intellectual stimulation I wasn't getting it from the language sections of the courses I was taking. And then thanks to the godsend that was medieval German studies at Durham

University and the fantastic lecturers with their interdisciplinary approaches, I was being fed by those medieval scholars who read Lévi-Strauss, who read the great German anthropologists, and suddenly I was seeing that the world was not all divided up into cultures and that translation was something that was not a process of organic manufacture in cultural artefacts: it was much more that 'culture' was a verb, and 'language' was a verb, and 'translation' was a verb, and so from Clifford and Marcus I then followed up on the 'great white men of anthropology' in the 1990s. Roger Keesing's work on the way that anthropology is divided up into exotica and that the culture concept has to go. Tim Ingold was saying very similar things about how the culture concept needed the term 'translation' because its divided up the world – translation is part of anthropology because it somehow needs to stick it back together again. Divisions were arbitrary. What I was seeing happening in the language classrooms where I was teaching and wanting desperately 'to language or translanguaging', but we were always focusing on essentialized 'target cultures' whilst deconstructing was happening: nothing was essential anymore, but we weren't allowed to talk about essentialism. Everything was critiqued, broken down so there as was complete intellectual mismatch, and for me the idea of translating cultures brought together the deep theoretical frustration I had with all of that, like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing across social sciences arts and humanities theoretically. I saw the speed at which different texts were going across different disciplines. I read my deconstruction texts in French, in French studies in the late 1980s, but suddenly I'm reading things in education here where the field was discovering Pierre Bourdieu's writings just after he'd died. So, this mismatch that came out of the political economy of translation meant I thought: 'wouldn't it be great to really integrate this term that feels so flabby in translating cultures by doing things differently, by being really critical about different practices and by enabling a different place for critical reflection?' I think for me, not for other scholars across the disciplines necessarily, but for me, the absolutely critical interrogative space for what we did within the grant was around the phenomenological double break relating to those concepts of translation and culture – considering whether we need them at all. And whilst I can see they are useful place holders

I'm actually still with Brian Street and Celia Roberts, Shirley Jordan, John O'regan and Mike Byram and the 'language learners as ethnographers', and with those for whom 'language as a verb' and 'culture as a verb'. What we were doing in intercultural studies really gave me an exciting seam for thinking of the world as a series of phenomena, as a series of ways of dwelling in it as habitus, as practice, as continuous rather than as reified categories of culture, just as you were describing them Angela, that we somehow had to stitch together again. I found it very satisfying to think of translation in these ways. I have found it's dripping into the decolonial turn. Other people I was reading at the same time as these 'great white men of anthropology' were the 'great black men of decolonising': Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Frantz Fanon, Glissant and all of that work that was the opening up post-colonial thought, and at long last also Mary Louise Pratt, bell hooks and some feminist writers who were giving me the flipside of what I was experiencing of what 'translating cultures' appeared to mean and how it appeared to be represented. All this has led to the little book I've just done on decolonising multilingualism. That's my theoretical take on 'translating cultures' and I think it's been deployed by others really usefully as a way of starting out on those journeys of critical reflection. I don't think everybody has ended up where I've ended up with it or has that kind of genealogy around it, but I think it's been really interesting watching people come to those realisations.

AC: I was just going to say that there's a really interesting tension between the ideas that Alison so eloquently summarised there, that I think many of us have experienced and signed up to, and the empirical data. Here, we see how these concepts – languages, cultures – are incredibly important to people still: part of what you do as a researcher is to deconstruct that data which gives you an incredible amount of power as a researcher because those concepts are emically important to the butcher, the librarian assistant and all our other key participants in our linguistic anthropological study. And we have found other ways of looking at culture useful, particularly work going on around stereotyping and how stereotypes get used as resources in people's everyday interactions, for good and for bad, and there's some very interesting work going on in linguistic anthropology, by often

young women scholars actually, that helps us interrogate and see how those stereotypes around cultures and languages get deployed to form relationships, to present values and sometimes to reach particular goals.

AP: Yes, and I'd also say that whilst we had some researchers working with data, we also had the practice-led work where people were making things. We had exactly the same experiences.

Sometimes the way of deploying stereotypes, essentialist notions of cultures, translation, language in ways in which to my critical mind appeared very naive but were also helpful for people accessing ideas. And then also in the more critical contemporary artistic space, seeing people deploying new notions, new ideas, new ways of transcending whatever it might be. That space of art for us might in other areas be called 'data' and did exactly the same thing. I could see those really helpful but difficult creative tensions with a lot of power, a lot of elitism and access that comes up around them.

CF: What really strikes me there in terms of interrogating that yoking together of translating and cultures is that, in different ways, all three of you took a similar anthropological direction.

Sometimes anthropology tipped over into various forms of ethnography, in your case Angela being linked specifically to linguistics. Where in your work does that leave translation studies? I'm thinking about key figures in the anglophone world such as Susan Bassnett, Michael Cronin, Laurence Venutti, or Berman in the Francophone world. I wonder how much the relatively recent body of material that has emerged in translation studies has in any way impacted in the research you've been conducting?

CB: As with all of these grants, TML is a large group of researchers. We continue to work together and I think we'll continue to for a long time, even though we are coming from related but different areas, whether that's modern languages, art therapy in the case of Margaret Hills de Zerate, cultural studies, history, linguistics, translation studies. So, translation is always going to play a part in the way in which people have been involved in the project. A large project is, of course, a pooling of people's expertise and their individual projects, networks, cultures, frames of reference,

bibliographies and especially what we've been looking at, practices of mobility, creating cultures, realities, subjectivities and thinking about the hybridisation of all of that. Self-understanding is framed within ongoing adaptation to the world around us, all of which is deeply concerned with translation, translation theory, the way in which we move between sign systems. Linguistic translation is something that is less and less a temporary, specialised activity, it's something which we are encountering all the time. It's something that becomes inevitable, a habitual practice of the everyday and I think it's taking from what Angela and Alison have been saying, it's about encouraging bodies of theory to come together productively and not seeing them as the domain of one disciplinary community or another, but also thinking about the way in which a large grant can do this by trying to coordinate an interest, a contemporaneous interest in bodies of theory that come together and lead to publishing initiatives, a series of workshops, seminars and major conferences. The large grant gives you an opportunity to do things rather differently, not to mention of course meeting regularly as large grant communities sharing our knowledge, knowing what people are up to in their different projects. Generally speaking, 'translating cultures' has been about that... about having that conversation at more or less the same time. Linguistic and cultural translation are intrinsically connected rather than separate sets of practice and theory. That obviously has implications for the way in which we think about modern languages. So, translation studies is the main disciplinary area of some of the researchers but it is something which has been shared and deliberately part of the way in which we think of production, circulation, reception.

CF: Thank you. I really appreciate that reflection, partly on how the large grants that you led acted as drivers for thematic ways of working that, as you describe, are disruptive even of new disciplines. I think one of my frustrations with new disciplines, and I saw this with post-colonial studies in the 1990s, is that rapid expansion can lead to sloganisation of terms, but also this defensiveness, the proprietorial take which one can understand which ultimately can be an impediment to fruitful further research. Alison?

AP: I think what I want to say follows on quite nicely from what Charles was saying. I was actually just picturing a conference I was at in Edinburgh, I think at Heriot Watt, where researchers on both your projects were present and presenting. I was thinking very much that they were the engines driving the new thinking that was going on. I was reflecting on the richness of theoretical thinking and what they were bringing to those events and what the money that enables us to pay their salaries and gather the data did to the field where other people presenting didn't have our riches. I was really struck by both the disruptive effect that had, and by the excitement of what was coming through with these different thematic ways of working that had also been given this official sanction. In terms of the question about translation studies, watching that process happen with some of the researchers on my own project, it would be safe to say that really only myself and David Gramling who had any background in translation studies. But actually, several other researchers in the team really enjoyed the reading list for translation studies. Susan Bassnett's work, for instance, Michael Cronin's work in particular, and Lawrence Venuti's. Delving into that, they found a very helpful seam to bring to their core discipline. That approach was in a disciplinary frame. You then 'multi' it, then 'inter' it, and basically there's process of needing to read around to get your head around how people work with the paradigm before you can actually do some fusion work or synthesising work. I think that was perhaps how translation studies originally found itself. It was important that we had Michael Cronin on the advisory board, as one of our critical friends. His presence was really important to us and in a way as somebody who was a bit further down the road and could say 'it'll be alright'. Saying that with enough heft for us to trust him to say: 'yes, you can blend these critical, multilingual, indigenous, anthropological approaches that you're trying to mix here with a focus on the domestic and the foreign.' For me, I think I found his presence, both in terms of reading people's work and as a critical friend, really vital intellectually, enabling us to recalibrate occasionally towards translation studies because a lot of the time it was more like a spectre or a ghost than a core presence. I would say that that the core presence within our project was more around applied linguistics, anthropology, the professions and arts, not translation studies. I actually thought when

we started out, I would spend a lot more time reading translation studies journals and literature and I didn't. That wasn't where the data and the mood of the project was taking me at all as a scholar.

CF: Just partly to echo what you've been saying for the theme more generally about colleagues like Susan Bassnett. Susan spoke at the opening conference of the theme; she closed the final conference of the theme. She and others in translation studies have been hugely supportive and we can't underestimate the contribution of Loredana Polezzi, who is co-investigator on Charles' project, now co-editor of *The Translator*, and who's been a real force behind the work as well.

AC: We drew on the concept of translators as mediators. Mediators who advocate and advise others. Somebody, for instance, who was a translator and somebody giving advice in the Chinese community centre on welfare benefits to people who needed help with English to navigate the system. So our interest in translation really was about not just navigating languages, Chinese or Mandarin, Cantonese or English, but also navigating systems, so focused on recontextualization and resemiotization as stories got retold in navigating the welfare system, as they changed modalities from spoken to written. So, for us, we were really interested in the translator as mediator and we, of course, became very focused on mediators who are migrants. It was about those migrants who are actively crossing linguistic borders, but who also are helping others to navigate systems which are often hostile to them. We found that translation was not only about interlingual translation from one language to another, but also included intersemiotic and intralingual translation as the community advisor worked to translate from official documents to the spoken word, and from different registers of English and Mandarin. All this as the translator used their linguistic and cultural resources to deliver social justice and represent people who often aren't heard by the system and giving them a voice. That was much more of a priority than equivalence between languages or whether something was a kind of fair representation. It was about getting something done for groups of people who needed help. Of course, many others have talked about the kind of hidden and *ad hoc* nature of translation that goes on in our cities daily, unrewarded financially. In phase

four, we really focused in on people who are doing that kind of advisory work in community centres, sometimes for little bits of money but often in a voluntary capacity. Without their work as translators, as interpreters, the city wouldn't work really.

AP: We had something similar but expressed differently in Katja Frimberger's work where she worked with the term 'language plenty'. That became important in our latter phase, largely because we were having the doors beaten down by every possible organisation during the so called 'refugee crisis', the crisis of hospitality, to work out what on earth could be done. So, again it was these crucial, very practical areas of work with no money at all attached to them in budget terms. Because we were in Scotland, and there was a real desire to set ourselves apart from other practices in different parts of Europe and North America, at the time there was a real desire to put some money behind programmes around what was brought to us as 'translation is a problem', 'language is a problem'. Out of that came work that shows that language is actually about plenty and that the migrants within our midst are users of languages and there are plenty of these. The place of deficit is within our own education systems, our own multilingual systems. So that was about granting agency to people who were multilingual. For us, it wasn't so much that people who were translators were the key mediators or justice makers; it was more that the multilingual became more and more pressing on us. It's just occurring to me that translation was not the term that was as useful to us – but just getting the work done, getting money moved and levered into different organisations to support translation as a transversal process, as something that wasn't just about ramming people into ESOL classes but was actually about saying: 'language is a shared task for the whole of Scottish society.' We are a multilingual country and within that everyone has a duty and a responsibility to engage with a multilingual space. How we do that is an important methodological question but also a civic question – and civic institutions want to start answering that question. So, we were part of trying to shift institutions away from 'language is a problem...' We were moving us away from using the term 'translation' and really focusing on multilingualism.

AC: And translanguaging!

CF: The multilingual is a direction to go in, but I wanted first to pay tribute to the incredible teams that the three of you assembled, teams where you had postgraduate students, early career researchers, more established scholars. In the three, four years with you, I've come to workshops, to summer schools, to do fieldwork on occasion, and I learnt so much. I learnt a lot from individuals but also from the interactions. One of my frustrations is I'm not sure we fully captured this when we think about the projects and the outputs. The outputs are straightforward really, but the outcomes and the learning from that collaboration and co-production less so. We talk about this but don't necessarily capture it the way we might.

AP: There isn't a box for it on ResearchFish!

CB: I think this takes us to one of the things that we found in particular. Doing a large grant of this dimension and working with a range of project partners in different parts of the world, you are inevitably thinking bigger, you are thinking all the time 'what's the rationale of what we're doing?' Which perhaps you would not be thinking about if you were working on your next article or your next book project or within only the confines of your institution. The whole point was to be thinking bigger, doing work that you sense has an impact and an importance, co-producing with people in different situations who see the world from different perspectives and who create knowledge differently. You learn from that and try to develop a language that enables you to think what you're doing with your team of people, in your institutional reality, to make sense within a much bigger context, engaging in that way with societal practices and debates that are going on within society, within which you desperately want to have a voice: about multilingualism, the multimodality of language, which is a question that we moved on to. To engage with this is to engage with wider practices within society, with different audiences of different ages. That was the work done in Scotland though coproduction with Castlebrae and Drummond schools. Also, the work that Naomi Wells and Jenny Burns did with wider communities and with the writer Shirin Ramzanali Fazel in the

West Midlands, in writing workshops talking about cultural production and multilingualism through creative writing. Through our workshops and our conferences and the policy document we prepared, we tried to suggest ways one can think about modern languages and the field's rationale in a much bigger context than perhaps we are generally driven to think about these terms.

CF: All three of you signal the way this conversation is going, and that's towards questions of multilingualism or questions of translanguaging. One thing that surprised me with 'translating cultures' was the way in which that was a direction of travel for a number of projects. Partly I think that to do with the political context in the UK. We saw it a couple of weeks ago with Boris Johnson and his comments about 'changing' people's first language as if we can have some kind of cognitive intervention which prevents people from speaking a language other than English. But over the lifetime of the theme, we've seen this again and again. David Cameron with different emphasis was weaponizing English language learning. I think that has got to do with this 21st-century linguistic awareness in Western democracies. This is not news in the rest of the world, particularly the Global South, where everyday interaction depends on repertoires of languages, and always has done. I'm intrigued to hear you all say a little bit more about the place of multilingualism and its intersection with translation. Drawing out some examples, Alison mentioned her recent book on decolonising multilingualism. Charles, your project was linked to the Salzburg statement on a multilingual world. And Angela your project has clearly driven recent debates around superdiversity and translanguaging. I'd just be intrigued so to hear more about that. How does that intersect with these debates on translation?

AC: I just want to track back over one point and then I will get to the question. To pick up the point on teams, I want to emphasize the importance of asking a methodology question in your wider research question. We should, as teams of people, interrogate our own languaging practices, our own construction of knowledge. It's not unusual for us in our team to have a microphone on the table and to consider the kind of power dynamics in groups, to ask our teams to write vignettes in

which we engage with some of the same questions that we're asking others. In that way, we deconstruct ourselves. I know it can get into examining your own belly button and focusing in on yourself but still if the Research Councils encourage a kind of methodological question as well it raises the profile of that kind of work that you point to as being really important.

Multilingualism? I think this is one of the areas where I entirely agree with you Alison, in policy terms translanguaging is still: 'what does it mean, it's a bit long.....'

AP: We'll get there in ten years...

AC: I entirely agree with you, but theoretically there's a lot about deconstructing language over the last ten years or so. People like Sifree Makoni and Alistair Pennycook, and Ofelia Garcia have questioned whether languages cut it as a theoretical concept. When you look at bilingual communities or bilingualism, those boundaries are very fluid. There's been a lot of theoretical work going on, so we too, even though our background is bilingualism in education, multilingualism in education, we struggle now with the 'multi' of multilingualism. It's a bit like the 's' on 'cultures', a countable object, 'linguaging' has been around for a long, long time as a way to move away from dictionary definitions or the referential definition of language and to look at the processes of meaning making, but also how language indexes social life as a concept. 'Translanguaging' has emerged in education as a way to challenge monolingual ideologies around language education, particularly in bilingual education and TESOL, and I'm guessing in modern languages. Let me just focus in on the Global Challenges Research Fund project that we have with South Africa because that's where translanguaging has come to mean something real to me in education. Colleagues there are promoting African languages in higher education, in schools, and they find it unhelpful to talk about translation and code switching because it further marginalises African languages. Translanguaging is being explored as a way to talk about the linguistic repertoire or the semiotic resources that everybody brings to the classroom. So translanguaging is being taken up there, particularly in higher education, as a pedagogy, as a decolonising pedagogy, as a way to talk about

people and relationships. Not languages, but as a way to talk about communicative repertoire. I think translanguaging is a social practice and when you look at it empirically you cannot deny that's what people are doing. It's a kind of descriptive account of what people do in everyday life, in markets, in the classroom. I see translation as one element of translanguaging. So, I would think that the team I've been leading would also see it in a similar way. Translation takes place between people who sometimes want to evoke languages as bounded objects, they want to talk about them as an important concept for themselves, they want to talk about one language in relation to another while at other times these boundaries attract little or no attention and fall away in significance. I've been drawing more on Bakhtin's theory of centrifugal and centripetal forces. I think languaging is not only a decolonising pedagogy. For me, it's about varieties of English where some are granted a much higher status than others. We need a theory of language that really focuses on what people are doing with their resources as they communicate with one another. It's fundamentally about relationships. Translanguaging, it's not about the code, it's not about the switch – it's about what people are doing, when they are interacting with one another. I think translation is for me an element of that account. It's no use saying that languages don't exist for people, of course they do, they're an incredibly important social construct. It's not an 'either or' it's a 'both'.

CF: Charles, just to pick up on the implications of what Angela's been outlining for modern languages. Modern languages counterintuitively are one of the last bastions of monolingualism, a place which has historically protected a certain ethnolinguistic nationalism as well. What does engaging with the multilingual in your project mean for our own subject areas and the assumptions underpinning them?

CB: Well, this is something that is hugely important. Just thinking about some of the things we've been talking about not only now but over a number of years and indeed at the very inception of the project, the question was: 'well you want to do work, you want to do research, you want to co-produce things, but what are you going to transform?' We were under an imperative to be

transformative, to be a beacon to be thinking about what we are going to change. Impact wasn't something that we just did, it was something integrated in the very framework of delivering a large grant but one can be intimidated by the dimensions of doing something like this. So, if you're going to transform something, then the question is, what are you aiming to transform? You need to set out with some sense of how you are going to change things you are not happy with. One of the issues we set out in our title, 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages', was to think about some of the things Alison is saying about modern languages: how it works, the underlying disciplinary framework, what its narrative is, its place within society. There's a good deal of other work coming to us through the British Academy, through the University Council for Modern Languages, the IMLR, which have been placing this on people's agendas. You cannot do modern languages and cultures and not think you need to reflect on its disciplinary framework. So part of what we were trying to say was that we should definitely be getting beyond the idea of the nation state which is ingrained in the way that modern languages tend to be done, which in some instances goes back to the idea of the 19th century. We should be looking at cultures, different inflections of culture, interactions, contact zones – and that shouldn't be something one does in addition to studying Italian, Hispanic, German, it should be integrated within the model. We should be thinking about how we conceptualize culture, what we mean by the term, what are the problems of using the term and what are the problems of demarcating the world according to languages. The multilingual, hybrid interaction has to be central in what one aims to do if one is going to be working on representations one should be really stressing the idea that one is looking at representations as a means of asking deeper question rather than reifying or fetishizing the idea of a literary product that one studies canonically and we should be concentrating not on producing one new model of modern languages but concentrating very much on how methodologies come together in a way that they allow us to think about a coherent disciplinary framework that is permissive of diversity, that facilitates diversity of disciplinary enquiry, and allows greater contact with sociology, with history with sociolinguistics and so forth we should be thinking about in terms of the wider picture. We talked about the global,

domestic and local and how those come together. We should be thinking also about how ethnography feeds into the way in which we do things and of course seeing the picture with where it's located, how knowledge is located within a much broader picture, what we're doing in relation to schools, the wider community, and the wider global picture with all its hierarchies and all its inequalities. That is what we set out to do, that is how we have developed our thinking – and our thinking, I cannot stress it enough, it's dialogic. It's a conversation, a structured conversation, with all kinds of stakeholders and co-producers in different parts of the world and the question is how can one translate that kind of practice, that kind of conversation into tools that will allow people to be thinking about where the study of modern languages and cultures, which might not even be the best term, where that is located in the academy and in society.

AC: I think that the large grants have done something that is important for translation studies: all of us are wanting to push back and contest much more than actually challenge multilingualism as a problem. Indeed, to see multilingualism as a resource, linguistic difference as a resource in the different contexts and environments in which we work. I remember saying at the very beginning of the TLANG project: 'what I really want to do is fight against those media representations of multilingualism always as a problem and this 4-year grant will allow us to change the world.' Well perhaps it didn't quite achieve that but still it's a worthy aim and I think we all share that... And it's a question for translation studies and for all disciplines, the impact agenda: where is it we want to take our fields in making a contribution in the context of very worrying political developments? I think we all feel that.

AP: The other thing I think that was underpinning a lot of our work was *Critical Multilingual Studies*, which was the journal David Gramling and Chantelle Warner edited. The concepts were really important to us, which I think also pushed us towards multilingualism as a critical field. But the constant interpolation by society and anybody who interrogates you about what you're doing is: how many languages do you speak? We were being asked to perform multilingualism as an

interpellation. I think we were in this constant tension between street level understanding of language bureaucracy and languages and how you learn them, and our nuancing and desire to bring these other perspectives in. So, I think there was a real tension between multilingualism and translation as one of the elements in that.

CF: Where next?

AP: Angela spoke at the outset about the civic spaces, Charles about the deterritorialising modern languages. A key question for me is how do we stop the toxicity and how do we stop it with active critique? We can actually enact that one beautiful quote for the World Social Forum by Arundhati Roy: 'Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.' That sense to me is palpable in the post life of the project. I've got no sense of post-mortem all.

CB: In the sense of how one's active engagement in the world is informed and has further policy implications.

AP: Yes, these aren't projects that have died. It feels like there's a little bit too much life in there at times.