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The Transnational Study of Culture: A Plea for Translation[*]

1 Introduction

"Culture [...] is both transnational and translational." (Bhabha 1994, 247) Homi Bhabha's phrase remains striking and emphasizes the necessity of a dynamic view of culture. At the same time, it points to the increasing importance of developing transnational cultural studies explicitly from the perspective of translation and displacement. If we understand cultures as the unfolding of a multi-layered superposition and a blurring of boundaries, then intercultural differences form an integral part of the concept of culture. Within this transculturally open concept, the analysis of cultural forms and practices cannot be restricted to any single research tradition in the spectrum of *studies of culture,* which is bound to nation-specific traditions of knowledge and research. What is needed is a transnational enhancement of cultural studies.

To avoid misunderstandings: Transnationalization does not mean the international distribution of European/Western forms and standards of the *study of culture*. The danger of intellectual imperialism would be too great. What it does mean is a critical internationalism – for example along the lines of a *critical regionalism* as presented by Gayatri Spivak in her book *Other Asias.* (2008, 1 ff., 131) Recently, perspectives put forward even by dominant British and American *cultural studies* conform to the idea of a critical internationalism, which takes into account the (power) differences of knowledge transfer worldwide. As Robert Stam and Ella Shohat state in their article in the comprehensive anthology *Internationalizing Cultural Studies*: "This unequal distribution of knowledge and prestige points to the necessity of de-Eurocentrizing and transnationalizing the field." (Stam/Shohat 2005, 481) This includes the need both to pluralize the Western-based research of cultures towards an anti-Eurocentric project, and to regionalize it in order to question hegemonic premises, claims of universality, and centristic perspectives within Western cultural studies. Not surprisingly, this was only a reaction to growing pressure from the postcolonial predicament of cultural studies itself. (Cf. Abbas/Erni 2005, 2)

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This pluralization of the study of culture, which from then on was relentlessly pursued, valorizes different knowledge traditions and takes them seriously as individual "speaking positions." (Abbas/Erni 2005, 8; cf. Szeman 2006; Stratton/Ang 1996, 362) But this adjustment towards pluralization never went beyond mere lip service. So far, there are few analyses that question which (scientific-) historical and political conditions would have to be met and which categories would be needed to initiate a critical transnationalization – both towards "comparative (multi)Cultural Studies" (Stam/Shohat 2005, 492) and towards an epistemological decolonization in the humanities as demanded by Sérgio Costa in his article "Found in Networking? Geisteswissenschaften in der neuen Geopolitik des Wissens." (Costa 2011, 46) Would it be sufficient simply to add the nation-specific or local variations of cultural studies in different parts of the world? Today, working with categories like connection, networking or cross-linkage presents itself as the obvious, established research perspective. Nevertheless even these categories can be misleading. It would be too easy, for instance, to employ them simply in the service of defining global networks, thereby hiding that these networks are heavily determined by power asymmetries and that they emerge out of historical non-contemporaneities. Bearing these problems in mind, it would be more constructive to bring translation as an analytical category to the fore – with special regard to its potential for recognizing and managing difference.

Translation has not only become a leading category in the humanities (Apter 2006; Bachmann-Medick 2012; Bassnett 2011), but it might also further the humanities and the study of culture in their internationalization. (Cf. Bachmann-Medick 2014) From the perspective of culturally informed translation studies, the focus moves towards specific processes of translation as well as towards differences, ruptures und un-translatable moments in the global circulation of theories, concepts, categories and terminologies. We must learn to take up the category of translation, with its inherent awareness of difference, to uncover and emphasize possible connecting points with non-European research traditions in the *study of culture*. This would be particularly beneficial when discussing the revaluation of *area studies*, and in particular the new perspectives on 'translocal' linkages in global history. (Cf. Freitag/von Oppen 2010) Coupled with a revaluation of area studies, translation would also overcome its overly traditionalist and antiquated connotations – which have become (problematically) reinstated in the German Council of Science and Humanities' recommendations for *area studies* from 2006 – that are based merely on exchange and cultural mediation, i.e. on a rather outmoded concept of translation that does not consider contemporary insights

into the asymmetries of global and transregional connections.[1] (Bachmann-Medick 2015) Emerging approaches to a transnationalization of the study of culture itself are already on their way to outlining a more complex concept of translation.

Even now, translation acts as a category that inspires cultural studies to self-reflexively expand the pillars of its own research practice. Currently in focus is a greater emphasis on the interdisciplinarity of research within the study of culture, especially within its characteristic "study of transitional processes" ("Arbeit an Übergängen") (Weigel 2001, 125), its "openness to translation" (Bachmann-Medick 2010, 384 ff.) or its "transition-logic." (Wirth 2008, 25–27) These aspects underline the striking advantages of a translational perspective. Such a perspective can be achieved by making an epistemological leap that would extend the traditional cultural technique and practice of linguistic translation to more encompassing processes of transmission and mediation. This would not only allow us to discover new areas of research, but also present us with another, more extensive potential of translation. Translation would become a comprehensive analytical category, opening up new avenues for epistemological thought that could then lead to border thinking, the sounding out of intermediary spaces (between cultures, but also between disciplines and systems of knowledge), the acceptance and acknowledgement of differences, and the breaking open of 'clustered' complexes of problems and general terms (like modernization, identity, subject, work, religion, and so on). Owing to this epistemological benefit for analysis, the category of translation would therefore bring about a definitive *translational turn* across disciplines, one that would nevertheless remain bound to intercultural or cross-cultural communication and interaction. (Cf. Bachmann-Medick 2010, 238–283; 2016, 175–209; 2009)

Facing the challenges of economic and cultural globalization, the *study of culture* cannot remain a stagnant, national enterprise limited to its own scholarly traditions. These traditions must learn to adapt to and apply the translational perspective to themselves from within the framework of a global project for transnational cultural studies. One of the central concerns for the study of culture today must be to find out whether there are any signs that lead to a global language, indeed to a global vocabulary as a condition of the possibility for such a project like a transnational *study of culture*, one which takes into account different

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1 Here, regional/area studies themselves are still being emphasized as "mediators" between cultures. At the same time they "[...] offer models for translating and negotiating between different cultures, or political and social structures." (Wissenschaftsrat 2006, 47) Here, translation is succinctly defined as "exchange with other countries," instead of a complex process of transposition, including broad translation processes already within the respective culture and its traditions of knowledge and research.

regional perspectives in the world. It will become crucial to encourage local registers of knowledge to participate in developing such a translational vocabulary.

2 Global Trans(re)lations

Translations between cultures and systems of knowledge have become indispensible nowadays, especially as analytical tools: for the management and investigation of cultural as well as interreligious relations and conflicts; for the development of integrative strategies in so-called multicultural societies; and, last but not least, for exploring productive junctions between the humanities and the sciences. The different approaches in the *study of culture* also need to refer back to the trans(re)lations in a society's everyday life. Furthermore, they need to reflect upon their often disparate ways of analysis, finding out either the extent to which they themselves are translatable within their specific methodological frameworks, or the ways in which they can offer themselves for analysis. In the end, increasing globalization cannot cloud the fact that there still are differences between various cultures of knowledge, systems of terminologies, thinking and acting. We need a sharpened attention to processes of transposition, mediation and insights into the single steps a translation procedure takes in order to better understand those differences – so as not to cover up too hastily either ruptures in intercultural interactions, distortions in the circulation of global representations, or obstructions on the stony paths of scientific *travelling concepts*. (Concerning *travelling concepts*, cf. Bal 2002; Said 1983; Clifford 1997; Neumann/Nünning 2012; Langenohl 2014; Bachmann-Medick 2014)

To investigate all these potential ruptures in global relations, translation becomes an evermore important cultural technique. Even though we cannot ignore questions about the limits of global translatability, the increasing concentration on translation processes within cultural studies raises our awareness of recent as well as historical situations of cultural encounter – as complex processes of cultural translation. The same applies to the sphere of scholarly exchange. Translation opens up to a transnational practice that deals with highly complex processes of transmission and mediation – more far-reaching than the bipolar 'exchanges' between national languages or cultures of knowledge and scholarship within a nation state framework.

These multilayered transnational issues at stake force the different perspectives on and approaches to cultural studies to take into account an increasingly complex understanding of translation – an understanding which explicitly transgresses a linguistic-textual framework and moves into the sphere of social and

scholarly practice. Only if the concept is broadened in this way can translation rise to its full potential within cultural studies, a potential which translation studies scholar Lawrence Venuti had already pointed to in the late 1990s. (Venuti 1998, 9) In doing so, translation will be able to overcome the boundaries of its 'discipline' within *translation studies* and become a fundamental category of analysis for cultural and social sciences. Indeed, the most recent decisive translational stimuli stem from subtle cultural and social-scientific uses of the category of translation which, however, still need to be checked empirically for their practicability in most cases. Jürgen Habermas, for example, entreats religious communities in post-secular societies to translate their religious languages into a generally accessible secular language. (Habermas 2006) Joachim Renn bases the entire field of sociology on "translational relations" (*Übersetzungsverhältnisse*) (cf. Renn 2006), in which he strives for a new perspective on social integration in the face of existing differences, as well as for translational connectivities between different parts and groups of a society. That translation can be a key term for social theory is reflected in the area of migration studies, which is being re-discovered from the perspective of translational activities and the act of translating oneself. (Cf. Papastergiadis 2000; Vorderobermeier/Wolf 2008) Titles such as "Translating Terror" (cf. Bassnett 2005), "Violence and Translation" (Das 2002), or *Translation and Conflict* (Baker 2006) open up explicitly political horizons of translation. Here we can see the greatest broadening of the textual and linguistic realm towards a more encompassing critical insight into political usages and effects of translation: as a political-manipulative strategy, as a specific practice of power or even violence, but also as an important strategy for narrative legitimizations of war and conflict, with all the communicative situations and mobilizing attempts that go with it.

3 (Cross-)References and Transformations

How can this broad category of translation help to increase the transnationalization of the *study of culture*? That depends on how far we look beyond the horizon of linguistic and textual translations with our sharpened attention, without rendering translation a mere metaphor. The cooperation with international *translation studies* can offer stimuli for analytical precision. Their own *cultural turn* (cf. Bassnett/Lefevere 1998; Venuti 2000; Bassnett 2002; Snell-Hornby 2006) was and is accompanied by adhering to an exact analytical translation process. We need to put the necessity of cultural translations – which has only been postulated for too long – into concrete terms within this framework. In this way it can be tested

and verified for small, graspable units of communication like situations of inter-action or mediation – even if these have to be tied back to broader horizons like power and dependencies, or discursive fields like Orientalism or colonialism for a proper contextualization. (Cf. Asad/Dixon 1985, 177; Venuti 1998, 158) A transna-tionalization of the *study of culture* can benefit from these context-sensitive and detail-oriented analyses of translation offered by *translation studies*, as well as from exposing the problems of the 'original' in its increasingly precarious status, its dubious authority, and its less than secure positioning.

The study of culture today cannot assume any more that the 'originals' of their theories and approaches originated in the West and are only being copied or maybe translated outside of Europe. Nevertheless, single acts of translation are still coined by powerful hegemonic relations, even asymmetries, of a "global regime of translation." (Sakai 1997, 2009) Such a framework for translation, including the translation of scholarly texts, academic approaches and debates, has to be critically reflected if there is to be a project of transnationalization within the study of culture. Attention has to be directed primarily towards contexts and frames of references, especially 'between' the different systems and cultures of knowledge. The potential of a *third space*, a *tertium comparationis* beyond a simple dualism opens up here, which has to be re-negotiated with every transla-tion of one position, one perspective, and one scientific system into another. The area of social action itself offers revealing insights into the necessity of mediating communication through a common, general frame of reference. Martin Fuchs, a sociologist with a cultural anthropologist's eye, has demonstrated this by way of the Dalit (the untouchables) in India. As highly marginalized slum dwellers, they have been and are attempting (especially since the mid-twentieth century) to make their voices heard and bring their claims across by translating their enti-tlement to human rights into the universalist framework of justice, freedom and equality. The powerful 'language' of Buddhism offers such a frame of reference to the Dalit. It allows them to discover the power of their own agency:

> They were now able to address the most denigrating aspects of their discrimination and existence publicly, most notably through new forms of literature, as many now felt empow-ered to speak up in the public arena and articulate their concerns and demands openly and forcefully. (Fuchs 2009, 31)

The reference point of Buddhism allowed the Dalit to connect to other social contexts and thus gain social recognition. Here, translation appears as an inten-tional act, as an active "reaching out to others" – a far-reaching perspective on translation, which allows different groups in a society to use translation as a "mode of agency." (Fuchs 2009, 32) The already problematic bipolarity of the

translation process does not work anymore in these practices of social translations. It becomes necessary to develop and use – even possibly universal – "*third idioms*" (in this case study the language of Buddhism) in order to gain frames of reference even for the acts of translating themselves. This demands a multipolar approach as translation does not mean simply bridging two unconnected poles. Rather than being a one-way process, translation becomes a sociological category for the analysis of complex relationships, which differs from a simple transfer in so far as it includes internal differences as well as the expectation of reciprocity and mutual transformations from the start.

If we want to enhance the transnationalization of the study of culture, it is a natural assumption that these third idioms or third spaces need to be developed as tracks for translation in order to put reciprocity into practice. Of course we cannot simply assume that the practice of negotiating differences alone, emphasized by Homi Bhabha, offers such a new track. After all we would first need – according to the claim of sociologist Thomas Schwinn – a certain "standardisation of differences." (Schwinn 2006, 225–227) Schwinn refers to standardized cognitive (by all means even normatively tainted) frameworks, within which differences can be articulated and communicated: for example, the reference to human rights, environmental, educational and health standards, etc. Common reference points like these as well as a formal standardization offer important 'corridors' of translatability (cf. Schwinn 2006, 209–211) despite all differences. They are needed, both for cultural and scientific translations, because systems of knowledge in themselves are especially difficult to hybridize; they rather co-exist unconnectedly. It would thus be a great step forward if, for example, Western academia accepted terms, methods, and insights from other traditions of science as "corridors" of translatability – instead of developing and formulating the decisive cognitive standards in technology and natural sciences from its own perspective only, in order to universalize these standards and send them around the world as *travelling concepts*.

4 Translation as Displacement

Defined by their self-reflexivity, *cultural studies/Kulturwissenschaften* should be able to make cognitive standards 'translatable.' This means that they must be repeatedly re-localized with respect to different cultures of science and knowledge but after all, the acceptance and acceptability of these (Western) standards also has to face resistance, especially from cultures and societies which can set their own, different forms of knowledge and traditions against Western ideas.

(Cf. Schwinn 2006, 224) But even when merely developing shared standards, difficult communication processes can be expected. We cannot simply assume smooth communication channels and 'corridors' (as Schwinn does); rather, there are breaks and ruptures, which might cause distorted appropriations or transformations. There is no way past the postcolonial predicament that paves the way for a kind of transnationalization broader than a one-way street. The postcolonial attention to power in any kind of translational relations (cf. Niranjana 1992; Bassnett/Trivedi 1999; Spivak 2000; Tymoczko/Gentzler 2002) has furthered a view of cultural translation as a process of transformation that is full of tensions and conflicts. This already goes beyond the scope of clearly defined positions or spheres, or the 'fidelity' to 'originals' of tradition, origin and identity. Therefore, it would be too rash to simply adopt the term "translational transnationalism" (Apter 2001, 5) to pave the way for an enlightened cosmopolitanism within the global politics of language, culture and translation. Instead, we should make use of studies of culture rooted in translation to track down the historical, social and political conditions of cross-cultural translations and science translations by looking at clearly defined problems.

An impetus for this perspective would be Homi Bhabha's unconventional coupling of "transnational and translational." (1994, 247) This goes beyond a mere play on words in pointing out a task of transnational cultural studies which still needs to be put in concrete terms:

> Any transnational cultural study must 'translate', each time locally and specifically, what decentres and subverts this transnational globality, so that it does not become enthralled by the new global technologies of ideological transmission and cultural consumption. (Bhabha 1994, 241)

The range of the translation category goes even further. It demands to explicitly spell out vague visions of wholeness from a translational perspective, be they visions of culture or cultural studies, or of globalization. Translation scholar Michael Cronin assumes that global processes can be envisioned and analyzed as decentered when speaking of "globalization as translation." (2003, 34) This opens the door for an actor-oriented approach to globalization. Owing to their own efforts in translating and adopting different perspectives step by step, actors even in a global civic society can work towards a bottom-up localization and thus actively define their place and establish networks and relationships. (Cf. Cronin 2006) The conceptual considerations put forward by Dipesh Chakrabarty (especially 2000, 2008, 2010), an Indian-Australian-American historian, demonstrate that the questions surrounding global translation processes cannot be answered without due reflection of the historical dimensions. Thus we need to re-interpret

the transition of non-European countries (like India) to capitalism, but also the manifestation of *multiple modernities*, in the face of the fundamental idea of *translation-as-displacement*: not as the result of a linear process of universalization, but as the outcome of historical, colonially shaped differences and fractions in translations. (Cf. Chakrabarty 2014)

"Translation [...] is the agency of difference." (Haverkamp 1997, 7) A statement like this needs to be substantiated. Mere epistemological efforts will not lead us any further. Neither is it enough to simply break down those holistic and supposedly pure concepts like culture, identity, tradition to their conflicting parts. Following Dipesh Chakrabarty (2008), historical substantiation and differentiation are indispensable when analyzing processes of cultural translation. Or, in the words of Latin America scholar Walter Mignolo, we have to do "theorizing across the colonial difference." (Mignolo/Schiwy 2003, 4) Faced with global relationships defined by their displacements and multiple cultural affinities, we are forced to re-think our understanding of translation with regards to politics and power relations. This would have far-reaching consequences for the still prevailing idea of translation as 'bridge-building.' This very idea continues to be used as a set phrase, even as an ideological construct in the 'exchange' between scientific/academic cultures. Instead, it would be more productive and realistic to take a closer look at the easily ignored fractures and differences in the dynamic of translation processes. After all, the 'in-between-situations' of translational relations are closely linked to in-between-existences caused by world-wide migration, exile and diaspora. These overlaps and fractures between different affiliations could also apply to the migration of theories, which we cannot describe any more with the harmonistic travelling metaphor along the lines of *travelling concepts*.

Translation is an important method of displacement and alienation, differentiation and mediation. It paves the way for an analysis of the 'in-between-spaces' celebrated by cultural studies – particularly by looking at them as 'translation spaces' in a more detailed way: as spaces for the configuration of relationships, situations, 'identities' and interactions by specific cultural translation processes. 'In-between-spaces' made accessible like this also have far-reaching epistemological and analytical potential because they foster translational perspectives, especially a search for cross-conceptualizations which are helpful in breaking up binary counter terms or even formulaic clusters. Thus, from a translational viewpoint, the umbrella term 'intercultural' could be tied back again to interaction processes of encounter, consisting of single steps of translation. This would help to make visible elements like understanding, mediation, misunderstandings, blockages, scepticism and defence, which so far have been frequently ignored. A translational approach like this makes the complexity of transfer and media-

tion processes more transparent and thus easier to manage. At the same time it demonstrates the importance of going back to the roots of terminological pre-dispositions and – often unspoken – assumptions. They can be criticized and differentiated when looking at translation processes – for example, by dissecting *master narratives* or synthesizing terms like modernization, identity, society or culture (even running the risk that such a dissection and negotiation might be a Western-European-American strategy again).

5 "Cross-categorical Translation" instead of Universalization

One way for the study of culture/cultural studies to distance itself from universalizing Western ideas, models, concepts, theories, terms and categories in a transnational framework would be the dissection of general terms. But does Boris Buden (2005, 17) not have a point when he argues that we need "a new universalist perspective" in order to develop a common path of communication and understanding in the face of increasing 'particularisms'? On this path, every "search for a universal basis of communication" is countered by the search for "the specific cultural origin of the particular." (Shimada 1997, 260) Exactly this dilemma creates a productive force field for questions of and about translation. Biased attempts to universalize based on Eurocentric assumptions are questioned vehemently, especially from outside of Europe. They also expose the problem of the European privilege to translation and its traditional practice of translating foreign cultures and languages unilaterally into the European context. In the future, the critical reflection of translation in the study of culture will have to put more force into a change in perspectives. This means engaging with translation processes from different directions and with different localizations in order to understand how "translation processes are essential for the self-conception of all non-European cultures [...]." (Shimada 1997, 261; cf. Hermans 2006; Hung/Wakabayashi 2005; Ning/Yifeng 2008)

Is it becoming more and more questionable to argue for global communication while grounding it on universalizations, which are still mainly defined by Western ideas? We cannot assume a global, extensive distribution based on universalizing transpositions. This assumption could and should be replaced by a critical view of local speaking positions and reciprocal global translation processes. Analyses focusing on the junctions where reciprocity in translation is possible are real eye-openers: for example, the common goal to find *third idioms* – like religious frames of reference (cf. Fuchs 2009), or the reference to human rights.

(Cf. Tsing 1997) Approaches like these need impulses from outside of Europe to reconceptualize reflections on translation. Notably, scholars in Asia are currently developing potent non-Western concepts of translation with a strong reference to a *translational turn* – these go as far as demanding reciprocal translations and an exchange of theories beyond ethnocentric preconditioning. (Cf. Hung/Wakabayashi 2005; Ning 2007; Ning/Yifeng 2008)

Dipesh Chakrabarty's radical displacement of the question of translation itself shows how especially in this context epistemological and global problems are intertwined with politics of translation. Already the title of his book *Provincializing Europe* (2000) draws attention to the fact that Europe needs to make itself translatable because it is losing its historical hegemony by being integrated into shared and "entangled histories" (cf. Randeria 2002) and thereby being 'provincialized.' In this situation, Europe loses its assumed embodiment of the 'original' and its claim to being the major authority in defining universal terms and concepts. According to Chakrabarty, it can only become apparent how historical knowledge is being produced not only in Europe but also in the so-called third world by understanding translation as displacement beyond colonial boundaries. Thus, *Provincializing Europe* explicitly suggests a broadening of the analytical approach to processes of cultural and political translations, from *cross-cultural* to "*cross-categorical.*" Only then can we suspend Eurocentric, universalistic frames of reference and, instead, stay open to non-European categories of translation. To give a well-known example by Chakrabarty, this should allow for a translation of the Hindi term *pani* into the English term 'water' without having to go through the existing Western scientific specification, i.e. H_2O. (Cf. Chakrabarty 2000, 83) In order to develop a common ground for reciprocal cultural translations, we need a specific mode of comparison which reflects the various ways of mediation and the problematic cultural affiliation of the respective *tertium comparationis*. This, following a translational turn, paves the way for an interesting epistemological perspective in the development of a transnational study of culture, a perspective which can only be drafted for now. (Bachmann-Medick 2014)

Chakrabarty (2006, 2014) emphasizes how strongly "cross-categorical translations" are tied to the demand to contextualize and historicize those universalizing categories of analysis (like democracy, dignity of man, equality, etc.): A political historiography in non-European countries such as India in a postcolonial context can only be achieved through a critical revision of the predominance of European key categories of modernity, even through a new perspective of translation as displacement. The idea of translation, as compared to the idea of either transfer or travelling concepts, enables us to lay bare the single parts and junctures of a whole set of historical displacements: in this case, the transformation of the 'original' European term 'proletariat' in India based on new collective

subjects of history like 'subaltern,' 'masses,' and 'peasants' reaching as far as the concept of 'multitude' proposed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004). According to Chakrabarty, translation as a difference-oriented concept needs to be tied back to its historical refractions:

> There is nothing like the cunning of reason that ensures that we all converge at the same terminal point in history in spite of our apparent, historical differences. Our historical differences actually make a difference. [...] The universal concepts of political modernity encounter pre-existing concepts, categories, institutions, and practices through which they are translated and newly configured. (Chakrabarty 2014, 59)

When comparing cultures, the relevance of such an approach for developing a transnational study of culture becomes apparent – not least when attempting to easily bypass reference terms of a global, transnational historiography with the preset assumption of "entangled" or "connected histories." The view needs to be sharpened through the lens of specific translation processes to see further. The relevance of a historical contextualization of cultural as well as scientific translation processes becomes blatantly obvious in a re-evaluation of universality in transcultural contact situations. Because homogeneous frames of reference are missing in the global sphere, self-consciously reflecting on culturally specific assumptions, frameworks, deep structures and translational perspectives becomes indispensible. Which terms are being assumed as a basis for transnational research? Are analytical categories like modernization, development, capitalism, family, democracy or work, really universally applicable and valid? Which translation processes are needed to open up the terms of transcultural analysis themselves – with the goal of finding functional equivalents on the practical level or the terminological systems of non-European societies?

6 The Transnational Study of Culture as a Mode of Translation Studies

We can only speak soundly of *cross-cultural translation* – including the translations among social and cultural studies themselves – if we aim towards "*cross-categorical translations.*" (Chakrabarty 2000, 85) This certainly implies one of the biggest challenges for any attempt at making transnational cultural studies as a mode of *translation studies* more distinguished. Here the individual disciplines within cultural research can further a transnationalization of the study of culture by bringing in their own current focus on translation. Just think about the decided discussions on restructuring a whole subject area, say in the field of comparative

literature. Here the *translational turn* is far-reaching because it opens the subject area up to political contexts and forces a re-thinking from the borders of "translation zones." (Apter 2006, 5) This term refers to arenas and conflict situations which hold great potential for translations whilst, at the same time, running the huge risk of mistranslations: diaspora communities, global media, conflict zones and war, as well as contact zones between different perceptions and realities. These 'zones' shed light on how "philology is linked to globalization, to Guantánamo Bay, to war and peace, to the Internet [...]." (Apter 2006, 11) It is certain that explosive issues like these for the comparative analysis of transcultural texts between "language wars," "linguistic creolization" and multilingual situations have given a strong impetus to sociological and political usages of the translation category. Within the emerging field of translational migration studies, however, we need to elaborate on what it could mean to redefine migration alongside the concept of translation, and view self-translation as an important element of a permanent transformation process: "In an age of global migration we also need new social theories of flow and resistance and cultural theories of difference and translation." (Papastergiadis 2000, 20) Even on the level of translational analyses in the social sciences, first attempts of using theories of cultural translation for examining the integration challenges of modern societies could be further investigated. It would certainly be a productive step to look at the opportunities for conflict resolution and the capacities for integration through a revaluation of translation processes. (Cf. Renn 2006; Renn/Straub/Shimada 2002)

Finally, the increasingly transnational field of historiography shows a striking rediscovery of the translation category. Translation is being read and used here as a specific practice of historical mediation, through which colonialism, decolonization, missionary history, transitional processes of conversion and the transfer of concepts can be made accessible by the analysis of actions. (Cf. Richter 2005, 13; Howland 2003; Bermann/Wood 2005, especially 257–273; Lässig 2012) Within this framework, scholars are increasingly on the lookout for creative re-interpretations of basic political concepts like freedom, democracy and human rights (Bachmann-Medick 2013), for challenges in developing their own historical-political terms and concepts in the face of these Western travelling concepts (cf. Liu 1995, 1999; Sakai 1997) – even for practices of explicit non-equivalence. The limitations of a transdisciplinary and transcultural translational perspective become apparent in these processes, at least as long as they are still under the spell of verbal language pre-loads and fixations. So far only few approaches – for example, in research on missionaries and conversion, as well as in religious studies – apply the concept of cultural translation to the translation of images as an "analytical tool for image transmissions and religious conversions in general." (Bräunlein 2008, 29) For a transnational study of culture there will be no way

around the realization that image and picture translations in particular offer important insights into intercultural relations. Significant first steps are being made towards "Cultural (image) studies (*Kulturbildwissenschaft*) as translation theory" (Mersmann 2004, 107–109): "visual cultural translation is still under-represented in translation theory." (Mersmann 2009) In the face of transnational media and image worlds, the translation of images is becoming increasingly controversial. We are faced with cultural differences and conflicting image cultures, even the prohibition of images, which have been exemplified in the debates and struggles about the Mohammed caricatures as well as in reactions to the obscene and scandalous torture pictures from the Abu Ghraib prison.

The disciplines' increasing willingness to open themselves up to the category of translation and to make themselves translatable offers an important springboard for more far-reaching questions of transnational translatability, as well as for the necessity of translation between the different, nation-specific cultures of knowledge within *cultural studies/Kulturwissenschaften* themselves. Currently there is too much commingling of hitherto new perspectives and too much deference towards Anglo-American theories even within Europe. (Cf. Bachmann-Medick 2014, new postscript 407 ff.) Which approaches are thus lost in translation? The task of translation is becoming increasingly relevant, especially beyond the borders of Europe, in particular regarding Latin American *estudios culturales,* which have been evolving more and more and coming to the fore. (Cf. among others Klengel 2008; Allatson 2007; Canclini 2005; Richard 2005; Moreiras 2001; Moraña 2000) Their development of distinct analytical categories (transculturation, *testimonio*, dependence, hybridization, etc.) questions the hegemonic master narrative of the U.S. as representative of *cultural studies*. The *estudios culturales* point out the necessity of outlining the prospective transnational study/ies of culture in a more multi-layered way than ever before, thereby critically reflecting the power divide between different cultures of research – not least by following *cross-categorical translations*.

7 The Globalization of the Study of Culture as a Challenge for Translation

There is no straight path to the globalization of the study of culture. It will rather be re-translated and transformed from its 'peripheries' from outside of Europe. According to Stuart Hall, it needs to expose itself to translation processes in order to enable this development: "Cultural studies today is not only about globalization: it is being 'globalized' – a very uneven and contradictory process [...] What

interests me about this is that, everywhere, cultural studies is going through this process of re-translation." (Hall/Chen 1996, 393) With this statement Stuart Hall emphasized already at the beginning of the 1990s that the European strand of cultural studies not only needs to translate into the societal processes of internationalization and globalization, but to make itself translatable for Asian and African cultural studies within this process:

> Cultural studies is transformed once you begin to think what the Taiwanese situation is, what "the nation" means there; how internationalization and the new global economy is transforming your society. Until you go to cultural studies through these structures, not from within cultural studies itself but from these externalities, you don't really translate it; you just borrow it, renovate it, play at recasting it. (Hall/Chen 1996, 397)

In this context, translation is completely disconnected from the idea of an (European) 'original:'

> I use [...] translation as a continuous process of re-articulation and re-contextualization, without any notion of a primary origin. So I am not using it in the sense that cultural studies was 'really' a fully-formed western project and is now taken up elsewhere. I mean that whenever it enters a new cultural space, the terms change [...]. (Hall/Chen 1996, 393)

In order to realize this still unfulfilled project of cultural research as both a result of translation and translation studies, we need to develop methods and terms of analysis which do not mainly stem from Western research traditions but have yet to be developed from a "global conversation." (Jacob 1999, 112)

At the heart of this complex problem are prominent objections against the idea of a "global conversation" as too seamless, as trusting translation to be a straight path to communication and the overcoming of borders. Comparatist and Asia scholar Naoki Sakai, for example, argues that this apparently seamless "global conversation" is being undermined by the highly visible discontinuity of translation processes. According to Sakai, *cultural studies*/*Kulturwissenschaften* can only turn into *translation studies* if the former unmasks the global translation system as a regime of the "unity of national language," as a "scheme of nationality" (Sakai 2009, 73) – if cultural studies reveals it as a modern scheme of "co-figuration" of national languages, which is used to define hegemonic borders and exclusive spaces. Nevertheless, translation can be empowered as a critical conceptual perspective and strategically used from within this regime of inequality. Following this idea, Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon have demonstrated the great potential for transnational cultural studies as translational studies: as "comparative cultural theory that is attentive to global traces in the theoretical knowledge produced in specific locations." (Sakai/Solomon 2006, v) This does

not mean that cultural studies, like *travelling theories*, find their way from the U.S. to the rest of the world. Rather, cultural studies should expose itself to the simultaneous development of theories *in disparate sites* of the world – and organize its publications in as many languages and voices as possible: in Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean at the same time, as has been programmatically demonstrated by *Traces* (cf. Sakai/Solomon 2006), a multilingual series of publications. Ultimately, theory is not only a Western prerogative any more.

As an epistemological project, the "dislocation of the West" (Sakai/Solomon 2006, 18) could be read as a counterpart to Chakrabarty's historical approach to *Provincializing Europe*. This convergence demonstrates that a translational perspective can be the most far-reaching when it motivates different approaches to the study of culture to make themselves translatable to a global knowledge-based society and to work towards pluralization – quasi against the grain of a *unilateral regime of translation*. This might sound rather conceptual and abstract, but the contact and negotiation zones between different cultures of science and scholarship often seem to overlap with the increasingly volatile global political problem fields. These translational scenarios – most notably since 9/11 – are more and more dependent on professional translators and interpreters as mediators and cultural brokers with a sensitivity to cultural conflicts. They demand an enhanced critical competence for managing complex processes of cultural translation with regard to their political and ethical dimensions, as well as to their deeper power-related structures; reflecting their implicit strategies, their claim to power and hegemony, their manipulations and acts of violence – as well as their often surprising possibilities for intervention. Translation does not remain limited to the mere 'exchange' between cultures of knowledge and scholarship; it is slowly but surely turning into a "matter of war and peace." (Apter 2006, 3) Under these circumstances, the study of culture's inclusion of the transnational becomes more than a mere research project; it becomes a translation project located at the political level. Such a translation project, far from being reducible to a common universal language, is necessarily bound up with the different "speaking positions" inherent to the studies of culture – positions that precisely do not allow for the smoothing out of strained political, social and economic differences found in every corner of the globe.

English translation by Mirjam Eiswirth

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