



14. 15.3.2008

# **Borders, Nations, Translations**

## The Political Limits of Cultural Trans-Nationalism

A conference in the framework of the eipcp-project **translate. Beyond Culture: The Politics of Translation** ([translate.eipcp.net](http://translate.eipcp.net))



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# Borders, Nations, Translations

## The Political Limits of Cultural Trans-Nationalism

Home is where I understand and where I am understood, wrote Karl Jaspers once. If this home today is our globalized world, then its mother tongue cannot be but a translation, both linguistically and culturally. And yet, what if we want this home to have a political meaning, to be the place of freedom, justice and equality for all of us? Should we form a nation of translation and claim its sovereignty in an independent state? Who translates betrays: mother tongues, borders and, above all, the old political dreams. The betrayers of all the nations will never form a nation of their own. It is time for a new challenge. Is it possible to articulate the emerging trans-national culture of translation in non-cultural terms or, in other words, are we able to translate a trans-national cultural space into a common trans-cultural political action?

With:

Boris Buden, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Rada Ivekovic, Sandro Mezzadra, Klaus Neundlinger, Stefan Nowotny, Jon Solomon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Hito Steyerl, Tom Waibel, Michaela Wolf.

<http://translate.eipcp.net/conference>

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# 14.3.2008

Languages: English and German

**12.00** Opening

**Therese Kaufmann, Boris Buden**

**12.30-15.30** Panel 1

Moderation: **Boris Buden**

**Rada Ivekovic**

Translating Borders

**Stefan Nowotny**

The Multiple Faces of the *Civis*, or:  
Is Citizenship Translatable?

**Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez**

Translating Transcultural and Decolonising of Knowledge

15.30-16.00 Break

**16.00-19.00** Panel 2

Moderation: **Stefan Nowotny**

**Tom Waibel**

Privateers in the Sea of Signs:  
Biopiracy and Politics of Translation

**Hito Steyerl**

Travelling Images

**Klaus Neundlinger**

Simultaneous - New Paradigms of Productivity:  
Will the Form of Space Replace the Form of Wage Labour?

Audio Streaming:

<http://translate.eipcp.net/conference>





# 15.3.2008

Languages: English and German

**12.00-15.00** Panel 3

Moderation: **Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez**

**Michaela Wolf**

Nation of Translation Nation as Translation:  
Charting Perspectives of Trans-cultural Political Action

**Sandro Mezzadra**

The Labour of Translation. Imagining the Politics  
of Translation Beyond Communication and Articulation

**Boris Buden**

Faithful to Whom: Fidelity of Translation as Political Question

15.00-15.30 Break

**15.30 19.30** Panel 4

Moderation: **Hito Steyerl**

**Jon Solomon**

Rethinking the Meaning of Regions: Translation and Catastrophe

**Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

Varieties of Transculture

**Party**

DJ-Team: **rst fatal kiss**

Buffet

Audio Streaming:  
<http://translate.eipcp.net/conference>





# Biographies &

## **Therese Kaufmann**

*is co-director of the eipcp - European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies and currently coordinates the transnational art- and research project translate. Beyond Culture: The Politics of Translation. She is member of the editorial board of Kulturrisse and teaches regularly. She worked for several years in Bosnia, Croatia and Belgium and graduated in German literature and art history at the University of Vienna and in Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College/ University of London.*

## **Rada Ivekovic** **Translating Borders**

Borders are hard to some and soft to others, there is a gradation of hardness (or softness). We need to ask who/what a border is soft or hard to, i.e. about a politics of borders (not limited to state politics). There are a number of different statuses in citizenship and nationality, rule of law notwithstanding. Soft and hard are extreme, opposite designations or characteristics difficult to measure, while a border is actually a relationship. The visualisation as a line is a simplification of a complex rapport. A border may also be seen as inexistent in itself, since it is an interface. The meaning of borders draws on whatever borders delineate, protect or stand for.

*Rada Ivekovic is programme director at the Collège international de philosophie, Paris, philosopher, indologist, writer, was born in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, in 1945. She published books in different languages concerning philosophy in general (Indian or comparative, but not exclusively, and including some translations from Sanskrit or Pali, textbooks, essays), political philosophy, feminist philosophy, (literary) criticism, essays.*

## **Stefan Nowotny**

### **The Multiple Faces of the Civis , or: Is Citizenship Translateable?**

According to Emile Benveniste, the two classical European languages, Greek and Latin, offer two different linguistic models of understanding the citizen : whereas the Greek model relates the polites to a polis, and hence builds up on a relation of membership, the Latin model constructs the meaning of civitas as based on the reciprocities among a multiplicity of cives, regardless of membership status. If it is true that any practiced language draws upon capacities of translation, then we might be able to analyse some elements of the political languages of our time as traces of a specific rewording of the tension between these two models, at least as far as the European context is concerned. The political determination of borders is but one of these elements. But what is the role of those in this process who are regarded, in present-day Europe, as non-European citizens or European non-citizens ?



# and Abstracts

*Stefan Nowotny, philosopher, lives in Vienna; board member of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, presently working in the framework of the two transnational projects transform and translate; 2004/05 lecturer at the University of Lüneburg (Kulturwissenschaften); 2001-2003 Visiting Fellow at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Centre de philosophie du droit). He has published various essays on philosophical and political topics, co-edited several anthologies, and translated a number of texts from both French and English into German, among which G. Ch. Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (together with A. Joskowicz).*

## **Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez**

### **Translating Transcultural and Decolonising of Knowledge**

A wide range of research indicates that domestic and care work in private households is now the largest employment sector for migrant women entering the European Union. These studies have considered the work conditions of domestic workers as an expression of global inequalities. However, they have not engaged in a transcultural analysis of the interpersonal relationship between employers and employees. This is a perspective that engages with the Cuban theorist Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation. I will apply this concept in my analysis of the relationship between employers and employees, mostly Latin American women, in domestic and care work. Their encounters will be analyzed in terms of translation (Benjamin, Pratt, Spivak). The discussion of questions regarding power relations around differential positionalities in terms of interlocking systems of power and domination, establishes an analytical perspective that is discussed through the concepts of cultural translation.

*Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez is a Senior Lecturer in Transcultural Studies with a focus on Migration and Diaspora Cultural Studies in the Department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies. She is co-director of the Migration and Diaspora Cultural Studies Network (<http://www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/research/centres/mdcsn/>). Her research and publications are situated at the intersection of Critical Migration Studies, Transnational Cultural Studies, Gender, Queer and Postcolonial Studies. She has published extensively on subjectivity and processes of racialisation and gendering, postcolonial critique in Europe and transnational labour migration; post-structuralism and ethnography; governmentality and discourse analysis.*

**Tom Waibel**

### **Privateers in the Sea of Signs: Biopiracy and Politics of Translation**

Patenting life forms is a contemporary way of hijacking common goods, and thereby an actual way of spatializing and territorializing knowledge. But the promotion of bioprivateering is no aberration of the idea of patent law moreover it is intrinsic to it. Patent Right legislation of the emerging nation-states of the 19th Century was to define the legal terms of transformation and translation of innovations from other nation-states. Novelty was reduced to the not yet used among national production even while being well known and practiced by other countries or societies. Extending such kind of legislation on life forms and their genetic modifications gives way to a global biocolonization based on biopiracy. In my contribution I will take a closer look on this problematic from the perspective of translation politics: Does capitalist globalization proceed by meanings of a monstrous translation machine? And how are signs to be translated within the exodus from copyright and trade related intellectual properties?

*Tom Waibel, lives in Vienna as philosopher, translator and de-professionalized intellectual; text-, film- and communication-works focused on political theory, postcolonial critique, migration and globalization.*

**Hito Steyerl**

### **Travelling Images**

How are films translated, not only linguistically but materially? Which notions of technology, property, copyright, national culture, memory and identity are involved, when it comes to the global spread of certain films? Using the example of certain Yugoslav partisan films, the routes of specific travelling images under the conditions of digital globalisation will be investigated.

*Hito Steyerl works as filmmaker, videoartist and author in the area of essayist documentary film, postcolonial criticism, as producer as well as theorist. The works are located on the interface between film and fine arts. Main topics: cultural globalisation, political theory, global feminism, and migration. Further activities include work as political journalist, film and art critic, catalogue and book author. The films have received international awards and are screened on TV in many countries. Phd in philosophy. Visiting Professor for Experimental Media Creation at Universität der Künste, Berlin, numerous lecturerships at art and film schools in Vienna, Munich, Hannover, etc.*

**Klaus Neundlinger**

### **Simultaneous New Paradigms of Productivity:**

#### **Will the Form of Space Replace the Form of Wage Labour?**

Simultaneity, though it is not achievable, is one of the major sources for the legitimation of translation. It is not possible to erase delay, deviation, i.e. the several movements of recovering in the process of translation. The process of production is based on a similar condition: Whilst the form of wage labour has led to concentration and homogeneity of the labour force inside the paradigm of industrial production, the new, heterogeneous forms of labour are characterized by the internalization of the form of space.

Labour force has to communicate, crossing different places, contexts and situations, creating a complex chain of value creation. Efficiency, therefore, is not to be found in the rational organisation of production, but in the internalized forms of translation, in the inevitable production of the space of unachievable simultaneity.

*Klaus Neundlinger teaches German as a foreign language, he is a translator from Italian to German, and a philosopher. At the moment, he works as a research associate at the Boltzmann Institut für Geschichte und Gesellschaft, carrying out a project on the new forms of self-employed labour.*

## **Michaela Wolf**

### **Nation of Translation    Nation as Translation: Charting Perspectives of Trans-cultural Political Action**

To imagine a nation of translation which enables the primacy of freedom and justice is, admittedly, tempting. Even if deprived of its utopian agenda, what remains is an explicit political nature of translation, understood in its wide range of meanings. In Translation Studies, the time has definitely passed that translation was perceived as linguistic transcoding implying equivalence between fixed entities such as source and target text. The view of translation that is growing in relevance in Translation Studies today is instead a cross-cultural cluster concept mostly informed by postcolonial thinking and closely related to what has been labelled under the umbrella term of cultural translation. In my paper, I will sketch the outlines of these developments in the discipline and will particularly trace the distinctive lines of traditional views of translation and some conceptual perspectives going beyond, such as transculturation, hybridity or transmesis. I will particularly focus on translation's contribution as a major political agent in the shaping of cultures, emphasizing its subversive practices. This will help to elaborate the concept's potential for a stronger politically informed agency and to privilege the view of translation as a shaping force in trans-cultural political action.

*Michaela Wolf is associate Professor at the Department of Translation Studies, University of Graz. Areas of research are sociology of translation, aspects of cultural studies in translation, translation history, postcolonial translation, feminist translation. Editor, among others, of *Übersetzungswissenschaft in Brasilien. Beiträge zum Status von Original und Übersetzung*, Tübingen 1997; *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, Amsterdam 2007, and author of a series of articles in journals and books. She is co-editor of the journal *Translation Studies* (Routledge) and had been a lecturer of Development Studies in various universities.*

**Sandro Mezzadra**

**The Labour of Translation.**

### **Imagining the Politics of Translation Beyond Communication and Articulation**

The talk will start from a brief review of different attempts to reframe the politics of translation in contemporary debates. The point will be made that translation has a deep relationship with violence, domination and exploitation. In particular the possibility (and the necessity) of thinking of capital as translation will be briefly discussed. This relationship and this possibility point to the strategic relevance of a set of problems that are often underestimated when the politics of translation is framed in terms of communication and/or articulation. The outlines of a different theory of the politics of translation will be proposed within a dialogue with insights coming from such scholars as Étienne Balibar, Rada Ivekovic, Naoki Sakai, and Gayatri Spivak.

*Sandro Mezzadra is political scientist and teaches the history of political ideas at the University of Bologna. His research focuses on the history of European constitutional law, citizenship, migration and post-colonialism. He is a member of the Italian autonomist movement and an activist in the Fassanito network. Recently published: La condizione postcoloniale. Storia e politica nel presente globale, Ombre corte, Verona, 2008.*

**Boris Buden**

### **Faithful to Whom: Fidelity of Translation as Political Question**

Fidelity of translation meant always more than its conformity to the original. German Romantics, before all Wilhelm von Humboldt, discovered its social and political dimension. They redefined translation in terms of its social creativity. Translations from foreign languages enrich translator's own language and help so to create his or her own nation. To be faithful to the original means in fact to be faithful to one's own nation. In its last consequence the fidelity of translation is a patriotic virtue, a loyalty to the nation. But what if translation finally betrays the nation and starts to create alternative forms of social and political articulation? Would it be the end of the idea of fidelity or rather its new start?

*Boris Buden studied philosophy in Zagreb and cultural studies at HU Berlin. In the 90s he was editor in the magazine Arkzin, Zagreb. His essays and articles cover topics of philosophy, politics, cultural and art criticism. Among his translations into Croatian are two books of Sigmund Freud. Buden is the author of Barikade, Zagreb 1996/1997, Kaptolski Kolodvor, Beograd 2001 and Der Schacht von Babel, Berlin 2004, (Vavilonska jama, Beograd 2007).*



## Jon Solomon

### Rethinking the Meaning of Regions: Translation and Catastrophe

Globalization has brought forth a considerable transformation in the meaning of the world's geo-cultural regions. Apart from the excitement or anxiety this may produce, it is undoubtedly an opportunity to rethink the meaning of regions in general and the role of humanistic knowledge in their construction. The current move from conventional geo-cultural regions typical of modernity since the advent of colonial encounter to postmodern networked forms of organization brings new attention to the interconnections between translation and knowledge in the formation of globalized hierarchies. It is crucial to observe that the hierarchies of central concern are, to speak in very rough terms, of two different orders: the social and the cognitive. This essay considers the crucial role translation has played in the construction of socio-cognitive regions. It further asks how the current concern over biocultural diversity might be addressed in a way that considers the long term, biopolitical catastrophe of translation.

*Jon Solomon is an assistant professor in the Graduate Institute of Futures Studies and the French Program, Tamkang University, Taiwan. Born in the United States and trained at Cornell University, he has lived in East Asia for most of his adult life. Areas of interest include the biopolitics of translation, the aesthetics of catastrophe, postfordism and the emergence of new forms of social organization, the relation between anthropological difference and primitive accumulation, and the legacy of colonialism in the establishment of modern disciplinary divisions in the human sciences.*

## Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

### Varieties of Transculture

I will make an attempt to look at the question of culture and transculture from various perspectives. I will attempt to define culture and cultural politics. I may distinguish between the police of culture in post-colonial entity and globalization. I will of course speak of the relationship between culture and gender. I will emphasize the importance of deep language learning. I will insist that culture is often an alibi and that living culture is its own counter example. I will speak of some themes that I have invoked before this, such as, subjectship and agency, cultural performatives and cultural performance, and the double bind between culture and access to the public sphere.

*Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is University Professor and Director of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University. She holds honorary degrees from the Universities of Toronto and London, and from Oberlin College. Also an activist and educator, she is involved in international women's movements and issues surrounding ecological agriculture. She has been deeply involved in rural education in Asia for nearly two decades. Her most recent book is *Other Asias* (2007).*