



Cosmopolitan solidarity in crises: Volunteer translation as a prosocial collective action

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Abstract: When a crisis happens, the affected region is very often culturally and linguistically diverse, with complex linguistic maps which are further complicated by the linguistic diversity of the rescue and humanitarian responders. Lesser-used languages often have fewer resources for provision of professional translators. Thus, the speakers of these languages depend on autonomous and civic solidarity (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019), including support in translation and interpreting. For example, during the recent earthquake in Türkiye language support was provided by volunteer translators serving many national rescue teams and relief aid workers. In addition, during the 2015 refugee crises in Europe citizen groups used cultural activities to show solidarity. This article examines the act of translation as a prosocial activity that shows solidarity with the victims in crisis situations. It raises awareness about the linguistic challenges faced by communities in crisis situations and identifies strategies to overcome these challenges using volunteer translation. By narrating individual translator motivations, it identifies solidarity as a form of advocacy and empowerment, while showing empathy towards the crisis-affected people.

Keywords: solidarity, cosmopolitan, crises, empathy, collective action, volunteer, technology.

1. Introduction

Discussions on cosmopolitan solidarity have become increasingly prominent in academic circles in recent years. The discourse on cosmopolitan solidarity centres on the responsibility towards vulnerable communities and the environment in an interconnected world (Held, 2010). Critiques have targeted prevailing cosmopolitan theories for not adequately considering the interplay between power and privilege in cosmopolitan frameworks, and for being an ideological extension of global capitalism (Basnett, 2023, p. 31). However, the “liberal cosmopolitan solidarity” which is vulnerable to postcolonial critique can be approached as a mode of political expression (Jabri, 2007, p. 727). This article is an attempt to expand the debate on cosmopolitan solidarity using three case studies where translation is used as an example of a prosocial act showing solidarity with people affected by crises, regardless of their religious, national or racial background.

Solidarity refers to bonds holding a group/community together, involving a sense of belonging and identification with the group (Smith and Sorrell, 2014). When this bond expands beyond the immediate group and stretches towards the whole of humanity, we can talk about cosmopolitan solidarity. Hobbs and Souter (2019, p. 543) contrast cosmopolitan with affinity-based solidarity, stemming from shared characteristics like culture and religion. According to

their definition, cosmopolitan solidarity is more universal, while affinity-based solidarity is more particularistic in scope. Although narrow affinities may be extended via “affinity-stretching” to foster cosmopolitanism in the long term, cosmopolitan solidarity is based on a commitment to the equal moral worth of all human beings regardless of nationality (Hobbs and Souther, 2019, p. 558). Having this in mind, cosmopolitan solidarity can be defined as behaviour driven by a sense of common cause and concern for the welfare of others.

The idea of solidarity may be observed as a topic that is closely related to some of the seminal texts in Translation Studies (Tymoczko, 2007; Cronin, 2006). However, the notion of translation solidarity has so far not been systematically theorized in Translation Studies (Baker, 2015, p. 2). The advent of research on activist volunteer translation (Baker, 2020) and translating texts to amplify marginalized voices and promote social justice has brought the concept of solidarity into Translation Studies (Castro & Ergun, 2017). Further to this, volunteer translation in crisis situations can be considered as a direct prosocial act of solidarity with the crisis-affected population. This type of solidarity is closely related to feelings of altruism and empathy, which are considered as individual acts but are contributing to the development of collective action, defined as the behaviour and actions of a group working toward a common goal (Marshall, 1998, p. 722), in this case working towards supporting vulnerable communities affected by crises.

2. Methodology

To examine this specific social construction of solidarity, this article examines the arguments translators provide for their actions to engage in volunteer translation practice in order to help victims of crises, including 1) disasters, such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes; 2) wars and violence; and 3) climate change and increased risk for future disasters. To understand translators’ motivations to engage in volunteer translation, the paper provides a narrative analysis based on interviews conducted by the researcher, as well as media interviews and explanations provided by translators on their personal or project websites.

The researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews with individuals who performed voluntary translation for those affected by crises. Informed consent forms were distributed to all participants, outlining the goals of the research, data storage, and the use of data for publication purposes. All interviewees were given the option to remain anonymous or reveal their identity. They were also advised that anonymity might be compromised as in some cases contextual identifiers could not be fully eliminated. The very nature of the research of specific case studies and the small number of participants are factors that increase the risk of tracing back participants despite all efforts at anonymisation. The volunteer translators participating in the study were informed of this risk and all decided to participate in the research and agreed to be identified in the published article.

The sample for this study included volunteer translators involved in various types of collective translation projects, from humanitarian to cultural and information exchange initiatives. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, with an effort to ensure diversity in terms of languages, types of translation work, and cultural backgrounds. The sample also included organizational representatives involved in coordinating volunteer translation efforts. Beatriz Recio has participated as a volunteer translator between English and Spanish for the online glossary of emergency terminology used during the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. Ambrose Musiyiwa is the coordinator of a

volunteer translation project for a poetry collection expressing solidarity with the refugees. Monica Manolachi and Pietro Deandrea are two of the volunteer translators for this collection. Besides the general questions about translation project aims and goals, the semi-structured interviews contained questions about translators' motivation to engage in projects, the impact of their participation for the community and personally, and their views on solidarity.

For the analysis of website content, a selection of websites of organizations that facilitate collective volunteer translations was chosen. The selection was based on the size of the organization (both large and small organizations were included), the types of translation projects they undertake, and their geographical reach. One source of interviews with volunteer translators is available in a blog called *Conversations with Writers*.¹ Translators Without Borders' website² features statements from their volunteer translators called Community Stories. Finally, Climate Cardinals website³ includes "In the Press" section with media stories about volunteer translations of climate change documents. The website interviews and media stories were downloaded into a corpus which was coded for recurrent themes related to motivation and collective impact, followed by thematic analysis.

The article does not aim to investigate the 'true' motivations of the translators, since it is difficult to uncover their candid attitudes and opinions. Rather, it focuses on how they interpret their behaviours (Riessman, 2005, p. 6). To do this, a narrative approach is used to present raw data collected through interview transcripts and website analyses. Attention has been paid to the meanings and the interpretations participants make of their own experience, rather than the assumptions made by the researcher. By doing this, the researcher tells a story about people, social processes, and situations (Charmaz, 2006, p. 172). Throughout the narratives, translation is analysed as a prosocial act from the perspective of cosmopolitan solidarity, and participants' stories are presented and analysed in terms of their motivations to volunteer, empathy, collective action and interaction with their social environments.

3. Volunteer translation in crises as a prosocial collective act

We are currently facing a global landscape marked by escalating crises—natural disasters, climate change, public health emergencies, and conflicts—that expose numerous communities to danger. These events are inextricably linked to widespread migration and displacement. Greenspan et al. (2018, p. 803) underscore the significance of volunteering as a pathway to immigrant integration. In this context, volunteer translation and interpreting have proven invaluable in the inclusion processes for people displaced by crises (Todorova, 2023; Grubb & Frederiksen, 2022).

In addition, the legacy of colonialism has left behind a mosaic of multilingual states, which are now struggling with the linguistic complexities brought on by the arrival of migrants and refugees seeking safety from turmoil. While advances in technology and education can facilitate communication across language divides, persistent social and economic disparities may intensify tensions. Language barriers and asymmetries in communication access can rapidly exacerbate vulnerability in times of peril. Populations unable to comprehend warnings, relief instructions, public health guidance, or details

¹ <https://conversationswithwriters.blogspot.com>

² <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/meet-the-twbc-community>

³ <https://www.climatecardinals.org>

of their rights may be denied lifesaving assistance or placed at greater risk of illness, violence, or exploitation (Dreisbach & Mendoza-Dreisbach, 2020; Footitt et al., 2020; O'Brien & Cadwell, 2017). In these situations, translation becomes an activity that can save lives, dramatically increase coordination, reduce miscommunication, and enhance equitable access to critical information and services (Dreisbach & Mendoza-Dreisbach, 2020; Federici, 2022; Todorova, 2024). Because of the urgency of the situation, translation is often performed by citizens, both professional translators and speakers of the languages of the affected population, who volunteer their language skills, to support populations affected by crises.

Since the 1970s there is an increasing growth and internationalization of the NGO sector in response to the declining capacity of governments and the corporate sector to address humanitarian issues (Linderberg, 1999). However, examining the power dynamics at play in refugee resettlement in the United States, Erickson (2012, p. 174) notes that while some volunteers contest social inequalities, others reinforce hegemonic forms of citizenship that prioritize Whiteness, Christianity, a Protestant work ethic, and gendered practices of care. The article underscores the importance of examining the role of organizations in refugee resettlement and questions the lack of training and accountability for volunteers. The author argues that volunteers, consciously or unconsciously, influence refugees' perceptions of the world and contribute to shaping their ideas about domesticity, religion, capitalism, and the state. The paper draws parallels between volunteers in refugee resettlement and missionaries, suggesting that volunteers serve as foot soldiers for hegemonic forms of citizenship. Among these there is a growing importance of considering contextual factors and designing policies that facilitate immigrant participation in volunteering activities (Greenspan et al., 2018, p. 808).

Volunteer translation has lately gained considerable attention, with the primary focus being on what motivates volunteers (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012; Pérez-González & Susam-Sarajeva, 2012; Olohan, 2014). Volunteer translation in crises has been studied by using the framework of virtue ethics (O'Mathuna et al., 2020) and the concept of Ricoeur's 'linguistic hospitality' (O'Mathuna & Hunt, 2020). This article attempts at furthering the debate by introducing the concept of cosmopolitan solidarity as a motivation for volunteer citizen translation during crises.

Cosmopolitan solidarity is defined as a type of solidarity that allows citizens to "organize and act on a relationship of common humanity with outsiders in peril" (Hobbs & Souter, 2019, p. 543). This notion of solidarity is based on Christian Straehle's definition that solidarity consists of three aspects: "(i) the postulate of equal moral worth of all participants; (ii) a sense of interdependence, empathy and common cause with others; (iii) and a concern for individual autonomy and self-determination" (2010, p. 111). Solidarity is closely connected to and motivated by the expression of empathy (Santos, 2020, p. 126). Empathizing with the other, translators have been able to assist the humanitarian workers to maximize the assistance provided for the large numbers of refugees in emergency situations (Todorova, 2019). Empathy is here defined as "a perspective-taking capability, entailing awareness of both self and the other (and of self as distinct from the other); understanding of the other's situation; and a degree of concern for the other, communicated through a range of carefully selected affective displays in compliance with the aims and overall objective of the specific institutional activity" (Merlini & Gatti, 2016, p. 143). Empathy allows individuals to recognize and respond to the emotions and needs of others with compassion and understanding. It is a fundamental human capacity that enables individuals to connect emotionally with others, acknowledge their pain or joy, and offer support or comfort. However,

solidarity goes beyond empathy, as it involves a sense of unity, shared purpose, and collective action (Santos, 2020, p. 129). While empathy focuses on understanding and sharing the feelings of others on an individual emotional level, solidarity extends beyond empathy by emphasizing collaboration and collective action. Solidarity implies a commitment to working together and making a tangible difference, whether through advocacy, activism, or providing assistance to those in need. Consequently, solidarity can be observed through solidarity-oriented behaviour (Lindenberg, 1998). This kind of prosocial behaviour can be direct (e.g. helping someone) or indirect (e.g. donating to charity) (Bazzani, 2023). Volunteering, defined as providing service to other people, is also seen as constitutive of prosocial activity (Musick & Wilson, 2008, p. 50). It is closely related to donating and also to helping behaviour (Rossi, 2001). In this context, it becomes important to distinguish motivations for action.

The following sections present the narratives of volunteer translators who have engaged in collective translation projects to benefit communities affected by crises. We look at their motivation to translate through the lens of cosmopolitan solidarity, focusing on the empathy and collective action themes.

3.1 Virtual translation as solidarity during disasters

In disasters, translators play a crucial role in facilitating communication between responders and affected communities (Tesseur, 2018; Todorova, 2023). They help ensure that vital information is conveyed, and that people can access the assistance they need. During the immediate response phase, responders often rely on volunteers to offer emergency language assistance (O'Brien, 2022, p. 95). These volunteers are seen as actively engaging with the affected communities and their efforts are regarded as deserving of appreciation and esteem (O'Brien, 2022, p. 95).

The role of social media platforms in facilitating solidarity and communication during crises has garnered significant interest in recent years. These platforms have been recognized for their ability to democratize crisis communication, enable grassroots solidarity movements, and promote global interconnectedness (Houston et al., 2012). In the context of crisis response, the use of translation technologies and volunteer translation has emerged as an important area of exploration. In recent years, machine translation, mobile apps, crowdsourced platforms, and speech recognition tools have been increasingly incorporated into crisis communications with mixed results (Ogie & Perez, 2020; Cadwell et al., 2019; Munro, 2010). Cadwell & O'Brien (2016) examine the potential of machine translation in disaster response, emphasizing its value of crowdsourcing in cases where human translation resources are limited. They stress the need for a user-centred approach in evaluating the suitability of translation technologies for specific contexts. Schäler (2010) explores the role of translation technologies in addressing language barriers encountered by humanitarian organizations in disaster response. The author highlights the potential of these technologies in improving communication, collaboration, and information sharing among responders and affected communities.

In many disasters volunteer translation efforts have been facilitated by information and communication technology (ICT). For example, during the Haiti earthquake, volunteer organizations outside of Haiti utilized technology platforms to process user-generated content and provide volunteer translation services, enabling effective communication between responders and affected individuals (Lewis, 2010; Munro, 2013). Similarly, in response to the 2011 disaster in Japan, volunteers created the website *sinsai.info*, which utilized crisis-mapping software to aggregate social media messages and display them on a map using GPS information and machine translation (Kaigo, 2012). These

examples highlight the increasing recognition of the role of technology, social media, and volunteer translation in crisis response.

A devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake occurred on February 6, 2023, severely impacting extensive regions in southern Republic of Türkiye and the war-affected northwest Syria. As a result, 55,000 people were killed and nearly 130,000 injured. Particularly in northwest Syria, the situation has worsened following the disaster, with affected communities enduring numerous hardships such as displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, limited access to healthcare, and incidents of fires due to intense summer temperatures. The aftermath of the destruction has led to an escalating humanitarian crisis, with millions of people still struggling to cope with the consequences.

Relief and support initiatives, as well as ongoing international communication, for the population affected by the earthquake often relied on volunteer translation and interpreting. Several organisations on the ground were trying to fulfil a variety of communicative needs such as ARÇ, Emergency and Disaster Interpreters, affiliated to the Translation and Interpreting Association – Türkiye. In addition, translation scholars and students from the Boğaziçi University developed shared terminology lists, crisis-response glossaries, and procedures for translation requests and feedback to help maximize accuracy while maintaining speed. These tools were shared globally and were used by volunteer translators to provide disaster management terminology in English, Spanish, German, Russian, French, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese but also Kurdish, Zazaki, Greek, Armenian, Macedonian and Serbian, among other languages.

One of the glossaries contributors was Beatriz Recio, who translated the terminology in Spanish. In February 2023, Beatriz Recio was an MA student in the Translation Technology stream of the Master in Translation Programme at the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Studies of the Hong Kong Baptist University. She moved from Madrid to Hong Kong in 2020, in the height of the COVID-19 lockdowns across the world, following a family decision. Recio is a journalist who describes her profession as incorporating aspects of translation. During her career, she has studied several languages including English, Czech, and Chinese. With the relaxation of the COVID restrictions for in-person lectures, Recio decided to enrol in an MA in translation programme that would give her the opportunity to refresh her knowledge of Chinese and learn new skills. She has been interested in the development of new technology and AI and how it can be useful in translation.

Introduced to the Boğaziçi University initiative for translation of Terminology for Search and Rescue and Disaster Management, Recio decided to contribute with translating the terminology list to Spanish. Asked about the motivation behind her decision Recio says:

A tragic situation such as the terrible earthquake in Türkiye in February 2023 or the more recent Morocco one in the Atlas, same as any other kind of disaster (like the recent fires in Hawai and Greece, the floods in Libya or the war in Ukraine), ... wherever it is the extreme situation, always touches and breaks the heart of many people. Not always an individual person who is far away in another country or region or even in the same country and region can help or get to know how to help, but on this occasion, since I was studying for a master's degree in Translation at the Hong Kong Baptist University I had the opportunity of collaborating through my knowledge of languages. My motivation was *humanity reasons, feeling myself contributing somehow...*

Recio is very much aware of her limitations to help but believes that she is contributing to a collaborative effort as she continues to explain:

Regarding the Türkiye Earthquake, although there were more demanded languages, such as Kurdish (Kurmanji) or Arabic to attend to the victims, I hope my modest contribution could have helped the Spanish Rescue teams to develop their work and save lives. My country is a great specialist in rescue missions, they usually go and help in this kind of situation, and they were of course on the field. I felt that I have contributed very quickly and in a very modest way, but I also felt happy to have been able to contribute in some way.

What was helpful to make her decision to volunteer some of her time to translating the terminology was the use of technology which allowed her to help from far:

To be honest, I didn't need to spend much time on it, around one or two hours, to translate the terms, since this was an initiative of the Boğaziçi University of Istanbul to build a Multilingual Disaster Relief Termbase which can help the Rescue Teams in their tasks and there was a team of dozens of volunteer international translators working on it. Thanks to modern communication technologies, it has been easy, efficient and quick to put together the translation effort of the volunteers and get a result in no time. On the other hand, I am sure that communication and formats (could it be an app?) could have been improved to get quicker, durable, scalable and excellent results.

In her volunteer translation efforts, Recio was motivated by cosmopolitan solidarity that does not treat people selectively based on their national or religious background: "I will help every country, religion, culture etc., whenever human beings and lives are affected in a situation of emergency or disaster." She also stayed part of the group, not just for the earthquake in Türkiye but also for future emergencies elsewhere: "A very good point is that this project is focused on providing a useful, simple tool for any disaster situation and is also an open project. The translators who collaborated are included in this international team, and connected by email and WhatsApp, which made it possible to reopen the project for example, after the September 2023 Morocco Earthquake."

3.2 Volunteer translation of refugees' stories

Apart from victims of disasters, refugees and asylum seekers who escape conflict zones (and also environmental risk) experience linguistic barriers and misrepresentations in the language(s) of their host communities. Cosmopolitan solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers reflects an ideal of commitment to protecting refugees based on our shared humanity, prioritizing refugees on the basis of need alone rather than shared affinities. It reflects a general duty to protect refugees as human beings in deep peril.

Personal stories humanize members of marginalized communities through narratives of individual exceptionalism and relatability, which establish grounds for empathy (Varma, 2020). Advocates hope cosmopolitan solidarity can be cultivated through practices like humanizing stories about refugees (Hobbs & Souter, 2019). Amid a rather negative public representation of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, many non-governmental organisations and advocacy projects, as well as artists, have attempted to counter the predominantly de-personalised accounts in the news media by using alternative means. Situated in opposition to the dominant news media discourse and photojournalistic images through which the refugee crisis is mediated to the unaware readership, personal life stories, have been seen by many as a valuable tool in reinstating individuality, evoking empathy, and calling to solidarity by presenting personalised migrant stories (Todorova & Poposki, 2022). When

these stories are further translated into other languages on initiative of volunteer translators, this becomes a prosocial act of solidarity with the people who seek refuge.

In Europe, the year 2015 was labelled the ‘European Refugee Crisis’ and saw the publication of journalistic narratives that “continue to represent asylum, and the asylum system in particular, as a problem” (Gross et al., 2007, p. 115) while not discussing “the causes of the displacement or the needs in terms of reception and accommodation” (Federici, 2020, p. 254). Based on this negative response to the refugee crisis in Europe, asylum seekers and refugees are framed within the discourse of ‘fake’ claims. However, projects that share refugee personal stories translated by both professional and non-professional volunteer translators show solidarity with the asylum seekers.

Journey in Translation is an international, volunteer-driven translation project that aims to translate poems from a poetry collection titled *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for those seeking refuge*, edited by Kathleen Bell, Emma Lee and Siobhan Logan (2015), published by Five Leaves Publication, a small press based in Nottingham. The anthology contains 102 poems expressing solidarity with the refugees who are receiving so little welcome as they take to boats and rafts to cross the Mediterranean and make their way with difficulty through Europe. The poems invite readers to take a view of the situation which is not governed by the fear and hatred expressed by the language in the media. In an article by Ross Bradshaw, which was published in the *Morning Star* on 6 January 2016, Siobhan Logan, one of the editors of *Over Land, Over Sea* explains that, in the run-up to the anthology, she felt distraught because of the scale of the crisis she was witnessing and because of dehumanising terms like “swarm” and “flood” that politicians and the media were using to describe the people crossing into Europe. Logan says, “As writers we’re very alert to the power of naming and labels and wanted to shift that discourse to a more humane one. We didn’t control TV channels or national newspapers. But we had our own words and shared them.” Logan found that *Over Land, Over Sea* gave poets the sense that they could do something. As she puts it: “It turns out *we could do something* after all. And coming together made that solidarity not only practical but also made it sing” (Solidarity Which Sings, 2016, my emphasis).

The idea to translate the poetry into as many languages in the world as possible was first introduced by Zimbabwean poet Ambrose Musiyiwa. According to Bell “poetry anthology could do two things simultaneously — tell more varied, nuanced and complex stories and raise money for charities helping refugees” (Solidarity Which Sings, 2016). All proceeds from sales of the book will be shared between the charities Médecins Sans Frontières, Leicester City of Sanctuary and Nottingham Refugee Forum. ‘Over Land, Over Sea’ reaches out to people seeking refuge and is being sold to raise funds for Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum and Leicester City of Sanctuary. Explaining his motivation to start the translation project, Musiyiwa states:

in a world in which most of the dominant discourses on migration and refugee issues are generated by politicians and the media, *Journeys in Translation* offers poets and translators a way of intervening in these discourses. I would say that solidarity with refugees and asylum is a commitment that needs to be sustained and ongoing. This is because it is only through sustained effort, from as many people as possible, that the hostility towards refugees, asylum seekers and migrants can be countered. An example of this solidarity can be seen in how, in 2015, in response to the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, people across Europe responded to what they were seeing by mobilising their communities, taking up collections, organising convoys and travelling to camps in places like Calais,

Dunkirk and Lesbos to provide material and other forms of support to people who governments were neglecting.

As a result of the initiative, over a 12-month period, 14 poems of the anthology's 101 poems were translated into over 20 languages, including Arabic, Assamese, Bengali, British Sign Language, Chinese, Dutch, Farsi, Filipino, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Irish Gaelic, Italian, Jamaican Patois, Polish, Romanian, Shona, Spanish, Turkish and Welsh. The translations are available through a designated website.⁴ Volunteer translators continue translating the poems for almost eight years now and the translations came from writers based in countries such as Argentina, Austria, Britain, Greece, Hungary, India, Italy, Mozambique, Poland, Romania and Zimbabwe. Many of these translations were shared through the Journeys in Translation Facebook group, while others, like Margaret Skervin's translations, were published in Issue 53 of *The Journal* and six more poems translated into Romanian were published in *Traducerile de sâmbătă* [*Saturday Translations*]. As a result of this continuation, the anthology is now available in Italian as *Per terra e per mare: Poesie per chi è in cerca di rifugio* (2020) translated by Pietro Deandrea and is being sold to raise funds for Mosaico: Azioni per i rifugiati, Watch The Med Alarm Phone, and After18. *Per terra e per mare* was followed by *Peste mări și țări: poezii pentru cine caută adăpost*, the Romanian edition of *Over Land, Over Sea* which was coordinated by Monica Manolachi who also translated the bulk of the poems in the edition. Like *Over Land, Over Sea* and *Per terra e per mare*, *Peste mări și țări* is being sold to raise funds for Sea Watch, Asociația LOGS Grup de inițiativă sociale, and the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG). Both volunteer translators, Deandrea and Manolachi, mention "the chance to connect with communities" be it from elsewhere or a local community of fellow translators working towards the same goal.

Asked why the anthology was being translated into other languages, Musiyiwa says: "*Over Land, Over Sea, Journeys in Translation*, the translated editions, the events we are organising around the anthology and the translations, and the conversations that are taking place around them are all examples of solidarity with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers." In addition, *Journeys in Translation* continues to create spaces in which the poems are read and discussed in English and in translation. The events bring together poets, translators and organisations that work with and support people on the move and those seeking refuge and present opportunities for connection and collaboration. The events also give poets and translators access to up-to-date information on what the organisations are seeing in the work they are doing with people on the move and those seeking refuge.

3.3 Intergenerational solidarity translation and the climate change

Finally, climate mitigation is an interesting case of cosmopolitan solidarity (Bazzani, 2023), as affluent nations are the primary contributors to the climate crisis, but it is the poorer countries that are bearing the brunt of its consequences. This burden manifests itself in increasingly severe heatwaves, droughts, and floods, which are causing significant devastation in countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh. Climate mitigation involves prosocial behaviour because costs of emission cuts are incurred by current wealthy countries and current generations, but benefits are for developing countries and future generations who face climate impacts. Therefore, climate mitigation can be seen as a form of global,

⁴ <https://journeysintranslation.wordpress.com>

intergenerational altruism. Intergenerational solidarity focuses on obligations towards future generations, particularly in the context of environmental sustainability and social equity (González-Ricoy & Gosseries, 2016). Climate solidarity refers to the idea that mitigation of climate change requires global cooperation and prosocial behaviour, since the costs are borne by some countries, but the benefits accrue to other countries and future generations (Bazzani, 2023, p. 356). Research on climate solidarity aims to examine low-carbon behaviour through the lens of cooperation, empathy and concern for others affected by climate change. Given the lack of direct sources, the narrative presented in this case study is based on several self-presentations and interviews of the founder of Climate Cardinals available online.

Climate Cardinals is an international youth-led non-profit organization working to make the climate movement more accessible to those who do not speak English. By translating environmental documents and information, the organizations aim to educate and empower a diverse group of people to tackle the climate crisis. The organization claims to have 10,000 volunteers who are translating and sourcing climate information into over 100 different languages. This international movement has reached millions of people across more than 70 countries. In their recent efforts, they are partnering with Google and using artificial intelligence to translate over a million words of climate information to date.

As presented on their website,⁵ Climate Cardinals was initially conceived by Sophia Kianni, an Iranian-American activist studying Science, Technology, and Society at Stanford University, who recognized the necessity for climate-related translations during a trip to Iran while she was in middle school. Witnessing the severe pollution in Iran, which obscured the night sky and stars, left her astounded. As Kianni delved into the online resources about the climate situation in the Middle East, her apprehension grew. The region was grappling with a climate crisis, experiencing temperature increases more than twice the global average. Kianni shared her concerns with her relatives, only to discover that they had limited knowledge about climate change. However, after reading Kianni's translations into Farsi, her relatives became supportive of Iranian environmental activists and expressed a desire to learn more about climate solutions. In an article in *Washington Post* (Natanson, 2020), Kianni states that "her grandmother, aunts and uncles cut their electricity usage, began using cars less often and even agreed to reduce their meat intake." Kianni's personal encounters have demonstrated the need for greater efforts within the climate movement to assist individuals like her relatives. She aspires to have other students join the Climate Cardinals team, contributing to the translation of information so that people from all language backgrounds can access knowledge about the climate crisis.

Rohan Arora, the executive director of Research and Development for the organisation, states in an interview (Jones, 2020) that "their focus is on translating short and simply written fact sheets, manifestos, and glossaries as opposed to raw research, because people may not have the willingness or capacity to start out by reading a 20 page paper." For example, they have translated the Condé Nast Climate Emergency Glossary into numerous languages, giving definitions of key terms such as "decarbonisation", "deforestation", and "microplastics".

Climate Cardinals has a community of volunteers passionate about climate action and translation. Volunteers can engage with this community by joining an online translation platform. This fosters collaboration, learning, and support

⁵ <https://www.climatecardinals.org>

within the Climate Cardinals network. However, while their mission to translate climate information into many languages is well-intentioned, one could argue that their approach has some limitations. Their starting point of translating content from English into other languages reflects a Western-centric viewpoint rather than a more collaborative model of knowledge exchange. There may also be questions about whether they sufficiently engage with local perspectives and knowledge systems from non-English speaking countries. Additionally, the use of artificial intelligence and partnerships with large tech companies could also be seen as prioritizing efficiency and scale over building human connections. While bridging language barriers to information access is valuable, a case could be made for more emphasis on reciprocal learning and dismantling structural inequities between the global north and south.

4. Conclusion

The narratives presented above highlight that volunteer translation in crisis situations is driven by individual feelings of altruism and empathy. Volunteer translators engage in translation work to help and support the crisis-affected population. Through their translations, they demonstrate empathy towards the victims and aim to alleviate their suffering. The article emphasizes the importance of understanding the motivations and perspectives of volunteer translators in their own words through narrative analyses.

The narratives also recognize volunteer translation as a form of collective action. Collective action refers to the behaviour and actions of a group working toward a common goal. In this case, volunteer translators come together to provide language support and translation services to vulnerable communities affected by crises. They collaborate and coordinate their efforts to ensure effective communication and equitable access to critical information and services. The article acknowledges the significance of collective translation projects, which range from humanitarian to cultural and information exchange initiatives, in fostering cosmopolitan solidarity and supporting communities in crisis.

This article has demonstrated how translation can serve as an act of cosmopolitan solidarity during crises. It emphasizes the role of empathy and collective action in volunteer translation as a prosocial act of solidarity with crisis-affected populations. It highlights the motivations and experiences of volunteer translators, showcasing how their empathy drives them to engage in collective translation efforts to support and empower vulnerable communities during crises. In the disaster case, the translator acted out of empathy but also a desire to support collective rescue efforts, even though the direct personal impact was minimal. This exemplifies the ideals of cosmopolitanism to assist based on humanitarian motives rather than self-interest. Similarly, the volunteer translation projects for refugees aimed to counter negative portrayals by providing more humanizing narratives. The translators contributed time and skills to advocate for displaced people based on shared commitment to humanity. Finally, the climate activism case showed youth translating environmental information out of concern for intergenerational justice. Their work builds climate solidarity, cooperating globally to mitigate warming despite uneven costs and benefits.

Furthermore, this research expands conceptualizations of translation as an ethical, socially engaged practice beyond fidelity to the source text. The solidarity framework presents new possibilities for translation ethics. The study illustrates how theories of prosocial behaviour and collective action can be fruitfully applied to study motivations for volunteer translation. Focusing on

translator narratives provides subjective insider perspectives to complement broader philosophical notions of cosmopolitan solidarity.

Across these contexts, translation served as outreach, education, and empowerment for affected groups. Another common issue across examples is the role of translation technology that proved as a tool that facilitates translation as a prosocial collective action. The research highlights the vital role of volunteer translators and technology platforms in facilitating communication during crises.

The article demonstrated translation's role in crisis response as an impactful act of cosmopolitan solidarity. Further research can continue unpacking this vital ethical dimension of translation practice. More work is needed to develop guidelines and best practices for volunteer translation initiatives to uphold ethics, quality, and sustainability. Further studies could compile a typology of contexts where translation regularly functions as cosmopolitan solidarity. Finally, comparative research on translator motivations across different cultures and political contexts is needed.

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