Confronting Digital Dilemmas in Translator and Interpreter Training

Edited by
Pavol Šveda, Martin Djovčoš and Emília Perez

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Chapter 9

Towards a Sociocentric Approach in Translator and Interpreter Education

MARTIN DJOVČOŠ

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9 Towards a Sociocentric Approach in Translator and Interpreter Education[1]

Martin Djovčoš

Introduction

Translation and interpreting have always been far from neutral endeavours. They have the potential to build bridges but also to create borders (Sakai 2010, Tymoczko 2014). In fact, Tymoczko even emphasizes that translation is always partial and that the act of translation is "engaged and committed, either explicitly or implicitly" (2000: 24). These qualities are even more vividly apparent in a digitalized world where humans and machines have become inseparable components of the same entity, which leads to the unprecedented spread of disinformation (see CEDMO Trends 2024[2]) across languages. The question remains how this constant concealing and blurring of the truth via translation is reflected in the classroom[3]. Despite the social-constructivist method having been introduced by Kiraly as early as 2000, standard passive approaches to translator training, from my experience typical for Central and Eastern European countries, do not address the changing geopolitical environment sufficiently (if at all). Haro-Soler and Kiraly concluded that "we need to move beyond transmission-related metaphors for teaching and learning, which suggest that knowledge is located in the teacher's head and can essentially be transferred to the heads of students" (2019: 267). They also repeat the call for "situated learning", which they understand as a process of cooperative knowledge creation through authentic action in the real world (2019: 259).

In this chapter I argue that constructivist translator education extends far beyond translation training and traditional classroom settings. Even more so, it goes far beyond widely used translation competence models (e.g. EMT 2022, PACTE 2003, Hurtado Albir (ed.) 2017, Third NACT Proposal 2023), and its chief goal, in my opinion, should and must be to train free-thinking and critically thinking individuals who also emerge as excellent professionals. I am striving to underscore "translators' social responsibilities in a globalised world and their own social involvement" (Way and Ruiz-Cortés 2025: 523). Such an approach goes far beyond what is known as "typical" profession-centred learning (see Pietrzak 2022, Kujamäki 2023). This is of utmost importance in the region under this study, where support for liberal

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democracies is flagging and support for dictatorships and authoritative regimes is on the rise (see Globsec Trends 2024). In light of all this it is quite clear that this chapter is far from being neutral. In response to these realities, this chapter calls for an empirical activist approach (Hostová et al. 2024) to translation training, concentrating mainly on a social-constructivist approach as defined by Kiraly (2000). To clarify, the activist approach is one where micro-level translational decisions are of less importance than attention to the broad social contexts in which translation participates (Brownlie 2016). I will also revisit some general ideas on knowledge, knowledge construction and education. I will emphasize the need to promote student activism and networking, which are not based on wishful thinking but on empirical evidence. Broadly speaking, I combine committed and empirical approaches (as emphasized by Pym 2025, chapter 2, this volume) to translation training or, better said, education[4] with the goal of creating an activist empirical social-constructive paradigm in translation teaching using "methodological polytheism" in Moscovici's (2000) words. I will also provide some practical examples of what I call good practice in this context, illustrated by a case study of the student movement *Sa zobud'* (Wake Up!), established at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia with the goal of promoting student engagement in – and well beyond – translation and interpreting practice. I will also illustrate how active engagement helps students move from school to practice. I firmly believe that such an approach has the potential to ease social tensions and help bridge polarized groups by transcending echo chambers.

Education: From Class to Universe-city

When discussing education in the post-modern world, or better said, liquidly modern world, Bauman (2001) asserts that

> The permanent and continuing revolution transforms the acquired know-how and learned habits from assets into a handicap, and sharply shortens the lifespan of useful skills, which often lose their utility and "enabling power" in less time than it takes to acquire them and certify them through a university diploma.
>
> (2001: 131)

Indeed, the Translation Studies Bibliography (2024) includes 43 papers with the keyword "artificial intelligence". The first paper appeared in 2019, and since the launch of ChatGPT on 30 November 2022, their production has skyrocketed. Between 2023 and 2024 there were 35 new entries[5]. Students graduating in 2022 had no chance to interact with the LLMs during their studies and left their university unequipped for practice for this new world. Moreover, conventional wisdom dictates that trainers must keep up with the latest market developments in order to be relevant authorities for their

students. This obviously is not and will never be possible on a global scale thanks to the technological and poverty divide (see Orrego-Carmona 2025, chapter 3 this volume). With rapid technological development, we translation educators tend to be one step behind the market and society. Therefore, our main goal is to equip students with the autonomy and competence to face new challenges in a collaborative environment. We must always keep in mind that today's students will be tomorrow's colleagues.

Reflecting on Bauman's thoughts, Oliveira Andreotti (2021) identifies two possible directions universities can take. They can either turn into supermarkets of credentials, where students are viewed as customers, or into esoteric ivory towers, developing their own metalanguage no one outside their field can understand. Today we see these approaches quite widely adopted across academia, and in my opinion, they must be rejected. I agree with Bauman, who, by the end of his reflections on post-modern education, suggests that the main role of education is "cultivating the ability to live daily lives at peace with uncertainty and ambivalence" and "the absence of unerring and trustworthy authorities", as well as "instilling tolerance of difference" (2001: 138).

On this note Lambert and Iliescu Gheorghiu argue that "universities continue working with old-fashioned structures while attempting to face the future" (2014: 14). Lambert (2014) proposes and actively uses the term *universe-city* to indicate that universities serve or are supposed to serve as a link between the city and the universe. And although this term is mainly used to criticize the role of universities in the contemporary world, it is a useful metaphor to remind us that our institutions serve a much higher purpose: knowledge-based action. Hauke defines knowledge as "the result of a personal relationship between ideas, sources of evidence (and resulting 'truths') and the individual" (2019: 380) as opposed to information and facts. Our role is thus to convert information to knowledge (Hauke 2019) to help students internalise the rather complex outside world.[6] Knowledge is a social practice. Citing Barret (1997), Hauke asserts that we need to move beyond critical thinking in relation to knowledge and become critical *actors*. Knowledge, she concludes, is not something to be transferred or even "learned" (2019: 391). Instead, students need to create knowledge themselves by interacting with the outside world. Thus, it is quite obvious that such a "holistic" approach to education cannot take place in the classroom, not even through collaborative projects (Haro-Soler and Kiraly 2019). They certainly need to learn information in class, but also internalise that information outside class. Knowledge for Kiraly (2000: 7) is "embedded in our personal interactions with other people", who in my opinion may be various agents not necessarily embedded in translation studies. Oliveira Andreotti (2021) even suggests that education is not the same as schooling and that future education will probably not take place in schools. I fully concur with Hauke's (2019: 391) assertion that "in the project of higher education, we need to be thinking beyond the disciplines and embrace novel and

adventurous learning spaces to allow this development in all our students". One may thus conclude that the goal of (translation and interpreting) education is to convert information into internalised knowledge manifested externally. I argue that such a process takes place outside of the classroom. Such spaces are all around us. Cafes, theatres, pubs, cantinas. I would even suggest that the real education takes place after classes over a pint when two (or more) students discuss translation studies, their profession, society, politics. In liberal democratic communities.

In other words, we need to look for significance in translation education and training. When discussing the issue of significance in translation history, Rundle (2022), citing Rickert (1986), suggests that we need to separate the inessential from the essential. Indeed, we know far too much about translator training and translation competence (as will be further suggested), but for example Pym (2022), in his talk at the Translating Europe Forum (available on-line), questioned the EMT and PACTE models for not being empirical and evidence-based. He also asserts that these models' competences are only something we (teachers) think students should know, but we have no data on it. However, to be fair, it needs to be mentioned that Hurtado Albir and the PACTE Group (2017) provide a lot of very concrete data suggesting that the model proposed by the group is empirically valid. So, it seems that one way of distinguishing the essential from inessential is to collect data and study their social impact (as I will demonstrate later in this chapter). By "data", I mean not only market data (as collected e.g. by Djovčoš and Šveda 2023), but also social data or societal trends, including the standpoints of translators and interpreters themselves to societal changes. We need to follow broader social trends since, after all, translation never takes place in vacuum. Rundle suggests that "the historian must make a selection based on historical interest" (2022: 83). The same can be said about translator trainers and educators, but they should look at the social first and professional interest second. In other words, "professionalisation requires both internal (within the profession) and external (within broader society) actions" (Way and Ruiz-Cortés 2025: 524). However, since everyone decides what is "of social interest" individually, we must bear in mind the educator's identity. By "identity" here, I mean "identity as substantive self-definition … which purportedly determines what I believe and do" (Izenberg 2016: 10 in Hostová 2017), inevitably leading to what I call "identity bias". I coined this term to assert that an educator must be aware of their own biases which will intentionally or subconsciously influence their selection of presented topics and their framing. Here it seems reasonable to adapt Way's (2020) self-concept and identity of translators to fit educators. In my view this relates to how educators see themselves in society and how they engage with other agents when providing translation/educational services (paraphrased from Way 2020: 186 in Way and Ruiz-Cortés 2025: 526). I, for example am an anti-nationalist liberal democrat, and therefore I will emphasize pro-democratic and anti-authoritarian aspects of translation

studies and ethical stances when negotiating with clients and talking to my students. It is narratives such as this that each teacher chooses to present to their students.

Constructing Narratives as a Translation Competence in the Community of Knowledge Builders

Can construction of narratives be viewed as a translation competence? Sure, it can, if defined thus: a process of translating information to knowledge that takes the social and political context into account. Baker (2015), proceeding from social science theories, recognises four main types of narratives: ontological, public, conceptual and metanarratives. Ontological narratives are personal stories we tell ourselves about our place in the world and about our own personal history (2015: 5). Public narratives are "stories elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual, such as the family, religious or educational institution, political or activist group, the media, and the nation." (2015: 5). Baker then elaborates on conceptual narratives, concluding that they are "stories and explanations that scholars in any field elaborate for themselves and others about their object of inquiry". Metanarratives or master narratives are the big stories of our society's place in history. Here, the role of a translator educator is to retell and possibly expand the story of our profession beyond the traditionalist, profession-centred narrative.

In this aspect Kiraly's (2000) social-constructivist approach is the most helpful since it aims to empower both learners and teachers. It strives toward a "transformationist position", where learning is seen "essentially as a personal, holistic, intrinsically motivating and socially effectuated construction process" (2000: 23). Professional knowledge can be "acquired only through action and not passive absorption" (2000: 30). It needs to be added, however, that Kiraly goes much further than acquiring professional knowledge. In his definition of appropriation, he suggests that "learning entails the internalization of socio-cultural knowledge" (2000: 38). Such knowledge far transcends translation-related activities. Here I understand translation competence as a byproduct of collaborative learning in a community of knowledge builders. Adopting such an approach means that the process of learning is by its nature activist, and *empirically* activist in particular. We learn from each other by actively discussing and sharing real world data with people having different knowledge bases and comparing such data in various settings. What is more, Kiraly (2000: 43) adds that "learning tasks need to remain embedded in their larger, natural complex of human activities." However, to achieve successful collaborative learning, one has to "aim beyond the levels of personal goals, to look beyond 'I' to 'we'" (2000: 194). Such an approach helps us work together with students on constructing viable professional narratives that move beyond the profession as such. By pursuing active professional engagement out of the classroom, students do

much more than learn about their profession; they also learn about social responsibility (as I will demonstrate when I describe the Winter School of Translation).

Although the latest and updated version of the EMT (2022) competence framework does distinguish four core elements of translator training – skills, competence, knowledge and learning outcomes – it is purely proficentric rather than sociocentric (my terms). The framework's authors explain that "this competence framework aims to consolidate and enhance the employability of graduates of master's degrees in translation throughout Europe" (2022: 3). Out of the framework's 36 requirements in four areas of competence, there is no explicit mention of understanding general social responsibility or overall social engagement. Such a framework may be more than sufficient for acquiring proficiency in translation, but to face current threats to democracy, this may not be enough. Translation training and education (see Haro-Soler and Kiraly 2019) needs to transcend the mere preparation of skilled workers and cultivate responsible social action and decision-making. The same can be said about the PACTE model, although, as mentioned above, translation competence improves one's professional results. The third NACT proposal (2023) presents a very clearly defined translator competence level (A1 to C2). Yet all these models tend to focus on acquiring expertise and professional competence (as defined by Kiraly 2000). Pietrzak (2022: 2) explores metacognitive translation training, concentrating on "self-efficacy, self-esteem and resilience", which "can enable translation trainees to further develop and successfully function as professionals in the translation market". Despite adopting a social-constructivist paradigm, it is quite evident that she delves deep into soft skills, albeit those which remain centred solely on the profession. For Pietrzak, the translator is a "service provider whose job it is to create effective communication" (2022: 10). She concludes that "not only is metacognition an important variable in itself, but it also plays a vital role in affecting other desirable educational outcomes such as academic achievement, job satisfaction and success" (2022: 173). This may be a good starting point for implementing a sociocentric approach.

By making a few possibly deconstructivist remarks, I do not in any way mean to criticize the models and levels I have mentioned. Quite the opposite. That being said, we now have a chance to build on them and move beyond our profession in education and translation context, becoming active agents of prodemocratic social change. Adopting a social-constructivist approach seems to be essential to achieving that. Creating engaged communities may also increase our profession's social visibility. And empowered students will become aware that a democratic society provides them with the space to manifest constructed agency.

Collaborative engaged action has already proved to be very useful and helpful when integrating students into wider society and professional communities. Gromová (2012: 23) suggests that "if students are involved in the activities of the professional community during their studies, it is assumed

that they will be actively involved in its activities after graduation"[7]. To test the validity of this claim, we analysed the Slovak translation competition Prekladateľská univerziáda (University Translation Olympics), organized by the Literary Fund of Slovakia, the Slovak Literary Translators' Society, the Slovak Society of Translators of Scientific and Technical Literature and Comenius University. University students (not only translation students) from all over Slovakia are invited to take part in the contest and compete in the translation of literary texts, translation of non-literary texts, and translation theory/criticism. The 29th edition of this annual competition was held in 2024. Emília Perez from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia, along with Simona Nagyová and Samuel Malý (students at Matej Bel University), joined me to analyse the results of the competition since 1995. We were interested in whether participation in the contest helped students to become successful professionals in the field of translation. Out of 238 winners, we were able to trace the professions of 167 participants, 6 of whom were still students. Our research sample thus comprised 161 winners, of whom 104 (64.6%) work in translation/interpreting and 35 (21.74%) in language/translation-related fields (teachers, editors, writers). Only 22 (13.66%) work in other fields. These other jobs include event and community managers, TV presenters, business managers, team leaders in several companies, etc. And although we cannot just yet establish a direct link between the competition and practice, we can at least suggest that penetration into the professional community may have been a significant catalyst for students to stay in the profession after graduation. If such an involvement-oriented approach were extended outside university (or, better said) classroom settings, it may bear some social responsibility fruit.

Toward Out-of-class Collaborative Action: Wake Up! A Case Study of a TS Student Movement

As a case study to underpin and illustrate my previous thoughts on evolving translator competence and moving beyond proficentric approaches (integrating professional and social), I will use an example of student movement *Sa zobuď!* (Wake Up!). The movement was launched in 2022 by second-year Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia graduate students Patrícia Hatiarová[8] and Ivana Božiková, who were not satisfied with the primarily transmissionist approaches to their education at Matej Bel University. Neither were they happy, in their own words, about the passive approach of the majority of students. They were later joined by undergraduate students who had actively participated in volunteer community interpreting for our Ukrainian refuge seeking friends who had to leave their country after brutal unprovoked Russian aggression.

In an interview[9] with Patrícia Hatiarová, she explained that *Sa zobuď!* (Wake Up!) is a student association whose aim is to bring together students of translation and interpreting. They connect all Slovak universities where

translation and interpreting are taught (Comenius University in Bratislava, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica and Prešov University in Prešov). Their main goal is to combine theory and practice, to increase the social engagement of students and to bring changes into the teaching of translation and interpreting. In order to achieve their goals, they launched:

- The student podcast *Sa zobuď!* (Wake Up!) (available on Spotify), where they interview practicing translators, interpreters and scholars, as well as students, about their professional (and otherwise) life
- The discussion series *From School Desks to Practice*, in which successful young graduates and current students talk about how they put their knowledge into practice during their studies and what it means to them. Students interview students. Moreover, these discussions are streamed, and students have the opportunity to interpret them over Zoom, so in addition to practicing their interpreting skills in real-life situations, students also practice their remote interpreting techniques and use of technology. It needs to be emphasized that these events are not centred on one university or classroom-based, but take place all over Slovakia in various pubs, engaging the greatest possible number of students, professionals and lay people interested in translation, literature and society (26.3.2024 in Banská Bystrica, 29.4.2024 in Prešov and 17.10.2024 in Bratislava)
- Book exchange events taking place on the same day at all four universities (23.4.2024)
- The Winter School of Translation (WST), an event held in Banská Bystrica, fully organized by students. They choose topics they find relevant for their professional career (translation, interpreting, technology, business), invite guests relevant for their participants, do their own fundraising and arrange accommodation, meals and travel expenses for invited guests. Moreover, after the discussions and workshops, they organize translation/education-related discussions in the city, team-building exercises, pub quizzes, discos etc.
- Cooperation with professionals from outside academia, namely the Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia, the Directorate General for Translation, translation and interpreting agencies (Translata, Otago, Transcreate, etc.) and publishers (IKAR, BRAK, FACE, Artforum, etc.)

Sa zobuď! also actively work on translators' and interpreters' social visibility by giving interviews to various media. Just within the first few months they were interviewed by five national-level online media outlets (2024), four national-level radio stations (2024), two regional internet media and one regional radio station (2024).

It should be emphasized that collaborative teacher–student events are quite common in Slovakia. They can be categorized as bottom-up and top-

down initiatives. By top-down initiatives, I mean those which are originally initiated and prompted by teachers and academia in general, and by bottom-up approaches, I mean those initiated by students themselves. There is a huge difference between these approaches and power distribution. While in the first case, patrons (teachers, publishing houses, translation agencies etc.) control the event, its management and outcomes, in the second case students are in charge, thus inverting "traditional" roles. In the first case, students are engaged by others, while in the second case, they are the ones engaging. In Slovakia, for example, there is no scarcity in top-down events. One such event has been described above: the Translation University Olympics. Nitra, for example, is home to the so-far 14 editions of the event Tvorivé prekladateľské reflexie (Creative Reflections on Translation), the Summer School/Autumn of Audiovisual Translation, and a conference for PhD students organized by PhD students: Tradition and Innovation in Translation Studies. Comenius University in Bratislava, for its part, has joined forces with the professional association SAPT to organize a series of professional events, such as St. Jerome's Days and Linguamarket.

The reason why I have chosen to describe the Winter School of Translation in more detail here is that it is the first case in the country of a translation/interpreting-related event with a bottom-up approach. The event is organized exclusively by students, without the involvement of teachers, who only act as consultants when asked for their advice. I therefore find it relevant to investigate this phenomenon more closely. I also dare hypothesize that such motivated students, who voluntarily dedicate their free time to organizing and participating in this kind of event, tend to be more sensitive to social issues and social changes taking place around them.

The Winter School of Translation

Hatiarová[10] (2024) explains that the Winter School of Translation wanted to provide students with collaborative out-of-class settings to build relationships not only with each other, but also with translation agencies, publishing houses or other potential employers. It was held twice: from 2 to 4 February 2024 in Banská Bystrica at Matej Bel University's Faculty of Arts, Záhrada – Centre of Independent Culture, n.o., and the pub Urban Spot, and from 31 January to 2 February 2025 at the same venues. The first School was attended by 197 participants from every corner of the translation/interpreting sector, and the second by even more: 214. The programme consisted of lectures, discussions, workshops and professionally managed networking. The main activities at the School were divided into eight categories: (1) interpreting, (2) literary translation, (3) technical translation, (4) localization, (5) subtitling, (6) translation criticism, (7) interpreting from/into sign language, and (8) entertainment, networking and general discussions. Lectures on sign interpreting and subsequent discussions were interpreted into and from the Slovak Sign Language. The main organizers (*Sa zobuď!*)

selected the topics of discussions, workshops and networking. They were sponsored by translation/interpreting agencies and the Directorate General for Translation, and they raised funds on the crowdfunding platform Donio. They also sold translation-themed promotional merchandise.

In order to evaluate the event and determine its successes and shortcomings, Hatiarová (2024) devised a feedback questionnaire which was sent to all participants. It was completed by 96 respondents in 2024 and 75 in 2025 from every Slovak university where translation and interpreting are taught. The data collection consisted of two parts – a registration form which participants filled in at the registration desk upon entering the Winter School, and a 20-question feedback questionnaire. The questions aimed to determine whether the lectures, discussions and workshops were relevant to the respondents and what they felt made translators most and least visible. They could choose from the following list: (1) professional organizations, (2) translation events, (3) the translator's name on the book cover, (4) visibility in media, (5) translation competitions, and (6) translation prizes.

In 2024 nearly 90% of respondents found the lectures and discussions at the event "very relevant"; in 2025 93.3% did. We believe that the appropriately chosen topics and quality of the speakers contributed to this, and the already-high satisfaction levels, albeit moderately, actually increased. I also assume that this type of event is attended mainly by active students who want to proactively further their education.

What is even more important, as Hatiarová concludes, is that the majority of students (83% in 2024 and 98.7 % in 2025) who completed the registration form know more translation and interpreting students after the event than before. The Winter School has indeed contributed to the development and strengthening of the translation and interpreting student community. It has brought together students from different universities and enabled them to network with potential future colleagues. The data suggest that the School has had a positive impact on the community of future translators and interpreters.

As for increasing translators' visibility, Hatiarová's data (2024, 2025) indicate that students consider press coverage to be the category that makes translators most visible. On the other hand, they consider translation prizes to be the least important factor in advertising the translation community in wider society. Translation events, e.g. the Winter School of Translation, are ranked second strongest.

The event's student organizers went far beyond proficentric competence to construct their sociooriented approach. They learned to network, raise funds, organize accommodation and arrange catering (for vegans and non-vegans; everything served in recyclable cups and plates), and they also raised their own social awareness and sense of responsibility. Indeed, they did improve their professional knowledge (as described in the questionnaire), but they also moved beyond translation and interpreting towards social responsibility. They took education into their own hands and motivated

teachers to move beyond their limits. In order to measure students' social engagement, we asked the agency Demdis[11] to conduct a survey for us. Demdis is a platform and community which through innovative methods engages the public in respectful debate and finds consensus in a fractious society. The basic mechanism of digital Demdis discussions is that discussants vote for opinions (agree, disagree, abstain) and add their own opinions, which are voted on by others. Advanced statistical analysis (PCA and k-means clustering) is then run in the background to identify (organic) opinion groups and opinions on which there is majority support across all groups. It is a combination of qualitative and quantitative open sociological research. The number of School participants engaged in the survey was 61. The main goal of the survey/discussion was to find out whether students perceive translation as a mechanical craft or whether they believe it cannot be separated from the promotion of the values of democracy, human rights and dignity. Participants of the survey agreed that translation should be a value-driven craft, to be pursued by people who see it as a mission and by those for whom it is merely a source of income. Participants also believed that translation is the bridging of two languages, two worlds; it should not be a mechanical transfer. In translation, the message of the work, i. e. its values, is transmitted, and this puts it in the position of a mission of value. They also expressed that it is important to have a value system in every profession and that the translator has a moral obligation to uphold the values of democracy, human rights and dignity. Students also mentioned that neutrality is an illusion – every translator is marked by the cultural and ideological context in which he or she operates. Participants mentioned that in order to achieve these aims, translators and interpreters should:

- be aware of their moral values and principles, their own convictions, so that they are able to "say no" when it is really necessary
- use the value framework as a guide, not as a tool to manipulate the text
- avoid overflowing with emotion while interpreting, because they may react irrationally as a result of their emotions being vented and, what is more, their subjective emotion is not equivalent to professional opinion
- have their names clearly displayed on the cover of the translated book

Moreover, we were also interested in their perception of current social turmoil. In this case, I wanted to test the presumption that engaged and motivated students also care about democracy and social reality surrounding them, the one their future profession is embedded in. We asked them how they perceived Russian aggression in Ukraine and Slovakia's membership in NATO and the EU. An overwhelming 87% of them strongly denounced Russian aggression and 92% also strongly supported Slovak NATO and EU membership. In the light of data quoted above on rising support for authoritarian regimes in Slovakia, this is a very promising result. This result allows us to speculate that motivated students of translation and interpreting are interested in education and not merely training. I am quite aware of

the fact that this is a very limited study looking deeply only into highly motivated students who voluntarily engage in translation community activities. It is also difficult at this point to look for causal relations here, but it shows us that we surely have to engage in investigating this community and their ways of doing if we want to challenge and overcome digital and social dilemmas ahead of us.

Based on the above, I have arrived at a few conclusions:

1 Polarization brings action.
2 Voluntary bottom-up engagement with the translation studies community may have positive benefits in moving beyond proficentric approaches in translation education and training.
3 The professional cannot be divided from the social.

Conclusion

The social-constructivist approach to translation teaching was introduced at the beginning of the 21st century. Schools and trainers around the globe have adopted the approach since and significantly improved translator education. We have managed to move from expertise to profession and real-world translation settings. Now, it is time to go further beyond the classroom and internships and build professional awareness and social action based on that. This process, however, cannot take place top-down, but bottom-up. We must acknowledge that students enrolling to translation programmes have better knowledge of some aspects of the world than their teachers (especially in technology). Students often defy our expectations, but not in a bad way. They know different things than what we presume they should know. Those tensions can be resolved only in a community of knowledge builders. Such communities, when mature, can "translate" their knowledge to various aspects of social life and become active agents of social change while being excellent professionals at the same time. But we need to listen and respect their needs, as they are the ones who will shape the world of tomorrow. In the community of knowledge builders, we construct our own metanarrative. Translation studies have a unique position to do so. We work with cultures; we mediate information with the aim to generate knowledge.

In this chapter I argued that the best way to move from professional communities of translation knowledge builders to agents of social change is student engagement. Events like the Winter School of Translation and the movement *Sa zobud*! (Wake Up!) are examples of such cases. They have managed to move far beyond the classroom and strive to build *universe-cities*. They unite students and scholars from various cities and institutions and hold events all around the country, showing that translation studies communities could indeed make a difference. In this way, a confident community is being built which, if their activities are sustained, has the potential to bring about real social changes. Such a process is indeed transformationist.

List of Interviews for Media by *Sa zobuď (!)* movement

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Notes

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2 https://cedmohub.eu/jake-jsou-trendy-ve-vyvoji-dezinformacnich-narativu-v-cesku-a-na-slovensku-za-prvni-ctvrtleti-roku-2024/

3 In this case I am not referring to the translation of technical texts, but mainly translation for publishing houses, journalistic translation and basically any translation involving social artefacts.

4 In this chapter, just like Platter, Iacono, and Zwischenberger (chapter 13 in this volume), I adopt Angelelli's (2017) differentiation between education and training, where education pertains to a structured programme of study at a university, requiring critical thinking and culminating in a degree. Thus conceived, it is described as "a form of passing on knowledge, skills, values and beliefs" (Angelelli, 2017, p. 32). Training, in contrast, is a more concise format focused on imparting vocational or specialized skills.

5 https://www-benjamins-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/online/etsb/keywords?f_sel_any_field=AI&f_=&model=bbr-etsb-keywords&f_N1_4_9_1=&fop_N1_4_9_1=rall [accessed 17.9.2024].

6 I prefer the distinction between information and knowledge to the distinction between declarative (knowing what) and procedural knowledge (knowing how) presented by the PACTE Group in 2003.

7 My translation. For more context on translator- and interpreter-training programmes in Slovakia, see Poláček and Tonková (2025), chapter 8 in this book.

8 It should be noted that at the time Patrícia Hatiarová was also a student of the Socratic Institute (https://sokratovinstitut.sk/socratic-institute/) whose main goal is to "educate adults and motivate them to foster positive changes in Slovakia".
9 The interview was conducted in July 2024.
10 Currently a PhD student in Translation Studies at the Department of English and American Studies at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. Her PhD thesis focuses on translator visibility in society. Her supervisor is Martin Djovčoš.
11 https://www.demdis.sk/

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