

***Wikipedia*, Translation and the Collaborative Production of Spatial Knowledge(s): A socio-narrative analysis**

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to provide insights into the significance and complexity of the role that translation plays in the production of knowledge within the free online encyclopaedia platform *Wikipedia*. First, it positions this investigation within a growing body of research into the user-generated site as a prominent new arena for the social construction of reality, before critiquing the ways in which translation has so far been conceptualized in this context. Second, it offers a case study focusing on the English-language *Wikipedia* article about 'Paris', using a socio-narrative-based approach to the study of translation. This analysis reveals translation to be inextricably bound up in the processes of knowledge production, dissemination and negotiation through which content is collaboratively created within the world's most popular reference work.

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Introduction

Wikipedia is the world's most popular online knowledge resource (*Alexa* Internet Traffic Statistics). Thanks largely to its free content, its vast size and its consequent prominence among the results of many everyday search engine enquiries, the site currently attracts a monthly average of 15 billion page views from a global audience of nearly 500 million individuals (*Wikimedia* statistics: Page views). On any given day, 15% of all Internet users will consult the encyclopaedia directly (*The Economist*), and many automated services and software applications – such as *Google*'s 'Quick

Answer' boxes and 'personal assistants' like the *iPhone's Siri* – also draw extensively on its entries (Simonite).

As one might expect from a phenomenon that has so rapidly become “part and parcel of the ordinary routines of our networked life” (Lovinck & Tkacz 9), *Wikipedia* has attracted the attention of many researchers based across the humanities and social sciences, from geography (Graham *et al.*) to sociology (König) to philosophy (Tabb). However, much of this research has tended to overlook the significance of the linguistic and cultural diversity of humankind for the creation of the site's content (Fichman & Hara 1). Most notably, the centrality of translation within this context has largely been either ignored or downplayed, even by researchers working in the field of translation studies. As I demonstrate below, in those studies where translation in *Wikipedia* has been discussed (Désilets *et al.*; Drugan; Hautasaari; McDonough Dolmaya), analysis has so far focused exclusively on the transfer and dissemination of user-generated content between the different language editions of the platform. In other words, previous research has not considered the extent to which translation might constitute a core mechanism for the production of knowledge within each *Wikipedia* version, nor has it engaged with the ways in which this practice might be caught up with the difficult processes of mass collaboration and negotiation through which many of the site's articles are constructed.

Consequently, this paper seeks to highlight the broader significance and complexity of the role played by translation and translators in the creation of *Wikipedia* content by investigating as a case study the collaborative volunteer construction of the English-language *Wikipedia* article on the subject of Paris, France. It begins by situating this analysis within a growing body of research into *Wikipedia* undertaken from a number of different perspectives, including translation studies, before introducing the key principles of socio-narrative theory as the conceptual framework that informs my approach to the data. I then present the results of my case study, emphasizing the extent to which translation has been inextricably integrated into the multi-agent practices of content creation and inter-subjective knowledge negotiation in this online context. Finally, in the conclusion, I reflect on the implications of these findings for research into *Wikipedia* and for the field of translation studies as a whole.

Research context: *Wikipedia*, the user-generated encyclopaedia

As a project aiming to collect in one place ‘the sum of all human knowledge’ (Wales), *Wikipedia* belongs to a long established and geographically widespread tradition. This endeavour can be traced back in history at least as far as the third century B.C.E. to the construction of the great library of

Alexandria, and is common to many cultures and societies spread across the globe (Pentzold 257; West *et al.* 1097). However, not even the *Yongle Encyclopaedia* of Ming-dynasty China or Diderot and d'Alembert's French Enlightenment-era *Encyclopédie* can begin to match *Wikipedia* in terms of the comprehensive extent of its coverage. Indeed, despite the fact that it only began in January 2001, the online encyclopaedia already contains over 44 million articles (as of March 2017) written in 295 different languages (*Wikipedia: List of Wikipedias*).

Wikipedia has achieved this rapid growth primarily through the adoption of an online 'volunteer crowdsourcing' model for the production and dissemination of knowledge (McDonough Dolmaya, *Analyzing* 169). While previous reference works have almost always relied extensively on models of collaborative authorship (Feldstein 77), *Wikipedia* has taken this collaboration to a whole new level by 'democratizing' the encyclopaedia construction process and allowing anyone with Internet access to contribute to and edit its content (*Wikipedia: Wikipedia*). Unlike its predecessors and current rivals such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the project does not select its authors on the basis of their subject-specific expertise and/or academic credentials, but invites every one of its readers to actively participate in the creation of a shared knowledge resource. There is very little in the way of editorial oversight; instead, contributors organize themselves in relatively horizontal structures for open collaboration and content management. In this way, *Wikipedia* has become not just an encyclopaedia, but also a diverse and engaged online community (Reagle 1). What started out as just a small handful of North American enthusiasts is now a vast global collective of over 200,000 unpaid and otherwise unaffiliated volunteers "from pretty much every ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic background, political ideology, religion, sexual orientation and gender" (*Wikimedia: Wikipedia: Editor activity levels*; Gardner).¹

In response to the apparent success of the *Wikipedia* model, much of the earliest research into the site focused on the issue of quality and whether or not such a volunteer-driven approach can produce reliable and accurate encyclopaedic content (Bragues; Giles). More recently, however, a number of investigations have begun to conceptualize the platform as a prominent arena for the social construction of reality (König 164). According to this perspective, *Wikipedia* is not just a popular website but an important new space for the production, circulation and contestation of the shared understandings by which we interpret the world around us and come to make sense of our place within it. For instance, René König has investigated the creation of the German-language *Wikipedia* entry concerning the '9/11' attacks on the USA in 2001. By following the online discussions (in *Wikipedia*'s so-called 'Talk' pages) between participants working within this article-focused community, König's analysis provides a detailed exploration of how Wikipedians negotiate differences in accounts of contemporary affairs, decide whose expertise is to be trusted, and come

to reach agreement on what kinds of knowledge should take precedence in their encyclopaedia (König 163). Specifically, he is interested in examining the extent to which *Wikipedia*'s participatory architecture truly has 'democratized' the knowledge production process, and whether traditional hierarchies of expertise are still largely maintained within this user-generated environment. His findings suggest that both the prevailing institutional account of 'September 11' and many alternative, non-mainstream interpretations of the events are discussed and given prominence by the community at different stages in the article construction process, but that ultimately the official narrative does seem to have retained its dominance in this context.

Jason Swarts, on the other hand, has examined the English-language *Wikipedia* article regarding so-called 'clean coal technology' to examine the "collaborative construction of fact" within the encyclopaedia. Using an approach based on actor network theory, he investigates the revision history of this text over a three-year period to trace the variety of rhetorical 'opening' and 'closing moves' through which knowledge on this scientifically controversial topic is generated within *Wikipedia*.² His analysis highlights the complex processes through which new pieces of information are pushed forward within the text, and then either "retained, changed, bundled, or dropped" as the community attempts to bring together a 'stable' version of the encyclopaedic entry whose form and contents might be acceptable to all of the participants involved.

This growing body of research has thus provided intriguing insights into the characteristics and contradictions of participatory knowledge production in *Wikipedia*. It has shown how the encyclopaedia's articles are created through a process of negotiation between advocates of many and often opposing points of view, and therefore through the difficult combination of multiple perspectives and information sources. It has also emphasized that these dialogues and debates are highly fractious, frequently escalating into full-blown 'edit wars' between the diverse members of this geographically dispersed online community. That said, little attention has so far been paid to the role of translation and translators in these collaborative processes of knowledge generation: for instance, despite the fact that many of the source materials on which the contributors to the German-language *Wikipedia* have based their '9/11' entry are written in another language (i.e. English), König's study does not explore the implications of this translation process or how linguistic issues might shape the article's construction. Indeed, Fichman and Hara (1) have suggested that this neglect of the significance of linguistic and cultural barriers for the production of content is widespread in much analysis of *Wikipedia*, and that more research into the multilingual dimensions of the site is needed if we are to better understand the user-generated encyclopaedia phenomenon and its place in modern society.

***Wikipedia* and translation studies**

As a now well-established academic discipline that treats encounters across languages and cultures as its central concern, one might expect translation studies to have provided a prominent platform from which to investigate these themes. Yet, research into *Wikipedia* by translation scholars has so far been strangely limited. For example, although Alain Désilets *et al.* have discussed *Wikipedia* and the role of translators within the site, it is cited as just one of many wikis whose multilingual content could be significantly improved through the design and implementation of better software and work-flow management strategies that might aid translation practices. Likewise, Joanna Drugan's discussion of the relevance of professional codes of ethics within new contexts of 'non-professionally produced translation' only considers *Wikipedia* alongside fifteen other community projects such as *Global Voices*, *Ubuntu* and *D-Addicts Fansubbing Forum*. Moreover, her analysis is not concerned specifically with what *Wikipedia* translators actually do in the course of their everyday participation within the site, but solely with the policies that have been developed at the institutional level of the community, i.e. with those guidelines that attempt to present 'good practice' for volunteers working within *Wikipedia* as a whole. Finally, Ari Hautasaari has published research in this area with the explicit aim of discovering what web-based tools might be developed in order to better support *Wikipedia's* translators. However, as he himself notes, this work is motivated less by a specific interest in their translation practice, and more by the chance to explore "processes of human-computer interaction" in this online context (Hautasaari, *Could* 946).

Indeed, it appears that the only extensive investigations into *Wikipedia* from a translation studies perspective are two papers by Julie McDonough Dolmaya (*Analyzing; Revision*).³ In both, McDonough Dolmaya is interested in *Wikipedia* as a particularly well known example of what she calls a 'crowdsourced translation initiative', and she seeks to compare and contrast this alternative translation model with practices common to the professional language services industry. In the first article, she conducts an email survey of 75 Wikipedians who have volunteered their language skills on the English-language *Wikipedia's* 'Translators available' page, and attempts to explore what kinds of people participate in these projects, why they translate and how they perceive translation as an activity. She finds that 68% of those surveyed have never worked as professional translators nor had any kind of formal training in linguistic mediation (*Analyzing* 174). Her results also reveal that her respondents are driven by a broad range of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors, including most commonly the desire to "[m]ake information available to other language speakers" (in 89.3% of cases), the fact that they "[f]ound the project intellectually stimulating" (in 68% of cases) and a

wish to “[h]elp support the organization that launched the initiative” (in 56% of cases) (*Analyzing* 182).

McDonough Dolmaya’s second article (*Revision*) then turns to focus on the issue of translation quality, using Mossop’s taxonomy of editing and revising procedures. This enables her to investigate whether Wikipedians are “producing translations that require revision”, the extent to which the open-editing process helps to “eliminate errors in translated articles”, and which “types of errors [are] more commonly resolved” (*Revision* 13). By analyzing the revision history of 94 *Wikipedia* articles that have been posted on the ‘*Wikipedia: Pages needing translation into English*’ page, she suggests that all the articles studied contained at least one transfer error (i.e. mistranslation or omission) and one language/style error (i.e. relating to grammar or spelling), and that, “[u]sually, three or four different errors from each category were identified” (*Revision* 8). Of these inaccuracies, McDonough Dolmaya’s analysis indicates that the language/style errors are more frequently corrected and therefore that monolingual editing is more common than bilingual revising in this *Wikipedia* context. However, she does note that “transfer errors are sometimes addressed, so this particular form of crowdsourcing can sometimes result in translations that are generally accurate and free of grammatical errors, though not within days or hours, as professional translation might require” (*Revision* 14).

While McDonough Dolmaya’s investigations are clearly valuable for the insights they provide into these otherwise under-explored areas of the *Wikipedia* platform, they nevertheless fail to engage with the broader significance and complexity of translation within the encyclopaedia. Indeed, in directly comparing these practices with the professional sphere and focusing attention on issues such as translation quality, they present a rather blinkered view of the role of translators in the production and dissemination of knowledge within *Wikipedia*, a view rooted all too firmly in the classical binarisms of the discipline of translation studies. Original writing and translation are separated out and presented as two entirely distinct activities, with the latter being characterized as essentially involving the faithful reproduction of a single, pre-existing source text in the target language and culture.

This distinction and characterization is particularly clear in the way in which McDonough Dolmaya introduces her object of study (*Revision* 1, my emphasis):

Wikipedia [...] has over 4 million articles in English alone, and content in 284 other language versions. While the articles in the different versions are often written directly in the respective target-language, translations also take place.

From this description, we might infer that “writ[ing] directly in the respective target-language” is essentially a monolingual activity, and that translation is something wholly different. Specifically, translation is framed as a process of direct transfer, taking place only between the many language editions of *Wikipedia*. No attention is paid to the ways in which translation might constitute an integral part of the production and dissemination of knowledge within each version of the site.

Moreover, in both studies, the role of the translator would appear to be that of an ‘information bridge’. These multilingual volunteers are positioned as impartial and apolitical conduits for the transmission of knowledge between linguacultures, in most cases using their language skills simply to facilitate the aims of the *Wikipedia* project and help make the encyclopaedia’s content accessible to a wider readership (McDonough Dolmaya, *Analyzing* 182). To paraphrase Baker (*Alternative* 23), they are assumed to act in accordance with the principles of neutrality long promoted within the translation profession, i.e. to take no sides and have no stake in the outcomes of their practice. By concentrating in her analysis on the extent to which different kinds of ‘errors’ are rectified within the community, McDonough Dolmaya implies that the central purpose of these individuals’ translation activities is to create a linguistically equivalent representation of the original article in the target language. She does not allow for investigation of the extent to which their work might simultaneously involve active processes of creative, ‘authorial’ intervention.

We should note that McDonough Dolmaya is by no means alone in characterizing translation in *Wikipedia* in this way: Désilets *et al.*, Drugan and Hautasaari all adopt a similar stance. For example, Hautasaari (*Could* 945) begins his paper by stating that “*Wikipedia* translation activities aim to improve the quality of the multilingual *Wikipedia* through article translation” and he subsequently defines ‘*Wikipedia* translation’ explicitly as “the activities related to translating *Wikipedia* article pages.” In doing so, he assumes this kind of direct translation between *Wikipedia* language editions is the principal form of translation activity conducted by the encyclopaedia-building community, and that this should be the main focus of research from the perspective of translation studies. No reference is made to other forms of multilingual practice occurring within the site, and translation is simply viewed as a rather mechanical process which might help improve the quality of smaller language editions (i.e. with fewer numbers of active contributors) by importing pre-existing content from another larger *Wikipedia* (Hautasaari, *Could* 953).

This paper aims to demonstrate the fuller significance and complexity of the role that translation plays in the production of knowledge within the free online encyclopaedia platform. As I will attempt to show through the case study presented below, what McDonough Dolmaya describes as “writ[ing] directly in the respective target-language” (*Revision* 1) can be seen to involve a diverse range of multilingual practices and complex forms of pluricultural collaboration. First, I will seek to highlight

that, much as in the journalistic field (Bielsa & Bassnett; van Doorslaer), the construction of *Wikipedia* articles frequently involves a muddy mix of translating, collating, summarizing and synthesizing, drawing on an abundance of source materials published in languages other than that of the target text. I will argue that these overlapping practices fundamentally disrupt the classical binary distinction between author and translator, given that translation has been inextricably integrated into the processes of original writing. As a result, I will suggest that attempts to distinguish between the two roles and practices serve only to impose reductive and inadequate categories on what the data suggests is a much more messy and intriguing reality (cf. Meylaerts & Gonne). Second, I will additionally try to show that the individuals who engage in such practices cannot be conceptualized merely as information bridges, but that they are heavily invested in the process and outcomes of their work: they are not impartial conduits for the transfer of human knowledge, but active and engaged participants occupying decisive roles in its production, reproduction and contestation. These translator-contributors often hold strong opinions regarding what should and should not be included in their encyclopaedia and as a result, I will emphasize, members of this diverse community often argue bitterly between themselves as to how each topic should be presented in the target language. In other words, the multilingual process of article construction progresses only through a complex series of difficult intersubjective negotiations, fraught with dispute, dissent and discord.

In order to investigate and make sense of these broader processes of translation and negotiation through which knowledge is produced within *Wikipedia* across languages and cultures, I propose to base my analytical framework on the understanding of socio-narrative theory first introduced to the field of translation studies by Mona Baker (*Conflict*) and subsequently developed by a number of researchers over the past ten years (e.g. Boéri; Harding). As I will explain in the next section, this approach stems from the idea that human experience of the world is fundamentally configured by the stories we tell ourselves and others about it.⁴ Socio-narrative theorists conceptualize translation as “a form of (re)narration” (Baker, *Renarration* 159) and seek to focus attention on the similarities between this activity and many other kinds of communication and textual manipulation through which knowledge is produced and disseminated, including original composition, commentary, adaptation, summary, paraphrase and synthesis. Thus, rather than encouraging the comparison of source and target text in the search for errors without consideration for the context and agents of translation, socio-narrative analysis promotes heightened interest in the social roles of translators as influential and culturally situated actors in the narrative construction of reality, both within their own societies as well as on a global scale. To cite Baker (*Renarration* 159), the lens of socio-narrative theory foregrounds the fact that

[t]ranslators and interpreters do not mediate cultural encounters that exist outside the act of translation but rather participate in configuring these encounters: they are embedded in the narratives that circulate in the context in which they produce a translation and simultaneously contribute to the elaboration, mutation, transformation and dissemination of these narratives through their translation choices.

Socio-narrative theory

The socio-narrative approach to translation draws primarily on the writings of scholars working in other areas of the human sciences (e.g. Bruner; Fisher; Somers & Gibson; White) to argue that the stories we tell ourselves and others constitute the primary and inescapable means by which we come to know and understand our social worlds (Baker, *Conflict* 3). This does not mean there is no 'real world' out there or that everything we perceive as reality is somehow no more than a mental construct: rather, socio-narrative theorists contend that, although this 'material realm' exists, it is only through narrative that we are able to make sense of the chaotic complexity of experience (Polkinghorne 1-3).

The narrative construction of reality is fundamentally shaped by two core principles: on the one hand, these stories help to bundle, categorize and streamline our perception of reality. Through a process of 'selective appropriation', they sift the "potentially limitless array" of experiences and allow us to identify as significant certain elements from the mass of data received via our senses about the events, objects, people, places and institutions of our social world (Somers & Gibson 60). This filtering effect is neither random nor impartial: as Baker (*Renarration* 167) explains, what is selected and what is neglected is governed by the geographical, historical, social and cultural 'location' of the narrator or narrators involved in elaborating the story in question, and by their reason(s) for telling it. Given my interest in the second half of this paper in the ways in which specific urban spaces are narrated in society, I might cite as a pertinent illustration of this point the example presented in John Short *et al.*. Focusing on the North American city of Syracuse (NY), the authors analyze the logos and 'city-brand' narratives that the civic authorities have used in presenting this locale to its inhabitants and the wider world, comparing those produced in the mid-nineteenth century with those circulated today. The comparison reveals a dramatic shift in the core elements from which the city's official narrative is constructed: while the iconography of industry is prominently foregrounded in the 1848 logo, this is wholly absent from the modern-day presentation

of the space (Short *et al.* 215). Gone are the black silhouettes of chimney stacks and row upon row of steeped factory rooves; these have been replaced by symbols of the natural environment (a lake) and the service sector (skyscrapers and office blocks). While industry and manufacturing remain an important feature of Syracuse's history and identity, it is clear that the authorities have increasingly sought to turn their back on this now 'unfashionable' facet of the city, rendering it entirely invisible from the official presentation. The official narrative has thus been transformed from one depicting Syracuse as a place of production, of work opportunities and wealth generation, to one portraying a clean, healthy and 'modern' living space, a place of consumer leisure and pleasure, in accordance with late-capitalism's new meta narrative of urban progress and prosperity.

On the other hand, Somers and Gibson (59, emphasis in original) have shown how narratives also provide us with the "*constellations of relationships* (connected parts) embedded in *time and space*" that help satisfy our fundamental desire for order, rationality and simplicity. These stories establish important distinctions and mental connections between cause and effect, good and bad, past and present, us and them; they allow us to comprehend the relative significance of any one event, object or (inter)action, and to determine how this affects us and our place in the world. This principle of 'relationality' too is far from impartial in the sets of associations it constructs. Rob Shields (215-229) for instance has analyzed the constellations of relationships depicted with respect to the north of England in the 'Kitchen Sink' films of the 1950s and 1960s, and in the long-running British television soap opera *Coronation Street*. By portraying themselves as 'realist British dramas' (hence 'Kitchen Sink'), showing the everyday stories of 'ordinary people', and simultaneously setting themselves explicitly in 'the north' of the UK, Shields argues that these productions have sought to directly question and challenge the dominant imagined geography of the British Isles. While the northern towns in which these fictions are shot have long been narrated as marginal to the 'home counties' of the south, these films suggest that it is London and the southern way of life that are the periphery, distant from and unimportant to the life of the average Briton. No outside (southern) influences distract from the events occurring within the local community (Shields 228); *The Street* is the focus and beating heart of British civilization.

As should be clear from the examples above, socio-narratives are only rarely expressed fully and/or explicitly in a single 'text' (however broadly defined) but are generally much more diffuse and amorphous 'configurations' that, as Baker (*Activism* 464) suggests, underpin a whole range of texts and discourses. Nevertheless, the tools of socio-narrative analysis do allow us to identify and distinguish between different kinds of narrative, and to understand the features and relative influence of each. For instance, following Somers and Gibson, Baker (*Conflict* 28-49) has developed a four-part hierarchical typology of socio-narrativity, comprising 'personal', 'public', 'disciplinary' and

‘meta’ narratives. Harding has expanded this foundational model through the introduction of a further category of ‘local’ narratives and by imposing a ‘dual’ structure on Baker’s ‘flat’ typology. She also replaces Baker’s ‘public’ category with the more precise concept of ‘societal’ narratives (Harding, *How* 292). For the purposes of the city-focused case study presented below, I adapt both these models to concentrate explicitly on the distinctions between the personal, societal, institutional and meta ‘spatial narratives’ through which we socially construct and make sense of our lived environments.

To begin with, ‘personal’ spatial narratives are those most fundamental stories that we tell ourselves and others about the spaces that form the immediate sphere of experience for our lives. They are rooted concretely in our individual perceptions of and affective sensations associated with the world around us, and yet they are also shaped to a significant extent by the ‘societal’ spatial narratives that circulate more generally in our culture. For example, the features of the everyday stories we relate about our home town or somewhere we have visited on holiday are determined both by our direct experiences of these environments and by the more geographically widespread and socially influential accounts constructed in the media, as well as in books, films, advertising campaigns, etc. Alternatively, we may identify certain cities at least partially in relation to those particularly pervasive narratives of ‘stereotypical’ national and/or regional identity, and thus come to associate these urban spaces with certain characters, events, images and customs (cf. van Doorslaer, *Translating* 1053).

‘Institutional’ spatial narratives on the other hand are powerful stories developed with respect to specific locales by the many different social organizations – such as governments, city councils, universities and businesses – that hold particular sway over our collective experiences and understandings of the social world. This category includes the ‘official discourses of urban regeneration’ (Hall) produced by civic authorities, as well as the ‘expert’ accounts published by academic researchers in all fields, derived from empirical observation and systematic analysis, but nevertheless “disseminated with an admixture of ideology” (Lefebvre 40). Such institutional stories are invariably shaped by the broader ‘meta’ narratives in which we are all embedded: those all-pervasive accounts whose plots are so ingrained in our collective understanding of our environment that we “simply tend to take them for granted” (Baker, *Renarration* 162). In my typology, this category would contain the definitional stories of urban progress and prosperity mentioned above by which cities of the world are increasingly framed in the neoliberal context (Short *et al.* 207). The apparent inevitability of the recent intensification of processes of globalization is another example of the power exercised by such a master narrative (Massey 293).

Case-study: Producing 'Paris'

Having established the main features of the conceptual framework on which my analysis is based, I can now turn to examining the specific case of the narrative construction of Paris within the English-language *Wikipedia*. Through this investigation, I intend to draw attention to the key role of translation and translators in this process of (re)narration and to highlight the fact that the many members of this culturally, geographically and linguistically diverse, article-focused community subscribe to very different personal, societal and institutional narratives of the French capital. The aim is to demonstrate the extent to which translation has been inextricably integrated into the multi-subjective processes of negotiation through which knowledge about this city is produced in this context.

The English-language *Wikipedia* article on the subject of Paris has been selected as a particularly abundant source of examples with which to illustrate my argument. This abundance is largely because of the fact that, since its creation at 11:45 am on 6th November 2001, the entry has received significant attention both from within the *Wikipedia* community and from readers of the site. Not only does it attract a steady average of around 8,000 page views a day (*Wikipedia*: Page View Statistics: Paris) but, as of 11:18 am on 11th March 2017, the text has been edited 16,277 times by 5,808 different users (*Wikipedia*: Paris: Revision history statistics). According to the latest database report available (November 2016 - *Wikipedia*: Database reports/Pages with the most revisions), this makes it the 101 most revised entry of all the 5,354,509 articles currently contained within the English-language *Wikipedia*, and the third most active city-related page, after 'New York City' and 'London'.

To achieve its goals, this case study is separated into three sub-analyses, drawing on two main sources of data identified within the Paris article environment. First, I will consult the 'Reference Lists' found within the most recently published version of this *Wikipedia* entry (Revision as of 12:17 on 10 March 2017⁵) in order to highlight a key indicator of the significance of translation as a core mechanism in the construction of this text. In accordance with the *Wikipedia* community's central policy of 'Verifiability', every segment of information published within the encyclopaedia must be connected, via a numbered and hyperlinked footnote, to the original resource from which it was taken (*Wikipedia*: Verifiability). These source materials are then collected by the *Wikipedia* software and can be viewed in the 'Reference Lists' placed at the bottom of each webpage. Thus, analyzing these bibliographic references not only allows us access to the intricate web of intertextual connections within which the *Wikipedia* article is situated, but also offers intriguing insights into the

compositional and translational history of each text. These lists cannot be considered fully comprehensive records of an article's past, given that some *Wikipedia* content is left 'unsourced' within the platform (especially when it is contributed by less experienced members of the community). Nevertheless, their analysis can still serve as a useful guide with which to explore what kinds of sources written in which languages have been used by the volunteer community to inform their collaborative (re)narration of the French capital.

Second, my analysis will investigate the so-called 'Talk' pages associated specifically with the Paris article text. These discussion forums are accessible via the 'Talk' tab located in the top left-hand corner of the main article content, and have been set up within the *Wikipedia* platform as a space in which contributors might plan changes to the article, confer over any issues raised during this process, and resolve any disputes and differences of opinion (Pentzold 257). The 'Paris' entry has a particularly active Talk page, containing 6,201 comments by 510 different individuals (*Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris: Revision history statistics). For the researcher, these conversations provide access to what Viegas and Wattenburg have called the 'rich context' lying behind each article's content: they clearly reveal the "cacophony of individual voices" involved in the construction of each text and allow scrutiny of the behind-the-scenes discussions that take place between them, opening up the 'black box' of the knowledge production process (Tkacz 5). Indeed, from the analysis of the Talk page comments, we are able not only to provide insight into why translation is so central to the production of knowledge in this context, but also to shed light on the multifaceted negotiations that take place between these translator-advocates of many different and opposing narrative constructions of Paris.

Reference List analysis

Clicking on each of the 319 referenced sources cited in the latest version of the 'Paris' article provides a clear indication of the extent to which translation has been involved in the construction of this entry. Specifically, we can observe that, while the contributors to this page have drawn on English-language resources in many parts of the text, they have more commonly identified, extracted and synthesized information contained within French-language materials: 173 of the cited sources (55%) are in French, while 144 are in English.⁶

In order to expand on this finding, it is worth looking in more detail at each of these references in turn in order to ascertain if every section of the encyclopaedia entry relies equally heavily on allophone materials. While the 'Tourism' section has been constructed mostly from English-language

resources⁷, in other sections of the article French-language sources have clearly been invaluable. Most notably, those parts of the entry that narrate the history of Paris from its origins through to the present day make only rare use of English-language materials, such as the brief historical accounts provided in Rachel Lawrence and Fabienne Godrand's *Insight* travel guide (References 19 and 25), or the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Reference 30). Otherwise, these bibliographic lists strongly suggest that the volunteer authors have collected, selected, translated, summarized and synthesized narrative accounts of Paris identified in French history books such as Alfred Fierro's *Histoire et dictionnaire de Paris*, Yvan Combeau's *Histoire de Paris*, Thierry Sarmant's *Histoire de Paris: Politique, urbanisme, civilisation* and Joël Schmidt's *Lutèce: Paris, des origines à Clovis*. The two volumes by Fierro and Sarmant in particular appear to have been used at many different points throughout the text in order to provide historical details relevant to each of these other sections: for example, fragments of Fierro's account of Paris' history appear to have been appropriated and translated in order to inform readers of the origins of some of the capital's most famous restaurants and cafés (References 231, 232, 236, 237).

Other sections of the text have been produced from other kinds of French-language sources. Those paragraphs that relate changes to the demographic composition of the French capital's population and that present the structure and features of its economy have relied heavily on the ability of their author-translators to interpret and collate information contained within official census reports and employment statistics, published in French by the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques* (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies – *INSEE*). The 'Economy' section especially seems to have relied extensively on the translation skills of the *Wikipedia* community's multilingually proficient volunteers: only 4 out of 25 of the sources cited here are available in English (References 160, 162, 165 and 167). Moreover, in every case, these English-language materials provide only comparison between Paris and the economies of other agglomerations around the world, rather than specific details regarding the French capital in particular.

In sum, analysis of these Reference Lists for this Paris article would suggest that translation has been inextricably involved in the collaborative practices of knowledge production and intersubjective renarration taking place within *Wikipedia*. Specifically, it demonstrates that contributors to this page have not relied exclusively on materials published in English, but have identified, appropriated, translated and synthesized many different French-language resources, in order to create this new presentation of Paris. Thus, the construction of this encyclopaedia entry cannot be characterized as a monolingual activity, but rather as a process in which multilingual translator-contributors have played a major role. For insight into the reasons why this might be the case and how this

collaboration proceeds, we must now look to comments made by Wikipedians within the 'Talk' page discussion forums associated with this text.

Exploring the reasons behind the use of allophone source materials

Analysis of Talk page discussions suggest that there are two main reasons why translation is so closely bound up in the construction of *Wikipedia* articles. First and foremost is the simple fact that much of the information required for contributors to create a detailed and up-to-date encyclopaedia article about the French capital has not already been published – or at least is very difficult to locate – in the target language. To give an example, in December 2005, contributors discussed the need to improve the 'Economy' section of their article by “clearly list[ing] the main branches of the Paris economy, instead of having just an explanation of the size of the Paris GDP” (*Hardouin*, 03:00, 3 December 2005, *Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris/Archive 1). One of the most active participants working on this page (*Hardouin*) suggested this might include a description of “the distribution of the [Parisian] workforce across economic sectors”, but noted that recent figures “are hard to find outside of France” (03:00, 3 December 2005, *Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris/Archive 1). As a fluent French-speaker, he emphasized that he has “access to very good data though” (03:00, 3 December 2005, *Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris/Archive 1). Indeed, inspecting the revisions he made to this section throughout this period in the article's history, we can clearly observe that it is primarily by identifying, extracting and translating information contained in French-language documents such as *INSEE*'s 1999 census report that he is able to contribute to the *Wikipedia* community's goal of producing a comprehensive and up-to-date reference work (see e.g. *Hardouin*'s Revision as of 02:19, 3 December 2005).

Other conversations between participants held later in the article's construction history reveal that other issues are additionally at play. On the one hand, it would appear that many contributors tend to regard sources written in the principal language of the locale (in this case French) to be more reliable or authoritative than many of their English-language counterparts. As one contributor puts it, by the very fact that they are “straight from the horse's mouth” (*ThePromenader*, 16:24, 21 October 2014, *Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris/Archive 13), French-language materials are considered to be more trustworthy in terms of their narrative presentations of the city. The *Grand Larousse Universel* encyclopaedia is framed, for example, as “perhaps the most trusted French encyclopedia [...] the number one reference checked by French people when they look for authoritative information” (*Hardouin*, 12:24, 9 May 2006, *Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris/Archive 7). The fact that it is written in French, in other words, lends the volume particular value within this *Wikipedia* community as a source on

which to base their English-language text. This is all the more significant, the Talk page comments suggest, given that many of the English-language resources available to Wikipedians are seen as being overly concerned with attempting to sell the city to potential visitors, rather than simply telling them about it. One unregistered contributor cites their “frustration at finding little in the English language of value or even relevance [sic] about Paris on the web”, and argues that “anything “Paris” is literally swamped with spam by tourist-fleecers” (64.34.168.70, 06:33, 29 August 2005, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 1*).⁸

Multilingual, multi-narrative negotiations

This last comment also hints at the extent to which translation in this context is never a neutral process of impartial knowledge transfer, but that the participants involved in these multilingual production practices are highly engaged with the narrative implications of their work. Indeed, as I will now attempt to show, these contributor-translators care deeply about the way in which Paris is (re)narrated to the English-speaking, *Wikipedia*-reading world, and disputes over what features of the city’s history and current reality should be foregrounded are as frequent as they are fierce.

At the heart of many of these debates is the fact that, as user *Blue Indigo* suggests, “there is not one Paris, but a different Paris for everyone & each one of us sees it with different eyes” (21:19, 27 November 2014, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 16*). Depending on their experience of the city and on the stories they might have been told about it, different users will have very different views and opinions about what constitutes ‘Paris’, about what is particularly Parisian about the city, and about the way in which this urban space’s past and present should be narrated in the text. This is of course true of all cities everywhere, but as another contributor-translator (*ThePromenader*) explains, this would seem to be particularly problematic in the case of Paris:

[d]oing an English Paris page in a place such as Wiki is no easy task, namely for the reason that there will automatically be conflicting views (subject choice) between a) English-speaking French nationals with an education or experience of Paris and its relation vis-à-vis the rest of its country [...] who will write about it much in the same way as, say, you would write about your own city or country, and b) Foreigners knowing much about Paris' "reputation" but little about its actual workings. (*ThePromenader*, 16:50, 5 December 2005, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 1*)

In other words, we can identify within this one article-focused community at least two opposing factions. On the one hand, there are many members of this group who, because they live in or near the French capital, subscribe most strongly to their own personal narratives of the place, based for the most part on their direct perceptions and lived experiences of their daily environment. Advocates of these 'Parises' include those *ThePromenader* presents as 'French nationals', but also participants such as *ThePromenader* himself and other North American 'ex-pats' such as *SiefkinDR*: these are all individuals who have spent much of their adult lives living and working in the French capital (see *Wikipedia: User Profile: ThePromenader*; *Wikipedia: User Profile: SiefkinDR*).⁹ As we will see in the discussion that follows, these accounts often foreground Paris as a modern, functioning metropolis, a world capital with a diverse and dynamic economy and pluricultural population. On the other hand, this community also contains large numbers of those that *ThePromenader* loosely describes as 'foreigners'. Because they are spread all over the world, and may never have visited Paris in person, these participants most commonly subscribe to the more abstract, if globally dominant, societal narratives of the French city, fuelled to a large extent by Hollywood depictions of Paris as "an enchanted world of culture and civilisation" (de Baecque 11). According to this view, Paris is the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, Montmartre and accordions playing in café terraces; or, as Susan Hayward (68) puts it, a "postcard city".

The differences between these two factions are clearly illustrated during one particularly ferocious 'edit war' that took place in the summer of 2013. This started at the end of June, after prolific Wikipedian *Dr. Blofeld* began "a major overhaul" of the 'Paris' entry in an attempt to promote it to 'Good Article' status (17:01, 23 June 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*).¹⁰ According to his User Profile, *Dr. Blofeld* is a native English-speaker living in the town of Barry, Wales, who has so far made over half a million edits to the online encyclopaedia as a whole (*Wikipedia: User Profile: Dr. Blofeld*; *Wikiscan: Dr. Blofeld*). Not only did his 'overhaul' involve rearranging the structure of the 'Paris' text (e.g. Revision as of 17:45, 23 June 2013), but also removing what *Dr. Blofeld* described as "unnecessary bloat" (*Dr. Blofeld*, Edit summary, Revision as of 17:53, 23 June 2013). At 15:56 on 3 July 2013, for example, the 'Demographics' section was extensively 'trimmed' and much of the discussion of the migrant populations of the city was deleted because, as *Dr. Blofeld* later explained, he felt these paragraphs were "way too big and unnecessary" (18:25, 25 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*). In their place, new content was added to other sections of the text: the 'Culture' section was extended with much more detail on the city's fashion (e.g. Revision as of 19:14, 3 July 2013) and music scenes (e.g. Revision as of 20:06, 3 July 2013), and a major new subsection was created, entitled 'Landmarks by district' (e.g. Revision as of 06:55, 4 July 2013). Organized by *arrondissement*, *Dr. Blofeld* here provided descriptions of the French capital's best known sights,

buildings and monuments through a process combining translation, paraphrase, summary and synthesis. For example, while some of the information required for this new content was drawn from English-language travel guides such as the *Frommer's* series popular in North America (Revision as of 10:44, 9 July 2013), he also made use of a French-language *Petit futé* guidebook to inform his presentation of sites such as the *Palais des Sports*, a multi-use entertainment venue to the south-west of Paris' centre (Revision as of 10:51, 6 July 2013).

However, for those contributor-translators who live in Paris, *Dr. Blofeld's* revisions of the article text were deeply 'perplexing' (*Superzoulou*, 15:37, 21 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*).¹¹ In direct response to *Dr. Blofeld's* changes to the 'Culture' section, one Parisian (*Der Statistiker*¹², 16:41, 29 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*) commented

I think it has an overly "museum city" feel to it. It can be rewritten [sic] bit to better reflect the current artistic trends/artistic scene, and not just the monuments/art of the past [...] I think it's important to keep a balance between the Paris of the past (museums, monuments, etc.) and the Paris of today (economy, current cultural trends, current population and immigrants, etc.).

Another 'local' contributor (*Minato ku*¹³) is more direct in his criticism:

The real question of all these [sic] talk is: what Paris should *Wikipedia* showcase?

The real functional and living Paris or the theme park that tourists imagine, you know, the romantic city where everything is old and everybody is white. (*Minato ku*, 21:21, 21 August 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 11*)

To summarize, these users consider that *Dr. Blofeld* has constructed an account of Paris which reproduces all too closely the clichés associated with the French capital via those globally dominant societal narratives discussed above. It selectively appropriates those features of the city that fit with the understanding of Paris as a place of culture, history and romance, and thus reinforces these stereotypical connections regarding what is particularly Parisian about the city. This jars with the perceptions, experiences and personal narratives of *Wikipedia's* France-based contributors with respect to their home town and, from the beginning of July onwards, they start to signal their disagreement *en masse* within the Talk page. *Der Statistiker* sarcastically comments, for example,

I think Dr Blofeld (since he's now the owner of this article) forgot to mention the demimondaines, prostitution, French Cancan, Pigalle and the Moulin Rouge in [his re-write of] the lead of the article. It's not clichésque enough. Please add more. [...] On an air of accordion of course. (*Der Statistiker*, 13:45, 21 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*)

Superzoulou on the other hand picks at the way *Dr. Blofeld* presents Paris as being best known musically “for its Bal-musette and gypsy jazz music, with the accordion being a musical icon of the city” (cited in *Superzoulou*, 16:06, 22 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*). He suggests that this

could be relevant in a 1950 travel guide, but that does not convey a very accurate picture of the Parisian musical scene, to say the least. (*Superzoulou*, 16:06, 22 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*).

When *Dr. Blofeld* responds by arguing that, from his perspective, the accordion is inarguably associated with Paris (16:15, 22 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*), *Superzoulou* asks

Associated by whom? Image [sic] of Paris in the mass media may be an interesting topic, but I do not think it should be given too much emphasis in a general article. Fortunately, French cuisine does not start with "French cuisine is known for its use of frogs and snails" :). (*Superzoulou*, 16:32, 22 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*)

As he argues elsewhere on another Talk page, *Dr. Blofeld's* account of Paris “may sound reasonable to people who are not very famiiar [sic] with the city” (*Superzoulou*, 18:04, 29 July 2013, *Wikipedia: User Talk: Superzoulou*), but for its inhabitants, this clichéd societal narrative is clearly upsetting, if not insulting.

After a further series of discordant exchanges in the Talk page discussion forums, *Der Statistiker* and *Superzoulou* decide to collaborate towards reworking the article according to their more local perspective. Most notably, they expand the ‘Demographics’ section that *Dr. Blofeld* had previously truncated, by collecting together information published in a series of reports by the Paris-based School of Social Sciences (*EHESS*), the Institute of Development and Urbanism (*IAU*), the Regional Health Monitoring Centre (*ORS*) and the French national statistics agency (*INSEE*) (see e.g. Revision as of 10:30, 11 August 2013). Translating and collating fragments appropriated from these institutional narratives of Paris allows them – in their words – to restore ‘balance’ to the article (*Der Statistiker*, 16:41, 29 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*). It permits these users to foreground an alternative impression of Paris, one which considers “what is more important about a

city than who lives there”, and to change the emphasis to include more “about age, incomes, and perhaps also about professional activities, household size and this kind of things [sic]” (*Superzoulou*, 18:59, 25 July 2013, *Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris/Archive 10). For example, this newly revised section includes detailed information regarding average incomes in the city, a discussion of the factors lying behind recent rises in birth rates and a new paragraph on migration both into and out of Paris.

With this intervention, some degree of compromise between the opposing factions does seem to have been achieved. However, the peace is only provisional, and similar arguments and narrative disputes occur repeatedly at several moments throughout the Paris Talk page corpus (most notably, in October 2014 – see *Wikipedia*: Talk: Paris/Archive 13). Indeed, in a context like *Wikipedia* in which “there are no ‘completed’ articles, [...] just endless chaos and conflict” (*BenKovitz*, 16:51, 19 May 2008, *Wikipedia*: User Profile: *BenKovitz*), it is inconceivable that this might ever be resolved.

Conclusion

One of the major limitations of this case study is of course the difficulty of asserting the full generalizability of its results. The ‘Paris’ page is only one of over 5 million articles currently contained within the English-language *Wikipedia* and one of 44 million if we take all language editions into consideration. That said, additional analyses conducted elsewhere (Jones, *Multilingual*) have indicated that similar kinds and levels of translation activity also take place within a larger dataset of 26 other city-related articles contained in both the English- and French-language *Wikipedias*.¹⁴ Therefore, although further investigation will be needed to corroborate these findings, it is highly likely that ‘Paris’ is by no means an exception, but rather a helpful illustration of the many different kinds of multilingual practices that occur within the online platform.

By focusing on the collaborative construction of this one article, the study has provided detailed evidence that is strongly suggestive of the broader significance and complexity of translation in the processes of knowledge production in *Wikipedia*. Specifically, while previous research into the encyclopaedia from a translation studies perspective has tended to reduce the role of volunteer translators to one of merely transferring content between language editions of the site, this paper has indicated that translation is in fact one of the core mechanisms for content creation within each multilingual and pluricultural community. Clear parallels should thus be drawn with the role of translation in the journalistic field (Bielsa & Bassnett; Schäffner; van Doorslaer): as in international news reporting, Wikipedians frequently make abundant use of materials written in languages other

than that of their target text, and the processes of article construction involve combinations of translating, selectively appropriating, summarizing, paraphrasing and synthesizing many different texts and fragments of texts. Such practices clearly undermine the classical binary distinctions between translator and author that have informed previous analyses of *Wikipedia* in translation studies, emphasizing the extent to which these roles are inextricably intertwined in this context (cf. Bielsa & Bassnett 104). As in Luc van Doorslaer's discussion of international journalism, we can observe that translating and writing are here brought together into "one process that is creative and re-creative at the same time" (*Double* 181). My findings thus signal the importance of asserting "non-traditional enlarged definitions of translation" (van Doorslaer, *Double* 179), especially when dealing with fluid, volunteer-driven situations such as those we find in *Wikipedia*. They emphasize the need to think beyond traditional theorizations of translation that frame the activity in terms of its "ingrained subservience" to an original author and text (Bielsa & Bassnett 64) and to foreground the decisive and complex role translators often play in the social construction of reality.

Much as in the case of translation in the journalistic field, however, identifying the steps, materials and individuals involved in these practices of multilingual knowledge production is often "at best labyrinthine" (Orengo 180). Not only does the relative anonymity of *Wikipedia's* contributors cause problems in terms of the reliability of the dataset (see Note 9), but research into their activities frequently requires careful collection and painstaking cross-analysis of multiple sources of potential data (including Reference Lists, Revision History archives, Talk pages and User Profiles) in order to reconstruct the article creation process. That said, with an appropriate methodology and an awareness of the shortcomings and pitfalls of the platform as a research environment, *Wikipedia* can provide ample opportunity and points of interest for translation studies. The above analysis has highlighted the value of the Reference Lists and Talk page discussion forums in particular as starting points from which to begin investigation into the ways in which the individual members of this geographically, socially, politically and linguistically diverse community produce and disseminate knowledge across languages and cultures. By examining these materials, it has emphasized that *Wikipedia's* translators are not merely 'information bridges' or impassive conduits for the transmission of knowledge, but politically engaged and culturally embedded social actors who strive with argumentative determination to ensure their understanding of the world is reflected in *Wikipedia's* content. Future research should no longer ignore their knowledge-producing agency: instead, it should aim to gain further insights into the ways in which they negotiate between opposing accounts of shared realities and attempt to agree on new narrative constructions which might be acceptable to all the participants involved.

Notes

1. This figure of 200,000 community members is based on the number of *Wikipedia* users who have contributed at least once in the preceding month (February 2017).
2. Previous versions of *Wikipedia* articles are stored within the platform's 'Revision History' archives. These are automatically time-stamped and arranged chronologically by the software, and can be accessed via the 'View history' tab near the top-right corner of any *Wikipedia* page.
3. Whilst the present article was being prepared for publication, McDonough Dolmaya published a third article on the subject of translation in *Wikipedia* (McDonough Dolmaya, *Expanding*). This article assesses *Wikipedia*'s institutional guidelines with respect to language and translation, and the directions in which translations tend to flow within this environment. Throughout this analysis and much as in her previous publications, McDonough Dolmaya focuses exclusively on the activities of those volunteer contributors who translate content directly from *Wikipedia* entries already published in another language edition of the site.
4. Socio-narrative theorists thus adopt a much broader understanding of the term 'narrative' than that which has conventionally been the focus of analysis in the humanities. Although rooted to a certain extent in the aims and methods of traditional narrative theory, their approach is not restricted exclusively to the investigation of literary narratives, but expands the scope to incorporate the everyday 'social stories' (hence 'socio-narrative') through which we communicate and make sense of our experience of the social world (Baker, *Conflict*; Jones, *Narrative*).
5. See Note 2 for details on how to access previous versions of the *Wikipedia* article.
6. The article's contributors have additionally twice drawn on an Italian text (a page within the official website of Rome's municipal government) to verify the statement that Paris is twinned with the Italian capital.
7. Out of the 13 citation links included in the 'Tourism' section, only four connect to French-language resources.
8. Unregistered users are identified within the *Wikipedia* platform by the Internet Protocol (IP) address of the networked device from which they have made their contribution(s) (e.g. 64.34.168.70).
9. On registering with the platform, Wikipedians are encouraged to create a 'User Profile' page to present themselves to other members of the community. Volunteers are free to provide as much

information as they wish, and many provide details regarding their interests, nationality, place of residence, profession and language skills. This kind of autobiographical writing is of course open to abuse, and it is possible that some users might exaggerate or even deliberately mislead when describing themselves in their Profile (*Der Statistiker*, for example, is not “from Göttingen”, despite what is written on his User Profile – see Note 12). Nevertheless, when conducting research into *Wikipedia*, we ultimately have no option but to accept this data at face value, unless we find contradictory evidence elsewhere.

10. An important feature of the *Wikipedia* peer-review process is the system of awards that can be granted to any article within the platform. ‘Good article’ status is awarded to those entries that are not as detailed as the top-level ‘Featured’ articles, but which are nevertheless “well written, contain factually accurate and verifiable information, [...] broad in coverage, neutral in point of view, stable, and illustrated, where possible, by relevant images with suitable copyright licenses” (*Wikipedia: Good articles*).

11. *Superzoulou* writes “[a]s a Parisian, I am rather perplexed by sentences like: “Although, the classical Conservatoire de Musique de Paris was founded in 1795, the city is better known musically for its Bal-musette and gypsy jazz music, with the accordion being a musical icon of the city”” (15:37, 21 July 2013, *Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/Archive 10*).

12. *Der Statistiker* is one of the few Wikipedians who agreed to be interviewed by journalist Eric Albert for his article on this Paris-focused ‘edit war’ published in *Le Monde* in October 2014. Albert describes him as a Parisian who became particularly involved in the debate because he was “agacé par la façon dont Paris avait réalisé sa présentation, concentrée sur l’aspect touristique, complètement à côté de la plaque” [‘angered by the way in which Paris had been presented, concentrating on its touristic aspects, completely missing the mark’].

13. Like many of the other Paris-based contributors to this page, *Minato ku* repeatedly makes reference to his/her being a resident of the French capital as a means of claiming some position of expertise with regard to deciding what should be included in *Wikipedia*’s presentation of the city. See for example his/her comment at 09:03, 26 September 2016 (*Wikipedia: Talk: Paris/ Archive 17*): “Many of us, Parisians, feel uneasy with this article because our living city is portrayed like a theme park for tourists. It’s not an accurate or balanced view of Paris.”

14. Future research should aim to discover whether these practices are limited only to this genre of knowledge (i.e. city-related content), or whether – as I suspect – they are more widespread across the full ‘circle of learning’ presented by the encyclopaedia.

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