Opera co-creation: from collaborative translation to artistic co-creation in audiovisual translation and accessibility

Cocreación de ópera: de la traducción colaborativa a la cocreación artística en la accesibilidad y la traducción audiovisual

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Abstract: Research on collaborative translation has expanded in recent years, with a variety of terms such as community or volunteer translation being used to refer to these practices. This article focuses on the Traction project as an instance of artistic co-creation between professionals and non-professionals in opera, and it suggests that the Traction approach could be usefully utilised in the context of audiovisual translation and media accessibility. After an introduction to the challenges of 21st century opera and their quest for new audiences, the article discusses the concept of artistic co-creation. It also presents how opera co-creation is being assessed in Traction. The co-creation process and its evaluation are then related to translation and accessibility to propose artistic co-creation as a new approach to collaborative practices which can benefit both professionals and non-professionals.

Keywords: Traction project, Opera co-creation, Evaluation, Audiovisual translation, Accessibility

Resumen: En los últimos años ha aumentado la investigación sobre la traducción colaborativa, con una considerable variación terminológica para referirse a ella (traducción voluntaria o comunitaria). Este artículo presenta el proyecto Traction como ejemplo de cocreación artística entre profesionales y no profesionales del mundo de la ópera y propone trasladar el enfoque de Traction al ámbito de la accesibilidad a los medios y la traducción audiovisual. Después de describir los principales retos de la ópera del siglo XXI y hacer referencia a la búsqueda de nuevos públicos, el artículo desarrolla el

concepto de cocreación artística. También presenta cómo se está evaluando el proceso de cocreación de ópera en Traction. Este proceso y su evaluación se relacionan con la traducción y la accesibilidad y se propone la cocreación artística como un nuevo enfoque colaborativo que puede beneficiar tanto a profesionales como a no profesionales.

Palabras clave: Proyecto Traction, Cocreación de ópera, Evaluación, Traducción audiovisual, Accesibilidad

INTRODUCTION

In 2005 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) drafted the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The document defines UNESCO's (2005) general principles regarding cultural diversity. It aims to give recognition to «the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning» (p. 6) and adopts a universally humanitarian and participatory approach. For the United Nations member states that ratified it, the Convention offers guidelines to support all forms of cultural expressions and the actors working with them. It is in this context that the Traction project, which is researching opera co-creation, was born.

The article starts with a short introduction to the challenges faced by opera as a form of cultural expression in the 21st century and the quest for new audiences. It describes how co-creation can enable a transformation of traditional opera, connecting it to communities that have important stories, ideas, and experiences to express, through a participatory and collaborative process. The article argues that the resulting social and co-created, multi-voiced opera experiences enable this traditionally elite form of performance to better connect with a broader audience. Additionally, such a participative model of opera enriches traditional opera performances, reaching new audiences and exploring novel digital and interactive representations. The article also describes how this type of communal art supports community development and empowerment among people at risk of exclusion, such as migrants or young inmates in prisons. The article provides an overview of how artistic co-creation has been defined in the literature and the many benefits that have been identified therein. It describes how co-creation has been understood in Traction and the evaluation framework that has been developed to assess it. The second part of the article discusses how the model developed in Traction could be applied to audiovisual translation and media accessibility. Audiovisual translation aims to make content accessible to those who do not understand the language and includes transfer modes such as dubbing, subtitling, or voice-over. Media accessibility aims to make content accessible

to those who cannot access certain components such as the audio or the video in an audiovisual content. Media accessibility includes access services such as audio description, audio subtitling, subtitling for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing, or sign language interpreting. The focus is first put on collaborative translation and the many approaches and terms used to refer to these practices, such as community, crowdsourced, collaborative, or participatory translation. Finally, ideas on how the Traction model could be transferred to audiovisual translation and media accessibility are presented before reaching global conclusions.

Traction has been funded by the European Commission from 2020 to 2022 and is working towards engaging new audiences through co-creation. The objective of the project is to provide a bridge between opera professionals and three specific communities at risk of exclusion for very different reasons. The first group is migrants in the Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona. Although the Liceu opera house is in a low-income multicultural neighbourhood, with a high presence of migrants from the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, most of these migrants do not generally attend opera performances at the Liceu. The second group is young people serving long-term jail sentences in Portugal who, due to their background, have not generally been in contact with opera. The third is people living in rural areas in Ireland who may live far from the main opera theatres. Traction is based on three trials, understood as experimental attempts which involve under-represented groups in opera in a quest for a new model of opera which involves new audiences. The approach has been to foster an effective community dialogue by implementing two essential aspects to be addressed simultaneously. On the one hand, a collaborative and innovative production toolset which establishes a novel workflow for the co-creation of operas. On the other, the definition and implementation of a community-centred methodology towards engagement through artistic co-creation. An evaluation based on four key aspects (technology, co-creation process, performances, and social impact) has already shed some light on the impact of the co-creation process in opera (Matamala and Soler-Vilageliu, 2021).

In this article, though, our aim is to go a step further and use the Traction experience to suggest an innovative approach to collaborative practices in the context of audiovisual translation and media accessibility by importing concepts and methods from artistic co-creation. Although our focus is on opera in Europe, some of the lessons learned could be transferred to other international scenarios.

1. OPERA FOR ALL

Opera is a unique art form where other artistic representations meet: music, writing, singing, drama, poetry, plastic arts, and sometimes dance. This complex alchemy makes an opera performance an extraordinary show, monopolising the sight, hearing, imagination, and sensibility of the audience. Opera, where all human passions are at work, is a key component of Western classical music tradition and represents an important European cultural heritage. According to Opera Europa (Walz, 2020), opera houses and theatres in Europe represent a yearly turnover of 5 billion EUR, with more than 15,000 opera performances, 2,000 opera productions, 50,000 permanent jobs and 25 million tickets sold per year. This data leads to a vision of opera as a popular art form; still, it depends heavily on public subsidy. The debate between the opera financing model and the social parameters for public sector subsidy has been rich. Opera Europa organised a session in the autumn of 2020 towards drawing both quantitative and qualitative measurements to justify the ongoing public subsidy model. Data gathered by Walz (2020) from a sample of 26 theatres from 16 countries show the majority (70%) were dependent on subsidy for 70% or more of their income. Even the 30% with lower proportions of subsidy relied on significant financial support from their state bodies. Table 1 gathers the variables suggested for analysing the subsidy model and associated social impact.

Quantitative	Qualitative	Social Impact
Number of performances, revivals, premieres, commissions	Artistic quality, innovation, international standards, craftmanship	Audience development
Audience and participant statistics (physical and other)	Range and/or focus of repertoire	Learning programme
Geographic reach	Development of the art form	Equality and diversity (representation in workforce, creation & audiences)
Financial and income targets	Talent development	Ecological sustainability

Occupancy rates	Quality of governance, management and planning	Good practice, CSR
Actual and average ticket prices		

Table 1: Measurements for public support in opera
Source: Walz (2020)

The Opera Europe effort is to go beyond the cost-effective approach (Graham *et al.*, 1983). Still, the first item to measure social impact is the traditional audience development (Blaug, 1977) either horizontally across the territory or vertically with new audiences. Engaging new audiences, or audience development, seems to be the biggest challenge since «[i]nducing the uninitiated to start attending artistic events tailored to their untrained tastes» (Blaug, 1977, p. 213) is very difficult when dealing with opera. Popularising opera is not an easy task, though it has played a small role as music scores in movies such as Apocalypse Now or Pretty Woman, TV series such as Sex and the City (Seattle Opera, 2016), and in sport with Puccini's Nessun Dorma in football (Classic FM). Engaging new audiences is what some opera houses are trying to achieve by reducing prices, proposing escape games or networking events for under-30 spectators, to name three activities. The commonality of all these approaches is the position of the opera house at the centre of the opera experience. All these engaging exercises depart from a top-down approach: opera theatres need to have an inclusive policy because of partial public funding. Hence lowering prices—for example—is believed to work towards social inclusion. Interestingly, the main factor for customer satisfaction of opera audiences is the emotional response. So, while all sorts of management policies have been developed in hopes of attracting a more diverse audience, professional opera companies have not invested in making an evening at the opera a source of emotional experiences for their customers. The opera house asks audiences to join in their terms, either in training schemes or with audience targeted performances, i.e. children. Results from these efforts do not increase audience diversity. Opera is still considered elitist and disconnected from society (Rentschler *et al.*, 2002), which clashes with data on the higher number of opera goers explained by McCarthy *et al.* (2001) as an increase in the educational levels, and not the percentage of the population who attends (Kawashima, 2000; Walker-Kuhne, 2001). According to Losada (2013), in the report for the financial company Deloitte, the European opera spectator profile is a 54-year-old woman with higher education residing in the same city as the theatre, who attends the theatre by car, usually accompanied by her partner (36%), with an average expenditure per person of 159 EUR. Again, the recommendation from the

report is the need for transformation to make opera inclusive for a broader audience. Though this report has not been updated, the Advisory Board for the Arts report in 2020 has similar findings. Only 9% of opera goers are «cultural surfers». That is, those who would attend in order to see a famous or popular piece.

There are several reasons why the larger part of society, and especially those most at risk of exclusion, are disconnected from cultural events in general, and opera in particular. Persons with disabilities, migrants, and the elderly are the largest vulnerable population, as reported by the UN agency International Labour Organisation (n.d.). These vulnerable groups focus their vital resources on surviving, and have financial, educational, and societal barriers to integrate not only into the labour market, but into society and its basic services, i.e.: education, health, housing, culture, etc. The most widespread discrimination in Europe is that based on ethnic origin (Farkas, 2015), and disability—the European Disability Forum (n.d.) quotes over 100 million people with disabilities in Europe. Another fact to understand the challenging engagement of diverse groups is that opera houses in Europe are in big cities (Falck *et al.*, 2011); hence, people from depopulated areas have difficulties accessing them, and finally we have those who live in institutions, such as inmates at prisons and patients in hospitals or in care homes. These people may feel the stories addressed in opera do not speak to their own vital experiences. Still, opera themes address universal emotions and can be meaningful for audiences who are usually excluded (André, 2018). Opera themes and librettos portray popular social issues, not only in previous centuries but also in contemporary opera such as Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935) or Hans Abrahamsen's *Let Me Tell You* (2013) (Kirk, 2001; Satterthwaite, 2016). Opera themes and productions have an extraordinary artistic capacity to express cultural diversity and the recognition of multiple identities and voices in ways that move, excite, and inspire (Rentschler *et al.*, 2002; Sterne, 2016).

2. ARTISTIC CO-CREATION AND ITS BENEFITS

Co-creation is a term that has been used recently in many areas, but its meaning is not always clear: in the field of education, co-creation is found (Dollinger, Lodge and Coates, 2018; Bovill, 2020) next to participatory design (DiSalvo *et al.*, 2017), student engagement (Kuh, 2009), or partnership in learning and teaching (Cook-Staher, 2014). In the field of public management (Dudau *et al.*, 2019), it is also being used next to other terms such as «co-production» or «co-design». In fact, Dudau *et al.* (2019) acknowledge that «the broadness of the 'co-' paradigm leads to significant conceptual fuzziness […]. The 'co-' concept is polysemic—it means different things to different people».

The origins of the term «co-creation» are to be found in the fields of business and marketing, where Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) explore the evolution of customers from passive to active players as a way to co-create value. More recently, Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010, p. 4) consider co-creation «the practice of developing systems, products, or services through collaboration with customers, managers, employees, and other company stakeholders». Value co-creation has been the focus of extensive research (Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Ranjan and Read, 2016; Rashid *et al.*, 2018), and co-creation has become a «trendy term used across the disciplines of business, design and marketing to indicate new modes of engagement between people in order to either create shared value or unleash the creative potential of diverse groups» (Rill and Hämäläinen, 2018, p. v).

In the artistic field, co-creation has been used to refer to audience involvement (Brown *et al.*, 2011) and, more recently, to the creation by professionals and non-professionals, in what has been also termed community or participatory art. However, as expressed by Walmsley (2019), «the terminology surrounding arts participation is in a state of flux». In fact, Walmsley (2013, p. 116) carries out a study based on a literature review and interviews and concludes that an «all-encompassing definition of co-creation remained elusive», but common traits emerged: «collaboration, agency, interaction, invention, experience, value and exchange».

If we focus on audience involvement, Brown *et al.* (2011) refer explicitly to co-creation as an instance of participatory audiences in a spectrum of audience involvement. Co-creation is defined as «audience members contribute something to an artistic experience curated by a professional artist». At its left on the spectrum, crowdsourcing would be when «the audience chooses or contributes towards an artistic product» and at its right audience-as-artist experiences would be when audience members «substantially take control of the artistic experience». At the other end of the spectrum, one would find receptive audiences, who would be just spectating or with an enhanced engagement.

In the context of Traction, co-creation is understood as the interaction of «professionals and non-professionals, as in participatory art» (Matarasso, 2021, p. 32). The participation of professionals and non-professionals is central to co-creation, but the role of the professionals may take different forms. In this regard, Matarasso (2021) has developed a spectrum of artistic co-creation, with less professional control at one end and more professional control at the other. This spectrum shows the central position of power relationships in the process of co-creation, but at the same time proves that there is not a single valid approach to co-creation.

In the context of Traction, the SAMP trial in Portugal is the one with less professional control. SAMP is a music school in Leiria which has been working in Leiria's youth prison since 2004. In the Traction project, inmates have been co-creating an opera performance with professional artists which premiered in June 2022. Some initial performances took place in June 2021. INO is working on a virtual reality community opera with Irish speakers from the island of Inis Meáin and teenagers and adults from areas closer to Dublin, together with professional artists. Finally, Liceu is involving people from the Raval neighbourhood, including persons with disabilities, migrants, and former sex workers. A showcase of the opera took place in March 2022 and the community opera will premiere in October 2022. As part of the Traction project, two main co-creation workshops have taken place to design the visual identity of the opera and the choir performance. The traditions and constraints of each opera production are different, hence the need to position them at different points in a spectrum.

Artistic co-creation has been argued to have multiple benefits for non-professionals. Matarasso (1997) offers an account of the evidence found of the social impact of participation in the arts. More specifically, he provides a list of 50 positive impacts in areas such as personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, health, and well-being. The impact of participatory art projects on persons with mental health needs (Hacking *et al.*, 2008) and the elderly (Beauchet *et al.*, 2020) has also been proven in literature. With a broader approach, Antonnen *et al.* (2013) suggest that the art has a positive impact on the individual and on the community at different levels. Regarding the individuals, positive outcomes are found at material/health, cognitive/psych, and interpersonal levels. Regarding the community, the benefits can be seen at economic, cultural, and social levels. In order to prove this impact, evaluation instruments are needed. Davies (2016) presents an account of different methods used across the Creative People and Places programme 2013–2016 to respond to three key evaluation questions posed by the funding agency: are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts? To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved? Which approaches were successful and what were the lessons learned? To answer these three questions, local evaluators used different evaluation methodologies. For instance, the exhaustive Culture Counts/Quality Metrics (Shared Intelligence *et al.*, 2017) was one of the methods adopted, alongside other tools measuring well-being (for instance, the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scoring System) or social return on investment. In Traction we decided to develop our own tools through a bottom-up methodology which is described in the following section.

3.   ASSESSING ARTISTIC CO-CREATION IN TRACTION

To assess an artistic co-creation process it is fundamental to define the specific aims and objectives of the co-creation process in a certain context so that the results can be compared with the set aims and objectives. In addition to this, Traction also aims at defining a general map of indicators to guide the evaluation of any artistic co-creation process, following a user-centric methodology (Orero and Matamala, 2016). To this end, a series of interviews were planned with key stakeholders with experience or knowledge about artistic co-creation. 19 interviews took place, including nine males and eight females and two participants who did not provide information about their sex, with ages ranging from 28 to 70. The profiles were diverse: artists, funding agency representatives, directors, cultural venue managers, and non-professional artists with experience in co-creation, among others. The interviews were oral, individual, semi-structured, and took place online in 2020. See Matamala and Soler-Vilageliu (2021) for further procedural details. A thematic analysis of the interviews, carried out with the software Taguette (Rampin, Steeves and DeMott, 2021), allowed us to propose a preliminary list of indicators. This list was then discussed in a focus group with four participants (an expert in co-creation and one representative from each of the trials) and two facilitators. During this discussion, it was agreed to:

a) Differentiate between indicators that relate to the process, to the artistic product, and to both.
b) Differentiate between outcome indicators and output indicators. The former gathers factual data on the activities and outputs generated by the project, whereas the latter evaluates the changes that take part because of the co-creation.

The final map is shown in Table 2.

Process	Artistic product	Process and product

• Non-professionals:
  • Profile
  • Participation
  • Engagement
  • Balanced contributions
  • Mutual understanding
  • Relationships
  • Satisfaction
 	
• Project evolution
	• Artistic product
	• Quality
	• Media impact
	
	• Audience
	  • attendance
	  • profile
	  • response:
	    • feeling represented
	    • personal change
	    • satisfaction
	
	• Non-professionals response:
	  • feeling represented
	  • satisfaction
		• Community impact
		
		• Non-professionals:
		  • personal change (empowerment, relationships)
		  • learning
		
		• Professionals:
		  • personal change (relationships, attitudes)
		  • learning
		
		• Institution:
		  • institutional change (attitudes, programme, practice)

Table 2: Traction map of evaluation indicators

The indicators related to the process are mainly related to non-professional participants and consider the following aspects (Matamala and Soler-Vilageliu, 2021): their profile and how many sessions they attend, paying special attention to the fact that numbers are retained. Their engagement, a term to encompass their active participation, motivation, interest, and enthusiasm, is considered a key indicator, alongside the fact that the different participant profiles, both professionals and non-professionals, can contribute in a balanced way to the co-created performance. The fact that participants find shared elements among each other, and that there is good communication and a connection between professionals and non-professionals is included under the indicator «mutual understanding». The fact that bonds of trust and friendship are being developed («relationships») and the satisfaction with the process are also included, along with the project evolution, which considers how the project takes its own journey and adapts to new developments.

There are also indicators related to the output, i.e. to the performance. In this regard, the fact that there is a final output is a quality indicator per se, next to media impact and artistic quality. In the context of Traction, this quality is assessed by using Matarasso's proposal, which considers craft, originality, ambition, resonance, and feeling. In terms of the audience, the number of people attending and the diversity of their profile is considered a quality

indicator. Traction considers that the audience response should be measured, especially in terms of feeling represented in the artistic performance, experiencing a personal change (for instance, thinking about new topics or changing previous beliefs), and satisfaction. Traction considers that the responses of the non-professional artists should also be gathered, especially in terms of feeling represented and being satisfied by the final performance.

Finally, there are indicators which are related to both the process and the product, namely the fact that the community talks about the project and feels involved in it (community impact) and the changes that take place at different levels: non-professionals may experience a personal change in terms of increasing self-esteem, changing their view of the world, feeling more empowered, whereas professionals may experience an attitudinal change. Institutions may also change due to the co-creation experience and in all cases a good indicator of success is learning, i.e. the acquisition of new skills.

These indicators have been used in the context of Traction to carry out a mid-process evaluation which has proven to have a positive impact on participants. In the case of inmates, although co-creating an opera was seen as a way of getting out of their cells at the beginning, a true appreciation of opera develops feelings of bond and trust. Participants acquire new skills and project these learnings into a future outside of the prison. At the same time, professional artists change their views and prejudices against inmates, and audience members become more aware of inequalities. In the case of Liceu, a co-creation process between students from an arts school and creatives from an occupational centre for persons with disabilities, together with a professional artist, has yielded positive benefits for all: there has been a growing mutual understanding and many skills have been acquired, as reported by the participants. Finally, at INO, the different writing, visual design, and composition workshops developed with professionals and non-professionals have produced high levels of engagement and satisfaction, with the acquisition of new skills and an increased interest in the arts as relevant outputs.

4. FROM COLLABORATIVE TRANSLATION TO ARTISTIC CO-CREATION

The previous sections have presented the Traction approach to co-creation and its evaluation, as well as the context in which the project was born. In this section, a proposal is made to view collaborative translation in a new light. A discussion of how co-creation and related terms have been considered in translation and how artistic co-creation could be understood within the framework of translation studies is presented, inspired by the Traction experience.

Translation has been considered an artistic creation. Levy, in his seminal work *The Art of Translation* (1963), described the creative nature of the process of translation, analysing both the creation of the new text and its reception for literary translation, with a focus on poetry. Levy's approach shows how the translator, in his case identified as one person, decides which features are chosen to be rendered in another language, culture, and time. The fact that the translator plays an active role does not always render an artistic creation. This is suggested by Holmes (1988) and reflected by Snell-Hornby (1991, p. 20): «I find the debate as to whether translation is an art or a craft rather pointless: it is usually a craft and often art—and sometimes it is both». While all the previous authors looked at translation as a human endeavour, O'Brien (2011, p. 17) defines collaborative translation broadly as «when two or more agents cooperate in some way to produce a translation», but she then goes a step further and also extends the concept to hybrid machine-human interaction.

The unstable terminology and fuzzy boundaries found in other disciplines is also reproduced in the field of translation studies. Terms such as «CT[3]» (community, crowdsourced, and collaborative translation), «volunteer translation», or «participatory accessibility» are to be found in the literature, together with the most recent term «co-creation». Co-creation has been used by Chen (2020) or Moore (2018) to define literary translation: «it's a kind of co-creation. A work requiring two authors: one, the original who invented the shape and the narrative, and the second who made it sing in a new tongue». Pym (2011) focuses on the crowdsourcing phenomenon by looking at the professional nature of the service versus amateur, the voluntary and free nature of any collaborative action. His approach leads to an unclear remark:

> Although now widespread in technology businesses, the main disadvantage of the term is that it is a cheap mutation of the standard business practice of «out-sourcing», which is the only way anyone could justify the word «crowd» (because it sounds like «out»). The term thus lacks specific reference. Recommendation: Volunteer translation (q.v.). The hyphenated «crowd-sourcing» has the virtue of marginally greater clarity and significantly smaller presumption of widespread acceptance (Pym, 2011, p. 77).

4.1. Participatory translation in audiovisual translation and media accessibility

It is in the field of audiovisual translation where the concept of participatory translation is studied most and in all the different audiovisual translation modalities, from subtitling (Orrego-Carmona, 2019) to video game localisation or audio description. Gambier (2012) highlights three challenging issues (professional practice, impact of technology, training) and refers to the Internet communities of fansubbers and amateur subtitlers. Pérez-González

and Susam-Saraeva (2014) use the term «participatory», where the focus is on the non-professional background of the translators. Pérez-González (2018) also uses the term «co-creation» when exploring emerging collaborative subtitling practices, referred to as «transformative subtitling», by fan networks for the «benefit of other members of their transnational communities of interest». His focus is on the impact of transformative subtitling on commercial media content, but our interest lies in how he uses the term «co-creation». In fact, Pérez-González (2018, p. 4) refers to these communities as «participatory networks of co-creators», «active audiences», or «consumers-turned-producers». He argues that there is «a clear move towards a regime of co-creation between producers and users of media content where transformative subtitling takes on a performative function, fostering mutual recognition». Jiménez-Crespo (2017) provides a detailed account of how crowdsourcing and online collaborative translation have been defined and implemented, the main difference being in the initiator of the translation process and who has control over the process: a company or organisation or a self-organised community. However, he does not use the terms «co-create» or «co-creation» in his monograph.

Different scholars have discussed the participatory nature of translation with a more or less philosophical, professional, financial, or sociological slant according to their agency. From the industry approach, and still in audiovisual translation studies, Bernal-Merino (2006, p. 34) comments on video games that «The new business model for developing video games is one that makes the creative department work almost simultaneously with the localization department. This is what I mean by shared authorship». Pym's (2011) financial considerations are also commented by Bernal-Merino (2016) and Mangiron (2018) in the field of video game translation. Both authors mention the nature of crowdsourcing translation as a popular and cheap response from gamers with small languages translation needs. Joining forces in a collaborative translation, they work against the industrial trend of video game exclusive distribution in large languages. From a sociological approach, Saadat (2017) investigates Iran's structural rules and resources driving and conditioning translation activity in what he calls «translaboration», a portmanteau from «translation» and «collaboration» which takes place in the cloud. Through translaboration, agency of control over the discourse is shifted resisting the state rules—the dominant discourse. As with any collaborative activity, the outcome is to empower the source text, or the translator, or both, hence measuring the empowerment and impact is at stake. From the field of media accessibility, Benecke (2014) described the production approach for audio description where a blind person always collaborates in the production process. This is borrowed by Di Giovanni (2018), who coins the term «participatory accessibility», defined as:

> Thus, participatory accessibility refers to the design, creation, revision and consumption of access services in an inclusive way: the blind, partially sighted and non-blind; the deaf, hard of hearing and non-deaf; children and adults; they can all work together in the making of truly shared access services for the media, for live performances, for museums. In fact, when referring to participatory accessibility, even the word 'services' becomes inappropriate: what is created and enjoyed should rather be seen as an inclusive experience, not merely a service (Di Giovanni, 2018, p. 158).

From the methodological approach of participation, Campbell and Vidal (2020) have developed cross-disciplinary theoretical conceptualisations of transmedial practices with workshop discussions as a methodological approach for the analysis. This participatory methodology is also exploited for audio description in museums by Wang *et al.* (2020). Their reception study measures the level of empowerment and independence experienced by visitors, and especially people with sight loss. Participatory art is increasingly becoming a normalised creative modality.

4.2 A new proposal: artistic co-creation in audiovisual translation and media accessibility

What we have seen so far, though, is that collaborative or participatory processes have been given different names and generally involve a) only non-professionals, and b) professionals and end-users, especially in the field of media accessibility. Our innovative proposal is to transfer the Traction approach to the field of audiovisual translation and media accessibility and suggest a third possibility: the co-creation of professionals and non-professionals as a tool for transformation. This communal approach can coexist with professional translation and with volunteer translations. Both approaches have their place in the cultural world, with different aims and objectives.

The collaboration of professionals and non-professionals could take different forms in the world of audiovisual translation and media accessibility, involving some of the modalities mentioned before, such as subtitling or audio description. For instance, a professional or a group of professionals could work with non-professionals to generate subtitles for a co-created performance. In the context of Traction, one could think of migrants in the Raval neighbourhood wishing to add subtitles in multiple languages, but also of the students in Ireland who may want to add this accessibility layer to their co-created performance. Another example could be the co-creation of an audio description for a co-created performance involving a professional describer, the non-professional actors, and even users with sight loss. In this context, a fruitful dialogue could take place among the different agents. In all

these scenarios, the co-creation process could benefit all groups: non-professionals would increase their linguistic and communication skills and their accessibility and multilingualism awareness. Professionals would enhance their understanding of multiculturally diverse situations which would allow them to acquire new social skills. It would also be possible to explore more creative approaches to audiovisual translation, since non-professionals may be less constrained by existing standards and regulations. As with the Traction spectrum of co-creation mentioned earlier, the audiovisual translation and media accessibility co-creation processes could also fall onto different places of the spectrum, including processes with a stronger or weaker professional control, but always with the presence of paid professionals, contrary to some of the current participatory processes.

Co-creating audiovisual translations and media accessibility services following the Traction approach could adopt some of the following guidelines:

- Both professionals and non-professionals need to be involved in the co-creation process.
- The role of professionals and non-professionals should be clearly defined. All participants should understand their role and agree to it.
- Ethical aspects should be considered during the co-creation process. All participants need to be involved voluntarily and sign the relevant forms so that their contribution can be used in the resulting performance.
- The artistic co-creation process should have a clear aim with a positive impact on all participant profiles.

When assessing this impact, the Traction map of indicators presented above could be used as a starting point, but focus group discussions and interviews with relevant stakeholders could contribute to define the specificities of audiovisual translation and media accessibility co-creation processes. One could hypothesise that the aspects related to the process would still be valid, but some of the indicators in the artistic output would need to be revisited as the output is not a performance. For instance, one could expect a co-creation process in the fields of audiovisual translation and media accessibility to be successful when participants are engaged and satisfied, when relationships grow and there is a mutual understanding. One could also expect non-professionals to enhance their linguistic skills. In terms of professionals, co-creation processes could be an opportunity to learn about environments they are not familiar with. It is when defining the indicators for the artistic output that some fine-tuning should be necessary, as the way it is shared with the audience can have an impact on its reception. It is not the

same if the content is to be broadcast on the Internet (for instance, a subtitled video) or if the content is a live performance (for instance, a live audio described opera performance). It is beyond the scope of the article to propose such revised map of indicators.

CONCLUSIONS

The article has provided a short overview of the challenges faced by opera in its attempt to become a democratic and socially accepted creative art form in the 21st century. It can be said there is a lack of unified terminology and methodology to analyse the impact of opera at social, artistic, or political levels. This leads to uneven data. Furthermore, the source of existing literature varies from academic and scientific approaches to *ad hoc* reports from a variety of sources. The fact that opera is no longer a European art form demands for new research approaches.

Opera satisfaction, at a personal level, is related to the emotional response it generates. To this aim, personal engagement in the opera production was considered towards highlighting personal impact. The article has explained how artistic co-creation has allowed non-professionals to expand their agency in the arts beyond the consumption of content into the actual co-creation of artistic works. Through a literature review, we have proved how this process of co-creation, and its resulting output, has a positive impact on the agents involved in the co-creation process. Traction has been used as a case study, but the Traction agent-grounded approach resonates well with translation studies concepts such as collaborative translation.

Discussions on the role of non-professional translations and collaborative approaches abound not only in the literature but also in daily practice. Communities of fansubbers, crowdsourcing projects, volunteer translation, and participatory audio description are some of the examples mentioned in this article. Cooperation among different professionals has become a normal practice. These days, live subtitling for example is performed by a team of subtitlers who take turns and cooperate with technicians. Audio describing movies is often carried out by a team of describers to speed up the process and meet the tight deadlines required by studios. The idea of one single professional behind the production of one piece is increasingly detached from reality. This is more poignant when translators these days use internet resources not only for documentation, but also for troubleshooting with peers through specialised blogs. Technology allows for participatory creation processes, be it for music composition, translation, or performances.

Our proposal here takes a step further and proposes that artistic co-creation can be understood as the collaboration of professionals and

non-professionals and can be seen as a tool for transformation also in audiovisual translation and media accessibility. This communal approach can coexist with professional translation (without the participation of non-professionals) and with volunteer translations (without the participation of professionals). All approaches have their place in the cultural world, with different aims and objectives.

The collaboration of professionals and non-professionals could take different forms in the world of audiovisual translation and media accessibility, as already presented in the previous section: from co-created subtitles to co-created audio descriptions, to name just two. There is still room for further research. For example, it remains to be seen how artistic co-creation in this field could be evaluated. To this end, a map of indicators inspired by the Traction proposal could be developed. It also remains to be seen in what audiovisual transfer modes and access services the co-creation process would be more useful. It would also be relevant to research how audiovisual translation and access services co-creation could be integrated into processes of artistic co-creation from the very beginning. Despite the many open avenues, this article has set the foundations of future research by presenting an overview of how artistic co-creation has been approached in opera within the Traction project and by suggesting ways to adopt a similar approach in audiovisual translation and media accessibility.

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