Identity in Transit: Interpreting Med Voices

[La interpretación de la identidad en Med Voices]

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Abstract

Med Voices, the EU project organised within the framework of EuroMed Heritage II and designed to valorise intangible heritage and safeguard community identity is analysed here from the perspective of the difficulties posed for the translator/interpreter. The project was designed to mine the data offered by oral history archives registered in the 13 different partner sites involved (under the coordination of London Metropolitan University). The Mediterranean was defined in Braudelian terms of cultural routes and roots and the interviews were analysed from the perspective of rehabilitating community identity in places where the same was at risk for varying reasons: due to war or conflict (Palestine, North/South Cyprus, the Lebanon and Turkey, for example), on account of permanent and traditional religious tensions (Granada, Spain) or as a result of the cutural standardisation produced by mass tourism (the Balearic islands and the Canary Islands, Spain). The interviews and the corresponding analyses were uploaded onto a database in both the language of the partner site and English (the lingua franca) designed to offer resources for further anthropological research, tourism applications and product design together with educational packs for use in schools. The problems of capturing and transmitting cultural idiosyncrasy (dialect, embedded cultural markers, lexicon, humour) concisely and coherently are briefly analysed, together with the complexity of producing texts designed for various different end-users.

Keywords:

Interpreting (process) and interpretation (product) restrictions; transference of cultural markers; interpreting *lato sensu*, IT and interpreting, end-users; *skopos*

Resumen

Se analizan las dificultades implicadas en la interpretación intercultural del proyecto europeo Med Voices (Voces del Mediterráneo) enmarcado dentro del programa EuroMed Heritage II. El proyecto se diseñó para valorizar el patrimonio intangible y la identidad de diversos lugares «mediterráneos» y salvaguardarlos a través de productos de turismo cultural de corte participativo. Se realizó minería de datos de los registros de historia oral grabados de los trece lugares implicados en el proyecto para volcarlos en una base de datos multilingüe (cuya sede virtual fue la Universidad Metropolitana de Londres, a cargo de la coordinación del proyecto). El área mediterránea se definió en términos de esferas culturales braudelianas de rutas (comerciales: *routes*) y raíces (identidades: *roots*). Los lugares se eligieron por su grado de fragilidad identitaria debido a diversas causas: como resultado de guerras o conflictos (Palestina, Chipre norte/sur, El Líbano y Turquía), debido a tensiones tradicionales religiosas (por ejemplo, Granada, España) o como resultado de la aculturación producida por recibir turismo de masas (las Islas Baleares y Canarias). Las entrevistas transcritas y sus análisis se volcaron a la base de datos en dos idiomas: en inglés (como *lingua franca*) y en el idioma del lugar. Se proyectó la base de datos como recurso para investigadores (sobre todo, antropólogos), para empresas de turismo, diseño de nuevos productos y con fines educativos, además de para colegios e institutos. En este artículo, se analizan brevemente las dificultades encontradas a la hora de captar y trasladar efectivamente la idiosincracia cultural (dialecto, marcadores culturales incrustados, léxico específico y humor, entre otros) junto a las complicaciones de producir/reproducir textos diseñados para distintos usuarios finales simultáneos.

Palabras clave

interpretación restringida como proceso y producto; interpretación de marcadores culturales; interpretación lato sensu; TICs e interpretación, usuarios finales; *skopos*

THE RELATIONSHIP between tourism and translation/interpreting/interpretation is a given: Narratives *transport* us to other places and cultures. Thanks to legends, stories, narrations and fiction, we identify with other places and cultures, feeling bonds well beyond our geographical affinities. Tourism, meanwhile, allows us to form a synaesthetic experience of place, the compound result of our previous expectations (readings, received and perceived information), the sensed event in itself and our memories of the same. The longer we stay in a place or the more we read about something, the closer we get to the underlying texture which structures the narrative. As De Certeau (1984) says,

> In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called metaphorai. To go to work or to come home, one takes a "metaphor" – a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.

(De Certeau 1984:115)

Mediterranean Voices, a EuroMed Heritage II project (2002–2006), was designed to draw up a database of intangible heritage resources for places where identity was under serious pressure and endangered, with a view to locating characteristic assets that could be deployed in community cultural tourism, thereby creating employment and bolstering local economies through preservation of cultural difference. The identity of the places was charted over seven parameters —Person, Community, Objects, Work, Leisure, Worship and Spaces— with some ten sub-headings each, by cross-referencing and data-mining the transcriptions of oral history interviews carried out with *ordinary* members of the community. The number of places involved, thirteen (London and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria the only members *foreign* to the Mediterranean region, together with Granada, Palma de Majorca, Istanbul, Bethlehem, Marseilles, Malta (La Valleta), Nicosia North/South (Cyprus), Crete, Ancona/Bolonia and Alexandria), plus the nature of the research methodology and objectives, made it a requirement for the *voices* to be reflected in their original language but also in the *lingua franca*, English, for the personal *tours* of the spaces, made places, to be comparable, and for bridges and boundaries to be established. Oral history was used, together with visual ethnography, in order to promote greater community participation and access to the results, echoing the philosophy of Grundtvig, the Danish poet:"*Only words that stride onward, passing from mouth to mouth, legends and songs, keep a people alive.*" By choosing *ordinary* people as opposed to distinguished members of the community for the interviews, the project aimed at reflecting the "ways of speaking" of ordinary and everyday language (what Austin described as tracking *"the minutiae of ordinary language"*) which, in turn, are dependent upon different forms of life (the Wittgensteinian *Lebensformen*).

The database was designed to be used, therefore and primarily, in practical tourism applications but also as a resource for various educational purposes, from University research through to primary school projects. It offered a virtual 'tour' for people, both local and non-local, interested in knowing more about the area and tracing their roots or future routes. Depending upon the health of the community identity in each partner place, the project, which also consisted in audiovisual products and exhibitions, was targeted mainly at foreign audiences, to promote responsible tourism and loyalty to, and understanding of "the sense of place"; or to build up self-esteem and inclusion/belonging through activities designed at educating and sensitising the local population with respect to their own intangible heritage and different identity. Working with intangible heritage meant building up "sensescapes" of places, leading to a greater need for intercultural interpretation. We were working between highly individualistic-oriented cultures such as English (typical of cooler climates) and the collectivistic culture of the Islands (and warmer climates in general) with different "frames" of values and, thus, different scripts.

> Isolated societies, such as island cultures, tend to be collectivistic. People have very clear ideas about what behaviors are appropriate. (…) Collectivism can be found in parts of Europe like Southern Italy and rural Greece. Much of Africa, Asia, and Latin America is considered collectivistic.
>
> (Neuliep 2006:47)

Working over so many places and potential target audiences of different cultural slants, and on the Internet, meant ensuring that the information given was attractive, informative and easily accessible (both technologically and linguistically). In other articles (Hart, (2006a and 2006b), Portilllo Stephens and Hart (2005)), we have concentrated on interpretation and treatment of community space in the museum, and memory, information technologies and intangible heritage. Here, we intend to research into the translation/interpreting difficulties of the multi-language database when attempting to reflect cultural singularities and "sense of place".

1. The interpreting / interpretation / translation remit for whom?

The Med Voices project posed several major problems from both the translation and interpreting/interpretation perspectives. Here, we are considering translation as both the writing and decision-making process and the written product whilst making a distinction between interpreting (the process) and interpretation (the product) although this distinction does not exist, as such, in the Spanish language.

The first problem posed was the very intention of the project itself, that is to plot cultural difference and promote identity, as defined by the locals themselves, to shape responsible community tourism products and activities. This meant uncovering 'cultural gaps' which are very difficult to deal with in media translation, even more so in interpreting, and to transmit these in an attractive and succinct way to foreign (in the widest sense of the word "foreign", that is local people with no insider knowledge, and outsiders) audiences. Therefore, the difficulties differed between the translated transcriptions (translations) and the subtitling (interpreting) or dubbing (interpretation) processes. Second, the variety of potential target users posed challenges for the tenor and tone of the description and translation of uploaded items. These had to be informed and informative without being encyclopaedic. They also had to be easily accessible both technologically and literally, in other words, written to attract attention and, hopefully, to be memorable. As Freeman Tilden (1957:41) said:

> For remember, the visitor ultimately is seeing things through his own eyes, not those of the interpreter, and he is forever and finally translating your words *as best he can* into whatever he can refer to his own intimate knowledge and experience. I put the words *as best he can* in italics, because this will emphasize the importance of making the translation as easy as possible.

Third, there had to be a decision taken as to whether the original interview transcripts were to be reproduced entirely or in edited form in English, for technological (speed of upload) and intellectual reasons (imbalances over partners). (Obviously, they were reproduced or accessible in their integral shape and extension in the original language, where they were designed to be used primarily for educational and informative purposes). In some cases, the interviews were exhaustive, offering a depth of information of immense value. However, the task of transcription fell to the interviewer (in order to correctly match contextual information-gestures, silences and pauses- with text) as did the interpretation and translation of the content, thereby slowing production. Likewise, in some partner places the interviews were less extensive thus leading to imbalances over the database and making 'lowest common denominator' decisions be taken in order to avoid slower upload of material (technological criteria) and unfavourable comparisons (intellectual criteria of depth of content). Fourth, there had to be a decision made with respect to the subtitling or dubbing of the original 'voices' into English, the *lingua franca*, with both presenting challenges of different natures for the specialists involved. Last, but certainly not least, was the need for linguistic cohesion and coherence and cultural localisation

over the individual sites on the database and between them for the true objectives of access and comparability to be achieved. The challenges of facilitating access for people with special needs was not immediately tackled in the project scenario but has been an ongoing task thereafter, to be discussed in greater detail later (under subtitling for deaf and audiodescription).

2. By whom?

Since the project was not originally conceived of as linguistic anthropology but fell into this category because of the need to translate the characteristic features of the intangible heritage of each place into the *lingua franca*, the people who were "interpreting" also influenced the decision made in the interpretation/translation process. "Foreign-ness" in the Wittgenstein sense/s of the word affected the product:translation and interpretation. There were native speakers of English in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, South Nicosia and Majorca (plus London, obviously) with English proficiency ranging from near-native in other partner locations through to almost inexistent in others. This meant that the English versions were not always produced by the researcher responsible for the oral interviews and, thus, could become decontextualised, diluted and less targeted in the transit from one language to another. The native speakers were totally integrated in their societies but were "foreign" to some of the community issues covered by the project. This produced, as a result, longer and more explicit narrations in the interviews due to the perceived need of the interviewee to "fill in" information which would have been taken "as read" or simply "gone without saying" had the interviewer been locally born. The interviewers were all also totally fluent in the local language as well as Engish, thus standing at a privileged position on the periphery of both languages where they could identify 'cultural gaps' that would (a) affect translation/interpretation but, and more importantly to the effects of the project goals (b)clearly differentiate one place from another. As Albert Cohen, the social anthropologist said in 1982, community encompasses notions of similarity and difference, of "us" and "them".

> The sense of difference … lies at the heart of people's awareness of their culture and, indeed, makes it appropiate for ethnographers to designate as 'cultures' such arenas of distinctiveness … people become aware of their culture when they stand at its boundaries.
>
> (Cohen 1982:2–3)

The quality of the product/process of the oral history interview was also affected by similarities and differences between the perceived social status of the interviewer and the interviewee. Although the interviewer was identified as a person representing an institution (in our case, the University of Las Palmas de GC) in order to ensure the safeguarding and correct treatment of the information received, there was always an attempt made to interview the person in their own familiar surroundings (albeit with a video camera and recorder) and to have a back-up interviewer or contact also familiar with the interviewee to allow for greater empathy to be struck. Gender and age differences also weighed in the divulging of information, above all, on 'sensitive' issues, with same sex/different ages producing best results in the case of women interviewees and mixed interviewers (that is, a couple) with men, where the woman interviewer preferably would be younger and the man of an age with the interviewee. These combinations allowed for the interview to be less 'staged' and more natural and for the interviewee to relax into their idiolect, often forgetting that they were being recorded. This allowed for more valuable paralinguistic (the audiovisual material) and linguistic (the transcriptions) information to be collected.

> And still in Holy Week, I go to see the processions. Not the big showy ones, the ones that people think are all the business now, no offence meant … I go to see la Virgen de la Soledad, I go to see the figure of el Cristo and, from time to time, I drop into a church, no, it's true, and since I don't know how to pray, I say:"Mate, "chacho", I need your help" my style.
>
> (Hart Robertson 2006:194)

Gender considerations also weighed heavily in the translation/interpreting decisions. Islanders are very prone to using "mi niño/mi niña" as a term of inclusion and endearment, regardless of the age of the interlocuter, although should a man use "mi niño" with another man of the same age, it is usually a sign of disparagement (probably equivalent to "my good man" in English). "Chacho" the shortened form of "muchacho" indicates an address on equal terms and complicity between Canary men and would be the equivalent of the English "pal" or "mate" or the Glaswegian "Jimmy". The use of "mi niña" between women, however, is by no means disparaging but rather indicates complicity.

> M. When you're on an island…
> 2. You're miles away from anywhere, "mi niña".

<div align="right">(Hart Robertson 2006:165)</div>

> M. But women didn't drink?
> 3. Ah, mi niña! Women used to have a drink on the sly.

<div align="right">(Hart Robertson 2006:166)</div>

This is ordinary language but constitutes, as Austin (1969) said, the reserve of "distinctions", "connections" and logical complexities accumulated by historical experience and stored up in everyday speech and, as such, must be transmitted for the true identity and sense of place to be translated. Such nuances can only be sensed and interpreted by someone truly familiar with the context in which the discourse/dialogue is being produced. Therefore, the person of the interpreter/interviewer/translator is of vital importance to the interpretation and translation of intangible heritage.

As Freeman Tilden predicated in his seminal work, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1957), the true aim of interpretation is to promote understanding and through understanding, appreciation, and through appreciation, protection. Quoted in Chapter One of the same book is Walter Savage Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* where Demosthenes is made to say the following to Eubulides:

> I have been careful to retain as much idiom as I could, often at the peril of being called ordinary and vulgar. Nations in a state of decay lose their idiom, which loss is always precursory to that of freedom …

Through reflecting the idiomatic characteristics of ordinary Canary discourse, then, by leaving them untouched in the translated version, at best "semi-explained", the interpreter/translator was attempting to preserve and protect this differential marker of the identity and inclusive nature of the Canary Island community.

Surprisingly, the people of Gran Canaria had no problems in identifying with a Mediterranean project despite the fact they clearly belong to the Atlantic sphere. Certain initial reticence was encountered when it was presumed that the interviewers were representatives of local organisations, such as the Town Council or the Island Council, Cabildo. However, when the instigator of the project was identified as the European Union, and it was explained that the interviews would be available on the Internet for the partner countries to read and interpret, cooperation was much greater and information was divulged such as would not have been made available had the project been at a purely local level. The fact that the interviewer, then, was not immediately recognised as "local" helped to break down barriers on information.

3. Where, when and how?

> Research is a continuing need and the life blood of good preservations. Both historical authenticity and proper interpretation demand facts. Research is the way to obtain these facts. There is no substitute for it, and no historic preservation should be attempted without research.

<div align="right">(Tilden 1957:27)</div>

The ethnographic fieldwork which gave rise to the on-line multi-media database[1] (as carried out simultaneously over an 18-month period by locally-based teams in selected neighbourhoods of 13 cities and was subjected to comparative analysis using a matrix of themes upon which previous consensus had been reached. The fieldwork sites comprised conflict and post-conflict cities, port cities and cities with a dominant tourism economy, and presented a whole range of issues relating to loss of significant cultural presences, the incorporation of new permanent, semi-permanent and transient populations or the reconfiguration and remodelling of urban space. Working with a range of stakeholder groups, the Med Voices project investigated the ways in which diverse populations anchor themselves and create belonging in neighbourhoods; the significance of history, memory and a sense of place in the process; the role of heritage in governance and civil society; and the principles of a 'critical' heritage practice for strengthening civil society and sustainable livelihoods.

In Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, the decision was taken to focus on the foundational part of the city, known as Real Las Palmas in the past, now as Vegueta, and on the former port area of Triana. Included in the general area of the study, and fundamental to its complete understanding (though largely unknown to the residents themselves, much less to visitors and tourists) were the surrounding built-up hilly areas of the 'riscos' and the coastal area once forming a coherent whole with Vegueta, but now separated from the same by the main coastal road, San Cristóbal. This whole area, once enclosed within city walls, is still known as "la ciudad" in contrast to "el puerto", the relatively new development of the city around the re-location of the Puerto de La Luz y de Las Palmas, which was formerly known as the area "fuera de la Portada". The main "informants" of the project were, thus, the people for whom this microcosm had formed the total realm of their existence, the Elders of the community for them to chart the identifying characteristics of a past much endangered by rife speculation of choice locations for building, on an island with little material or monumental heritage, catering to a floating population of tourists all year round that outnumber the locals six-to-one. Therefore, the time perspective of the local project was from the Thirties onwards.

> Mediterranean Voices in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria aspires at retrieving a whole world of memories for some, re-awakening slumbering memories for others, and introducing a whole generation to elements of their past which make sense of their present, and show them where to direct their steps in the future. (…) It is all to easy to abandon or ignore Intangible heritage as occurs with any value nowadays which cannot be easily quantified in economic terms. Our elders are as valuable for our survival as our youth, and yet we rarely value them until we have lost them. (…) Mediterranean Voices is about recovering a "sense of place" and an "identity"
>
> (Hart Robertson 2006:150)

As such, and given the rapid rate of change in the capital city, the most vital information received from the informants had to do with "lost spaces", both in the physical and metaphorical senses of the term. Thus, Dr. Antonio Bethencourt de Massieu, when referring to cock-fighting (now forbidden) and Canary wrestling or "lucha canaria" in the dry gulley of La Guiniguada (now filled in and covered by the main road up to the centre of the island) lamented on the de-virtualisation of the traditional Canary wrestling in the following terms:

> A. And there's a whole vocabulary attached to both, to cock-fighting and the "lucha", a whole liturgy. The vocabulary is highly specific:the 'agarrada' or grip, the "palmada" or light touch, get it? A whole vocabulary which is enormously rich and abundant, and which naturally gets lost if it's not used, the same as what happens with cock-fighting.
>
> (Hart Robertson 2006:185)

In order to avoid the subjectivity and nostalgic re-construction of events of the past that is often found to be inherent to people's narrations in oral history interviews, above all when they are of a staged nature (pre-concerted, within the framework of a project and filmed/recorded), the interviews (some fifty in all) were transcribed, coded and data-mined, to search for areas of coincidence and cross-referencing. Reference was also made to other documents of the time,

such as the famous tales of Pancho Guerra relating the exploits of the picturesque Pepe Monagas, an inhabitant of the "riscos" and *cambullonero*, the black market port workers who traded out at sea, mainly with the cruise liners, selling canaries and other goods in exchange for merchandise, including penicillin, brought from abroad:hence the name, deriving from the English "come buy on". The poetry of Tomás Morales also offered valuable information with respect to the important community symbols of the past, such as La Pepa, the train that ran between Alcaravaneras and the beach area of Las Canteras (then totally covered in dunes) and the area beyond the slaughterhouse in Vegueta. Other works such as those of Alzola, Doreste, Millares and Luis García de Vegueta plus the outstanding Crónicas de un Cincuentón (all of a challenge for a translator) and Fernando Martín Galán's Las Palmas:Ciudad y Puerto offered the context for the co-text. Photographs and postcards of the times were other references provided by the informants and counter-verified with the valuable photographic archives at the local Trust Fund for Ethnography and the Development of Arts and Crafts, FEDAC[2] in order to correctly culturally map the walled world *intramuros* of the city of the past. By naming and locating in space and time the shared values of the city, then, a structure was given that would allow for others to interpret these values, in function of their requirements (tourism, educational, research)for future developments.

> B. (…) Any other things that I think have been lost? Well, what we've lost there (IN THE VELA LATINA) is that the boats used to start off from Mar Fea, right after the tunnel that was there and six or seven mates would get into a car, a Hudson, these black convertibles that were so popular then, the same cars that were the taxis before, and the "piratas" (illegal taxis), and you sat three up front, three in the middle and three in the back, sometimes even four. They'd roll back the roof and they'd set off in a convoy, following the race (….) There were bets and the bets were made between cars:"Ten duros (fifty pesetas) on the Tomás Morales" and the other, often an ordinary worker would say, "I'll go with that" and at the end of the regatta, in the port, after the celebrations of the winners, the people who had betted would hunt one another out to pay their debts, whether they'd lost or won. You wouldn't get that nowadays…
>
> (Hart Robertson 2006:185)

The spatial references were given in the original Spanish in the English version, with occasional explanations (semi-definitions) in order to maintain coherence with other tourism texts e.g. the Casa-Museo de Colón, or House-Museum of Columbus. Identifying features of the language (such as *"mi niño", "chacho" "agüita", "guayabas"* (beautiful young girls) and "*galletones*" (teenage boys or young men) among others) were left in the text but compensated for by similar expressions in the target version (English). A conscious decision was taken to transcribe the interviews in correct, that is, relatively neutral Spanish to facilitate understanding, although in the subtitling for the deaf, this decision would, perhaps, be revoked and a spelling of the type used in Pancho Guerra's *Los Famosos Cuentos de Pepe Monagas* be used in the Spanish to allow for the characteristic pronunciation of the islanders to be reflected.

> -¿Jaga el favor, no sea bobo! Dígame la hora sierta. ¿Usté pa qué es uardia? ¿Pa llevar la gente al semento y metesle multas a los "piratas", no más?"
>
> (Guerra 1984:23)

The Internet, as Manuel Castells so rightly points out in his book, *Communication Power* (2009) poses many challenges to the "grassrooting" of information in the global spaceless place of flows and timeless time, and all the more so when the objective is to effectively translate differentiated identity as made manifest in oral history, rooted in time and marked by place.

4. What? How? Why?

The Internet is perhaps the most potentially exacting medium for translation and interpreting since the potential audience is huge and the amount of information circulating so immense that the translator has to work hard to produce equivalence of impact in the localisation of material. When the material is cultural, and culturally unique, it is often difficult to be concise without

being excessively reductionist. The combination of photos, audiovisuals (the interviews, themed Powerpoints, documentaries, music) and text was used in Med Voices, therefore, to fully map out the context of "sense of place". Thus, the *informative* content with respect to cultural identity was themed, (7 themes: The Person, The Community, Work, Play, Objects, Worship, Lost Places/Spaces), sub-themed (using simple coding such as 1 (a) to indicate (1) theme, Person, and (a) sub-theme, rites of passage) and illustrated cohesively over the database for the 'tourists' or 'visitors' to be able to find their way around the different locations and topics with ease. Likewise, as previously alluded to, place names and people's names, including forms of addresses, *Don* and *Doña* were maintained in the original, with some form of compensatory explanation only when the reference was too opaque to be duly comprehended (for example, in the case of "Colón" and Columbus). Where placenames had suffered changes mainly after democratic rule in Spain, the informants would invariably maintain the original name and explain themselves the changes, failing which "localisation" in time was made by the translator. References to money were left in the original as in *veinte duros* or *perras chicas* with explanations given to explain how substantial or insubstantial the amounts were. Since the transcriptions existed and allowed for these matters to be clarified via glosses and translator's notes, the expressions were left untouched in the subtitling and dubbed forms. Castells (1997) maintains in his seminal trilogy of *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* when referring to the power of identity in the Network Society that

> (…) language is a fundamental attribute of self-recognition, and of the establishment of an invisible national boundary less arbitrary than territoriality, and less exclusive than ethnicity (…) in a world submitted to cultural homegenization by the ideology of modernization and the power of global media, language, as the direct expression of culture, becomes the trench of cultural resistance, the last bastion of self-control, the refuge of identifiable meaning.
>
> (Castells 1997:52)

As is the case in the Museu da Lingua Portuguesa in Sao Paulo, Brazil, most of the characteristic cultural gaps in informative vocabulary were detected when talking about gastronomy, music and autochthonous sports. Greater recourse was made to illustrative links when these occurred in the transcriptions of the interviews. In the subtitling and dubbing, they were left in the original form and links were provided to cookery books and related resources for the visitor to "browse" for further information.

The *expressive* content most surfaced in the transcriptions and translations of the interviews and in the interpreting process, that is, the subtitling or dubbing. Here coherence in depiction of gender differences, for example, reflected in idiolect and choice of vocabulary (a woman will rarely use *guayaba* –a ripe guava– to refer to another woman) had to be maintained over the individual sites in order to clearly portray the role of women in the society over the time period studied. Decisions also had to be made about translation of "dated" (as in outdated) expressions still used by many of the informants and whether these were to be revamped in the English version: "*chachi*", meaning "superb" would normally now be translated as "cool" or even "awesome", expressions that did not exactly cohere with the age of the people pronouncing them. Other expressions, such as the ones used by older Canary women to avoid swearing, for example, "*¡hinojo!*" (literally, fennel) defied literal translation of any kind and were adapted to reflect their alliterative and phonetic values. The differences in verb forms and forms of address (the Canary islanders using the respectful *Ustedes* and the third person plural to refer to 'you' in the plural form and the preterite instead of the present perfect for recent past as in the greeting "*¿Qué pasó?*") were largely lost in translation.

Humour, above all of a self-ridiculing type, is an essential part of the Canary islander character. The kind of humour characteristic to the Archipelago is presumed to have been inherited from the British, above all in Gran Canaria. Cabrera Perera (1988) makes reference to the same in his work, *Las Islas Canarias en el Mundo Clásico*:

> There is a Majorcan legend which says, more or less, that when God created the world, he decided to rest a little and lay his fingers down on the Mediterranean Sea. The result of this contact was the Balearic Islands. (…) The Canary islanders have our own. (…) After God made the world, he made Man with the clay from the ground. Once he had done so, the Creator contemplated his work with pride. As he contemplated it, he absentmindedly wiped the dirt from his hands. He threw the leftover bits of clay into the ocean and thus the Canary Islands were created: not even God knows where they are.

> (Cabrera Perera 1988:177)

The humour is indicative of the inclusive nature of the island communities and therefore is a vocative marker of cultural difference which is important in an area receiving tourism in that it denotes a welcoming nature (for a long time, the marketing slogan for the Canary Islands was "Warm by Nature"). It is also important as a cultural binder for the community, that shares an optimistic perspective and the capacity to stand up to adversity. As such, great care was taken to attempt to reflect this characteristic duly in the translations/interpreting.

> M. You were an altar boy?
> E. Of course, it was a big business. (…) For each funeral, we got between half a peseta and seven and a half. Don't get me wrong. We weren't dying for people to die in the neighbourhood but, once they went, business was business.

> (Hart Robertson 2006:188)

Simon Anholt, the destination marketing guru behind the images of London's Olympic games and South Africa's World Cup indicates that perceptions with respect to people and places are important for both company investments and tourism. In his work on nation branding and public diplomacy (2009), he comments:

> We live in a world where perceptions regularly trump reality – the economic crisis itself is surely proof of that – and today it's all about the survival of those perceived to be the fittest. Knowing how to deal with intangibles is just as important in such times as traditional military, political or fiscal competence.

> (Anholt 2009:27)

The dominant vocative contextual focus of the database, then, is to underline the intangible values of the Canary island identity, in this case of the island of Gran Canaria, in order to subtly shift the perception of the island from mindless and hedonistic Three 'S' Tourism to offer something of a more sustainable and responsible cut in times of climate change and crisis, that is, a strong and welcoming community where it is easy to belong.

5. Subtitling or dubbing?

Realms have been written about the various merits and demerits of subtitling and dubbing in audiovisuals so as to make repeating the arguments here redundant. To the effects of the project, which was, after all, based on anthropology of tourism and identity as revealed through oral history interviews, subtitling was far preferred in that it allowed for the original paralinguistic cues to be interpreted more faithfully, for the "intangible" elements of the communication to shine. Only for people with loss of vision or totally blind did we produce a dubbed version, with work still pending in the field of providing voice instructions and audiodescriptions of the photographic material and interviews for these visitors to have full access to the database. New developments in tele-texting and simultaneous interpreting voice-prompted texting (Georgakopolou 2012) will bring down the cost and time parameters of interpreting the Med-Voices interviews in their extended life or re-birthing, after the EU funding for the project ended in 2006, and various hacking incidents, possible as a result of the fragile 11 language system, disabled the database completely for some years. The project has produced various offshoots, one of which is housed in the Digital Memory platform at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria[3] as yet only in Spanish, called Voces y Ecos. Another is housed in the

Med Voices Association page (the original input of the 13 partners). It is hoped to be able to use the know-how and experts produced in the Master Oficial de Traducción Profesional y Mediación Intercultural at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, in all of its various strands, to continue to interpret the information into English and to strengthen this valuable project, designed to promote identity, cultural difference and intangible heritage to improve the quality of life and tourism on the island.

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Notes

All translations, unless otherwise specified, are the author's own. The original interviews in their Spanish versions are available in the Spanish version of the exhibition catalogue figuring in the bibliography.

[1] <http://www.medvoices.org> Retrieved January 20, 2014.

[2] <http://www.fedac.org> Retrieved January 20, 2014.

[3] <http://www.mdc.ulpgc.es> Retrieved January 20, 2014.