Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 135-166
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p135
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ECOTRANSLATION, ARTVOCACY AND CARE
A creative response to climate change communication

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Abstract – Climate change is a planetary crisis, which – among many other societal aspects – involves communication and, in particular, environmental communication. Despite the multiple efforts made to improve its quality and dynamics, environmental communication is defective, highlighting the need to tackle its flaws ethically and, specifically, 'care-fully'. Drawing on my 2022-2023 Arts Council England project, '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27', the article reflects on the value of translation – or ecotranslation – as a communicative practice grounded in material and care-full work. The potential of art to facilitate communication between climate change experts, educators, health professionals, creative writers and lay publics and foster climate action and possibly activism among the latter was demonstrated through workshops with artists who translated the stories into prints. The aim of this article is to gain insight into the interconnections between translation and artmaking and the role that these interconnections play in effective ethical communication and advocacy or ARTvocacy (Hunter-Doniger 2020). Reflections on my care-full organization of the project, embedded within a wider international project run by the University of Exeter, are followed by the analysis of creative responses to fictional stories and, more broadly, climate change communication. The article makes use of a combination of approaches from Environmental Communication, Translation Studies and Ecofeminism to unveil not only the value of the project as advocacy but also the need to care and foster care-full work to respond to the climate crisis.

Keywords: ecotranslation; ethics; care; communication; advocacy; action; arts; printmaking; creativity; visual translation; art exhibition.

1. Introduction. Climate change communication: impasses and ways forward

Climate change has reached unprecedented and alarming levels. Gas emissions, including carbon dioxide and methane, have exponentially increased, contributing, among many other factors, to greenhouse effect and global warming (IPCC 2023, p. 4). Following the work carried out by various scientific bodies and institutions, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change created by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, news about the climate crisis has

multiplied in length and number, also encouraging the growth of "environmentalist movements […] from something quite marginal to marches and initiatives" (Caimotto 2023, p. 124). The media deliver alarming information and data, adding to the concerns shared by scientific institutions and research centres alike (Armstrong *et al.* 2018, p. 19).

Despite the increasing amount of information around the considerable risks and damages caused by environmental disasters and the call for action, the message is not getting across. Researchers claim that the climate crisis is first of all a crisis of "language, communication, and translation" (Roberts *et al.* 2023, p. 646): there is a broken link between interlocutors, namely those who deliver messages and those who receive messages. Furthermore, the language used to translate what fuels environmental degradation is defective and flawed, failing to capture the complexity of the problem (Armstrong *et al.* 2018, pp. 70-71) or eliciting predominantly negative emotions such as uncertainty or fear (Huang, Guo 2024, p. 1; Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 38; Otieno *et al.* 2014, p. 616). Individuals are more occupied with shielding themselves from the sense of fear generated by the sensationalized news broadcast by the media than with looking for opportunities to access information, engage in meaningful communication and take action (Moser, Dilling 2011, pp. 164-165; Otieno *et al.* 2014, p. 634). This lack of engagement on the part of individuals is often construed as lack of interest or care for the health of the planet (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 161). In fact, it is sometimes a defensive response to the negative way climate change communication is framed (Bilfinger *et al.* 2024, p. 2; Davidson 2024, p. 2, Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 165). Exposed to limited opportunities to interact with scientists and co-interpret statistics, facts and figures – another form of language – individuals are left with partial or inadequate understanding as to how to act for the good of the planet (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 166). This lack of insight is sometimes coupled with ineffectual narratives about climate activism, which create a further sense of disconnection from information and climate action (Bashir *et al.* 2013, p. 614; Castro, Rosa 2023, p. 755; Kutlaca *et al.* 2020, p. 1; Parsons 2016, p. 3). For example, the often-cited study by Nadia Y. Bashir *et al.* maintains that there is a clear link between resistance to social change and negative stories about "people who strive to achieve this change, the activists themselves" (2013, p. 614). Even those who care about the environment and feel motivated to create change report the presence of rhetorical barriers which hinder collaboration with organizations involved in climate activism (Latkin *et al.* 2023, pp. 389-390). They also appear to want to disassociate themselves from the negative language attached to environmental activism (Bitschnau 2024, p. 84). As a result, the care they feel for the planet is not fully capitalized on or brought to fruition. Accessing actionable knowledge and information related to the threats posed by climate change is challenging: communication around the environmental crisis is not

effective. It is either unclear or disorganized, patchy or uncoordinated, skewed or too scientific and, as a result, inaccessible (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 165; Yusuf, St. John III 2022, p. 3).

Scholars are unanimous in their evaluation: climate change communication needs to be improved. Some call for clarity and accessibility as non-negotiable stipulations (Yusuf, St. John III 2022); some focus on storytelling, as an inclusive and creative form of community engagement (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 49; Roberts *et al.* 2023); others propose the collectivization of language, as a co-productive effort, and the pluralization of messages into different cultures (Roberts *et al.* 2023). Because of the urgency to engage audiences, some scholars show the benefits of communities collaborating with scientists and institutions (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 53; Roberts *et al.* 2023), others stress the need for scientists and institutions to work with those whose activism and advocacy support them (Kibele *et al.* 2023, p. 4; Parsons 2016, p. 4). The quality and dynamics of communication are questioned, appraised and analysed, to reflect either on whether/how environmental information is disseminated or shared (Lejano *et al.* 2013, p. 62; Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 163; Murunga *et al.* 2022, unpaginated) or on whether/how to grapple with the moral complexity arising from climate change (Rushton 2024). Recent studies (Holmes 2020; Markowitz, Guckian 2018) unpack the inadequacies of climate change communication and offer well-defined recommendations about how to deliver effective climate change messages. The goal is to create responsible and ethically attuned communities, ready to act for the good of the planet. But for this goal to be achieved, the information disseminated should also be ethical, namely packaged in a responsible and thoughtful manner. As Comparative Literature scholar Jørgen Bruhn states, "the ecological crisis is not a problem or a condition restricted to investigations in the natural sciences, or […] to technological solutions" (2021, p. 119). The crisis requires responsible commitment from everyone, communities and communicators alike. Whereas enough notice has been taken of the delivery and quality of climate change communication, more work needs to be done on how to ground environmental communication in ethics and, in particular, the ethics of care (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 2). Care is the energy that drives humans to other humans and/or non-humans, nurturing relationships and a spirit of cooperation (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 1; Phillips 2015, p. 58; Phillips 2016, p. 471, p. 475). Phaedra C. Pezzullo focuses on care as an act of "resistance" (2024a, p. 2) against an ideological system that does not assist or respect the vulnerable, *in primis* the environment. However, despite the breadth of case studies included in Pezzullo (2024b), no attention is paid to advocacy and translation in relation to one another. Both advocacy (Lambert 2023, p. 100) and translation (Washbourne 2019, p. 399) are communicative praxes which are designed to support someone's or something else's cause, by *speaking for* or

on behalf of them, namely by acquiring knowledge and translating it to others. The knowledge translation performed by advocates – as a meaning-making activity (see Marais 2022) facilitating the understanding of what is at stake or needed – should therefore be imbued with care. Is the climate crisis also a crisis of translation, as Hugh Gerald Arthur Roberts *et al.* (2023) claim? Before answering this question, I will turn to how translation and the ethics of care can be promoted and performed by environmental advocates as communicators.

This article draws on reflections on ethically responsible communication practices and climate action. These reflections ensued from a creative project on translation and environmental advocacy, which I led between 2022 and 2023 and which was supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. The aim of engaging with these practices was to foster care-full[1] work and promote a shift in the lay publics' views on action and, possibly, activism. Action – which cannot necessarily be conflated with activism – plays an essential role in driving individuals and communities to achieve positive change (Johnston, Gulliver 2022, p. 47). An exploration of the capacity to act and help in an ethical manner, through active engagement and/in translation, is at the core of this article. In other words, this article wants to advance knowledge in Environmental Communication by demonstrating the contribution that translation, when rooted in ethical principles (Berkobien 2020, p. x), offers to advocacy as reception and delivery of climate change issues. Environmental scientists and climate change communication scholars invoke a deeper connection with the lay publics rather than simply delivering top-down information (Moser, Dilling 2011; Murunga *et al.* 2022, unpaginated; Parsons 2016, p. 4). In order to respond to their call, I aim to prove that this connection can be provided by translation, namely a communicative endeavour which entails responsiveness, relationality and interpretation as well as multifocal interrogations of meaning. Particular attention will be paid to ecotranslation, a section of Translation Studies that looks at ecological issues and that still lacks case studies from the arts to tackle the climate crisis. By so doing, this article aims to offer a practical example to pave the way for future evidence-based research on translation not only as care-full relationality but also as creative practice. It also aims to be part of a growing body of literature that is now "finding ways to make the issue more salient and pressing to a broader swath of the public" (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 36). Taking up the translation line of inquiry will enable me to demonstrate how the study of translation can contribute to Environmental Communication

[1] The unusual spelling was adopted by Phillips in 2019 to refer to practices and initiatives informed by the ethics of care. I apply the same spelling throughout this article.

as a discipline of care (Pezzullo 2024b) and, more broadly, to an integrated approach that warrants the adoption of translation to address climate change. As a number of scholars maintain (Bruhn 2021, pp. 119-120; Cronin 2017, p. 3; Polezzi 2022, p. 309), the ecological crisis is an enormous issue which requires not only cooperation between different disciplines in the Sciences, but also collaboration between the Sciences and the Arts and Humanities. In this spirit, my project serves as an example of the response that the Arts, the Humanities and, in particular, Translation Studies can offer to Environmental Communication and climate action.

The first Section of the article will briefly illustrate my Arts Council England project. The second Section will review the scholarship which has pioneered a new line of research in translation, communication and climate action. It will also identify a gap in research especially *vis-à-vis* care ethics and care-full approaches to translation. The goal is to situate my project within this scholarship, present the parameters which I used to craft my methodology and fill a research gap. Creating an appropriate and suitable environment is paramount for ethically grounded communication to occur. Therefore, the third Section will focus on how I delivered the project and the care that I, as project and translation lead, applied to it. The fourth, and final, Section will analyse its outcomes and respond to the question raised earlier: is the climate crisis also a crisis of translation?

2. '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'

'12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was born out of a wider international project, entitled 'We Still Have a Chance', located within the environmentally impactful University of Exeter Green Futures campaign and directed by public engagement and education expert Cecilia Mañosa Nyblon. The goal of the latter, international, project was twofold (see Roberts *et al.* 2023). First, it aimed to co-produce *We Still Have a Chance*, a collection of twelve stories on climate change. The collection ensued from multilingual storytelling workshops led by creative writer Sally Flint and English-Arabic translation work led by me and literary scholar Hugh Gerald Arthur Roberts. The workshops – and the published collection now (Flint 2022) – raised such issues as human-induced pollution, biodiversity loss, food deprivation and extreme weather conditions via the power of fiction. Second, the project aimed to disseminate these stories widely, including at the November 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference COP27, Egypt, and call for action. The dissemination was carried out by way of artistic productions inspired by the collection. The magnitude of this project was so vast that it acted as a catalyst for further action and research, serving as a springboard for my '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'. In a similar spirit to 'We Still Have a

Chance', '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was set up to produce a series of cross-media translations (and, specifically, translations into visual artworks) to promote the anthology *We Still Have a Chance* – whose twelve stories gave my project its name. '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27', therefore, continued along the same vein as the wider international project which hosted it. However, whereas the initial project pursued mass mobilization, the second one was directed toward local communities. Both adopted approaches which are fundamental in driving change, but, being dissimilar in nature, the projects faced different struggles and scenarios. '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was planned to engage with "transformational struggle[s]", namely leaving the "transactional struggle[s]" (Aron 2023, p. 267) of influencing COP27 policy makers in the hands of 'We Still Have a Chance'.

The "transformational struggle[s]"– to use the terminology proposed by climate activist and scholar Adam R. Aron 2023 – aimed at shifting the environmental behaviour of local communities, in particular in the city of Exeter. In order to do so, it was deemed important to recruit communicators that could speak to the lay publics and that had the health of the planet at heart. To encourage behavioural change for environmental impact mitigation, the project favoured the arts and translated principles, centred around advocacy and creativity, into what Tracey Hunter-Doniger (2020) termed – as we shall see later – ARTvocacy. Art has enormous power. It advances a range of interpretations and viewpoints; overthrows stereotypes and clichés; encourages openness to the depicted subjects; heightens appreciation of controversial themes; and offers a better understanding of specific topics related to local and/or global phenomena (Brownlie 2022, p. 8).[2] Three creative workshops (over four days) were delivered in November 2022, in collaboration with the Double Elephant Print Workshop and Screenprint Studio, Exeter.[3] Art specialists Simon Ripley, George Barron and Rosie Stiling led the workshops, each focusing on such specific printmaking techniques as letterpress, screenprinting and collagraphy respectively.[4] A pool of local artists, in particular twenty-one printmakers, attended the workshops and produced visual translations, namely artistic prints inspired by *We Still Have a Chance.* November 2022 introductory sessions, preceding the creative workshops, were delivered by me, as project and translation lead, together with a team of experts consisting of climate scientists, medical researchers, health professionals, educators and creative writers. Embedding these sessions into the project responded to Susanne C. Moser and Lisa Dilling's (2011) and Michael Murunga *et al.*'s (2022) call to bridge the

[2] Art installations, for examples, are often used as part of climate change communication which, as Markowitz, Guckian (2018, p. 36) say, has adopted many forms of expression.
[3] See https://www.doubleelephant.org.uk/ (30.09.2025).
[4] George Barron also acted as Double Elephant project manager.

science-action gap via meetings with experts. Drawing on multiple strengths and expertise, the introductory sessions shed light on the project and the need for advocacy and climate action. They illuminated the genesis of the Source Text and the value of translation as a creative frame.[5] Thanks to these events, the artists involved were shown the care applied by my team to the work done in support of the project and, more broadly, the planet. To complete the workshops, the artists were tasked with selecting a story from *We Still Have a Chance* according to their preference, reflecting on the knowledge acquired and translating that knowledge visually into artworks. In other words, translation was leveraged as a multipurpose item: a communicative tool to acquire knowledge and make meaning; a resource for advocacy to spread the word; and care work to express concerns about the environment.

The artworks were produced in November 2022 to echo the international events at COP27, Sharm El-Sheikh. Once completed, the artistic prints – now digitally displayed on the University of Exeter Green Futures website –[6] were exhibited for a year at multi-artform venue Exeter Phoenix, Exeter. Their photographs (taken by professional photographer Theo Moye) were also showcased around the city of Exeter in popular cultural institutions, including the Devon and Exeter Institution, Exeter, which now stores them alongside Met Office resources and Exeter-based schoolwork.[7] The exhibitions demonstrated the commitment of everyone involved and their desire to partake in transformational struggles and climate advocacy. The transformations that *We Still Have a Chance* underwent – artistically speaking – aimed at shifting the landscape of climate change communication, placing emphasis on the engagement with the materiality of translation.[8] The next Section will discuss the latter concept and its links with care.

[5] The introductions were also in line with Bruce and McKee, who suggest offering the lay publics "real-world" (2020, p. 152) scenarios as well as "access to peers and […] experts" (p. 153).

[6] See https://greenfutures.exeter.ac.uk/we-still-have-a-chance/ (01.10.2025).

[7] Another part of my '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' involved Exeter-based schools, which were supported by local artists (recruited in collaboration with Daisi Arts Inspired Learning) and which produced visual translations (prints and installations) of *We Still Have a Chance*.

[8] The reader might wonder whether the artworks inspired by the climate stories included in *We Still Have Chance* (also referred to here as Source Text) should really be considered translations. The current literature on translation is less and less divided in this respect. As stated above, translation is a key player in interpretative and sense-making practices, both across and within languages and cultures. Susan Bassnett (2011, p. 42) maintains that any form of adaptation can be equated to translation or, in other words, that translation encompasses adaptation, in that the latter is inescapable (and welcome) in translation. It should be added that, despite welcoming adaptation as a strategy in translation, some scholars still differentiate adaptation from translation, on the ground that the latter only/predominantly pertains to the linguistic realm. Others (Boria *et al.* 2020; Kohn, Weissbrod 2023; Vidal Claramonte 2022; Weissbrod, Kohn 2019), on the other hand, have enlarged the semantics of translation to embrace a plethora of instances encompassing not only adaptation (a term which has often been used to define cinematic adaptations [see Hutcheon 2006]) but all sorts of cross-media actions. My view is in

3. Ecotranslation in/and climate change communication

Translation Studies scholars are increasingly engaging with the contribution that translation can offer towards the environmental crisis. In order to illustrate how translation can facilitate environmental advocacy grounded in care-full work, it is useful to turn our attention to a number of studies elicited by Michael Cronin's (2017) seminal work on ecotranslation.

Ecotranslation is a term that was first coined by Translation Studies scholar Clive Scott during a 2015 lecture at the University of Exeter (Cronin 2017, p. 2; 2019a, p. 484) to define the translator's exploration of the textuality, or 'environment', of the Source Text and Target Text. The notion was then adopted/adapted by Cronin to call for a radical rethinking of the translation environment so as to encompass many more instances of acts of translation, both human and non-human. The end goal was to enhance the pivotal role that translation can play *vis-à-vis* the ecological crisis. Scholars have responded to Cronin's call in an attempt to engage with the "(in)humanity of translation" (2019b, p. 189), as he posits. Carolyn Shread reminds us that ecotranslation is not "a discrete object with which we interact" (2023, p. 114) or that we "master" (p. 119). To put it differently, it is not merely a linguistic approach applied to render ecological themes across texts. Nor is it merely a hermeneutic tool used to investigate the representation of nature in Target Texts. Even if these approaches can play a role in fostering a critical environment and sharing ideas about the climate, they operate within limited contexts and produce conventional outcomes. As the ecological crisis is the outcome of a series of human-induced transformations, Shread (2023, pp. 113-115) invites us to open ourselves to the world and look at translation as a practice inherently embedded within the ecosystem that defines us: a practice performed by all the elements that populate the Earth. In this light, "ecotranslation is not a task; it's a new form of life" (p. 115). This form of life helps us to shape meaning, partake in the interspecies relationality that mark our togetherness and connect us to the world (see also Marais 2022, p. 2). In short, it helps us to communicate with/in the environment that hosts us (Shread 2023, p. 115). While echoing Cronin, Shread stresses the need to pluralize and diversify acts of translation. We should "translate with" objects and beings (2023, p. 114), "reconfigure translation practices, including translating outdoors" (p. 113) and employ "movement, gesture, and expression as modes of communication more expansive than human linguistics" (p. 119).

line with the latter scholars who see translation as a negotiation of meanings and messages across and within different domains (linguistic, cultural, semiotic, intermedial, intermodal and multimodal).

In a similar vein, Hedwig Fraunhofer (2023) builds on Cronin's theorizations to extend her translational horizons. In an attempt to include the dialogue with the vegetal world into these horizons, Fraunhofer tries to picture what translation could be like if this practice considered the more-than-human. In addition to enlarging the scope of translation, her ecotranslation gives voice to the interrelatedness underpinning the co-presence upon which the ecological system is founded. The answers that she provides are worth mentioning, because she takes a different direction to Cronin (2017; 2019a; 2019b), drawing on the principles of physicist-philosopher and feminist theorist Karen Barad (2007). These principles centre around such complex dynamics as entanglement and complementarity which, in quantum physics, refer to particles being linked (or entangled) and influencing one another in a supportive (or complementary) manner (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 45, p. 50). Fraunhofer notes that these dynamics are also at the heart of the translation process, bringing to light the specificity of its relational nature and, more broadly, humans' positionality. In other words, translation is not just the outcome of a chronological transfer between static entities such as Source Text and Target Text. It is a fluid and malleable experience connecting and shaping the human and the other-than-human, which are enmeshed with one another in multiple, interdependent ways (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 45; see also Barad 2007, p. ix). Accordingly, humans are not at the centre of materiality or thought. They are instead integral to a broad web of co-dependent elements whose presence affects the reciprocity and relationality that bind the world (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 41). Barad also claims: "Humans are neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming" (2007, p. 150). Fraunhofer and Shread have made an important contribution to the advancement of the posthumanist and materialist turn in Translation Studies (see Bennett 2022; Littau 2011, 2023; Marais 2022), within which I situate my own work. Their work has provided the foundations for my own translational practices within the context of environmental advocacy. These practices challenge traditional views of both translation and climate change communication: that the former should be a linear process and the latter should be a unidirectional activity.

According to the posthumanist and materialist phase in the conceptualization of translation, translation is not merely a linguistic activity, just as language is not merely an abstract concept. Both language and translation pertain to the materiality of the world and the body and display a pliable nature (Connelly 2019; Maestri 2024). Shread's notion of plasticity has been particularly formative for me. She posits that translation is a "plastic" mesh that binds the world together as a cohesive and multifaceted whole (Shread 2023, p. 116). And "plasticity is a generative philosophical intervention that describes the material processes of bestowing, taking, destroying, and resisting form – processes that are all, variously, translational

in nature" (2023, p. 116). While Shread does not draw on Barad, her concept of plasticity pushes forward the argument of translation as a form of entanglement. For sure the term plasticity conjures up environmentally unfriendly connotations, yet it secures the embodied nature of translation. It situates translation within the material world that it inherently shapes, enriching its transformative potential. The malleable, pliable and plastic nature of translation turns transformations into continuous expressions of physicality and "life forming" (Shread 2023, p. 116). Experimenting with plasticity and the materiality of translation as a way of playing with the energy that drives all sorts of motions and productions seemed to me a profitable approach, especially when one tries to address climate change communication.

Diversifying the communicative contexts and practices often followed in climate advocacy is not an easy task. It requires hard work, attention, reflection and especially – as I said initially – care, namely "the care that orients ecotranslation and the generosity of attention Cronin invites upon initiating this collective, collaborative, and wholly inclusive, undertaking" (Shread 2023, p. 120). Shread (2023) stresses the value of care as a response to the climate crisis and draws attention to scholars (Berkobien 2020; Cornelio 2017) who have discussed its significance within the context of translation, placing emphasis on Megan Berkobien and her approach to ecotranslation. These studies represent an important milestone especially because care, despite being a key ethical principle very often applied by translators to their work, is not discussed in the scholarship on translation ethics (Koskinen, Pokorn 2021; Lambert 2023; Pym 2012; Washbourne 2019). It does not appear in recent studies on translation activism (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020) or Cronin's seminal work on ecotranslation (2017; 2019a; 2019b) either. Rebecca Tipton (2024, pp. 199-200) is the only one that briefly devotes attention to the ethics of care, mentioning its first feminist theorizations and especially the importance placed on relationality and the emotional connections that care establishes with others. Being devoted to ethics in translation and interpreting education, Tipton's work (2024) does not venture into the application of the ethics of care to ecotranslation or environmental communication. This is done, as stated earlier, by Berkobien (2020) and Pezzullo (2024b) respectively, namely scholars whose disciplines have not cross-pollinated to date, despite common grounds. Berkobien, a literary scholar and translator, explores care through forms of collaboration and camaraderie in literary translation. These collaborations create shelters or refuges needed to fight climate change. Pezzullo, an environmental communication scholar, invokes the application of care-full approaches to the communicative praxis of environmental issues. These praxes should be imbued with reflection, attention and empathic considerations for the other. However, despite mentioning imagination as a fundamental component in

care work (Berkobien 2020) or as a mental space overwhelmed by anti-environmental and capitalist ideologies (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 2), neither of them elaborates on it. Imagination and care – as a combination – are only cited quickly in some contributions (Doyle 2024, p. 28; Raja 2024, p. 77) to the Special Issue on *Environmental Communication as Care* edited by Pezzullo. Because of the creative nature of ecotranslation, it is important to provide a definition that draws together imagination and care, by relying on ecofeminist scholars particularly interested in the ethics of care and ecology. I will avail myself of these definitions in the following Sections.

Care is an ethical inclination to love the other 'agentially', with facts, *doing* things, ecofeminist Mary Phillips claims (2016, p. 475). It is a relational disposition which puts into practice – with actions and imagination – love and respect for others and objects (2016, pp. 476-477). Put another way, the caring imagination "create[s] points of departure for developing responsive interconnections that inform action" (p. 477). It is a strength that helps us to transcend our bodily limitations and reach out to the other (p. 478). It is also a proactive stance that nurtures and, at the same time, is nurtured by ethical creativity. Ethical creativity refers to a set of tangible practices which employ an ethically sound approach to enact "sustainability transformations", namely "gradual long-lasting processes, with a final aim of making the current systems of production and consumption more sustainable" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 284). Within it, the caring imagination is particularly important because it sparks creativity and facilitates hands-on experiments, by turning practices into "tangible and salient accounts of *how* transformations can be enacted in various realities" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 285, italics in original). According to these authors, transformations are necessary for ecological issues to be attended to. Unfortunately, due to the complexities and the complications built into processes of transformations, transformations do not come about through quick-fix solutions (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, pp. 284-285). Any intervention aimed at activating transformations must be sustained – and indeed will be facilitated – by the ethics of care, which provides the necessary love and attention to detail for the process to succeed.

What if communicators were more translation-sensitive, that is to say attuned to translation as a plastic sense-making activity? And, as a shared activity whose production of things comes into being as entanglement and complementarity? Finally, what if communicators were more ethically oriented, applying an ethics of care to the materiality of translation and therefore communication? Being focused on connections and "a feeling with, rather than a feeling for, others" (Hobart, Kneese quoted in Pezzullo 2024a, p. 3), care strengthens the relational aspect that underpins translation.

4. The ARTvocacy model: care, printmaking and transformation

Purposeful and ethical communication does not happen in a vacuum. The appropriate setting and conditions need to be care-fully arranged in order for them to foster meaning-making and knowledge translation. Prioritizing care as a criterion for selecting participants was paramount, because care helped them to step into the role of translators and advocates. Moreover, thanks to artist and workshop leader Barron's knowledge of the local printmaking art scene, we recruited artists whose praxes were already marked by a desire to contribute to meaningful actions for change. Scholars in leadership education Jacklyn A. Bruce and Katherine E. McKee confirm: "There is no reason to take up the mantle of advocacy unless you believe that there is a need for change" (2020, p. 151). Finally, recruiting artists with specific environmentally conscious interests was crucial to fulfil the aims of the project and attain the desired results. As environmental scientist E.C.M. Parsons says, "do not try to ram a square peg into a round hole. For example, if talking to an artist, suggest ways in which they could use [their] artistic skills to interpret and highlight your cause" (2016, p. 5). Working with like-minded participants enabled me to invest my energies and attention to care to the full to unlock potentials and create a forum for collaboration and reflection.

As a first step, I imagined and encouraged a safe and cooperative environment, rooted in care-full work. Berkobien teaches us that safe spaces, or refuges, are key in the co-creation of strategies to care and repair (2020). The model that inspired me the most and that allowed me to design a collaborative and hands-on path to climate advocacy was the ARTvocacy model established by school educator Hunter-Doniger (2020). The term was first coined at a public event in Washington, D.C., and then used by Hunter-Doniger to signify the guiding principles framing her educational practice. These principles, founded upon a philosophy of care for the planet, position the arts as an opportunity to learn (how) to speak for others and practise advocacy. While Hunter-Doniger's aim was to establish a new pedagogical approach which used existing artwork to teach to care for the planet and practise advocacy, my project enlisted artists to translate climate stories into artwork, a process which would inspire them and those who would then 'consume' their artwork to practise climate advocacy. In fact, my participants were all independent thinkers capable of expressing informed views with a unique and personal sense of aesthetics. Hence, I applied a care-full adjustment to Hunter-Doniger's model, paying respect to the artists' wisdom and avoiding a top-down approach to learning. During the workshops, the artists' wisdom was used as a resource, not to fuel art-based activism or artivism (see Scerbo 2021) or to push "direct action to achieve a political or

social goal", but "to make needs heard", in the words of Translation Studies scholar Joseph Lambert (2023, p. 100). My ambition was to offer everyone the opportunity to tune in to the magnitude of climate change and map out – through such relational practices as the arts and ecological care – one's personal path to climate advocacy. As artist and workshop leader Ripley stated, "I think a lot of us don't really have the confidence to know what exactly should I be doing? How can I make those changes that have the greatest impact?' (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:17:31.51-00:17:46.19). Hunter-Doniger's ARTvocacy model with the modifications I applied placed emphasis on how advocacy (and possibly activism) materializes when actionable knowledge is made accessible through translation into an ecological aesthetics.

By promoting a malleable, slow space-time collaboration, ARTvocacy harnessed reflection on how to shape messages under the banner of translation. The reflective engagement embedded within ARTvocacy allows for the making of art to be turned into a care-full making of meaning: a translational exercise carried out "to communicate the urgency of change" (Bruce, McKee 2020, p. 161). Moreover, this reflective engagement is as plastic as the artistic practice put in motion: it transforms, changes, modifies, renovates, mitigates and, finally, translates. The aim is to acknowledge "that the systems in which we live and work must be *dismantled and rebuilt* to serve not just a select few, but all people" (Bruce, McKee 2020, p. 151, my italics). Translations and transformations at every possible level – both material and conceptual – were therefore at the heart of the ARTvocacy ethos I nurtured. Artist David Brampton-Greene, one of the participants in my project, confirms:

> The word advocate is such a great word because for me it suggests that we're … I'm still trying to understand. I'm still in a position of finding out and learning, which is part of the problem, because obviously somebody that takes action, an activist, has made a decision that they, they know this action needs to be taken, it needs to be taken now. (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:16:7.22-00:16:34.20)

According to him, advocacy is a positive attitude situated along a continuum stretching from appropriation of actionable knowledge to active participation. The element that keeps these aspects closely related but not clearly divided is translation, centred on the appreciation of the interrelatedness that binds them. Translation helps to make sense of the knowledge one needs to learn in order to act and champion change. Driven by the impulse encapsulated into "advocāre", the Latin root of advocacy ("to call upon, summon […] to invoke the aid of" [*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2025]), the ARTvocacy practice which I strived to establish invoked translation as an act of care for

transformation. I envisaged that this act would lead to tangible reflections on how to convey actionable knowledge.

One, final, factor became crucial when ARTvocacy took shape: the choice of the creative practice to be capitalized on. Generally speaking, any form of art can be instrumental in advocating for a cause, because it "engag[es] the attention of audiences, who may be desensitized to statistics" (Brownlie 2022, p. 8). Being rooted in materiality, artmaking can also help us to move away from approaches that frame translation as an abstract concept or "a loosely conceived metaphorical concept" (Desblache 2020, p. 208), enhancing its embodied and physical nature instead (see Blumczynski 2023, p. 11; Vidal Claramonte 2022). In order to implement ARTvocacy, I opted for an artistic practice whose nature is specifically founded on translational entanglements and plasticity, namely printmaking. Printmaking is inherently linked with distribution, dissemination and, by extension, advocacy (Ripley in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 01:0:49.31-01:0:55.11; Weisberg 2018 [1986], p. 59). It is also a "labour-intensive art form" (Reeves 2018 [1999], p. 75) and the dexterity required to produce prints evokes the translational entanglements that Fraunhofer (2023) speaks about. Artist Ruth Weisberg explains the physical entanglements involved in printmaking almost in sexual terms: "The irreducible essence of printmaking is an embrace, one body pressed against the other" (2018 [1986], p. 63). The artist's body presses "the matrix against a receptive surface" (p. 63), leaving on that surface traces of their self whose imprint gets enmeshed within the fabric of the work. "Touch always results in a print" (Reeves 2018 [1999], p. 73), allowing for the personal and the situatedness to take shape. Arguably, the interconnectedness that marks the essence of printmaking is consistent with the mechanism that governs translation. While marking and staining, the materiality of print and printmaker forges relations and causes entanglements. Just like translation, these relational entanglements affect the physicality of all the parties involved in the artmaking process, creating new identities and connections. Finally, the repeated gesture required to produce artistic prints – not only to generate several copies but also to try out a variety of techniques and outcomes – engages both the body and the mind almost ad infinitum, allowing for a pluralization of translational acts ignited by movement and motion. The printmaking gesture elicits embodied thinking and care-full approaches to communication which – just like translation – stem from the materiality of the body. These approaches were captured in the March 2023 focus groups that I led and that are analysed in the next Section to shed light on the outcomes of my project.

5. ARTvocacy practices and outcomes: the role of ecotranslation and the ethics of care

This Section analyses the outcomes of ARTvocacy, in the light of the theoretical framework and methods that informed '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'. The analysis focuses on the prints produced by ten of the twenty-one artists who participated in the project, specifically those artists whose prints' artistic quality, precision, care and originality secured them a place in the 2023 Exeter Phoenix exhibition. Translational entanglements, plasticity and caring imagination are used to cast light on the regulatory forces, such as knowledge translation, behind the ethically informed communication – and by extension advocacy – practices put in place by the artists.

Translation turned the artists in my workshops into risk-takers. Undertaking care work requires courage to face challenges and risks, not just a sense of responsibility. Quoting ecofeminist Karen J. Warren, Phillips says that we must "dare to care" (2015, p. 52; 2019, p. 1159). Advocates demonstrate moral courage, often stepping into challenging or high-stakes situations (Bruce, McKee 2020, pp. 158-159). The nature of the risks that they assess before adopting any action strategy is usually greater than the ones that the participants in my project had to face. As stated above, '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was embedded within a wider project coordinated by the University of Exeter, a well-established institution with a structured approach to risk assessment and mitigation. Even if situational risks were ruled out, the ARTvocacy practice that the participants embraced exposed them to conceptual risks, confronting them with the challenges that communication entails. The first of such risks was to engage with sign systems – verbal and visual forms of communication – whose make-ups diverge. Linguist and semiotician Gunther Kress claims that "writing and image each enable meanings to be made which cannot, however, easily be 'shifted' from the one mode to the other – nor, actually, made at all in the other mode" (2020, p. 26). And this is because, Kress continues, "meaning is made according to the characteristics of the environment and the affordances of the modes" (2020, p. 32). Moreover, the literature on translating fiction into visual art is still limited, and so are the tools available to practitioners embarking upon such projects. Monica Boria and Marcus Tomalin claim: "Despite its increasing prevalence, minimal attention has so far been paid specifically to the impact that multimodal communication is having, and/or is likely to have, upon the theory and practice of translation" (2020, p. 5). Despite these hurdles, all artists completed successful work, developing a deep-rooted, personal approach to the translation of fiction into printed images.

The artists' personal approaches to translation are the most interesting aspects of this project, because the ensuing prints value emotions, which do

not always take centre stage in ecological matters. Emotions – according to feminist scholars of care ethics – are often "rejected in rationalistic moral theories" (Held quoted in Tipton 2024, p. 199). Phillips expands:

> reason is presented as the only way to achieve the limited changes believed to be required, while the emergence of ecocentric perspectives and values that might arise from a greater *emotional* connectivity with nature must be suppressed. (2015, pp. 57-58, my italics)

Contrary to this, a "careful practice of […] translation doesn't skirt the lived experiences we bring with us to any text" (Berkobien 2020, p. 3). As the lived experience comes with "emotive material", it "can play an important role in changing public attitudes and eliciting public concern" (Parsons 2016, p. 4). Along the same lines, Bruce and McKee hold that "being able to speak from your own experience is also important and can add impact to your advocacy appeals" (2020, p. 157). The importance of the personal – and the emotive – in public activities is also echoed by Linda Flower (2008), a scholar in rhetoric and community literacy, whose work on public engagement devotes attention to the strategies required to mobilize the lay publics towards meaningful actions. In order to explicate these strategies and construct public engagement spaces, as rhetorical sites, Flower affirms the non-negotiable significance of allowing for the personal and the political to (e)merge. It is only then that public engagement spaces become fruitful and transformative loci (2008, p. 2). The materialization of the personal underpins – to various degrees and extents – all the visual translations, the prints, exhibited at the Exeter Phoenix. The prints expose not only intermedial links with the climate stories but also an intimate, emotive and subjective response to them.

Victoria Owen visually translated the short story *A Crack in the Sky*. The print represents a banana tree full of fruit and a child hugging the tree. The print is an emotive appeal to act ethically towards nature on behalf of future generations (Owen in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:32:50.24-00:32:54.47). This appeal, often lodged in climate change communication and advocacy (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 50), aims to address the viewer by visualizing and eliciting affects and, in particular, vitality affects. Vitality affects, experienced since birth through "energy" and "a sense of aliveness" (Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 31), are the backbone of our infanthood. Later in life, they can trigger or be triggered by memories (Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 169; Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 31, p. 37). Owen stated that the short story "focus[es] your attention on certain aspects or feelings" (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:24:43.30-00:24:50.12), namely the feeling that the female protagonist remembers experiencing while "running between the rows of tall plants" (*A Crack in the Sky*, p. 23). Vitality affects have a vigorous as well as temporal quality not only because they are produced by embodied energy, but

also because they are solicited by movement, especially repetitive and/or on-going (Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 31; Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 169). For this reason, "they cannot, as such, arise in a single moment or converge at a central point because a successive string of singular elements is needed for a vitality affect to be created" (Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 169). And that is why Developmental Psychologist Daniel Stern, the first scholar who conceptualized them, often conveyed them linguistically with present participles (2008, p. 169), such as "running" in our case. The temporal aspect of vitality affects also corresponds to progressions or processes of "intensity of sensation" that evolve over time (Stern quoted in Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 171). These processes are marked by fluctuations and oscillations, which may also consolidate into a crescendo of feelings following a clear "activation-arousal" pattern (Stern quoted in Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 171). The emotive response displayed by Owen is the outcome of such a crescendo, which drives the protagonist to embrace the object of her memories, namely a tall tree situated in the "banana farm, verdant and lush with the fresh rich scent the rain-soaked earth offered up" (*A Crack in the Sky*, p. 23). The feelings experienced while running, namely "a welling up within, an excitement and sense of promise" (*A Crack in the Sky*, p. 23) are now projected onto the printed image and, even, extended. The representation of the child hugging a huge tree (personifying Mother Nature) conveys another type of vitality affect, namely the energy flow that dynamically emerges from the caregiver-child interpersonal connection (Køppe *et al.* 2008, pp. 171-172). Transformation, through visual translation, affords, therefore, the opportunity to give voice to the personal and intimate and launch a strong appeal, with the potential of "nurtur[ing] one sense of self", to borrow the words of Angela Moriggi *et al.* (2020, p. 288). The print harnesses the power of memory and affect to exhume the most primitive and nostalgic reminiscence, namely the paradise lost. In the story this reminiscence is represented by "the banana farm, verdant and lush" which is now "withering, hard unyielding fruit that never ripened, […] unable to adapt to the soaring heat" (*A Crack in the Sky*, pp. 23-24); and, in the printed image, by the child hugging the tree that symbolizes the primeval mother-child bond generating "affect attunement […] through […] bodily interaction" (Køppe *et al.* 2008, pp. 171-172). The appeal is clear: what if future generations could no longer connect with the affective depth inscribed in our subjectivity since the origin of our being?

Owen's print can also be read as a quintessential celebration of care as "recognition of our entangled materialities", in the words of Phillips (2016, p. 471). The substantial production of fruit that springs out of the tree branches is an expression of care, as generous as the all-encompassing embrace given by the girl. However, as realistic as this image might be, it is a memory and a dream, which exists only in the female protagonist's caring imagination. The actual state of nature is fairly derelict, struggling to survive, as the short story

says. Being able to access the Source Text, which was also provided at the art exhibition, the viewer knows that the human embrace is loaded with particularly meaningful connotations. It symbolizes a desperate act of caring for Mother Nature, an act which goes beyond the need to feel or retrieve personal, affective vitality or any other "ontological necessity" (Wells, Gradwell quoted in Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 286). It is a keen attempt (even if vain) to prevent Mother Nature from dying. Phillips claims: "Our capacity to care […] extends beyond our personal experiences to an ability to respond to difference, and to visualize what the other, given their specificity, is undergoing" (2016, p. 478). The personal thus extends to embrace difference, the other and a non-atomistic view of humanity, celebrating human-nature interdependence. In our focus group, Owen justified her approach by highlighting that "there isn't one thing without another. None of it can happen in isolation" (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:34:1.98-00:34:8.55). The interdependence celebrated by Owen's ARTvocacy practice encapsulates, therefore, the essence of care, defined by feminist philosopher Joan Tronto as: "Everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' […]. That world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (quoted in Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 283).

Phillips's view can also be applied to the reading of artist Sarah Furby's print. Her print, a visual translation of the short story *Wait Here*, depicts a young girl curled up in a shrub as if rocking backward and forward, almost in a foetal position. While waiting for her mother to come back to a dry place, she finds refuge in the undergrowth. The print represents the girl lying down among leaves in such a way that she appears to be woven – almost entangled – into the fabric of Oneness with Mother Nature. Whereas the Source Text only says that the little girl "had hidden among the tamarinds" (*Wait Here*, p. 60), the print enhances the sense of protection and the care the girl feels while hiding "under the feathery-dry leaves" (*Wait Here*, p. 60). In so doing, the artwork displays not only human-nature interdependence, but also the materiality of care. And that is why the sensuousness that Furby's print inspires is central. Furby chose to translate visually a specific element of nature, described by the Source Text in a tactile and palpable way as "feathery". Care is in fact both maternal and material, being linked to the body and experienced by every body – not just mothers and children (Phillips 2016, p. 471). Through a visual awakening of the senses, the print encourages the viewer to see nature and humans as part of our caring responsibilities and leave behind individualistic modes of being in the world, "where the needs of the other living beings are disregarded" (Phillips 2016, p. 473). The affective vitality generated by Furby's print – celebrating the body and bodily encounters – also plays a key role. Here affective vitality surfaces from the dyadic relationship with nature and is

actualized by movement and bodily intensities that predate language. There are no words embedded in this print, unlike other artworks produced with letterpress techniques. Yet, the message is clear. The affects that spring out of the image have illocutionary force, which – along with various types of creative activities such as "art, music, and dance" – "begin an inner movement that leads to vitalization" (Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 30). They bring energy (back), soliciting humans to embark upon "processes of inner change" (2019, p. 30). Leading scholars in climate change communication and scientists Moser and Dilling consider affect an effective element in public engagement, claiming that "people […] actively respond by way of changes in climate-relevant behaviour or political action" when they "experience an emotional response" (2011, p. 162). What is interesting to note is that both Furby and Owen applied amplification strategies to translation, enhancing what the Source Texts encapsulate and "affirming the need to reconnect with the biosphere, learning to see human and nature as a whole" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 282).

Amplification proves to be a key strategy applied to the translation of *We Still Have a Chance*. In order to put this strategy into practice, one needs to pay attention to details and, if necessary, expand them. By so doing, the details are magnified and intensified (see Taylor 1998, p. 55). Focusing on the finer points is the thematic subject of artist Brampton-Greene's work inspired by *Survival*. His print represents an eye which visually calls for attention and the need to pay attention, thereby recalling the etymological root of care. The active meaning of care translates into "attentiveness, regard, consideration" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 283), which, in the context of climate change, are a "practical necessity [created] to become responsive to ecosystem health" (2020, p. 286). Cronin also says that "relating to others, whether human or non-human, implies, first and foremost, paying attention to them" (2019a, p. 485). Brampton-Greene's eye amplifies key moments in *Survival*, a story that places emphasis on vision and a series of gazes amplifying vision. It opens with William Blake's lines from *The Tyger* and continues with a story told by a grandfather whose subject is also a tiger. The grandfather's tiger roaming through the forest has "eyes like medallions" (*Survival*, p. 36) which echo the grandchild "listen[ing] wide-eyed" (*Survival*, p. 37) to the grandfather's story of the roaming tiger. Cronin says that paying attention is crucial but not easy within a production economy whose "main income generator" is "getting people to take notice" (2019a, p. 486). Unsurprisingly the eye pictured by the artist resembles a "shield" (Brampton-Greene in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:30:25.88-00:30:36.57) and is situated in an allegorical forest, alluding to the tiger's difficulty of moving around perils and obtaining clear vision. The activity Cronin proposes as a way to steer through this attention-seeking maze or forest is translation. Translation is "the structure and contents of cultural attentionscapes that set up specific

orientations towards the future" (2019a, p. 487). It is therefore the barometer that helps us to navigate through meaning-making and knowledge appropriation. Brampton-Greene's print aligns with Cronin's perspective. The print signposts the viewer, pointing to the attention and care given by the grandchild to the stories of wildlife and, later, the family garden (*Survival*, p. 36). The effectiveness of the print stems from the visualization of attentiveness: the vector setting in motion the circularity of care. In line with Moriggi *et al*., the artwork encourages the viewers to increase their "capacity to 'see with fresh eyes' […] and, as a consequence, to regain a sense of wonder, appreciating Earth's beauty but also its suffering" (2020, p. 290). The value of Brampton-Greene's print also comes from the staging of what translation, as a meaning-making activity, can do: it signposts the way for reader and viewer by directing them to the cornerstone of the story. Moreover, by shedding light on the essence of meaning, the translation applied by the artist enriches both Source and Target Text. It ensures complementarity and circularity, instead of separation or transfer, between one and the other, strengthening the ecotranslational aspects advocated for – as mentioned above – by Fraunhofer (2023). The image of the eye acquires more significance when placed alongside its Source Text and vice versa. While disentangling meaning, the print unveils the mechanism that underpins communication: "Translation as a circular, dynamic motion between source text and translation" (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 45). This motion increases attentiveness which, as shown above, brings contexts into focus, activating the caring imagination, namely the energy that drives those who practise the ethics of care.

Imagination, "one of the ten central capabilities for a good life", also "allows us to deal with uncertainty and take the future in our hands" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 289). Uncertainty poses enormous risks which challenge climate change impact assessments and designs (Merino-Benítez *et al.* 2024, p. 2) as well as caregivers' plans and prospects. Despite its connotations and challenges, uncertainty offers strong artistic tension, raising questions and creating the opportunity to be imaginative and transformative. Artist Sue Wyllie leveraged uncertainty to produce her print and reflect on responses to climate change. Her print, which depicts objects polluting the water in the short story entitled *Live by the River*, was produced by capitalizing on the unexpected – triggering feelings of uncertainty. In one of our focus groups, she elucidated the potential encapsulated in moments of creative uncertainty by claiming:

> I quite like to work with simple things and just see where it takes […]. I don't really know where I'm going with any of it. It's just so I've got a pile of stuff here and and … how am I going to interpret that and make something out of it? (*Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:11:17.82-00:11:38.69)

By experimenting with the stencil of the shadows of random objects and rubbish (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:17:21.36-00:17:49.65), she generated unexpected circumstances and the imaginative curiosity leading to the creation of a work aesthetically original and new. In this, Wyllie's idea of exploring uncertainty and the unexpected – "this idea of working with not knowing what you're doing" (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:11:52.39-00:12:18.56) – echoes Moriggi *et al.*'s argument, according to which imagination and creativity are key to change and newness (2020, p. 289).

Once she had explained her ARTvocacy methods, Wyllie pushed her argument further by placing emphasis on the plastic aspect of her translational style. This aspect is central to questions not only of the caring imagination but also of agency (Phillips 2016, p. 477). Her layering, colouring and playing with positioning, shadows, inks, shapes and photosensitive screens were part of a mode of printmaking based on a co-agential, collaborative approach to materiality. To explain this mode of production, printmaker and art educator Ken Tyler says: "You don't know whether the suggestion came from the printer on the press or that it was the artist's idea" (quoted in Weisberg 2018 [1986], p. 64). What is important to note here is the following. Wyllie tried to find a "compromise" between her agential input and the one given by matter, as Weisberg (2018 [1986], p. 64) would say. Shread would instead prefer the expression "letting go" (2023, p. 116) to indicate the non-interventionist approach applied by the artist. Both scholars would highlight the co-productive process enacted by matter and artist, a process centred around plasticity. Drawing from French philosopher Catharine Malabou, Shread elucidates that "if plasticity is anything, it is about letting go, and accepting that the human determination to shape and form will itself be exploded" (2023, p. 116). Wyllie's co-agential praxis encapsulated therefore the essence of plasticity and ecotranslation. The artist worked with matter, caring for it and respecting its agency, an agency which is beyond human control. In so doing, Wyllie summons her viewer to be as respectful and imaginative as her, complying with the boundaries drawn by matter. Her plastic capacities do not just result into original artistic techniques. They become a way to sculpt the viewer's awareness of environmental degradation and climate-conscious behaviour (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:20:52.51-00:21:13.18), creating new opportunities for "a reshaping of our mode of existence into sustainable forms" (Shread 2023, p. 116). Moreover, the artist's plastic abilities foster a different kind of imagination to the one stimulated by the media. In line with Phillips (2016, p. 472), Julie Doyle (2024) says that the environmental crisis is also a crisis of imagination. The imagination which envisions possibilities for a healthy and positive future is sacrificed to make way for a sterile one which "renders apocalyptic visions central" (2024, p. 31). Wyllie's representation of water polluted by foreign bodies does not sensationalize degradation, catastrophes,

or disasters. Her print encourages viewers to tap into their caring imagination and visualize possible ways of bringing back agential matter. It also encourages them to ignite remedial action and positive transformation in response to the paralysis of matter and the fossilization, so to say, of pollution.

Imagination is key in artistic production as well as ARTvocacy, as argued above. It can travel far in time and space, but it can also foster reflection on proximity and the present. This is what artist Erika Cann aimed to encourage, by domesticating the story entitled *Mermaids' Tears*. Domestication and proximal frames are not just strategies used in translation to make texts relatable. They are also successful rhetorical strategies implemented in advocacy and climate change communication to reduce the spatial and temporal distance between individuals and the planetary crisis and elicit a stronger psychological response to the latter. Charlotte Jones *et al.* maintain that "strategies that emphasize the proximity of risks may be helpful in promoting behavioural engagement" (2017, p. 332). Wyllie's print is the outcome of an experiential practice that turned uncertainty – one of the "main dimensions of psychological distance" (Jones *et al.* 2017, p. 332) – into a manageable here and now; Cann's print lifts up a mirror to the Exeter viewer by showing the plastic pollution along the Devon shores, so dear to the local community. Both artists' intent was not to represent off-putting images, but to foster mitigation behaviour, by shortening the physical and psychological distance between the viewer and the represented issue. After all, as stated above, printmaking is a form of art that celebrates proximity and, in particular, the contiguity with the artist's body, "invok[ing] the body via the hand in the print" (Reeves 2018 [1999], p. 74). Proximity, as a method (in Wyllie's case) and a concept (in Cann's case), embeds the artists' soul and body within the artwork, while making their plea clear. Whereas Wyllie's print is an invite to emulate the main character's eco-conscious behaviour and "scoop […] floating rubbish" (*Live by the River*, p. 63) out of a fictional river (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:20:52.51-00:21:13.18), Cann's print encourages the viewer to clean the Devon beaches of their "mermaids' tears" (Cann in *Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:18:4.60-00:18:16.27). The print represents a metaphor that, according to *Mermaids' Tears* (p. 13), has gained currency among climate scientists. These scientists use the image of teardrops to symbolize not just the damage caused by mythical creatures from Arabic folklore resembling mermaids and haunting the Nile, but also all microplastics polluting water bodies. However, whereas the eponymous story extends this generalization by including all "rivers, waterways, seas and oceans" (p. 13), Cann's print applies a "'cultural' lens" (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 166) by zooming in on a section of a Devon beach. The choice of the short story was dictated by a keen interest in helping her viewer to grasp such abstract concepts as deep time, slow violence and microplastics. In our focus

group, Cann wondered: "How do you articulate the scale of the problem to somebody who doesn't immediately know what it is?" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:11:5.46-00:11:11.23). Attracted by the opportunity to raise public awareness of the physical violence inflicted by human hands on the environment, Cann chose to focus on a local geographical space as "a way of making some of those concepts more accessible and kind of as a starting point for people to engage with it" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:19:4.34-00:19:32.96).

Cann's print is emblematic not only in its advocacy for the health of the Devon shores but also in its representation of "slow violence" (Cann in *Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:10:13.40-00:10:30.60). The print unsettles (literally speaking) the artist's depiction of the Devon beach by punctuating the image with dots or, symbolically, teardrops resembling microplastics. The unsettlement is so radical that it visually demonstrates the inability of the dots to blend in or get entangled with the rest of the image, foregrounding an unresolvable and unpleasant asymmetry. Despite their irregular and uneven form, the pebbles – that lie beneath the dots – are organically interwoven, turning their interlacing into a perfectly natural geological fabric. However, because of the dots, the harmony created by the pebbles' shapes, depth and colour – which quintessentially embody the concepts of entanglement and complementarity (Fraunhofer 2023) – ceases to exist. There is no interrelationality or interconnectedness: the dots are superimposed on the pebbles, obscuring their organic shapes and imposing an unnatural substance onto them. The asymmetry created by the imbalance between shapes and forms tells a clear story, that of slow violence. The choice of colours is also telling, especially as they mark the subtlety embedded in the violence perpetrated at the expense of the environment. During the workshops, Cann experimented with different colours, especially to anchor firmly the idea of microplastics in the image. After researching and reflecting with art specialist Barron, she settled for blue and yellow. Cann confirmed that she was drawn to them both because they are the most "present colours of plastic in the ocean" and because they are "very much linked to the seaside and the coast" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:23:45.20-00:24:11.79). Therefore, even if she wanted to juxtapose a natural representation (the pebbles) with an unnatural one (the dots) disrupting the landscape, she decided in favour of these colours. She revealed: "Maybe at a first glance [blue and yellow] feel like [they] would fit in. And that's the kind of scary thing about microplastics: the fact that you don't see them to start off with" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:24:21.60-00:24:34.92). Their apparent invisibility, marked by such recurrent colours as blue and yellow, translates the insidiousness of human violence. Once more, the colour coding executed by Cann was guided by an ethics of care. Cann did not disregard the human body. Instead, she leveraged experiential knowledge and aspects of our physical existence – blue and

yellow "were kind of more naturally occurring colours" (00:23:45.20-00:24:11.79) – to enhance her caring imagination, aligning therefore with Phillips' invocations. The imaginary and the corporeal need to be intertwined if we want to recognize the vulnerability of nature (Phillips 2016, p. 477). Fruitful entanglements were put in place and enacted not only by Cann but by all the artists analysed here, carrying words of warning and traces of our body and nature.

The exhibition was founded on artistic complementarity and a complex argument, the points of which reverberated in concert with the multiple perspectives foregrounded at the Exeter Phoenix. Whereas Furby and Owen focused on emotions, Cann supported the former artists' goals by implementing proximity. Emotional appeals trigger an active response when they are "paired with a short-term temporal frame" (Huang, Guo 2024, p. 4). The viewers constructed their own stories and engaged with "a whole body of voices" (Dowsett in *Focus Group 2*, 2023, 00:42:50.10-00:42:58.78) arising from the artworks and the Source Texts – provided, as stated earlier, at the exhibition. A number of artists also visualized their own stories by capitalizing on the aesthetic power of words and the techniques learned in the letterpress printmaking workshops. Some incorporated words to unveil the capitalist ideologies operating against a green mindset (Dowsett 2023, inspired by *Déjà vu*), to denounce the mismanagement of water resources (Nash 2023, inspired by *Air Like Water*), to lament the shortage of water (Waterlow 2023, inspired by *Wait Here*) or to alert the viewer to the extinction of birds (Martin 2023 inspired by *The Age of Reason*). Others problematized climate change communication from within, exposing the flaws and the limits of human language.

Despite its material aspect, which could be seen as intrinsically natural and, therefore, positive, language is also responsible for the environmental crisis, as stated in the Introduction. Inspired by *The Fisherman* story, artist Douglas Anderson echoed Roberts *et al.*'s (2023) view, placing emphasis on the physicality of language that, like a net, entangles and strangles nature. His effective depiction of letters superimposed upon dead fish speaks by itself. Ironically, it speaks in silence without recourse to human language, portrayed as an indecipherable mess of tangled and jumbled alphabetical signs. Climate change is a crisis of communication and language which, despite its physicality, does not seem to capture the essence of materiality. In the print, alphabetical letters (standing for human language) lie above aquatic animals lacking oxygen and water, impeding vision and, ultimately, life. Human language cannot really represent aquatic life, translate it or build a genuine and productive rapport with it. It kills nature, by suffocating or misrepresenting it, as the image shows. We now go back to the question raised in the Introduction: is climate change also a crisis of translation? The alphabetical mess displayed by Anderson's print could also suggest this.

However, the type of translation that is displayed in the picture is predominantly linguistic. And that is why the principle that drove the curation of the exhibition was based on complementarity. We should not move away from linguistic translation, but integrate it with other modes and forms, just like what my ARTvocacy project did. In other words, in order to move people to a position of caring about the environment, we need to employ multimodal forms of communication which would capture the complexity of reality and convey various meanings and messages.

6. Concluding remarks

As stated in the Introduction, for effective communication to occur we need to make a concerted effort to address the flaws affecting communication. Ecologizing translation offers multiple avenues to tackle the opacity impacting communication, an opacity which – as Roberts *et al.* (2023) maintain – undermines understanding and knowledge transfer, especially when the topic discussed is climate change mitigation. Care is an antidote to the disengagement and negligence found in current neoliberal discourses around climate change (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 2; Phillips 2016, p. 468). The disengagement is apparent when we often hear "Twenty-four thousand years into the future, no one will be meaningfully related to me" (Morton quoted in Cronin 2017, p. 2). So, why should I care? Translators do care and show us the way to be more mindful of the other: they are attentive to details and they put the relatedness of things at the forefront of their ethical choices and actions. They also offer those who care a valuable frame to apply and appreciate.

As demonstrated, ARTvocacy, as translational practice and locus, enabled the artists involved in my project to speak and engage with their audience while advocating for ecological actions. Eminent Translation Studies scholar Maria Tymoczko claims: "The history and usage of the words *engage* and *engagement* imply commitment, involvement, participation, mutual pledges and promises, making guarantees, assuming obligations, exposing oneself to risk, entering into conflict, becoming interlocked or intermeshed" (2010, p. 11, italics in original). The artists/translators that participated in my project were not passive receivers of messages. They embraced the Source Text, moulding and shaping its content into pliable and plastic messages, with a clear public appeal. They assumed obligations in that they accepted the challenge of translating fiction into art in accordance with high standards. They raised uncomfortable questions. Most of all, they became more and more involved, entangled and enmeshed, bringing innovative practices into the completion of the project and enhancing human-nature complicity. The vitality, vivacity and energy released by the

engagement with the artistic processes of translation were a tonic that enthused artists and workshop leaders alike. “What comes out at the other end of the journey, which could have enhanced or embellished or transformed what [I]’ve just done”, is “really liberating” (Dowsett in *Focus Group 2*, 2023, 00:13:43.63-00:14:14.00). The liberty to act also shifted some of the artists’ view on activism, as they worked to elicit positive action.

As communication about climate change has reached an impasse, translation offers new communicative frames to redress the imbalance caused by broken links and crossed wires. Translation was the frame that enabled artists to approach climate-related topics in a “really powerful” way (Waterlow in *Focus Group 3*, 2023, 00:2:28.24-00:2:33.49) and respond to an array of green-conscious reflections. Translation was the hands-on action taken to transform the stories into artwork, the device used to propagate messages around climate change and, especially, the turbine activated to convert raw materials into energy. Source texts and translations obtained a non-hierarchical, joint first place in the workshops. On the one hand, the Source Texts served as a roadmap to “channel your thinking” (Ripley in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:07:43.70-00:08:6.53) and shape the artists’ eco-conscious reflections into their visual language; on the other, the process of translation acted as a platform to bounce ideas back and forth and echo concerns and responses to the climate crisis.

Presenting scientific facts or delivering news about climate change is not enough to elicit a tangible response, not even for those who care. Delivering verbal information entails a one-way transfer, positing the lay publics as a passive receiver of messages, not as interlocutor. The translation imbued with ethical principles and entangled with material practices is not a one-way transfer of information. It is a multi-directional system leading to individualized responses, meaning-making and co-creation of knowledge for a better and healthier future.[9]

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[9] **Funding and ethics statement:** this work was supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. All participants gave written informed consent.
Disclosure Statement: no potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Acknowledgements: I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Arts Council England for the financial support given towards the realization of my project. My gratitude also goes to all the members of the 'COP' team for showing me what it means to care for the planet and contributing to my project with dedication and collegiality. Cecilia Mañosa Nyblon, Dr Sally Flint, Prof. Rosa Barciela, Prof. Peter Stott, Prof. Ian Fussel, Prof. Reza Zamani, Prof. Justin Dillon, Dom Jinks, Sarah Campbell and Dr Fatma Sabet have been – and continue to be – a source of inspiration and support. They have provided precious input, laying the foundations of 'We Still Have a Chance' and working hard to secure the success of '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'. In particular, I am indebted to Prof. Hugh Roberts, 'COP' team member and former Director of Research and Impact (Department of Languages, Cultures and Visual Studies, the University of Exeter), for his generous support, brilliant ideas, continuous care and good humour and, especially, for believing in me. I am grateful to my reviewers and also to my colleague Prof. Maria Scott, for their helpful feedback on the latest versions of this article. Last but not least, thank you from the bottom of my heart to the Devon and Exeter Institution, Exeter Phoenix, Theo Moye, George Barron, Simon Ripley and all the Double Elephant members and artists. I am grateful for their time, creativity and passionate commitment. Without them, this project would not have been possible. It is thanks to them that I think we still have a chance.

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