# Translating Prefigurative Politics: Social Networks and Rhetorical Strategies in the Alter-globalization Movement

## Introduction

Prefigurative politics is a form of revolutionary action that emphasizes the creation of alternative ways of being and relating within the times and spaces of protest. Prefigurative strategies were central to the resurgence of global activist politics that gained notoriety during alter-globalization movement protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle. As David Graeber (2002) explains, the alter-globalization movement draws heavily on the heterodox anarchist tradition he describes as ‘new anarchism’. New anarchism rejects the separation of means and ends typical of twentieth century Marxist and social democratic politics – wherein revolutionary insurgency or parliamentary majority were seen primarily as steps towards a future socialist utopia – in favour of strategies and tactics which seek to realize desires for a better world in the here and now. The term prefigurative politics captures this desire to turn protest into a direct expression of the ‘other world’ that was invoked in the alter-globalization movement slogan ‘another world is possible’.

This paper traces the genealogy of, yojiteki seiji (予示的政治), a translation word for prefigurative politics that entered Japanese debates concerning the alter-globalization movement in 2006. Alienation and desperation grew in Japan in the 1990s as the egalitarian middle-class society built during the post-war high economic growth period receded, the bubble economy collapsed and inequality increased (Yoda 2006). Governing elites adopted a range of neoliberal policy responses to the economic crisis (McCormack 1998). The resistance to neoliberalism produced a colourful protest culture, which sociologist Mōri Yoshitaka (2005) describes as the ‘new cultural/political movements’. Of course, the ‘newness’ of these movements is contested. Carl Cassegård argues that the resurgence of youth protest in Japan from the 1990s did mark a break after the long period of quiescence he attributes to the traumatic legacies of violence during the New Left protest cycle of the late 1960s and early 1970s (2014). However, the political currents which emerged out of this youth protest culture actually had a more complex relationship with history, deliberately distancing themselves from the New Left in some moments, will reclaiming other elements of Japan’s protest traditions (Brown 2018). Ruth Reitan’s (2012, p. 323–324) characterisation of the alter-globalization movement as a ‘*frayed braid*’ woven from liberal reformist, Marxist revolutionary, and anarcho-autonomist strands better captures the multi-layered nature of the movement and its culture than does a strict old/new dichotomy. This paper concerns the intellectual history of the movements’ anarcho-autonomist strand, and the role of translation in facilitating transnational connections between Japanese-speaking activists and intellectuals with their counterparts in the European and Anglo-American spheres.

When the Group of 8 (G8) summit, an annual talkfest for the leaders of the eight largest economies, was scheduled to take place in the resort town of Tōyako in Hokkaido in 2008, activists in Japan began preparing an international protest against it, together with alter-globalization groups and individuals around the world. Translation was an important part of these movements as they engaged with the transnational rethinking of anti-capitalist politics. These intellectual engagements can be traced back to the 1990s, when translations and commentaries on autonomist Marxism began to appear in the journal *Gendai shisō* (Contemporary Thought). This journal was originally a conduit for the introduction of postmodernism to Japan. Its founders were critical of the Marxist thought which had become hegemonic in Japanese intellectual life in the post-war period (Ikegami 2001, pp. 369–371). However, by the mid-1990s when a number of incidents such as the Hanshin earthquake, the Aum sarin gas incident, the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl in Okinawa by U.S. servicemen shook Japanese society, the journal’s editors recognised the emergence of new forms of urban activism such as the homeless peoples movement (Ikegami 1997). It responded a special issue on ‘street culture’ in May 1997, which included extensive discussion of autonomist ideas and practices.

Autonomist Marxism was one important current within the alter-globalisation movement. The publication of the book *Empire*, authored by two of its best-known proponents Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (2000) attracted considerable interest in Japan. A Japanese translation appeared a few years later (Hardt and Negri 2003) and was the subject of extensive debate (Matoba 2005; Nishitani et al. 2005). A number of Japanese intellectuals with links to social movements invited Antonio Negri to Japan to give a talk in 2008, in the lead up to Group of Eight (G8) summit. However, the visit was cancelled at the last minute when organisers had difficulty obtaining an entry visa for Negri, due to historical charges relating to his arrest in 1978 as part of a crackdown against political dissidents by the Italian state (Kyodo News 2008). Many of the activists and intellectuals who were interested in the anarchist and autonomist currents within the alter-globalisation movement coalesced around a short-lived journal *VOL*, which featured numerous translations of anarchist and autonomist texts, interviews with leading activists and intellectuals who espoused these ideas and original articles on anarcho-autonomist thought, referencing struggles in Japan and overseas. In 2009, a *VOL lexicon* a dictionary appeared which brought together many of the key terms from the alter-globalisation debate, containing definitions for eighty-two key terms from autonomy (autonomia, アウトノミア) to workfare (wākufea, ワークフェア) (Yabu & Shiraishi 2009).

The term prefigurative politics, translated into Japanese as yojiteki seiji, appeared in Japanese in the context of the alter-globalisation movement and G8 summit and has since become an important intellectual tool for talking about the political strategies of contemporary anti-capitalist movements. In this paper, I explore the means by which the English phrase yojiteki seiji became a standard translation (teiyaku, 定訳) for the English ‘prefigurative politics’. I begin by addressing the literature on translation and social movements and the role of translation in the development of modern Japanese political thought. I then provide a detailed genealogy of the translation word’s appearance in a number of books, articles and essays. I analyse this genealogy from two perspectives. First, I consider the appearance of the translation word as an expression of the growing integration of Japanese activist intellectuals with the global circuits of the alter-globalization movement. Second, I identify some of the rhetorical strategies translators and writers on prefigurative politics employed to integrate the translation word into existing Japanese discourse. In my concluding remarks I argue that the translation of prefigurative politics shows that the transnational circulation of activism facilitated by the alter-globalisation movement has furthered the development of a common political imaginary across linguistic divides.

## Translation in/of Social Movements

While the alter-globalisation movement has inspired a broad literature in the sociology of transnational social movements (Della Porta 2007), the role of translation and interpretation in these linguistically diverse movements remains under-examined. Mona Baker’s (2006, 2009, 2013, 2015) work is an important exception and has inspired similar work (for example Notley, Salazar and Crosby 2013). Responding to the Egyptian revolution of 2011, Baker argues that ‘if our networks of solidarity are to become more effective and reflect the values of horizontality, non-hierarchy and pluralism that inform contemporary protest movements, translation, interpreting, subtitling and other forms of mediation must be brought to the centre of the political arena and conceptualized as integral elements of the revolutionary project’ (2015 p. 1). She has looked specifically at the notion of prefigurative in the Egyptian revolution, arguing that subtitlers working with filmmakers to share the voices of women were a potential site for prefigurative practices of creativity and the refusal of representation, but that the activists neglected this potential by continuing to rely on English-dominant subtitling practices and prioritising semantic content over the specific voices of women (Baker, 2016, pp. 15–18). Baker’s weaving of the politics of prefiguration into her translation studies provides a reference point for this paper, but where Baker applies the lens of prefigurative politics to translation practices, I look at translation as a means of sharing prefigurative strategies between linguistically divided activist communities.

Translation has played a particularly important role in Japanese modernity. The threat of violence which underlay Japan’s encounter with the West, during a period when European and American powers were seizing colonies in Asia, meant that translating the West became a technology of survival for nineteenth century elites who sought to master the tools of imperialism before they succumbed to them. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), new translation words such as jiyū (freedom), ken (right) and shakai (society) developed in a dialogue between the translators of core texts of European liberal philosophy, movements for freedom and people’s rights and the drafting of the 1889 Meiji constitution (Howland, 2002). Later, the language of Marxist thought facilitated the further development of a critical vocabulary for grappling with modernity. As the philosopher and literary theorist Karatani Kōjin (2012, pp. 29–31) observes, the Japanese encounter with Marxist thought and the subsequent debates on the nature of Japanese capitalism provided the form for Japanese intellectuals’ first serious reckoning with their own modern history.

However, Yanabu Akira (in Yanabu, Gaubatz & Haag 2008) argues that translation words in Japanese remain cut off from the everyday language of social life. Such words, he asserts, ‘are treated as premium-grade foreign goods, backed by the perceived authority of advanced civilization’. This is a charge which might well be laid against yojiteki seiji, which remains an obscure term used by a handful of radical intellectuals. However, the social and rhetorical practices discussed in this essay question the cultural essentialism latent in this charge. Baker’s (2009, p. 222) narrative approach is an argument against the tendency of translation studies to ‘thematize cultural difference and invest in the idea of more or less discrete cultural communities, largely drawn along national lines’. Narrative theory, posits instead that ‘disparate individuals come to share and identify with a set of broad narratives that can draw them together as a community’. In this paper, I examine the way participants in the alter-globalisation movement in Japan used their translation of *yojiteki seiji*, arguing that their strategies for doing so wove a narrative community centred around articulating common tactics of resistance to neoliberalism.

Translation has continued to be interwoven with scholarly debate and popular action in Japan. In his discussion of an important debate between Japanese social philosophers Maruyama Masao and Katō Shunichi on translation in Japanese modernity, Haag (2008) suggests that:

The long-term and far-reaching implications of translation for Japanese modernity have little regard for disciplinary boundaries; proper inquiry into this topic calls for a consideration of “translation” not simply in terms of language and texts, but in the broader sense of what motivates translation, what political and cultural developments translation makes possible, and what the sociopolitical consequences of a particular culture of translation might be (p. 44).

As sociologist Johan Heilbron (1999, p. 430) notes, ‘translations are a function of the social relations between language groups and their transformations over time’. In this paper, I explore the relationship between social movement actors in the English- and Japanese-speaking worlds and the rhetorical strategies Japanese writers and translators used to integrate the prefigurative politics debate at the level of discourse, by means of a close examination of the translation history of a single translation word.

## From Prefigurative Politics to Yojiteki seiji: A Genealogy

The first attempt to coin a translation word for prefigurative politics was in a 2005 translation of Rebecca Solnit’s (2005) Hope in the Dark, where the phrase ‘the politics of prefiguration’ was rendered by translator Inoue Toshio as ‘yoji no seijigaku’ (予示の政治学). The next was in Sabu Kohso’s translation of David Graeber’s (2006) preface to the Japanese edition of his book Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology, where it was rendered as yojiteki seiji (予示的政治). Whereas many new terms entering Japanese through debates on alter-globalisation were transliterated directly into Japanese using the phonetic *katakana* script, *yojiteki seiji* is a compound of existing words in the Chinese script (*kanji*) – *yoji* (予示) meaning to foreshadow and *seiji* (政治) meaning politics. These compounds are linked by adding the suffix *teki* (的), meaning ‘-ive’, to the first compound. According to sociologist Shibuya Nozomu, the *kanji* compound was better suited in this case because the source term was so novel and readers could not be expected to make sense of it based on the English sounds alone (2020, pers. communication, 18 March). This is in contrast with other terms which emerged out of the globalization debate such as *han-gurōbaru*, where the *kanji* character *han* (反) was combined with the already familiar term *gurōbaru*, a transliteration of the English ‘global’.

Protests against the G8 summit in Hokkaido in 2008 marked a turning point in the use and diffusion of yojiteki seiji in the Japanese literature. In the lead-up to the protests, radical intellectuals engaged in extensive theoretical debates on the politics of the alter-globalization movement, culminating in the Counter G8 International Forum in Tokyo, a conference held in opposition to the G8. At the conference, speakers from Japan and abroad, including Graeber and Kohso, discussed contemporary anarchism, autonomist theory and prefigurative politics. The next appearance of the term *yojiteki seiji* appeared in Shibuya Nozomu’s commentary to his translation of John Holloway’s (2008) essay ‘1968 and the Crisis of Abstract Labour’, one in a series of pamphlets translated in preparation for the G8 protests by the loose group of alter-globalisation activist-scholars working together as the ‘VOL collective’. One year later, yojiteki seiji was included in the VOL lexicon, a dictionary containing definitions for eighty-two key terms from the alter-globalization movement (Yabu and Shiraishi 2009). The entry for yojiteki seiji was written by David Graeber (2009) and translated by Hirata Shun. The translation word’s appearance in the lexicon indicates its stabilisation within the vocabulary of this intellectual milieu.

The translation word next appeared in the context of the homeless peoples’ movement in Tokyo. Around the time of the G8 summit, a battle erupted over the so-called ‘Nikefication’ of Miyashita Park, a small public park located in Shibuya (Cassegård, 2014, pp. 167–76). The struggle concerned the ward government’s plan to sell the naming rights for the park to Nike Japan and to allow the company to install new sporting facilities. This would require the eviction of the park’s sizeable homeless community and make entry to the park conditional on paymentment of a fee. Homeless people joined with activists and artists to oppose the privatization plan. Responding to coverage of the issue in the English-language press (Hall, 2010), blogger and activist Irukomonzu (2010) objected to the characterization of their activities as an ‘opposition’. He used the notion of prefigurative politics to explain that the movement had, ‘gone beyond mere “oppositional” action’, in order to, ‘imagine the form of the ideal park we desire’ and to demonstrate this vision through direct action. Irukomonzu cited the Japanese translation of Solnit’s (2005) Hope in the Dark for his use of the term prefigurative politics. However, while citing Inoue’s translation, he substituted Kohso’s yojiteki seiji for Inoue’s yoji no seijigaku, explaining that he had made ‘some changes to Inoue’s translation’ in a paratextual note. Irukomonzu’s modification of Inoue’s translation suggests that Kohso’s translation word had already become standard within the urban activist milieu. Further evidence of this is contained in an essay published in the same year by Inaba Nanako, a sociologist and activist with the homeless people’s movement, where she used yojiteki seiji in an essay on homelessness activism in France and Japan (2010).

Since the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster of March 2011, when Japan experienced a major upsurge in popular protest (Brown 2018), *yojiteki seiji* has appeared with increasing frequency. The anti-nuclear movement led to a renewed search for language to describe what felt like a new paradigm of street protest. PhD student Hara Tamiki (2012) used the notion of prefigurative politics to describe some of the most radical and outlandish protests, with their colourful costume parades and extensive use of music and ecstatic dance. Hara did not provide any specific citation for his use of yojiteki seiji, suggesting he assumed an audience already familiar with the term. Shibuya Nozomu also returned to the notion of yojiteki seiji after the triple disaster in his theoretical reflections on a movement against the Shiga nuclear reactor, where he draws on Rebecca Solnit's ideas (Shibuya 2012). He has continued to write about it in a piece on the prefigurative politics of desire (Shibuya 2015).

The translation word has now moved beyond the initial circles of the *VOL* collective and the radical intellectuals who first introduced it, appearing as an analytical concept in two recent academic monographs by Kosugi (2018) on the student struggle at the University of Tokyo in 1968and Andō (2019) in a discussion of the electoral politics of the Japanese anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s, where he points out the contradiction between what he characterises as prefigurative politics – activists’ desire to express their opposition to nuclear power through immanent practices in their daily lives – and their attempt to win political representation for the movement through standing for election to the National Diet (pp. 132–138). Both authors feel comfortable using a term that only appeared in Japanese in 2009 to discuss historical movements in the 1960s and 1980s respectively. Ten years after the G8 summit, while the translation word yojiteki seiji remains obscure and is not listed in major dictionaries, it has begun to take on a life of its own.

## Translation as a Social Network

Anthony Pym (2009) has called on historians of translation to ‘study translators, then texts’ (p. 8). Following the translators of yojiteki seiji, we can map the emergence of a new protest culture in Japan that began with the Iraq war movement, found its feet in the protests against the G8 summit and built into a torrent of rage in the wake of the Fukushima disaster. In a translator’s afterword to Rebecca Solnit’s Hope in the Dark, Inoue Toshio, who first attempted to coin a translation word for ‘the politics of prefiguration’, describes how he became active in Translators United for Peace in response to the invasion of Iraq. This organisation aimed to translate and distribute news and information not otherwise covered by the mass media (Baker 2013, pp. 26–27). Inoue (in Solnit 2005, p. 234) first met Solnit through his involvement in the group and a number of his translations of Solnit’s essays are available on the TUP website (https://www.tup-bulletin.org/). However, as Baker (2013, p. 26) notes, Translators United for Peace had its roots in Japan’s well-established peace movement tradition rather than in the anarcho-autonomist section of the alter-globalisation movement, where the majority of the debate on prefigurative politics took place. It is therefore unsurprising that Inoue’s translation word was rejected in favour of one proposed by Sabu Kohso, a translator deeply involved in these circles. In the single instance identified above where Inoue’s translation was cited in a discussion of prefigurative politics, Irukomonzu (2010) retranslated the key passage and replaced Inoue’s yoji no seijigaku with Kohso’s yojiteki seiji. Inoue’s distance from the networks of anarchist and autonomist thinkers where most discussion of prefigurative politics occurred may explain why his translation did it prove popular with subsequent translators.

While Inoue’s translation word did not catch on, Solnit’s work has been influential in the alter-globalisation movement in both the English- and Japanese-speaking worlds. Solnit has been widely translated into Japanese (2005, 2010, 2017, 2018) and was invited to Japan to talk about her research and writing on the forms of social solidarity which arise in the wake of disaster after the Fukushima accident (Solnit 2012). Solnit’s brother Daniel is an anarchist and artist who travelled to Japan for the 2008 summit to facilitate a puppet making workshop and speak at the Counter G8 International Forum. The session in which Daniel Solnit appeared was chaired by Sabu Kohso, who coined the standard translation word yojiteki seiji. Kohso is a self-described ‘East Asian mediator’ (Kohso 2010) who has played an important role as a conduit for debates on the anarchist and autonomist left between the Japanese and English-speaking worlds. He is a translator of texts in critical theory in both directions between English and Japanese (for an example of his Japanese to English translation work see, Karatani 2005), and an original contributor to debates on contemporary anarchist and urban theory in Japanese (Kohso 2006, 2009). Kohso played this mediating role in the lead up to the 2008 G8 summit as a member of the VOL collective, the loose group of intellectuals who, in addition to producing a pamphlet series for the G8 protests, published a journal of radical theory between 2006 and 2011. Kohso’s translations and interviews with leading English-speaking intellectuals appear in several volumes of this journal (Kohso 2006b).

While protests against major international summit meetings had previously taken place in East Asia (Nakata 2008, pp. 200–206; Kuah-Pearce & Guiheux 2009), the anti-G8 protests in the lakeside resort town of Toyako in July 2008 were probably the first where the anarcho-autonomist strands of the post-Seattle alter-globalisation movement had a major influence. When alter-globalization movement activists converged on the German town of Heiligendamm to protest the G8 summit in 2007, a number of Japanese activists attended the protests and wrote about their experiences for an audience back home that was already taking an interest in the movement (Nakata 2007; Ōya 2007). The G8 Action Network and No G8 Action Japan, which forged links with anarcho-autonomist alter-globalisation protesters in Europe, North America, Australia and other parts of Asia, were formed after the Heiligendamm protests (Nakata 2008; Higuchi 2012). Following the summit, activists from Germany conducted an East Asian ‘infotour’ in late 2007, when they disseminated information about the G8 protests and alter-globalisation in Europe. Activists from No G8 Action Japan subsequently undertook their own infotour of Europe, North America, Southeast Asia and Australia to publicise the upcoming Hokkaido protests (Higuchi 2012).

Kohso was one of a number of members of the VOL collective who were involved in protests against the Hokkaido summit in 2008. The loose structure of the collective also reflects the diffuse nature of the alter-globalisation movement. *VOL lexicon* editors Yabu Shirō and Shiraishi Yoshiharu (2009) explain that they use the term ‘collective’ to refer to something ‘other than a fixed membership, whose dynamic composition itself we imagine as a collectivity that produces expression’ (p. 4). They explain that the VOL lexicon is the work of an overlapping but distinct group of writers from the journal and pamphlet series. Its contributors include all of the key writers who helped introduce prefigurative politics to the Japanese debate, including David Graeber (in translation), Sabu Kohso and Shibuya Nozomu. The multi-authorial approach taken in the VOL lexicon reflects the diverse social network in which debates on alter-globalisation in Japan took place, with members of the collective penning some of the articles and translating others. Moreover, the adoption of the authoritative generic conventions of a lexicon suggest that the ‘theoretical armoury’ (Yabu & Shiraishi 2009, p. 5) its contributors sought to assemble had achieved a degree of stability.

## Rhetorical Strategies

The translators who propagated the term yojiteki seiji in Japanese wrote in a number of forums, including social movement publications, radical intellectual journals and books intended for activist and academic audiences. Introducing the term within the generic conventions of these publications meant weaving it into existing discourse. As I mentioned in my genealogical overview of yojiteki seiji, the English term prefigurative politics did not appear in the original English edition of Graeber’s book but in two paratexts to the Japanese edition: a preface penned by Graeber for the Japanese edition (p. 19); and the translator’s afterword (p. 183). Kohso coined the translation word in these texts by translating Graeber’s preface and then elaborating on it in the translator’s afterword. The terms appearance in these paratexts, the author, translator and publisher ensured that Graeber’s writings formed the original intellectual context for the translation word. Given his attendance at the 2008 G8 summit protest in Japan, including at the Counter G8 International Forum in Tokyo, this rhetorical context was also embedded in the inter-personal connections discussed above. His article on prefigurative politics in the 2009 VOL lexicon gives the only clear ‘definition’ of yojiteki seiji in Japanese. However, while the importance of an American theorist writing in English to the coining of the term might be interpreted as giving further evidence that the translation word simply trades on the authoritativeness of ‘Western’ discourse, it is important to note that Graeber (2009) disavows the concept’s ‘Western’ origins, tracing it back to a longer history of political thought he identifies with Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi.

Shibuya Nozomu’s discussion of yojiteki seiji also took place in a paratextual translator’s commentary to a VOL pamphlet edition of an essay by John Holloway (2008, pp. 7–8). He thereby extends the theoretical grounding of the concept from Graeber’s anarchism to Holloway’s autonomist Marxism. For Holloway, 1968 was a seminal moment in the unfolding of the Marxist contradiction between labour as useful work and labour as source of exchange value (abstract labour), when a variety of social movements engaged in a multi-faceted revolt against the capture of what he calls their ‘productive doing’ within the capitalist value form. In his paratext, Shibuya suggests that yojiteki seiji is a way of thinking about the kind of ‘other world’ that is called forth in the famous alter-globalisation movement slogan, ‘another world is possible’. When workers untether their useful work from the exchange relation, he explains, they create or prefigure that alternative world (in Holloway, 2008, p. 7). The alter-globalisation movement is a concrete example of this, which ‘prefigures another way of living and another set of social relations’.

Hara uses a similar rhetorical strategy in his use of the term yojiteki seiji in the context of the post-Fukushima anti-nuclear movement. However, where Shibuya positions the term largely within a theoretical literature originally written in English, Hara (2012, pp. 6–7) grounds the translation word in Japanese social thought. He illustrates the concept of yojiteki seiji with a quotation from the sociologist Mita Munesuke’s (writing under his pen name Maki Yūsuke) most famous work, Kiryū no naru oto (Maki 2003). He also ties the notion of prefigurative politics to the popular intervention by philosopher Karatani Kōjin at the June 2011 No Nukes Plaza demonstration outside Shinjuku station when Karatani made the apparently circular statement that ‘demonstrations do change society because they change society into a society in which people demonstrate’. Kartani emphasises the intrinsic value of demonstrating as a way of enriching democratic participation, even when the demonstration’s goals are not achieved immediately (Brown 2014). For Hara, this statement expressed the spirit of prefigurative politics by collapsing the separation between ‘means’ and ‘ends’.

Shibuya also suggests a more practical way of understanding prefigurative politics based on the experience of the anti-G8 movement by situating prefigurative politics as a form of politics based on experiential learning, as occurred during the anti-G8 movement. Shibuya (2008), for example, having introduced the term yojiteki seiji in his translator’s afterword to Holloway’s essay before the G8 summit, later described his experience at the protest camp as an example of the new politics. This strategy of grounding the term in specific practices of protest was also adopted by later writers. Hara (2012) drew a direct line between the Arab Spring protests which kicked off in Tunisia in late 2010 and the revolt in the streets of Tokyo. He sought ‘to approach the anti-nuclear movement by positioning it not simply as a national event but as a link in a fomenting global social movement and understand the inner logic and ethics that runs through it’ (p. 4). Hara draws on journalist Tahara Maki’s writings on the struggle in Tahrir Square during the uprising against Mubarak, noting that Tahara described the protests in Tahrir not simply as a ‘means’ of bringing down the Mubarak government, but also an ‘end’ in themselves by manifesting participants’ own autonomous live. Hara saw this ethic in Shirōto no Ran’s anti-nuclear marches held in Tokyo after March 2011. He quotes from Shirōto no Ran activist Matsumoto Hajime, who explains that the group’s tactic is ‘to create spaces where a strange bunch of people get together and create the world after the revolution as an established fact’. For Hara, this is the very definition of yojiteki seiji (p. 6).

## Conclusions

Translation, as Baker (2013, p. 24) reminds us, ’does not reproduce texts but constructs cultural realities, and it does so by intervening in the processes of narration and renarration that constitute all encounters’. In this paper, I have highlighted the role of social networks in the translation of prefigurative politics and suggested that the process served to strengthen these networks. The protests against the G8 in Hokkaido served to assemble the people, ideas, texts and practices that translated yojiteki seiji as a new tool in the ‘theoretical armoury’ of political movements in Japan. The translation was mediated by a complex transnational social movement that encompassed multiple overlapping social networks and events. It included radical intellectuals such as Shibuya in Japan, Holloway in Mexico and Solnit, Kohso and Graeber in the United States. Textual translation was closely linked with action in the streets to protest the G8 summit in Japan. In order to imbue the new translation word with meaning, translators and writers on *yojiteki seiji* wove the concept into their protest narratives. The work of Solnit, Graeber and Holloway in English and in Japanese translation provided reference points for this. However, Hara also compared the theory of prefigurative politics with the work of sociologist Mita Munesuke and philosopher Karatani Kōjin’s analysis of the anti-nuclear demonstrations written in Japanese. Translators also made links between the idea of *yojiteki seiji* and practices of protest in Japan, such as the G8 protest camp in Hokkaido or Shirōto no Ran’s anti-nuclear demonstrations.

The construction of this translation word reflects the way cultural exchange in the context of a global political movement is enmeshed in language. The social networks via which ‘prefigurative politics’ entered Japanese as yojiteki seiji embodies fluid encounters between movements in the Japanese and English-speaking worlds. They constitute a circuit of globalization which stands in contrast to those of corporate globalization. The authors introduced the notion of prefigurative politics and the translation word yojiteki seiji in paratexts in order to clarify its meaning and position it within existing debates. Developing the translation word’s meaning by engaging with these debates in both Japanese and English served the rhetorical function of anchoring the word in existing literatures. As a result, it has now acquired a degree of stability in the literature which is reflected in its use in recent monographs.

Yanabu Akira’s charge that translation words remain isolated from the everyday life of Japanese is superficially true in the case of *yojiteki seiji*. It remains confined to a small circle of radical intellectuals who associated with anarcho-autonomist social movements. However, the process of translation as a part of a transnational social movement does undermine the essentialist presuppositions upon which Yanabu’s theory is based. The movement of people, ideas and texts between the Japanese and non-Japanese speaking worlds is fluid. Drawing on Baker’s narrative approach, we can look on the translation of *yojiteki seiji* as a series of overlapping narrative practices by means of which translators and writers in Japan wove their activities together with those of their contemporaries in other parts of the world. The journey from prefigurative politics to yojiteki seiji is one through which geographically and linguistically diverse activist communities struggle to articulate a common purpose.

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