

Call for Papers: Special Issue of Perspectives:

Mean Machines? Technological (R)evolution and Human Labour in the Translation and Interpreting Industry

Guest Editors:

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The translation sector has become a prototypical case for the revolutionary force of digitalisation. The outsourcing of translation processes from humans to machines, combined with easy and free access to translation services via digital tools, is radically changing the entire field of transcultural communication. This special issue focuses on technology-induced transformations that can be observed on a variety of levels in the translation and interpreting landscape.

On an industry level, the value ascribed to professional human translation is in decline, as machine translation (MT) is becoming increasingly efficient (Carmo 2020). This leads to economic reverberations for human translators who struggle to negotiate adequate rates for their assignments (Vieira 2020). It is evident that the mechanisation of translation results in growing economic pressure for professional human translators.

The digital transformation in the field of translation also triggers a debate on the level of theory and ethics. This includes a discussion on the status and purpose of translation in an increasingly globalised and digitalised world (Cronin 2012). MT can be described as a means of low-threshold access to translation, in a sense liberalising translation for broad segments of the population (cf. O'Thomas 2017: 285). At the same time, the large-scale deployment of MT through multinational corporations offers ample potential for a critique of technocapitalist practices (cf. Baumgarten/Cornellà-Detrell 2018) and raises questions of ownership and participation in technology development (Bijker/ Hughes/Pinch 2012).

This special issue invites contributions that focus on the effects of the mechanisation and digitalisation of translation and interpreting on the levels of labour, industry, theory and ethics. The special issue will discuss how our views on translation as a product, a process, a business sector and as a social practice are subject to steady and gradual transformations, with transcultural communication progressively sliding into the realm of machines. We particularly welcome contributions with a critical, interdisciplinary and daring theoretical outlook. Contributions may be submitted from a wide array of investigative lines, not limited to the ones mentioned above, and may be inspired by one or more of the following questions:

- How are the working conditions and job profiles of professional translators transformed in the face of digitalisation?
- How does the value of translation change as it increasingly becomes a post-human task? Against what background can the value of translation be measured?
- What is the role of Translation Studies in the investigation of translation technology, considering the discipline's history and genetics?
- How can theories and heuristics from *Science and Technology Studies*, such as Social Construction of Technology (Bijker/Hughes/Pinch 2012), contribute to a more holistic view of translation technology and, especially, machine translation?

- In what way can the hegemony of technology corporations in the development and deployment of MT systems be described as a technocapitalist practice?
- Do we need to incorporate a critical theory of technology (cf. Feenberg 2002) in translation studies as a basis for a comprehensive investigative approach to translation technology?
- How can translation technology be assessed against the background of ecology and climate change, considering its use of resources through energy-intensive data centres (cf. Cronin 2019)?

To contribute to this special issue, please submit a short paper proposal (500 words, excluding references) to both guest editors:

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Deadline for paper proposals: 15 April 2022

Publication schedule

Deadline for paper proposals	15 April 2022
Notification on paper proposals	30 April 2022
Submission of full papers	31 October 2022
Notification on peer review outcome	31 March 2023
Revised versions	30 June 2023
Final manuscripts	30 September 2023
Tentative publication date	Winter 2023

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