EST Congress 2016 – Panel

Title of panel	Translator status and identity: constructed and experienced boundaries of the translation profession
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Translation as a profession manifests very few established boundaries: in most Western countries, anyone can start working as a translator, regardless of their qualifications. In consequence, agents in the field are constantly involved in boundary work: constructing, negotiating and maintaining – or critiquing and undermining – the boundaries of the profession (Grbić 2010, 2014). The experiences of such boundary work are likely to have a considerable impact on **translator status**, or the perceptions of prestige, value and respect attached to the profession, and on translators' **professional identities** or self-perceptions.

Moreover, the context in which translators' professional boundaries, status and identities are negotiated has seen considerable changes in recent years. Technological developments increasingly facilitate both crowdsourced translation and fit-for-purpose machine translations, and translation technology has become indispensable to business translators' work. At the same time, the growing number of multilingual communities – which can exist either globally or locally, virtually or in real life – means that professional translators have to negotiate a niche for their work among communicators who are used to getting by with the help of non-professional translation or English as a lingua franca.

Building on Helle V. Dam and Kaisa Koskinen's panel at 7th EST Congress 2013 that explored the centres and peripheries of the translation profession, the proposed session invites contributors to explore how the boundaries of translation as a profession are negotiated by the various agents, and how these constructed and experienced boundaries affect translator status and identity in a context transformed by translation technology, multilingualism and English as a lingua franca. Sub-themes and questions that we invite contributors to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What kinds of **strategies and measures** have different agents, from individual translators to industry stakeholders, translators' associations and authorities, adopted to construct boundaries for professional translation? Have different agents such as business translators or literary translators opted for different strategies? How do the strategies opted for by different agents interact or counteract with each other and contribute to the (in)stability of professional boundaries? What kinds of concerted efforts are there to establish a professional niche for translators, for example by means

of accreditation systems or standards, and have they been successful?

- How do various agents **experience** the shifting boundaries and their effect on their professional identity and status? Do they perceive the lack of solid professional boundaries or the recent changes as a threat and call for increased protection, or have they developed strategies for coping with the situation? Do some agents even thrive on the ambiguous professional identity facilitated by the shifting boundaries? Are there differences among the experiences of different agents, such as professional translators and translation students?

- What kind of impact does the absence of watertight professional boundaries have on **translator status** as perceived by various agents within or outside the field? Empirical studies so far indicate that translators see their status as middling or lower (e.g. Dam & Zethsen 2008, 2011; Katan 2009). Are there links between such relatively low status perceptions and the lack of professional regulation? How is translator status affected by the wide availability of machine translation and the advances in translation technologies? Are non-professional translation and the use of English as a lingua franca making people more or less appreciative of the skills required to translate?

- How do various agents **construct their professional identities** when they can only partly rely on an acknowledged professional niche? What kinds of strategies do they employ in their discourse and in their interaction with other agents within and outside the field? How do these strategies take non-professional translation and English as a lingua franca into account? Can technological developments empower translators by offering them tools for strengthening their expertise and professional identities, or is technology bringing about a devaluation of translators' skills?