

## EST Congress 2016 – PANEL

<b>Title of panel</b>	<b>Translation policy: connecting concepts and writing history</b>
<b>Name(s) of convener(s)</b>	Lieven D’hulst and Reine Meylaerts
<b>Affiliation</b>	KU Leuven (Belgium)
<b>Email address</b>	Lieven.Dhulst@kuleuven.be/Reine.Meylaerts@kuleuven.be

The concept of translation policy made its entrance in Translation Studies in the late 1970s, applying, according to James Holmes, to “the place and role of translators, translating, and translations in society at large: such questions, for instance, as determining what works need to be translated in a given socio-cultural situation, what the social and economic position of the translator is and should be, or [...] what part translating should play in the teaching and learning of foreign languages” (1972/1988: 78). Since then, the concept gradually narrowed down its scope into manageable units that offer meeting ground with policy aspects of other disciplines in the humanities, such as linguistics, cultural studies, economy and business studies, politics and law studies or the sociology of literary exchange. Some of these policy aspects have already developed into proper domains of interest and in the case of political science and public administration have even turned into a full-fledged subdiscipline, i.e. Policy Studies (A. Wildavsky 2006). Time has also come for Translation Studies to come to terms with this domain of interest by focussing more in detail on the theoretical and historical specifics of translation policies. This panel will offer room for debate on these two issues.

On the one hand, the concept of translation policy needs further specification: e.g. when including official institutional settings, does it overlap with “institutional translation” (Schäffner et al. 2014)? When pointing at “relatively informal situations related to ideology, translators’ strategies, publishers’ strategies, prizes and scholarships, translator training, etc.” (R. Meylaerts 2011: 163), should one distinguish translational and non-translational situations? Yet, the search for specifics also entails an interdisciplinary dialogue in at least two respects: (1) the concepts of policy (and politics) cover a wide range of parameters. Consider language policy: it includes planning of language learning, codification and maintenance of language use, support given to minority languages, political and governmental agents or instances such as schools, churches, media, armies, and so on. If any, which are the best candidates to be selected and adapted in view of a theory on translation policy? (2) This selection should take into account the fact that concepts are part of a theory. Take again language policy: according to Spolsky (2012), such a theory covers three interrelated levels: language management, language practices and language values. Would it make sense to distinguish, within a theory of translation policy, between law-making and ruling of translation, the translation activity ensuring communication between authorities and citizens, and the values assigned by members of a speech community to translation?

On the other hand, the historical study of translation policies is still in its infancy, a finding that may be testified by the scarcity of specialized studies, while in turn this scarcity may to some extent be understood as the consequence of the general implicitness of translation policies. Hence, historical research should be able to prove the effectivity of translation policies in and across societies as well as across time. Such an enterprise raises a number of methodological challenges. First, metalanguage: how are “policies” named and defined in the past? Are they in explicit ways, as laws or rules, or are they to be extracted from other sources (correspondences, reviews, reports, the translations themselves)? Second, categories: is it instrumental to consider publishers, critics, patrons as managing “agents”, the translator’s “norms” as tokens of the codification and maintenance of language and genres? Third, periodization: what is the temporal range of translation policies? For instance, translation politics designed by the French revolutionaries (L. D’huilst & M. Schreiber 2014) seemed to stretch over a generation only (1795-1815), yet it is plausible that former European hegemonic regimes, such as the Spanish and the Austrian handled similar politics (Wolf 2015), containing often some principle of subsidiarity. Fourth, space: policies may be designed and imposed locally (by a city administration), at a national level (through laws and decrees), at an international level (as may be testified by translation policies of international publishers or business companies).

## References

- D’huilst, L. & M. Schreiber. (2014). “Vers une historiographie des politiques des traductions en Belgique durant la période française”, *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies* 26:1, p. 3-31.
- Holmes, J. (1972/1988). “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies”. *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, p. 67–80.
- Meylaerts, R. (2011). “Translational justice in a multilingual world. An Overview of Translational Regimes”, *Meta: Journal des Traducteurs*, 56:4, p. 743-757.
- Schäffner, C., L. Sabina Tcaciuc & W. Tesseur (2014). “Translation practices in political institutions: a comparison of national, supranational, and non-governmental organisations”. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 22:4, p. 493-510.
- Spolsky, B. (2012). *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wildavsky, A. (2006). *Cultural Analysis: Politics, Public Law, and Administration*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Wolf, M. (2015). *The Habsburg Monarchy's Many-Languaged Soul. Translating and interpreting, 1848–1918*. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins.