

28 Advancing Translation Studies by understanding the Labour in Translaboration

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Discussions of ‘translaboration’ have so far focused on the investigative potential of the conceptual blending of ‘translation’ and ‘collaboration’. A further and rather central concept that emerges in/from translaboration is ‘labour’. Labour, as the production of appropriated surplus value, remains, we argue, an under-researched and under-discussed dimension of translation. To advance our understanding of both translation and Translation Studies, and the ways in which both fields of activity intersect with critical areas of human interest, the concept of labour, as distinct from ‘work’ (Narotzky 2018), warrants more sustained engagement. Our focus for this panel is the work/labour dimension of collaborative translation. In online collaborative translation, hundreds or even thousands of mostly non-professional and voluntary translators collaborate in crowdsourced translation drives initiated by and benefitting both profit-oriented companies such as Facebook or Skype and not-for-profit organizations such as Translators Without Borders or Kiva. Are these translation efforts work, labour, or just fun? The same question applies to self-managed online collaborative translation drives such as Wikipedia-translation, and to the various types of fan translation such as fansubbing, fandubbing etc. Digital labour (Fuchs 2010) is a particular pertinent category here, as are concepts such as playbor (Kücklich 2005), fan labour, and affective labour since this type of collaborative translation centrally builds on social relations and consequently affects (Koskinen 2020). But what about the work/labour dimension of collaborative translations in the analogue world? The collaborative translations undertaken in 17th- and 18th-century Germany between women and their male partners as their intellectual equals, for example, were often construed as ‘labours of love’, thus masking their specific constellations of agency, creativity, and gain (Brown 2018). To advance Translation Studies from the vantage point of the labour, we invite panel contributions addressing the work/labour dimension of translation in the following contexts, among others:

- translation crowdsourcing for for-profit and not-for-profit/humanitarian organisations
- self-managed and user-initiated forms of online collaborative translation
- historical or contemporary case studies of analogue collaborative translation
- translation’s relationship with digital labour, fan labour, playbor, or affective labour.

References

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