

Call for Papers
Special issue of *Translation in Society*
guest edited by
Cornelia Zwischenberger, University of Vienna

Round trips wanted! Travelling concepts between Translation Studies and the Social Sciences, and beyond

The concept of 'translation' is ubiquitous in a wide range of disciplines, nowhere more so than in the Social Sciences – indeed, entire sociologies have been built on and around it (Callon 1981, 1984; Renn 2002, 2006). Similarly, the Social Sciences have always been a particularly important source of core concepts for Translation Studies, including 'norm', 'role', 'habitus', 'system', 'profession' and, more recently, 'collaboration', to name but a few. These 'travelling concepts' (Bal 2002) have always been of fundamental importance to Translation Studies in that they have underpinned the important shifts, or rather turns, within it. A closer look at how some of these travelling concepts are used in Translation Studies and, vice versa, how Translation Studies' master concept 'translation' is used in the Social Sciences reveals that these have tended to be one-way trips. That is what this Special Issue attempts to reverse.

Concepts in the sense of Bal (2002: 11) are understood here as dynamic in themselves as well as polysemantic, often ambiguous, closely linked to certain discourses and not so much as firmly established univocal terms. Establishing univocal terms goes along with striving for terminological precision and standardization. This task is often pursued by traditional terminological approaches (Iveković Martinis et al. 2015). Concepts are not to be confused with casual words either as academic concepts always unite entire theories or approaches behind them which they represent (Bal 2002:33).

'Translation' is widely used in the Social Sciences. One of the most well-known uses is certainly in Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) (Callon 1981, 1999; Latour 1993, 1994). 'Translation' is in fact an integral part of the lexicon and the very functioning of the theory. Broadly speaking, 'translation' is used there to bridge the separation between subjects and objects, and thus to overcome the dualism of sociologism and technologism. The act of translation between subjects and objects creates hybrid actors, which are the core component of networks in ANT. This theory was conceived of as a sociology of translation and/or the sociologic of translation (Callon 1981, 1984). Though of a different kind, Renn's (2002, 2006) sociology is similarly built on and around 'translation'. Modern societies, fragmented as they are, depend on constant communication. Translation is essential to communication between societies' various social and/or cultural units and therefore helps to overcome boundaries (Renn 2002, 2006). In the same sense, 'translation' is also used in Organization Studies in the model proposed by Carlile (2004), coming into play when a semantic boundary needs to be overcome within an organization to facilitate collaboration among various units for the sake

of innovation. In yet another example from Organisation Studies, an entire translation model is developed as a way of bringing about and explaining organizational change (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996; Czarniawska & Sevón 2005). What unites these examples, with the exception of Renn (2002, 2006), is that there is not a single reference made to Translation Studies and the body of knowledge it has accumulated around 'translation'. 'Translation' is a very successful travelling concept in the Social Sciences in the sense that it is widespread. However, since it is normally used as a rather loose metaphor, the concept itself frequently lacks the heuristic power it could have (Zwischenberger 2022, 2023). Translation Studies' critical engagement with the uses of the concept of 'translation' in other disciplines and fields of research is a rather recent phenomenon (e.g. Baer 2020; Blumczynski 2016; Gambier & van Doorslaer 2016; Dizdar 2009; Heller 2017; Zwischenberger 2017, 2019).

Translation Studies as an 'interdiscipline' *sui generis* has itself imported massively from other disciplines, especially from the Social Sciences, but it has frequently ignored the epistemological bases of those travelling concepts. The concepts of 'role' and 'collaboration' are two cases in point. Very often in Translation Studies, 'role' and 'collaboration' either remain undefined or are simply used as concepts from everyday language. In other words, 'role' is equated with the 'task' or 'function' of a translator or interpreter and 'collaboration' is simply used as a synonym for 'working together'. Only recently has there been a more thorough engagement with these concepts and a turn to the disciplines in which they are used as master concepts, namely to Sociology, Social Psychology and Cultural Anthropology for 'role' and Organisation Studies for 'collaboration' (Zwischenberger 2015, 2022). The same is true of a conceptual engagement with 'profession' and consequently also the '(non-)professional', which are very often taken for granted in the Translation Studies literature (Grbić & Kujamäki 2019). However, Translation Studies has, for example, undertaken some serious conceptual work with the concepts of 'norm', 'system' and 'habitus', successfully integrating them as academic concepts (Buzelin 2018)—although with quite some differences between the different subfields of the discipline.

Thus, whilst many disciplines pretty much ignore Translation Studies when it comes to 'translation' as a travelling concept, Translation Studies has sometimes also paid insufficient attention to the Social Sciences when adopting some of their travelling concepts. This has consequences for both Translation Studies and the Social Sciences. Travelling concepts can be vital tools for academic disciplines when properly adopted as academic concepts. Conceptual engagement lays bare the entire network within which a core concept is embedded, thus allowing a new and richer language to emerge. Ignoring the expertise that has been amassed on concepts newly adopted into a discipline hinders inter- and especially trans-disciplinarity. These travelling concepts would hardly make a round trip into the disciplines where they have an epistemological footing simply because doing so would bring no enrichment to them in their current form. This is particularly problematic for Translation Studies, a discipline that in general is less established than disciplines from the Social Sciences and beyond in terms of recognition and references being made to it outside its disciplinary borders.

This Special Issue aims to tackle this status quo. It is crucial for Translation Studies scholars to become proactive in order to strengthen their own discipline from the inside out

and to become more attractive to other disciplines. One promising way of strengthening Translation Studies could be to sharpen its conceptual tools, potentially enabling analytically precise concepts to travel back to the Social Sciences and beyond, thereby inviting other disciplines to take a closer look at Translation Studies and its expertise on the concept of 'translation'. This could then act as the basis for some inter- or even trans-disciplinarity (e.g. Bielsa 2022) in the form of round trips by the concept of 'translation' and concepts from the Social Sciences.

We therefore welcome conceptual-theoretical contributions that engage proactively with the uses of 'translation' as a travelling concept in other disciplines and/or with travelling concepts in Translation Studies and that address the following main questions (though we certainly do not remain restricted to them):

- What does Translation Studies have to offer to approaches in the Social Sciences that use the concept of 'translation'?
- Why is Translation Studies relatively ignored by other disciplines despite its expertise with the concept of 'translation'?
- What do Social Sciences using the concept of 'translation' currently have to offer to Translation Studies? What does an engagement with the uses of 'translation' outside its disciplinary borders tell Translation Studies about its own conceptions of translation?
- Which travelling concepts from the Social Sciences or beyond have so far had the greatest lasting impact on Translation Studies and why? Which travelling concepts from the Social Sciences or beyond should be adopted by Translation Studies because they hold great potential and could thus guide the way forward for the discipline's development?
- Is more sound conceptual work the way forward to enable Translation Studies to strengthen itself from the inside out? Are there alternative and better ways for Translation Studies to make itself more relevant to other disciplines?

Please send your extended abstract (700-800 words, excluding references) to cornelia.zwischenberger@univie.ac.at by 31st August 2023.

Timeline

Deadline for abstracts: ~~31st August 2023~~ **15th October 2023**

Notification of acceptance: ~~30th September 2023~~ **12th November 2023**

Submission of full manuscripts: ~~31st January 2024~~ **29th February 2024**

Notification of results of internal vetting process and peer review: **30 June 2024**

Resubmission of accepted manuscripts with corrections: **30 September 2024**

Final submission of papers to chief editors (after final checks by guest editor): **30 November 2024**

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