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Call for Papers

19th Annual STS Conference Graz 2021 –
Critical Issues in Science, Technology and Society Studies

<https://sts-conference-graz.tugraz.at>

**Digitalization as a Transformational Force
for Transcultural Communication**

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We hereby announce a call for papers for a session track on the theme of Digitalization as a Transformational Force for Transcultural Communication. This digital session will bring together scholars and practitioners from the fields of Translation and Interpreting Studies as well as researchers working with theories, methods and heuristics from Science, Technology and Society Studies.

The session will be organised alongside three different but interconnected formats: We will begin with some classical presentations (20 minutes per presentation), followed by two brief 'polemical' positioning papers (10 minutes per paper), and the session will be concluded by a panel discussion.

We welcome abstracts **either** for 20-minute-presentations, **or** for 10-minute-positioning-papers. The concluding panel discussion among the participants will further encourage interdisciplinary debate on the session topic, leading to a possible joint publication.

Abstracts (max. 300 words) should include name and affiliation, presentation format, title and five keywords. Please send your abstract as a Word document **by February 22nd 2021** to the following three email addresses simultaneously:

stefan.baumgarten@uni-graz.at; michael.tieber@uni-graz.at; sts-conf-graz@tugraz.at.

We look forward to your abstracts and to an inspirational session!

Digitalization as a Transformational Force for Transcultural Communication

Science and technological innovation are among today's major drivers of socioeconomic transformation. Transcultural communication is one of the numerous areas that are deeply affected by digitalization. New digital tools and, particularly, the rise of artificial intelligence and machine translation enable people to become global citizens by breaking down communication barriers (O'Thomas 2017). Meanwhile, the field of transcultural communication is experiencing profound changes in multiple ways. On a professional level, translators are adapting to increasingly challenging working conditions by engaging with a fast-growing range of digital tools that not only dictate workflows but also have an impact on their

overall approach to translation (Doherty 2016). On an industry level, machine translation is on a rapid rise leaving professional translators with a growing number of commissions for post-editing which results in reduced rates for assignments (Moorkens 2017). On a more abstract level, digitalization changes the way we perceive transcultural communication as a general phenomenon. The swift and easy availability of translation, e.g. via smartphone applications, turns transcultural communication into a need which, with increasing levels of expectation, is supposed to be met anywhere anytime. As a further consequence, translation becomes a computable process, entirely disengaged from the human realm of thought, comprehension and empathy.

Digitalization transforms the world of transcultural communication in ways that can be studied using heuristics from Science, Technology and Society Studies. The impact of translation technology on the field of transcultural communication can be investigated against the background of the Sociology of Technology (e.g. Häußling 2019; Schubert/Schulz-Schaeffer 2019) – especially by leaning on the theoretical framework of a Social Construction of Technology (SCOT; Bijker/Hughes/Pinch 2012) – with reference to the Critical Theory of Technology (Grimes/Feenberg 2013) or the equally critical thrust of Technology Assessment (e.g. Simonis 2013). These are only a few of the numerous theoretical and methodological approaches suitable to study transcultural communication in the digital age. We thus welcome contributions from a wide array of investigative lines, not limited to the ones mentioned above, that may be inspired by one or more of the following questions:

- How does the increasing use of translation technology change the job profile and workflows of professional translators?
- What are the effects of digitalization on professional translators' working conditions?
- In what ways does the deployment of technological means such as machine translation, computer-aided translation or platforms for crowd translation transform transcultural communication as an industry?
- How does society as a whole view transcultural communication in the digital age?
- What does it mean for the social status of translators if machine translation continues to gain importance?
- In what ways does the nature of transcultural communication change due to new technological opportunities such as platforms for online collaborative translation or applications for machine translation and interpreting?
- How does our understanding of transcultural communication transform as we allow machines to continuously occupy more space in the field of translation and interpreting?

KEYWORDS: transcultural communication, digitalization, translation, translation technology, social theories