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"Coming out" … as a translator? Expertise, identities and knowledge practices in an LGBTIQ* migrant community translation project

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in translation studies in translation projects involving unpaid, "non-expert" translators. At the same time, the fields of science & technology studies and social movement studies have examined the social knowledge practices at work in social movements. This article discusses the case of a translation project by MiGaY, a Vienna-based activist organization dedicated to LGBTIQ* migrants in Austria. In 2016, MiGaY published a text on "coming out" that pays specific attention to the challenges faced by LGBTIQ* migrants. Drawing on Thomas Gieryn's notion of boundary-work, this article examines how translation expertise is negotiated in relation to "translation", "activism", and "LGBTIQ*" questions. It proposes a distinction between identity position (e.g. an "expert" or "lay" translator) and knowledge practices (i.e. actual, contextually contingent knowledge processes), since these do not necessarily coincide.

Introduction

There has been increasing interest in what has been called, among other things, "community translation", "collaborative translation", or "crowd-sourced translation" (DePalma and Kelly 2008; Fernández Costales 2012; Jiménez-Crespo 2017). Such research has considered the phenomenon of translation work done by unpaid and, sometimes, untrained volunteers in a variety of contexts, including the crowdsourcing of translation work by commercial platforms as well as non-profit projects such as TED and Wikipedia (McDonough Dolmaya 2012, 2017; Olohan 2014), fan translations of popular media (Pérez-González 2012), and translation networks dedicating themselves to translating for "good causes" related to global inequalities (Baker 2006, 2009, 2013; Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012).

There has also been interest in forms of volunteer translation on a smaller scale, such as language brokering for friends and relatives who do not speak the dominant language(s)

where they live and are not familiar with the dominant culture (Dorner, Orellana, and Li-Grining 2007; Orellana 2009). Researchers have examined motivations for engaging in community translation (McDonough Dolmaya 2017; Olohan 2012; 2014; c.f. Antonini et al. 2017b), raised questions as to how non-professional volunteers translate (Presas Corbella and Martín de León 2014) and addressed concerns over quality (Jiménez-Crespo 2017), often in relation to debates on general translation competence (Göpferich 2009; Lesznyák 2007; Pym 2003).

At the same time, fields such as science & technology studies and social movement studies have shown significant interest in the role that knowledge plays in social movements around, for example, interventions in policy processes, consciousness raising and organizing (Breyman et al. 2017; Choudry 2014; Epstein 1996; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Oliver and Johnston 2000). In this article, we seek to bring together these two areas of research to critically reflect on notions of expertise in relation to community translation, and to examine the role of social knowledge practices (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011) in community translation for activist movements.

We focus on the case of a translation project by MiGaY, a Vienna-based activist organization dedicated to LGBTIQ*[1] migrants in Austria. MiGaY was founded in 2009 as a platform of support for those who face discrimination both as LGBTIQ* individuals (in their respective "communities of origin" as well as in Austria in general) and as "immigrants" (in Austria in general as well as in local LGBTIQ* communities). In 2016, along with the relaunch of their (German language) website, MiGaY published a text on "coming out" (En, En, and Pöll 2016) that addresses people interested in questions regarding (their) sexuality and pays specific attention to the challenges faced by LGBTIQ* migrants. MiGaY then initiated a community translation project for translating this information into other languages, both to make it more widely available and to highlight diversity within LGBTIQ* communities.

The source text was composed of information presented on the MiGaY website, with the section on "coming out" being of particular relevance. It was written as a primarily informative text for readers who are not familiar with LGBTIQ* discourse – including young (LGBTIQ*) people and their (migrant) families. Volunteer translators were asked to create a target text that would be helpful for people in these groups in their respective target language communities. They were told that they could adapt their target text in any way necessary to achieve this goal, including omitting information available in the source text and adding new information. The source text was accompanied by a short introduction that included a discussion of some of the potential issues translators might face in their work, e.g. culturally specific labels for sexual and gender identities.

At the time of writing (February 2019), the project is ongoing, with sixteen different translations online and more being worked on, ranging from languages strongly tied to Austria's history, such as Czech, Hungarian, Hebrew and Turkish, to other so-called "European" and "non-European" languages, such as French, Mandarin, Spanish and Vietnamese, all of which represent Austria's current multicultural reality.

The translators involved in the project worked on a volunteer basis and represent a significant breadth of backgrounds, from academics working on related topics, to professional translators not part of the LGBTIQ* community themselves, and LGBTIQ* individuals with or without translation experience. They were recruited in a number of different ways: while some joined the project because of personal networks or prior

involvement in MiGaY, others responded to calls on the MiGaY website, the online message board of the Students' Union at the Centre for Translation Studies at the University of Vienna, as well as on Facebook and Twitter, or they were contacted through online dating websites and hook-up apps such as PlanetRomeo and Grindr. Communication with almost all volunteer translators was conducted through online means. Each individual language version was usually worked on by one person, though translators could – and in some cases, did – use other translations as their main or additional source texts (a strategy discussed as typical of "massive online collaboration" translation by Désilets [2007]).

In this article, we do not seek to judge the quality of the translations produced in this project. As Pym (2015, 150) argues, quality is always "a matter of who has the authority to say what is good", and what we are interested in is how such authority is constructed and challenged by the volunteer translators. We proceed from the argument that being an "expert" is not an inherent quality of any person, nor simply a result of their knowledge or skills. Instead, the very position of "expert" (and, by extension, "non-expert" or "layperson") is a social role that is discursively established in power-laden social contexts. Thus, we discuss how notions of "expertise", "translating" and "activism" are constructed in volunteer translators' understandings of themselves. We focus particularly on the "boundary-work" engaged in by translators of various backgrounds as they negotiate who can inhabit which identity positions, and connect them to the practices that the volunteer translators engaged in.

To this end, we first introduce the methodological set-up of our study, followed by a brief discussion of research on expertise and knowledge practices. We then examine how expertise and knowledgeability are negotiated in relation to translation, experiential knowledge, and activism.

Methodology

We draw primarily on semi-structured interviews (Mason 2002; Silverman 2006) with thirteen of the (at the time of writing) twenty volunteer translators who had translated material for MiGaY. Additionally, and as a source of background knowledge, we were involved in the translation project ourselves as we co-authored the German "coming out" source text. Michael is part of this project both as a translator (for the English version, which in turn served as a source text for various other translators) and through coordinating the translations.

The interviews were based on an interview guide comprising the following areas of interest (the specific questions asked varied between interviews):

- Social background regarding education, translation experience, and membership in LGBTIQ* communities
- Motivations for taking part in the translation project
- Approaches to the translations
- Understandings of "activism" and its links to participation in the translation project

Interviews lasted from 45 min to 2 h, with an average length of 1 h and 15 min. They were audio-recorded and transcribed. We analyzed the transcripts using what Clive Seale (2004, 299) calls "interpretative analysis" (see also Mason 2002). In coding, we focused on

participants' (multiple) roles in relation to the translation project as well as negotiations of activism, expertise and translation processes. Our analysis combines constructivist and realist approaches as we treat interviews both as a "topic" – that is, discursive constructions to be analyzed as such – and a "resource" – that is, information "about processes and realities located beyond [the] specific text and context" (Henwood 2007, 72). This means that we do not assume that participants' responses transparently represent an external reality, but rather that these responses exist as context-specific constructions emerging from the interactions between interviewer and participant.

The interviews were conducted in German and English. All quotations used as examples in this article are taken from these interviews. For the purposes of this article, we have translated German language extracts into English.[2] Some extracts from interviews conducted in English contain non-standard features and phrasings, which we decided neither to adapt ("correct") nor mark as such (e.g. by using *sic*) as we did not want to obscure the diverse realities of participants' individual Englishes during the interviews.

Our approach to this project is guided by feminist research ethics (Mauthner et al. 2002). Prior to the interviews, we discussed the purpose and context of the research project with participants and asked them to sign informed consent forms, to which all participants agreed. Considering that LGBTIQ* participants belong to marginalized groups, we took particular care to protect them; this included being careful to guarantee their anonymity by not using consistent pseudonyms (see Pereira 2017), as explained below.[3]

Given the performative power of categorizations used in research to produce the very subjects we mean to represent, as well as the potential consequences of naming / not naming particular groups, the politics of classification deserves a lengthy discussion (see e.g. Bowker and Star 1999; Hacking 1986; 2003) that we cannot provide here. Instead, we invite you to ask the following questions regarding the categorizations we chose to offer: Which categories do we make visible, which ones invisible? What epistemological value do these categories bring? Which subdivisions do we make implicit, which ones did we choose to disregard?

Of the thirteen participants, eight had a background in some form of translator training such as a Bachelor's degree (in six cases) and/or a Master's degree (in five cases) in translation studies. Of these eight, only three participants were active as paid translators, with one additional participant mentioning being experienced only in interpreting, and one other participant having stopped doing translation work altogether. Among the five participants without translator training, two had completed a significant number of translations for similar (activist, LGBTIQ*-related) purposes, with one other participant mentioning their main experience with translating as "merely" translating interviews in academic research contexts. Two participants started working on the MiGaY translation without any prior experience with translating as an activity that they would label as such. Finally, out of the thirteen participants, five were identified (by us) as heterosexual, with all other participants (self-)identifying as (part of) LGBTIQ*.[4] The languages participants translated into are more or less equally divided between so-called "Western European", "Eastern European" and "Asian" languages.

We chose the specific categories above because (a) we believe that translators' experience with/in and allegiance to sexual identity-based communities impacted their engagement with the translation; and (b) we are particularly interested in how forms of expertise emerge in the context of the translation project. In response to these questions

surrounding categorization and in order to protect the anonymity of our research partici-pants, we have chosen not to give them consistent pseudonyms that would enable the linking of utterances from specific research participants to each other. Instead, whenever we offer extracts from the interviews, we give some information about the categories rel-evant to the specific context in which they are being presented.

Forms of expertise

Historically, and due to its links to translator training and an associated drive to support the reputation of translation as a professional field, research in translation studies has often emphasized the forms and importance of translation expertise available (only) to trained translators (Gile 2009; Jonasson 1998; PACTE 2003). Such research tends to proceed from the assumption that there are self-evident differences between "expert" and "non-expert" translators, with the latter often seen as necessarily less competent. This stance may sometimes be linked to a desire to position specific forms of expertise as crucial to producing good translations in order to strengthen the economic position of professional translators (Antonini et al. 2017a), a facet of what Gruber (2017) calls the "defensive positioning" of translation studies, resulting from the (perceived and actual) lack of social recognition for translation.

At the same time, translation has been argued to be something that happens in the lives of *all* people, as something that is "ubiquitous" (Blumczynski 2016) and a "fact of life" (Cooke 2011). Concerning the importance of professional training, in Bogusława Whyatt's (2012) survey of forty professional translators, only 25% replied that they had acquired translation expertise through translation training, while 95% responded that they had developed their expertise through experience. Finally, over recent years, a number of scholars have worked to develop a more nuanced perspective on translation work done by non-professional trans-lators, showing how "lay translations" may not necessarily be "deficient" compared to pro-fessional translations, and may even be superior in certain cases – for example, because non-professional translators may not adhere to norms espoused by professional translators (Baker 2009; 2013), potentially making them more flexible (Jääskeläinen 2010) and/or more likely to innovate (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012).[5]

The field of science and technology studies (STS) has devoted itself to a similar pursuit by demystifying the processes associated with academic and other expert knowledges. Research in STS has examined how the status of being an "expert" is not self-evident, but constructed in social interactions. Gieryn (1983, 1995, 1999) introduced the notion of "boundary-work" to describe how scientists actively work to construct boundaries between expert and lay knowledges, applying a number of strategies such as monopolizing professional authority and resources by labelling outsiders as amateurs and delegitimising non-authoritative knowledges. Such boundary-drawing is often also linked to, for example, gendered and geographical power hierarchies (Harding 2011; Pereira 2017). At the same time, STS scholars have shown that the belief that "laypeople" never have any expertise to offer is misguided, and have explored the ways in which experiential/lay expertise can contribute to the production of better and/or more actionable knowl-edges (Evans and Collins 2008; Wynne 1992). Similarly, the domain of social movement studies initially saw social movements as unruly masses that deviated from social norms and has in recent years shown increasing interest in the role of various forms of knowledge

(see e.g. Breyman et al. 2017; Casas-Cortés, Osterweil, and Powell 2008; Choudry 2014; Eyerman and Jamison 1991).

There are three central facets of expertise and knowledge that the body of work cited above helps us see more clearly. First, expertise is not a self-evident or objective category, but produced interactively by "experts" and "laypeople" alike as they engage in boundary-work around who counts as an expert and who does not. Second, expertise can be conceptualized in terms of its being attached to specific individuals (i.e. one either *is* an expert or one *is not*), or its connection to specific practices (i.e. expertise as something that is *done* rather than something that is *possessed*). Third, any knowledge-related process involves multiple, often overlapping forms of knowledge as well as knowledge practices.[6]

Below, we first tease out how boundary-work regarding "translation expertise" is performed by translators who position themselves on various points on a spectrum of "expert" and "lay" status. We then investigate how preparatory and writing practices that are often associated with translation expertise are reflected upon by "expert" and "lay" translators, followed by an examination of how LGBTIQ* experiential knowledge (that is, the knowledge that is linked to one's life experience as a member of LGBTIQ* groups and communities) is negotiated by participants. Finally, we discuss boundary-work performed by participants around notions of being an activist and engaging in activism.

"Expert" translators?

While discussions of boundary-work tend to focus on the strategies employed by would-be experts to set themselves apart from others in order to protect or increase their authority, we found that boundary-work around translation expertise was most strongly engaged in by research participants who considered themselves non-expert translators. They often took over the work of drawing boundaries between themselves and "expert translators", whom they considered to be more competent in a number of ways, including with regard to their linguistic skills and knowledge of translation processes. They imagined that professional translators would do many things differently and would not make the same "mistakes" they may have made:

> [Professional translators], they make less mistakes, I guess, and their vocabularies [are] richer than mine. (Participant with several years of translation experience but no formal translator training; interview in English)

> [A] professional translator studies at the university at the department of translation or English language, literature or whatever. I don't have this background, so […] I can never say, ah, I'm a professional translator. (Participant with over 10 years of experience in translating in activist contexts; interview in English)

Participants often also drew links to the question of being paid for translation work, indicating that there must be something professional translators can do that they cannot, and that this justifies their not getting paid for their translation work:

> [I translated a medical text and] I said okay, you can give me a little money because I'm not professional. […] I also did subtitles […] And I said, you can pay, but not too much because I'm not professional. (Participant with over 10 years of translation experience but no formal translator training; interview in English)

> If I'm being really honest, if I'm paid a very good amount of money, for doing this, the rate as good as those professional translators, I would definitely feel guilty. (Participant with little translation experience and no formal translator training; interview in English)

These participants actively constructed themselves as "non-expert" translators (or not actual translators at all), and were thus themselves engaging in the kind of boundary-work that upholds rigid divisions between who gets to be (seen as) an "expert translator" – or simply a "translator" – and who does not. In contrast, participants who presented themselves as professional translators and/or translators with a background in translation studies did not mention their expert status in such explicit terms. We hypothesize that due to their inhabiting a more prestigious position, they were able to take a more relaxed approach to constructing an (expert) identity for themselves during the interview (e.g. by simply mentioning their background in translation studies).

In spite of these constructions of explicit expert positions, all of the participants without a background in translation studies and/or with little or no translation experience had invested a considerable amount of mental energy into reflecting on their approaches to the translation. While these participants lacked the technical terminology used in translation studies to discuss these issues, they nevertheless reflected, often in great detail, on a broad range of translation-related intricacies, including considerations about the target audiences of their texts and the potential consequences of their choices in style, register, and terminology, as evidenced below:

> When I'm thinking about who will read the text, I always imagine that … they may be someone who have no knowledge about the movement at all. So I try to imagine […], what would that person know about LGBT in his everyday life. (Participant with little translation experience and no formal translator training; interview in English)

> Especially when I translated it to [my target language the first time], oh my God, it was like a scientific text (laughs) … 'cause I read it and [I was] trying to comfort a person [having difficulties,] so [I realized that] I would like to soften the language that I used. (Participant with no translation experience and no formal translator training; interview in English)

> This is the language of those who already know about these things; the language spoken as an "inner-circle" language. So you have to be really careful that you write in a way so that others can understand it, too. (Participant with several years of translation experience; no translation studies background; interview in German)

These accounts show that translation done by so-called "lay" translators does not necessarily lack thought or meta-analysis, even if "lay" translators may not use the same terminology as "expert" translators for these activities or follow the exact same structured processes. They also demonstrate that these "lay" translators did not simply draw on implicit knowledge without conscious awareness of what they were doing, but rather reflected very explicitly on translation-related processes such as imagining potential/likely target audiences and adapting the target text accordingly. Additionally, some "lay" translators also engaged in activities that form part of professional translation preparation processes, such as reading parallel texts or consulting community members of their imagined target audiences.

Translation ideologies and/as expertise

While research participants often reflected explicitly on translation processes and strategies, many held beliefs that are often positioned as uninformed, "lay" understandings of translation – for example, the idea that there can be lexical "equivalency" between languages or that speaking more than one language is sufficient to translate between these languages. Critically, such understandings were mentioned by both "expert" and "lay" translators. While some "expert" translators positioned themselves in opposition to such "uninformed" approaches (including some who did so in a very strong manner), others did not. Similarly, while some "lay" translators acted in accordance with stereotypically "uninformed" ideas, others employed more nuanced approaches.

For instance, while still working on their translation, one participant with no translation background commented on their belief that making certain changes to their translation would improve its quality, but at the same time indicated a conviction that they were not "allowed" to do that:

> If I would really set aside some part and reshuffle it a bit that would probably be easier. But then that would not be called a translation anymore. (Participant with no translation experience; interview in English)

When told that such "reshuffling" would be perfectly appropriate, they worried about whether that would destroy MiGaY's trust in their translation:

> If I'm allowed to do that, I would probably do a little bit of that. But then my question to you would be […] would you just trust my own interpretation of the text? (Participant with no translation experience; interview in English)

Other "lay" translators acted differently, with some presenting various interventions into the text as valid translation strategies. However, as with many "expert" translators' accounts, ideas around "accuracy" and "neutrality" still featured quite often:

> You can put a lot of yourselves just into the translation and it would still be very accurate. Like, keeping the translation very accurate, you have many ways, I think, to change it. (Participant with no translation experience or training; interview in English)

> It was one line in the original language [so] I try to expand it to two or three sentences to make sure that I can explain it. (Participant with little translation experience; no formal translator training; interview in English)

Similarly, one participant with no prior translation experience talked about the learning process they experienced while working on the translation, from assuming that skills in the two languages in question would be sufficient, to realizing that translation work was more difficult than they had expected. However, another participant with no translation training or translation studies background exhibited a very different understanding in this regard, stressing that they expected the translating to be difficult despite their language skills, as "translation is a tricky job, you know?".

Many of the positions presented above are closely connected to a belief that a target text can be "mapped" onto its source text. While many "expert" translators would be quick to dismiss such an understanding of translation as "underdeveloped" or simply "wrong", this thinking was in fact not only challenged by some "lay" translators, but also held by some participants with translator training. The latter seem to "know"

that, on a surface level, certain understandings of translation are considered inappropriate, but at the same time, they subscribe to these very beliefs on a more fundamental level. Effectively, they mentioned similar ideas of "mappability", even though they had the linguistic (terminological) resources to be more careful in their phrasing, such as in the following quote by an "expert" translator, who also refers to the notion of "neutrality":

> Of course, these terms do exist in [my target language]; they could easily be translated one to one. […] I tried to translate literally – and that's a bad word, so not "literally" – but I tried to really translate one to one. […] It's simply more neutral when I write what you wrote and what you really want to say. (Professional translator with a background in translation studies; interview in German)

It would be easy to dismiss these understandings, held by both "lay" and "expert" translators, as either a fundamental deficiency of *all* "lay" translators or a failing of certain *individual* "expert" translators. According to such a distinction, "lay" translators whose beliefs and practices go beyond "mappability" are as much exceptions as "expert" translators who subscribe to those very beliefs. However, drawing this distinction would mean engaging in the very boundary-work that delegitimises the efforts and practises of "lay" translators under investigation in this article. Instead, the variability in positions towards these topics *within* both the group of "lay" translators and that of "expert" translators shows that an easy a-priori distinction into "lay" and "expert" translators based on certain factors of individuals' backgrounds such as translator training does not adequately reflect the complexity of the knowledge *practices* that these translators actually engage in.

LGBTIQ* experiential knowledge as a form of expertise

In participants' discussions of how they approached the coming-out text, they often brought up a form of expertise other than more obvious aspects such as linguistic skills and translator training: life experience regarding LGBTIQ* questions. However, this form of expertise was not usually framed as such by participants. Different facets of this kind of expertise can be accumulated in different ways, such as one's own links to organizations focused on LGBTIQ* topics, experiences of discrimination and around one's own processes of sexual/gender identity formation, as well as an understanding of the inner workings of LGBTIQ* communities. While these participants often described themselves as inferior compared to "professional translators", they saw their non-heterosexuality as a valuable asset not possessed by heterosexual/cisgender professional translators, thus challenging the assumed superiority of the latter due to their being "professionals" alone:

> If I pass the job to a professional translator [who lacks LGBTIQ* knowledge], they may not translate the context so well. […] They may not translate some of the ideas and some of the terms so well. (LGBTIQ* participant with little translation experience; interview in English)

> I'm sure that if you gave it to, like, a white, straight man, you know, he would write it much … without this conflict. Because, you know, [my target language] is on his side. […] [It] might be more challenging for him because he maybe he wouldn't agree with what's written. […] I think he would have just went through it, but he wouldn't pay so much attention to, like, the feminist stuff. (LGBTIQ* participant with no translation experience; interview in English)

> I think the translator might not be as reflective as I am […] I try to bear in mind that I need to take into consideration of my own position […] I think, this thinking process might make myself better than some of the translators. (LGBTIQ* participant with little translation experience; interview in English)

These participants, who constructed themselves as "laypeople" in relation to translation, but as "experts" on LGBTIQ* topics, engaged more strongly in the kind of boundary-work that would conventionally be expected to be performed by "experts". Additionally, while "lay" translators pre-emptively emphasized their ostensible disadvantages compared to "expert" translators, only one of the non-LGBTIQ* participants framed their lack of knowledge on LGBTIQ* matters in this way:

> You wrote that I shouldn't hold back from writing in a more radical way, which actually assumes that my thinking is based in a much more radical approach than is actually the case. […] You wrote about the "Anglophone perspective" [on sexual and gender identities], and I am not knowledgeable enough in this regard to be able to say, yes, this is this perspective and that's a different one […] I looked at some of the parts that you had mentioned […], but for me as a non-expert in this regard, I wouldn't even notice as many things. (Non-LGBTIQ* participant with a background in translation studies; interview in German)

All other non-LGBTIQ* participants – both "expert" and "lay" translators – did not phrase this specific lack of knowledge as a lack of expertise. Instead, they framed it in more positive terms by emphasizing what they had learned in the translation process. While "lay translators" constructed translation expertise as unattainable for the uninitiated, "LGBTIQ* laypeople" saw LGBTIQ* expertise as something that could be acquired if they put work into it:

> You start thinking about things you had never thought about before and … it enriches your life experience. (Non-LGBTIQ* professional translator with a background in translation studies; interview in German)

> It was fun to do research, to learn something new, about you, about this community […] (Non-LGBTIQ* professional translator with a background in translation studies; interview in German)

What we can see from the ways in which expertise both relating to translation work and to LGBTIQ* issues was negotiated by research participants is that opportunities for performing specific kinds of boundary-work are not equally available to everyone (see Neather 2012). While both those participants with "lay" status in translation and those with "lay" status in LGBTIQ* matters deployed compensatory strategies (e.g. doing research) and engaged in "expert" practices regardless (e.g. explicitly reflecting on various facets of translation processes), they presented them in different ways.

This is not to claim that "expert" translators lacking LGBTIQ* "expertise" must necessarily fail in their translation or, vice-versa, that "non-expert" translators with LGBTIQ* "expertise" are able to create a successful translation based on this aspect of their knowledge alone.[7] What we would like to demonstrate here is how members of groups who hold more prestigious positions in wider society ("expert" translators, non-LGBTIQ* individuals) may (a) not even feel the need to safeguard these positions (as in the case of "expert" translators), and (b) have easier access to discourses that deconstruct the expert status of others (as in the case of non-LGBTIQ* individuals who can acquire a measure of LGBTIQ* expertise).

Therefore, just as it would be unhelpful to suggest that non-LGBTIQ* individuals cannot or should not gain an understanding of LGBTIQ* matters (although lived experience can confer a form of understanding – called "wisdom" by Patricia Collins (1989) – that goes beyond explicit "knowledge"), we wonder whether a focus on legitimizing the expert status of trained translators may serve to not only unnecessarily delegitimize "non-expert" translators but also deter them from learning valuable translation skills. Considering that translation does not exclusively take place in the capitalist marketplace, but that informal forms of translation are essential for many members of marginalized groups (from "immigrants" to LGBTIQ* people, as demonstrated by the MiGaY translation project), making translation knowledge more accessible could have clear positive societal effects.

Boundary-work around activism

Turning to such societal effects or societal work, most participants also engaged in boundary-work around *activism* in one way or another. Indeed, it has been argued that "activist" is often seen as a coveted "expert" identity in social movements: Bobel (2007, 156) observes that "[a]ctivist, as an identity, is out of reach for many who, in spite of doing the work, resist the identity" because they see themselves as not dedicated enough or otherwise unfit to claim the label. In fact, many participants said that they did not consider themselves activists, often citing their perceived "passivity", the perceived lack of time that they were investing in relevant activities, their engagement with certain activities "only" in the context of their (paid) jobs and their lack of public presence in general. Generally, they often felt they were simply not doing enough to earn the label of activist:

> An activist is much more [than I am]. That would require a lot more commitment from me. (Participant with several years of experience in volunteer translation work; interview in German)

> If you ask me if I think *you* are an activist, I would say yes, because … you really came up with the whole [idea], and I'm more of a supporter. (LGBTIQ* participant who has taken part in Pride marches; interview in English)

> I just have the feeling I'm not doing as much as I could be doing. (Participant who has done various kinds of activist work for several years; interview in German)

Even when participants had been engaging in various activities that could be seen as activism, such as participating in protests, demonstrations and Pride events, volunteering for charity organizations, doing educational work on social justice issues, organizing film festivals and teaching German to refugees, they shied away from calling themselves or their activities "activist". One participant said that "social commitment" was something they had simply grown up with and therefore saw as "something normal" that was to be expected of everyone in society, which meant it could not be labelled "activist". Another participant who, for a large part of their life, had had a full-time position in an openly activist institution even mentioned that "sometimes, this work [makes] you feel that you need to do more".

In addition to this question of "commitment", boundary-work around activism repeatedly referred to the relationship that participants felt they had or did not have with the communities that such activism is supposed to support:

> I'm never part of the community to which I commit myself. […] It's part of activism that you are part of such a community. (Participant active in various projects for different causes; interview in German)

> To throw myself into activism, well […] I'm not like that … I haven't joined a local group yet, so for now, it stays virtual. […] I am still missing that feel, that skill to really interact with people. (Participant active in volunteer translating; interview in German)

Similar to the boundary-work done around translation expertise, boundary-work around activism was also engaged in avidly by participants who felt they could not legitimately claim that identity for themselves (rather than ones who would consider themselves "activists"). We believe that in both cases, broader societal discourses around the characteristics necessary for claiming positions such as "translator" and "activist" for oneself mean that also – and especially – those who would be excluded from them police the boundaries of these positions.

In parallel to questions around who could take on the identity of activist, participants also addressed the question of whether the translation work for MiGaY could be seen as an act of activism. Assessments of this latter question could sometimes be traced to individual-based values as well, such as specific understandings of commitment, e.g. in terms of the time an individual is willing to invest, or the political ideology to which they subscribe.

> You can be called an activist the moment you start being picky about what you translate. 'cause if I would translate […] the MiGaY thing, and then tomorrow I'm translating something for [Donald] Trump, then … what kind of an activist am I? (Participant with experience in volunteering; no translation experience; interview in English)

> I wouldn't use the label ["activism" for the translation], not yet. It's missing a systematic quality to be called that. Or maybe repeatability […] its scale is simply not enough for it to be labelled with this rather grand term. (Participant with a background of various activist activities; interview in German)

In addition, the question of whether the translation could be considered activism was often framed in terms of whether it had the potential to benefit others. Compared to the various forms of boundary-work mentioned above that are ultimately judgements of individuals' characters, this framing focuses on the consequences of specific acts:

> Because it's helping. [Translating] so that people would understand better or feel better when they read their texts in their own languages, and, why not, I see that as an activism. (Participant with a strong background in activism and several years of experience translating for activist purposes; interview in English)

Some participants commented on their belief that their specific translations would be unlikely to reach many people directly, either because they did not expect enough people to speak this language in Austria or because they felt that the potential target audience would not look for this kind of information in a way that would lead them to the MiGaY website:

> It's not gonna be super useful, like, how many people are gonna read a website, in Austria, about, like, immigrants, in [my target language]. (Participant with some volunteering experience; no translation experience; interview in English)

> I would just think it's probably quite odd that a person [speaking my target language would] google "coming out" … it wouldn't really be on the top of a person's head. (Participant with some LGBTIQ*-related activist experience; no translation experience; interview in English)

However, the very fact that the website and coming-out text were to be available in various languages was seen as a positive consequence of the translation by the majority of participants, and this added to their feeling that their contribution was meaningful:

> [Offering the website in so many languages] also communicates a desire to really address as many different people as possible and, in a way, create some sort of access for people from all over the world. (Participant with a translation studies background; used to be involved in various activist activities; interview in German)

> It's great when you see that your language is represented, too. It means that someone has actually thought of you or of other people who speak that language, which I can imagine is a good feeling. (Participant with a translation studies background; sees "effect" as essential in defining activist activity; interview in German)

Additionally, while many participants (particularly those who were not active in openly activist organizations) more explicitly linked activism to practices such as protest marches and "waving flags in the street", they often, especially upon reflection, also acknowledged that translation work might have activist consequences as well:

> Before I begin the translation process, […] I didn't think a lot about whether this is activism […] But [now,] I think it can be definitely regarded as activism. Because, at least personally, I think it involved a very reflexive process […] although the effect cannot be evaluated easily, I guess, but I think that ultimately, as long as it benefits one individual, then it can be considered activism. (LBGTIQ* participant with an academic background; interview in English)

> Now that I think about it, you could say that what I did, the translation, is activism, because, well, simply because I actively participated in something and made it accessible to the public, and maybe that is also a form of activism. (Professional translator; not generally involved in activism; interview in German)

Similar to the boundary-work in relation to translation described above, boundary-work on activism was often internally contradictory. On the one hand, many participants felt they could not claim the identity position of "activist", just as many felt they could not call themselves "translators". On the other hand, arguably, they engaged in activist practices by translating the MiGaY texts (similarly to how "lay" translators sometimes drew on "expert" methods) – and were more open to calling that work activism than they were to calling themselves activists. Tellingly, one participant told us that they could not be an activist because protest marches made them nervous before remembering that they had in fact taken part in protest marches (and enjoyed it) when they had attended university several years earlier.

Conclusion: identities, practices, and boundary-work

In this article, we have examined the boundary-work and knowledge practices engaged in by participants in a translation project organized by an activist LGBTIQ* organization, MiGaY, in relation to translation expertise, LGBTIQ* expertise, and activism. We have tried to show how these notions are understood, (re)imagined and (re)produced by those directly concerned by them, which has made visible a number of parallels between these ostensibly separate areas.

The struggles over both who gets to inhabit the position of "expert" translator in general and who can claim (translation-relevant) expertise in relation to the LGBTIQ* material specific to this particular translation project – as well as discussions around who can say, without mitigation, that they are an activist – refer to certain requirements for inhabiting specific subject positions. These requirements, and associated subject positions, are negotiated in boundary-work. This boundary-work was not only, or not even primarily, performed by "experts": "lay" translators avidly drew up divisions between themselves and "expert" translators, while "expert" translators did not feel the need to actively construct themselves as experts, and most participants saw themselves as lacking the qualities necessary for being called "activists". On the other hand, understanding of LGBTIQ* topics was claimed much more explicitly by participants with LGBTIQ* backgrounds, while non-LGBTIQ* participants framed their lack of this form of expertise in positive terms.

Against this background, we argue that different kinds of expertise carry different valuations, and some kinds of expertise encounter greater resistance against being seen as such than others. We hypothesize that these differences are linked to wider societal valuations and the relative power of different subject positions. Our research participants saw "being a translator" as a prestigious position linked to ideas of expertise and competence and thus distanced themselves from this position – and the confidence in one's expertise associated with it – if they felt they did not fulfil the criteria necessary for inhabiting it. The position of "being an activist" was associated with similar expectations, revolving primarily around assumptions about commitment. "Being an LGBTIQ* person", however, was not connected to high social status, and LGBTIQ* people performed much more explicit boundary-work, presenting their experiential knowledge as valid expertise. At the same time, non-LGBTIQ* participants did not construct LGBTIQ* expertise as prestigious in a way similar to translation expertise and activist commitment. Thus, boundary-work around expertise was engaged in differently by participants, and these differences were linked to societal power relations.

In parallel to these negotiations of roles and positions, participants often drew on practices that would be associated with either "lay" or "expert" statuses almost irrespective of their (self-)positioning. "Lay" and "expert" translators alike explicitly reflected on many facets of translation work; and "lay" and "expert" translators both worked on the basis of more or less critical translation ideologies. Many participants, while hesitant to claim the label "activist" for themselves, arguably engaged in activist practices, thus becoming "lay" activists. And while non-LGBTIQ* participants did not and could not see many facets of lived LGBTIQ* experience, they were able to acquire a degree of explicit knowledge about it.

What we want to argue for, therefore, is a more complex understanding of expertise in the context of translation work. We want to emphasize three facets that were particularly salient in our research. First, an understanding of *expertise as multiple and partial* – including translation expertise, experiential expertise, etc. – not only highlights the many different factors that are necessary for a successful translation, but also provides a better perspective on community and everyday translation beyond the professional marketplace. Second, expertise is not an inherent property of any individual or group. Rather, the status of being or not being an expert is *actively constructed and deconstructed* in specific contexts and specific interactions – and is imbued with power relations on societal and global levels. Third, distinguishing between individual *roles/identities* and specific, situated knowledge *practices* enables a more nuanced understanding of the translation processes that

actually take place. In other words, as people involved in social processes from translation to activism and scholarship, we might benefit from worrying less about what we might be allowed to call ourselves and instead appreciating more strongly what we do.

Notes

1. LGBTIQ* stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Inter and Queer". The asterisk is meant to both represent the constructedness of all social identities and leave room for other identities that deviate from cis-hetero-normative norms (such as asexuality).
2. All these translations are "ours", which means that they were done – as all translations are – on the basis of our own translation ideology and for the specific purpose for which they are used here. They are in no way implied to be "neutral" or "objective", as no translation can ever be (Spivak 1997; Cooke 2011).
3. In Austria, research is not (yet) routinely considered by an institutional review board.
4. Our classification of participants in relation to their sexuality is based on relevant accounts about themselves in the interviews. Some participants used a specific label (e.g. "gay" or "lesbian") for themselves, while others revealed (parts of their) sexual orientation only via indirect means, e.g. by referring to their (exclusive) heterosexual relationship or by distancing themselves from the LGBTIQ* community. While, due to the limited scope of this article, we cannot comment here on the heteronormative power of such accounts, it is interesting to note that it was only the heterosexual participants that did not in any way explicitly refer to their own sexual identity. When asked about their position in relation to the LGBTIQ* community, not a single heterosexual participant mentioned their own sexuality directly. Instead, they generally interpreted the question as a question about their attitude towards LGBTIQ* people. In comparison, non-heterosexual participants that were reluctant to use a label for their sexual identity did so with commenting on the problems associated with using labels in general, or with a single label in particular.
5. In the context of these discussions, "professional" is generally used to refer to someone whose main occupation is focused on translation work. It is therefore not to be understood here as synonymous with "expert". For an overview of how "professional" and related terms have been used in translation studies, see Jääskeläinen (2010).
6. While the idea of "knowledge" tends to be associated with disembodied structures, the term "knowledge practices" emphasizes the situational character of how knowledges play out in actual interactions (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011).
7. For comparative studies on translations done by professional translators and subject-matter experts, see e.g. Faber and Hjort-Pedersen (2009); Nisbeth Jensen and Zethsen (2013); Orlando (2017).

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