

11th EST congress: The Changing Faces of Translation and Interpreting Studies

Leeds, 30 June – 3 July 2025

Deadline for paper proposals: 26 July 2024 via [this link](#)

Panel 9. City Museums as City Translation

Chairs: Luc van Doorslaer (University of Tartu/KULeuven), Anneleen Spiessens (Ghent University)

In the past two decades, the fields of museum translation and city translation have emerged as significant areas of research, offering a broader-than-linguistic view on translation to encompass cultural and representational dimensions. While museums are viewed as translation zones “in which intercultural contact is itself a form of translation” (Neather 2021, 160), scholars focusing on urban environments acknowledge that “translation can be a revealing lens for investigating social and cultural history in a broad range of urban contexts” (Cronin and Simon 2014, 120).

Despite the somewhat limited extent of their interaction thus far, the realms of museum translation and city translation manifest numerous shared interests and research avenues. This panel seeks to explore one of the most conspicuous points of convergence by directing its focus towards city museums. City museums are ‘spaces of memory’ (Tamborrino 2012, 463) serving as vital repositories for the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage, yet they also encapsulate the present and future development of the city and its people, thereby shaping a city’s sense of identity and contributing to the process of place-making (Grewcock 2006, 39).

Exhibitions, conceptualized as translations, are always “partial” representations involving “selection, but also deselection” of material (Spiessens and van Doorslaer, forthcoming 2024). Catering, moreover, to a diverse array of local and international audiences, city museum curatorship requires nuanced strategies of both interlingual and (inter)cultural translation. This process raises important questions about how museums navigate linguistic and historical differences, cultural diversity, and transnational effects as they portray the city in both its contemporary and historic dynamics.

Paper proposals may focus on (case studies related to) city museums, museums or exhibitions directly involving cities, or iconic sites integral to a city’s identity. Topics of interests include, but are not limited to:

- conceptual common ground between approaches to city translation and museum translation
- methodological considerations in city translation research
- the unique position of city museums within the broader translational framework of a multilayered memorial city landscape
- interaction between interlingual, intralingual, intersemiotic and intrasemiotic translation in exhibition contexts
- city museums as spaces of linguistic and cultural negotiation
- the role of translation in diversifying museum audiences, fostering sustainable communities, and connecting the local and the global
- the significance of translation in unlocking multilingual collections

References

Cronin, Michael, and Sherry Simon (2014) Introduction: The City as Translation Zone, *Translation Studies* 7:2, 119-132.

Grewcock, Duncan (2006) Museums of Cities and Urban Futures: New Approaches to Urban Planning and the Opportunities for Museums of Cities. *Museum International* 58:3, 32-42.

Neather, Robert (2021) Museums and Translation. In *Handbook of Translation Studies, volume 5*, ed. by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, pp. 159-164. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Spiessens, Anneleen, and Luc van Doorslaer (forthcoming 2024) The Ethnographic Museum as a Sensitive Translation. *Babel*, special issue on 'Museums as spaces of cultural translation and transfer', ed. by Sophie Decroupet and Irmak Mertens.

Tamborrino, Rosa (2012) Searching for a State-of-the-art Public Space: City Museums among Archives and Networks. *Planning Perspectives* 27:3, 463-473.