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DISSERTATION

Titel der Dissertation

„The Impact of the Social Web on
the Support Networks of
Freelance Translators“

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Wien, im Juni 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studien-
blatt:

A 092 324

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studien-
blatt:

Dr.-Studium der Philosophie Übersetzer-
ausbildung (Stzw)
UniStG

Betreuerin / Betreuer:

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Gerhard Budin

*Communication is a fundamental social process,
a basic human need
and the foundation of all social organization.
It is central to the Information Society.*

– Geneva Declaration of Principles for the Information Society

*You can go out into the world
to see what people think translation is,
who translators are,
how translations are actually used,
what goes on in the translating brain [...].
Anything the theories say should be tested
on some kind of non-theory,
quantitatively or qualitatively.*

– Anthony Pym

Preface

Despite all the noise that our fast-paced society generates, we should pause now and then, asking ourselves whether the current development of technology, economy and our daily lives is as we would like it to be. What do we gain from innovation? Are we overwhelmed by too much of everything? Are too many mobile devices and too much information leaving us overnewsed and uninformed? And are we using the technology to our benefit; or is the technology using us – to the benefit of a few?

Is the way we are doing our work, the way we earn our livings beneficial to us? Is it satisfactory, healthy and sustainable? Or are we just rushing about, not recognizing the harm we might be doing to ourselves, our profession and society?

It is the duty of researchers to ask questions and to challenge the way we live, the way we work, the way we build our future.

Particularly with regards to social and individual wellbeing, the use of technology and the active constitution of economy and labor, it is our obligation to question recent developments and to wield influence based on the thorough understanding we have obtained.

This thesis will certainly not have an answer to all these questions. However, the topics discussed on the next pages and the study results are intended to generate a small impact towards gaining a deeper, empirically grounded understanding of the contemporary translation profession and how the people who work as translators are affected by current technological developments.

Translators keep our global village spinning. It is high time that our scientific interest caters to their important role in economy, politics and culture.

Acknowledgements

McFarlane wrote many years ago: “[T]ranslation borders on too many provinces for the linguist to remain secure within his own proper territory or to survey the ground from one vantage point alone; a thorough exploration will compel him to make repeated approaches through the territories of his neighbours, and he will rely on their guidance and advice.” (1953, p. 93)

These words are true and there are many people who supported me with their guidance and advice during my doctoral studies.

First of all, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Professor Gerhard Budin for always being an excellent and encouraging supervisor, and to Professor Hanna Risku for her helpful feedback and suggestions.

A special thanks to Professor Sighard Neckel for introducing me to the world of social studies and giving me the opportunity to participate in his research colloquia at the Goethe University Frankfurt.

Thanks to all study participants who shared their valuable time with me and provided me with fascinating insights in the translation practice.

My deepest thanks go to my friends and my family, especially to my parents Beate and Ralf Groß, Christian Ehler and his family, Dr. Kathrin Thanner, Julia Schromm, Kira Girolami and Katja Fessel – thank you for your love and support.

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1 Introduction

The Internet has by great means changed the ways people do business and interact with one other in our globalized world. International trade, politics, culture, and societies depend on experts who are capable to intermediate both languages and culture. As a result, professional translators and interpreters play an important role in our global village. At the same time, they are also affected by the changes and disruptions caused by rapid technological development. Since the outsourcing wave of the 1980s, when numerous corporations dissolved their translation departments (Fulford & Granell-Zafra, 2008), the majority of translators have become self-employed workers.

Web-based social technologies have been reported to increase the efficiency of inter- and intra-organizational collaboration and knowledge sharing, independent of space and time. Businesses participate in online social networks for marketing purposes and maintain dedicated online communities for fostering open innovation. Self-employed professionals are also expected to benefit from the use of Web 2.0 in various ways. Particularly small businesses and freelancers rely on their informal and formal networks for commercial success (Osnowitz, 2007).

Participation in online marketplaces – also referred to as *e-lancing* – can be a convenient means for them to connect with prospective clients and collaborators (Malone & Laubacher, 1998; Shevchuk & Strebkov, 2012). Online social networking services and professional virtual communities have been found to support communication, knowledge exchange, learning, employability and social contact among self-employed professionals (Gruber, 2008; Barnes, Clear, Dyerson, Harindranath, Harris, & Rae, 2012). Social technologies enable virtual collaboration and the management of both private and professional social relationships (Koch & Richter, 2009; Wolf, 2011).

Studies on professional translators' participation in online communities (Dickinson, 2002; Gouadec, 2007; McDonough, 2007; Risku & Dickinson, 2009)

and the blogosphere (Dam, 2013) suggest that they also get high levels of practical and emotional support from virtual social networks.

Particularly freelancers who work from home have been found to suffer from isolation and a lack of visibility in trade networks and on the market (Mason, Carter, & Tagg, 2011). This negative aspect of home based telework (Golden, Veiga, & Dino, 2008) is also a reality for many professional freelance translators (Venuti, 1995; Simeoni, 1998), but it seems that the use of social technologies may be used to mitigate them:

“Most fundamentally, the translators make themselves visible simply by being present in the blogosphere, which gives them a voice in the crowd. But as we have seen, the translators also use their weblogs to network, build communities and bring visibility to other translators and to translation as such.” (Dam, 2013, p. 32)

Over the past decade, numerous online marketplaces and communities emerged around translation services. The increasing popularity of these platforms seems to prove that they have become a relevant business infrastructure for professional translators and language services providers (LSPs). However, we still have an incomplete understanding of the interplay between virtual interaction and social relationships in the “real” world (Faris & Heacock, 2013). Empirical findings on how translators participate in the social web, and which benefits they receive from it, is scarce and the existing research solely focused on translators’ virtual relationships. Other research of freelancers in the creative industries suggests that personal networks, established and maintained by personal contact, are vital for self-employed workers (Meiksins & Whalley, 2002; Neff, 2005; Osnowitz, 2006; Shevchuck & Strebkov, 2012).

Based on these findings, it must be questioned how these two ways of organizing – in virtual space or in person – fit together. Are traditional business networks, based on long-term relationships, social contracting and emotional bonding changing or will they even be replaced, as individuals join and leave elastic networks “that may sometimes exist for no more than a day or two” (Malone & Laubacher, 1998, p. 148)?

Do translators benefit from global networking and user-generated information resources as can be found on the social web? And if so, how? Which resources do they activate through online social networking services and does the increase of web-based interaction and business activity have an impact on (traditional) social relations in the physical world?

1.1 Research Questions

The discussion presented above and the identified research gap lead to the research question which this study seeks to answer:

What impact does the social web have on the social networks of freelance translators?

In order to ensure a structured approach to answering this rather abounding question, it is reasonable to break it down into three more specific questions:

- Which resources do freelance translators receive from their personal and virtual social relationships?
- How do professional freelance translators make use of the social web as a virtual space for social interaction, collaboration and business?
- Do the virtual and the personal network relations converge or oppose each other?

To answer these questions, this study follows a qualitative, exploratory approach and draws on a combination of qualitative social network analysis and ethnographic methods. A participant observation, think-aloud protocols, guideline-based interviews and the survey of translators' ego-networks provide a comprehensive data basis. The data gathered was analyzed by applying qualitative content analysis and qualitative social network analysis.

1.2 Contribution

This dissertation contributes to translators' and freelancers' network studies. It provides a deeper understanding of the translation profession as a branch of the creative industries and the atypical, project-based forms of employment

which “have always been typical to the creative sector – [and] are quickly becoming relevant to the traditional sectors as well” (Kari, 2011, p. 7).

It is important to recognize translators’ agency (Abdallah, 2010) in the translation industry and Translation Studies must increasingly consider the social and human side of translating. This new focus helps translators and society to better understand the role of translators in economy, politics, culture and intellectual life – now and throughout history (Bowen-Bailey, 2006).

An in-depth knowledge of how professional translators work, how they connect with one other and with other actors of the translation ecosystem (Dunne, 2012) and how they establish themselves as *solopreneurs* is particularly relevant for students and teachers of Translation Studies. Students must bridge a wide gap between theoretical studies and the business world (Katan, 2009) after their graduation and, as inexperienced newcomers, they are particularly prone to economic exploitation and moral hazard (Abdallah, 2010, 2012). These phenomena are also apparent in other sectors of the creative industries and must be addressed:

“Work is a core activity in society. It is central to individual identity, links individuals to each other, and locates people within the stratification system. [...] Work also reveals much about the social order, how it is changing, and the kinds of problems and issues that people and their governments must address.”

(Kalleberg, 2009, p. 1)

As Translation Studies curricula contain application-oriented theories and aim at educating future translation professionals through practical exercises, imparting up-to-date knowledge of the translation market, a deeper understanding of social network markets and a mindfulness to emerging business models (enabled by the social web) should be on the agenda of all educators. Professional translators may also use research insights from this study for gaining greater insight into their own profession and to better understand how social contracting impacts their daily business.

This dissertation can also be interesting for those readers positioned outside of Translation Studies. The interdisciplinarity of this work, covering topics such as

non-standard types of labor, social technologies for collaboration, and social capital in virtual and personal networks, makes it appealing to labor researchers and policy makers who concern themselves with new forms of labor and fostering of the creative and cultural industries as an economic driver. The findings of translators' work practices in reality and virtuality also contribute to the under-researched fields of small business studies (Mason, Carter, & Tagg, 2011; Barnes, D. et al., 2012) and new careers (Osnowitz, 2007; Eikhof, 2013).

1.3 Structure of this Thesis

After a brief introduction to the problems addressed, the research questions and the contributions of this thesis, Chapter 1 concludes with the thesis structure. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to a broader background of translating as a business, the creative industries and the promises and impact of the social web. The concept of e-lancing is addressed in detail and the reasons for outsourcing and an increasing freelance workforce are presented. Previous research concerning translators' self-employment and portfolio work, their participation in online communities and online marketplaces, the special role of translators' professional status and the role of gender are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 briefly introduces the theories used, namely social capital theory and social support networks. The methods of data collection and analysis are presented in Chapter 5, followed by a presentation of the study results in Chapter 6. A critical discussion of the results, the study's limitations and an outlook on future research is presented in Chapter 7.

2 Background

In our globalized world, translated texts are omnipresent and yet remain unnoticed, as many translations are not recognized (BDÜ, 2011). This invisibility (Venuti, 1995; Simeoni, 1998) of translators' work in business and society certainly bears consequences on the professional status and income situation (Chan, 2009) of professional translators. Many people – both consumers of translated texts and translation buyers – do not know what translators actually do, which competencies and skills translating actually requires, perceiving translations as a commodity (Dunne, 2012). Section 2.1, therefore, discusses the meaning of the terms translating and translation. It then summarizes the history of Translation Studies briefly, followed by an introduction to the study of (professional) translators.

Occupational images are socially and individually constructed (Cohen & Mallon, 1999). As creative knowledge workers (Fuchs-Kittowski, 2007) and services providers for organizations and individuals in economy, politics and culture, translators occupy a complex professional role with multiple facets. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the sociocultural and economic contexts of the translation industry (section 2.2) and the profession, it is necessary to locate its interfaces with the creative and culture industries, the liberal professions as well as similarities with concepts such as the creative class and social network markets (section 2.3). Careers in these industries have become increasingly limitless (section 2.4), with freelancers joining and leaving (virtual) organizations, working on project-based contracts and building their micro-enterprises in individualized market niches.

The knowledge society and the emergence of a broad range of intellectual services have been shaped significantly by the ubiquity of web-based technologies. The World Wide Web (section 2.5) serves as an immense information repository, provides an infrastructure for business, communication and learning, and facilitates social interaction independent of space and time (Koch & Richter, 2009). The rapid technical development of the past decades also had a significant effect on the work of professional translators, causing a

continuing increase in the demand of translations. It stimulated the development of distinct areas of specialization, such as technical translation, localization or trans-creation, among others and led to the development of software tools which allow increased efficiency and consistency in handling large amounts of multilingual content.

2.1 A Brief Summary of the Study of Translating and Translators

While the act of translating written text from one language into another has a very long tradition in human history (Nord, B., 2002), translation as a profession and the scientific study of translating are rather young disciplines.

In everyday life, many people do not distinguish between the transfer of written text – which is called translating – and the transfer of spoken words – which is referred to as *interpreting* – and neither are they aware of the fact that these two activities provide the basis for two related, however quite distinct occupations.

This work discusses translating as a professional activity and therefore needs to use a definition of translation as a starting point. Still, there is an “incredibly broad notion” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 181) of what translation is and various “contradictory attempts at definition highlight the difficulty, and even futility, of expecting watertight categories for what might better be viewed as a cline of strategies under the overarching term ‘translation’” (Munday, 2008, p. 7).

The different notions of the term translation will be discussed in section 2.1.1, followed by a brief overview of the history of the scientific study of translation in section 2.1.2. Despite its young age, or maybe just because of it, Translation Studies were facing various turns and have quickly developed into an interdiscipline with diverse sub-branches. A prolific subfield of Translation Studies is the sociological study of translation (section 2.1.3) which has led to the development of a new research area *Translator Studies* (Chesterman, 2009)

focusing on translators, their social networks and working conditions (section 2.1.4).

2.1.1 Translation

Much has been written on the characteristics of translating and its closely related sibling, interpreting (cf. Kade, 1968; Stolze, 2005; Vermeer, 2007). A common distinction is made based on the form of the source text: In *translating*, the source text is permanently available to the translator (most often in written form) and its translation can be repeated and reviewed any number of times. Therefore, the source text can be consistently reproduced in the target language and revised and adjusted whenever needed. *Interpreting*, in contrast, refers to the adhoc reproduction of an orally presented source text into a target language. The main difference to translating lies in the limited possibility of correcting and revising the results, due to time constraints of the transfer process and momentariness of the spoken text (Munday, 2008). However, Munday emphasizes that

“the difference between translation and interpreting cannot only be one of the written versus the spoken: For example, interpreters are routinely asked to produce [target language] versions of written documents such as witness statements and other exhibits in the courts and formal speeches that are written to be read, etc., thus blurring the boundaries between the modes.” (2008, p. 9)

Thus, according to Hatim and Munday (2004, p. 6), the term *translation* can be understood in the following three ways:

1. The “process of transferring a written text from [source language] to [target language] [...] in a specific sociocultural context.”
2. The “written product, or [target text], which results from that process and which functions in the sociocultural context of the [target language].”
3. The “cognitive, linguistic, visual, cultural and ideological phenomena which are an integral part of 1 and 2.”

Translation Studies theories always imply that a human individual is involved in the translation process (Chesterman, 2009). Hence, the term *translation*

includes machine-aided human translation (MAHT) and computer-aided translation (CAT) (Nord, B., 2002).

Translating can be defined as knowledge work, which is typically characterized by the lack of predictability, the need to solve new problems and cope with changing performance requirements (Fuchs-Kittowski, 2007). Translating is also a decision-making process. For each new text, translators must decide on the translation strategy and the composition of the target text, based on its objective (Dizdar, 2006). The concept of translating and the relationship of source and target text are culturally and socially influenced (Hermans, 1997; Song, 2012). Translators' freedom of action is limited by their responsibilities (also referred to as the "translators' loyalty" (Nord, C., 2006) and the expectations of other actors involved (e.g. the author, the translation agency, the client, the readers) (Abdallah, 2010). These influential factors impact the translation process and the translated text.

This thesis focuses on translating as a professional activity, which is done to earn money. It is very important to recognize that

“professional translation has nothing to do with the academic exercise of ‘translation’ as practiced in traditional language courses [...] [nor] does it have any relations to ‘translating for pleasure’, which is translation carried out in relaxed circumstances, just ‘for fun’. If professional translators get satisfaction from their work, they certainly do not translate for the sheer pleasure of translating, they mean business.” (Gouadec, 2007, p. 3)

Due to the ongoing professionalization of the translation industry, traditional translation tasks yield into a broad complex of various activities, including management competencies and in-depth specialist knowledge of technical fields (Budin, 2002). Particularly freelance translators are expected to act competent and diligently in all areas related to translating, including terminology management, client acquisition, marketing and administrative office work.

Moreover, it is also important to recognize translation as intellectual, creative work, which requires specialized skills, experience and technical domain

knowledge. However, there is a lack of transparency on the skill set forth and education needed for pursuing a career in translation and most translation users do not understand the complexity of the translation process: “At present, translation is a topic which anyone and everyone professes to know about and a craft which many laymen with a smattering of foreign languages think they can master.” (Snell-Hornby, 2006, p. 5) And Dam (2013) concurs: “There seems to be a widespread ‘anyone-can-do-it’ attitude towards translation, which translators find is a serious threat to their occupational status.” (p. 18)

2.1.2 Translation Studies

By today, Translation Studies (TS) have become a diverse interdiscipline, sharing theories and areas of study with numerous other academic disciplines such as cultural studies, computer sciences, semiotics, linguistics, literature studies, history, anthropology, or psychology. This interdisciplinarity is regarded as both beneficiary and obstructive by TS scholars¹. Bassnett and Lefevere refer to it as “a success story of the 1980s” (1995, p. vii) and Snell-Hornby claims that the “‘extralinguistic’ insights from neighboring fields [...] have probably done more for Translation Studies than the theories of ‘pure’ linguistics ever could have achieved” (Snell-Hornby, 1991, p. 14). To the contrary, Chesterman bemoans the lack of a “shared understanding of precisely how this total context is best delineated” (2006, p. 9) and Pym (2000) criticizes the discipline’s lack of scholarliness: “Translation Studies remained intellectually mediocre throughout the 1980s and is struggling to find orientation in the 1990s. Many of its theoretical efforts have been directed toward gaining academic power rather than *identifying and solving significant social problems.*” (Pym, 2000, n.p.; my italics)

Although Translation Studies is a young academic discipline, the first theoretical discussions about translating date back to antiquity, when Roman writers translated speeches of famous Greek orators. These were mainly word-

¹ Lévi-Strauss (1945) even defined collaboration as *the* basic principle of interdisciplinarity: “[...] neighboring disciplines, inspired by each other’s example and aiming at renovation, have a special duty to collaborate.” (cited in Duarte, Rosa, & Seruya, 2006, p.3)

per-word translations used to study rhetorical strategies of outstanding speakers (Munday, 2008). The theoretical essays about translating were intended to explain and reason the procedure of translating. In the middle ages, another peak of studying and writing about good translation practices resulted from an increased need for Bible translations, which until today remains the field of translation with the longest history and the largest number of target text languages for one single source text (Nida, 1964).

During the Baroque and Enlightenment eras, translation was used as an exercise for students to develop language skills and writing style (Zuber-Skerritt, 1984).

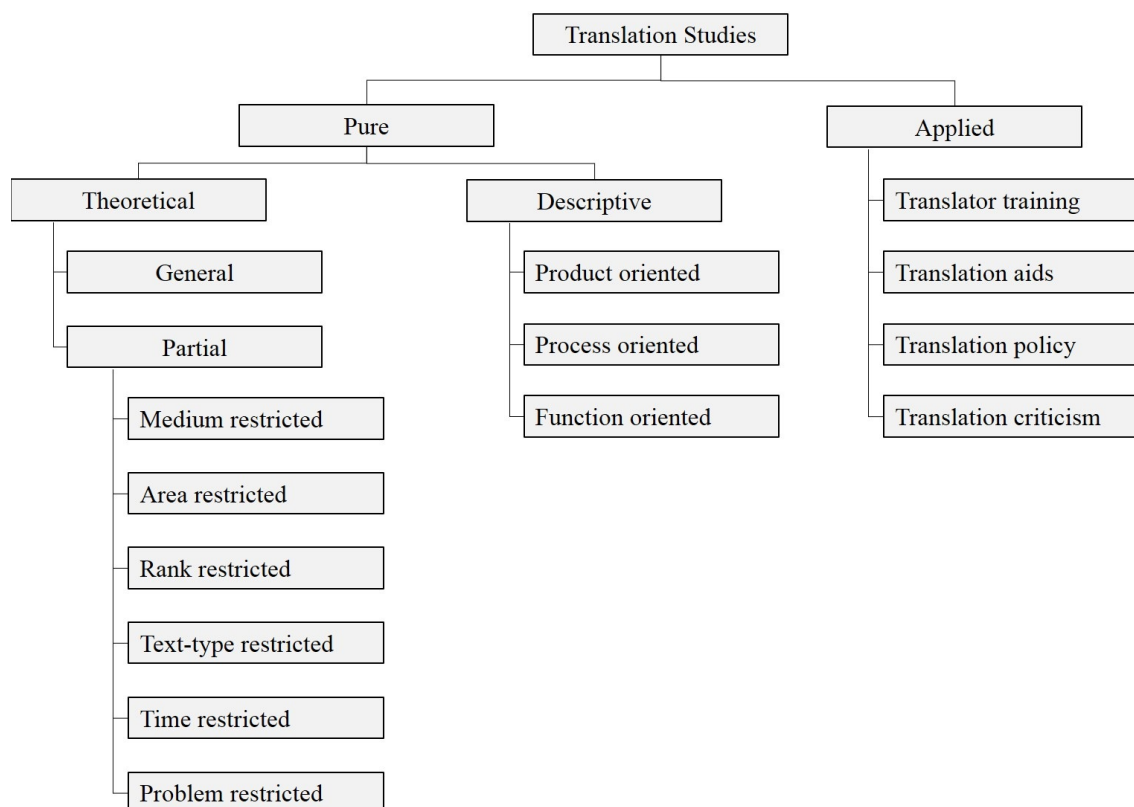


Fig. 2.1: Research areas in Translation Studies, adapted from Toury (1995)

As a result of the *pragmatic turn* in linguistics, Translation Studies emerged as a new academic field in the 1970's. It started to grow by drawing on theories from other disciplines, such as comparative literature studies and linguistics. However, even after the 1970's, scientific articles about translating were heavily influenced by linguistic methods and theories (Snell-Hornby, 1991).

The term *Translation Studies* (TS) was first proposed by James S. Holmes in his seminal paper “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” (1972). He was looking for an appropriate name for a scattered discipline which was referred to as *translatology* (Harris, 1977, 1988), *translation science* (Zuber-Skerritt, 1984), or *science of translating* (Nida, 1964) and has even more distinct names in other languages (Stolze, 2005). Holmes outlined the different sub-branches of TS and Toury (1995) plotted them into a mind-map twenty years later (figure 2.1). The map and its adaptations are still used today for outlining the scope and sub-branches of TS.

Dizdar explains the motivation and the need for the new academic discipline Translation Studies as follows:

“In the 19th century, science became more and more associated with measurability, exactness and the ability to come up with general laws. The understanding of translation and translation strategies were influenced by expectations of (linguistic) exactitude and the articulation of normative statements on translation and the act of translating. The rejection of such an attitude was one of the forces behind the emergence of Translation Studies as an independent discipline. [...] Most scholars agreed that in order to be fully recognized, the discipline had to be organized analogously to other already well established scientific fields. For this, Translation Studies needed its own concepts, terminology, theories and methods.” (Dizdar, 2012, pp. 53-54)

The original objective of TS was the empirical analysis of essential principles and regularities of the translation process in order to elaborate a translation theory which could serve as a model for the analysis of specific translation activities and allows to formulate general laws of translating (Kade, 1963; Toury, 1980; Dizdar, 2012).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the discipline saw some competition between linguistic and cultural approaches – the so called “cultural turn” – as well as an awakening interest of translation scholars in cognitive science (Risku, 1997, 2000), focusing on mental processes and decision-making approaches of translators (Krings, 1988; Kußmaul, 1993). During that period, the social context of translating, translations and the translator was already recognized (Kiraly, 1995; Munday, 2008): “individuals are socially and culturally situated

and [...] the environment needs to be considered in order to understand cognition.” (Rambusch et al., 2004, p. 1)

Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, further interdisciplinary areas of research have developed, e.g. corpus-based studies (Baker, 1996) and research on software localization (Parra, 2000). Another important development has been the sociological turn, caused by a growing attention to translation as an occupation and the role of translators as a social and professional group (Dam & Zethsen, 2012). The sociological turn will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.1.3 The Sociological Turn in Translation Studies

Translators’ work, motivations and role in society were not a central concern of Translation Studies during most of its history (Mossop, 2000). Only recently, TS scholars started to take an interest in translation as a “socially regulated activity” (Hermans, 1997, p. 10), the specific social contexts in which a text is embedded (Song, 2012), and “the time and space displacements of people and texts (whether written or oral) and the consequences of these displacements” (Angelelli, 2012, p. 125). It became “suitable to go beyond the text in search of answers to research questions [...] in order for us to understand the essence of translations” (Abdallah, 2012, p. 4). Recent studies address, among other things, issues of professional translators’ occupational status, working conditions, social networks, role perceptions, and power relations in the industry (Dam & Zethsen, 2008; Chan, 2009; Chesterman, 2009; Kuznik & Verd, 2010; Abdallah, 2012; Dunne, 2012; Dam, 2013), while drawing on established sociological theories, such as Bourdieu’s *field* and *habitus theory* (Simeoni, 1998; Inghilleri, 2005) or Luhmann’s *social systems theory* (Vermeer, 2006).

In some TS publications, the term *sociology of translation* is used to refer to the study of social aspects of translating. However, the term “sociology of translation” is another name for the sociological tradition *Actor Network Theory* (Callon, 1980, 1986; Latour, 1992; Law, 1997). In this context, the concept *translation* describes the process of forming a network of human actors and

non-human actants, based on negotiations (Latour, 2005). The term was originally coined by Michel Callon (1980), drawing on the works of Serres (1974). Thus, *sociology of translation* is a completely different research tradition and the use of this term for the study of social aspects of translations and translating in Translation Studies causes confusion.

In this thesis, I will therefore refer to the study of the social aspects of translations and translating as *translation sociology*, as done by Andrew Chesterman (2007) and Holmes (1972), who already envisioned translation sociology as an area of research, however Toury (1995) did not include it in his mind-map (Chesterman, 2009).

Drawing on Holmes' proposal, Chesterman (2006; cited in Chesterman, 2009, p. 16) suggests three strands of a translation sociology:

1. the *sociology of translations*, as products in an international market,
2. the *sociology of translators*,
3. the *sociology of translating*, i.e. the translating process.

Andrew Chesterman has been an advocate of paying more attention to the “people behind the texts” (2009, p.14) for many years. In 2009, he suggested to extend Holmes' map by a new subfield, called *Translator Studies*. The motivation for this new area of research and its objectives will be explained in more detail in the following section.

2.1.4 Translator Studies

In prescriptive and descriptive TS, the *translator* was more of an abstract persona than considered an actual human individual. Sociological processes of translating were included in descriptive TS, analyzing the function of translations in the target culture. It was not until the 1980s, when TS scholars claimed a need for investigating the history of translation, that they also started focusing on the people who produced translations. Topics like the social status of the profession, translators' working conditions and the social impact of translation have since enjoyed increasing attention. However, empirical

research remains “to a large extent still pending.” (Dam & Zethsen, 2010, p. 195)

The term *Translator Studies* was coined by Andrew Chesterman in 2009, when he proposed a new subfield of TS, “which focuses primarily and explicitly on the agents involved in translation, for instance on their activities or attitudes, their interaction with their social and technical environment, or their history and influence.” (Chesterman, 2009, p. 20)

He draws on Holmes’ map (1972, 1988) and argues that a new subfield of TS is developing, including research questions and studies with direct attention to a translator’s agency.

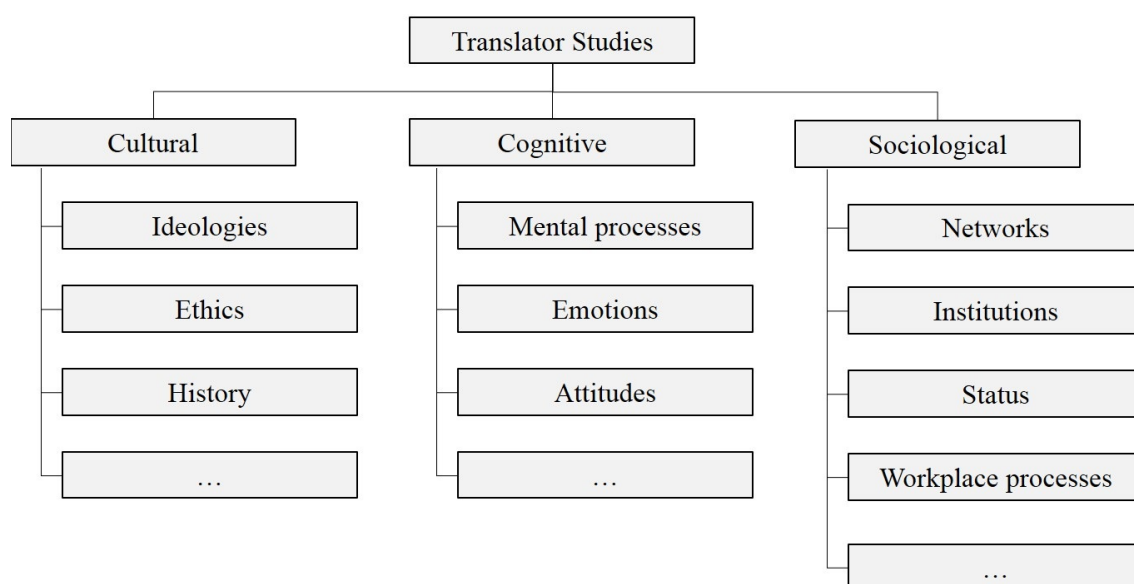


Fig. 2.2: Mind-map of Translator Studies and its sub-branches, adapted from Chesterman (2009)

Translator Studies share three of four sub-branches with TS: culture, cognition and sociological aspects of translation (figure 2.2).

Research in the *cultural strand* focuses on values, ethics, ideologies and traditions and wants to learn more about translators' and interpreters' roles in cultural evolution as well as their impact on history. The *cognitive strand* includes research on mental processes, emotions, personal attitudes, norms and personality which might influence translators' work and the translation. In

the *sociological strand*, networks, institutions, status, and workplace processes are the main areas of interest.

This thesis clearly belongs to Translator Studies, with a strong focus on the sociological strand. However, cognitive aspects (such as norms, personal attitudes and emotions) as well as cultural aspects (such as values and ideologies) will also be of interest in the analysis of professional translators' support networks. Chesterman's approach has yet to be widely adopted and some critical voices do exist:

“I see it more as a subfield of Translation Studies, or rather a particular approach within Translation Studies, as it is informed by and feeds into this wider disciplinary field. I therefore simply suggest labeling [sic!] it the *translator approach* in translation studies.” (Dam, 2013, p. 17; my italics)

For this thesis, the proposed field of Translator Studies proves as a valuable theoretical map to draw on, as it allows to locate the study and its findings within the realms of Translation Studies.

2.2 The Hidden Industry: Translation as a Business

“A translator's work remains invisible for most individuals. Usually, one does not recognize a translation.” commented André Lindemann, president of the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ) in his speech at the international translators' day 2011 (BDÜ, 2011, n.p.; my translation). This perception is also shared among TS scholars who see the translator as “the quintessential servant: efficient, punctual, hardworking, silent and yes, invisible.” (Simeoni, 1998, p. 12), and refer to translators as “a mute, silenced group in society.” (Abdallah, 2012, p. 1)

In 1995, Lawrence Venuti's book “The translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation” has been published and since then, the fact about the perfect translation being “so transparent that it doesn't seem to be translated [...] like a pane of glass” (Shapiro, n.d; cited in Venuti, 1995, p. 1) and the invisibility of translators and interpreters as a result have been repeated, confirmed and elaborated numerous times. Venuti (1995) argues that this invisibility had even been enforced by professional translators themselves and criticizes their

attitude as “a weird self-annihilation, a way of conceiving and practicing translation that undoubtedly reinforces its marginal status.” (p. 7)

Despite this indistinctness, mostly unnoticed by the public, the language services industry (including all language-related services and products²) and the demand for translations have been growing steadily over the past decades (section 2.2.1). The translation industry has developed into an increasingly professional, highly digitalized industrial sector (section 2.2.2), however it remains highly fragmented – with few big players and a large freelance workforce (section 2.2.3).

2.2.1 Overview of the Translation Industry

The translation industry is a sector of the language services industry, which also comprises interpreting services, the software and multimedia localization industry, the language training and consulting industry and specialized software for these industries.

The market for language services in the European Union had a turnover of €8.4 billion in 2008, with translation and interpreting services accounting for €5.7 billion. It is expected to continue growing at 10% p.a. and will exceed a total volume of €16 billion in 2015 (Rinsche & Portera-Zanotti, 2009).

The global market of outsourced language services was worth \$15 billion in 2009 (approximately €11.4 billion) (Beninatto & Kelly, 2009) and reached \$33.5 billion in 2012 (Kelly & DePalma, 2012). The largest market shares can be attributed to Europe (43%) and the USA (40%), followed by Asia (12%) and the rest of the world (5%).

“Translation as a profession has historically been a solitary craft practiced by individuals. In recent decades, however, the globalization of markets (Levitt 1983), the digital revolution, the advent of the information economy (Drucker 1988) and the globalization of production (Ghemawat 2007) have transformed translation from a profession confined primarily to individuals, to a cottage

² This includes translation, interpreting, sign-language interpreting and software/website localization services, as well as language training, language consulting services and the development of specialized software for these services, among others.

industry model and finally to a full-fledged industrial sector (Shreve 1998, 2000).” (Dunne, 2012, p. 143)

Today, the translation industry is “primarily digital, outsourced, and project-driven” (Dunne, 2012, p. 144) which has a significant impact on the working conditions of professional translators.

2.2.2 Outsourcing

During the dot-com boom, the *new economy* appeared as a promise, particularly to industrial and emerging countries which sought to proceed from dying industrialism towards becoming highly productive knowledge economies. The new economy is driven by the development of new technologies, continuous innovation, and new information and communication technology (ICT) (Black & Lynch, 2004). The boom of ICT has also enabled companies to outsource intellectual work and knowledge-based processes which are interchangeable, generate little revenue and are not part of their core strategy (Ungson & Wong, 2008). Handy (1989) calls this manifestation a *shamrock organization* with a three-leaved workforce, consisting of core, flexible and sub-contracted labor.

Of translation buyers, 87% outsource their translation projects partly or fully (Beninatto, 2006). Companies, which participated in the translation business practices survey conducted by the World Bank (2004), outsourced 50% of their translation projects, preferably to medium-sized translation agencies. Their requirements towards translators are diverse and include technological competencies and several years’ working experience.

“A new type of company arose in response to this demand — the language services provider (LSP) — and rapidly established itself as the foundation of a new outsourced services sector.” (Dunne, 2012, p. 144)

The outsourcing process in the language industry (figure 2.3) involves three generic actors: The client (or translation buyer) subcontracts the LSP on a project basis. The LSP acts as a broker between translation buyer and the translator(s) and assumes responsibility for project management, terminology management and quality management, which is particularly important for

large, multilingual translation projects and clients with a frequently high demand for translations. LSPs share the market with smaller, often specialized, translation agencies (also referred to as “boutique agencies”) and freelancers who team up in cooperatives and provide the same services as LSPs (Dunne, 2012).



Fig. 2.3: The language industry subcontracting chain, adapted from Dunne (2012)

Thus, professional translation services have transformed into an industry in which the majority of professionals work freelance (Fraser & Gold, 2000; Holland, Shaw, Westwood, & Harris, 2004; Locke, 2005; Granell-Zafra, 2006). The benefits for translation buyers are obvious: Translation projects can be sub-contracted on a flexible basis and translation costs are reduced.

Freelancing also offers potential benefits to translators, e.g. greater control over working practices, the flexibility of combining translation with other activities and the opportunity to specialize and build an individual niche for professional activity (Gold & Fraser, 2002). The professionalization of the translation industry also involves an increasing demand for differentiated technical specializations (Fraser & Gold, 2001).

On the other hand, there is also a downside to freelancing. Besides the general risks of being out of range of stable employment, such as income uncertainty and a lack of collective representation (Osnowitz, 2007), there are some disadvantages of freelancing which apply particularly to the translation industry. The requirement to work freelance when pursuing a career in translation puts a lot of pressure on professional translators. Translation buyers expect high-quality translations in increasingly shorter time periods (Granell-Zafra, 2006) and the perception of translation as a commodity fosters pricing pressure, which makes it particularly difficult for freelancers and small

translation agencies to survive on a progressively competitive market (Dunne, 2012).

Another recent disruption of the translation industry, which is closely related to the outsourcing trend, is the rise of intellectual or *electronic sweatshops* (Garson, 1988) in developing countries and crowd-sourced business models, which combine (sometimes even voluntary) semi-skilled intellectual labor with machine translation technologies, by splitting texts up into segments and having these information bits and pieces translated by a number of different individuals. These approaches try to make use of the economy of scale, by unbundling specialization and labor (Smith, 1937), which – as Dunne argues convincingly – does not work as easily in translating, due to the fact that it requires understanding of context and decision-making abilities:

“dividing labor and increasing scale can actually increase the work effort required of an individual translator or other project participant. For example, the disaggregation of work and division of labor typically results in the separation of translatable text from the manner of its presentation. Thus, translators [...] are faced with the prospect of translating text without context. The presentation of disembodied text complicates not only the translation decision-making process, but the very act of understanding the text as a whole and the communicative undertaking of which it is an artifact.” (2012, pp. 154-155)

Weckerle and Theler (2010) affirm this notion for creative goods and services in general. Creative products are experienced products, characterized by a certain degree of singularity. Their level of quality or adequacy is based on the subjective perception of any single user. Therefore, standardization is only possible to a limited degree and it is not expedient to apply the same standards as used in industrial production.

The threat of outsourcing has long been used for intimidating workers to speed up the work rate or put pressure on the price of labor and companies now also apply these strategies to intellectual work (Ross, 2007). Labor researchers agree that this development fosters economic exploitation and that companies have to be held responsible if they charge western-country rates for products and services but pay foreign workers lower wages (Ness, 2007). The ongoing

commoditization of the translation market could have a severely negative impact on the entire translation ecosystem, as Levitt puts it: “Historically, companies that have taken and stayed resolutely on the commodity path, even when they have driven their costs deeply down, have gone extinct.” (1991, p. 134)

2.2.3 The Freelance Workforce

Freelance translators are “the type of translators who seem to dominate the translation market globally” (Pym, Grin, Sfreddo, & Chan, 2012, p. 88). It can only be estimated just how many individuals actually work as freelance translators. Since the occupational title *translator* is not legally protected in most countries, anyone can offer translation services and statistics and estimations available differ widely (ibid.).

If we take Germany as an example, we can see that estimations and statistics deliver largely differing numbers: According to Rinsche and Portera-Zanotti (2009), 6,000 individuals worked as employed and self-employed translators and/or interpreters in Germany in 2006. The authors obtained this number from data available from the German Federal Bureau of Statistics. According to the official employment statistics of the German Federal Employment Agency, however, more than 6,800 individuals were employed as translators and/or interpreters in March 2011 – a number which exceeds the total number of freelancers and employees in the translation and interpreting sectors presented by Rinsche and Portera-Zanotti (2009). According to the German VAT (value-added tax) statistics, 6,154 freelance interpreters and 1,488 translation bureaus were registered in Germany in 2008 (destatis, n.d.).

Although the numbers refer to different occupational images and employment status, these range mostly from around 6,000 to 7,000 individuals working in the translation (and interpreting) industry. Surprisingly came a statement from the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators, BDÜ, which announced in a press release that 40,000 individuals work as interpreters and translators in Germany, with 70% to 80% of them working in a freelance capacity (BDÜ, 2011).

According to an estimation by the Belgian Quality Translation Association, more than 200,000 individuals work as freelance translators worldwide (Boucau, 2005). A more recent estimation by the authors of the European Commission report “The status of the translation profession in the European Union” assumes that roughly 333,000 individuals work as translators and/or interpreters worldwide (Pym et al., 2012). With Germany accounting for about one third of the translation turnover worldwide (ibid.), the BDÜ estimation of 40,000 translators and interpreters working in Germany appears realistic.

One reason for these differing numbers is the characteristic of translation as a *boundaryless career* (cf. section 2.4). These careers can take on various forms and are shaped by an individual’s competencies, project networks and entrepreneurial activities (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Translators are also considered *portfolio workers* (Gold & Fraser, 2002), who offer a selection of specialized professional services and, thus, successfully occupy individualized niches in a diverse market. Due to the distinctness of freelance translators’ careers and occupational profiles, it is conceivable that statistics only capture proportions of the entire group of professional translators in a country, based on the sampling criteria. The German VAT statistics, for example, include only those businesses and self-employed workers who had an annual turnover of more than €17,500 p.a. Many translators who work part-time or are not yet well established in the market will therefore generate less turnover and are not included here.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the occupational situation and working conditions of freelance translators, it is therefore essential to locate translation as a profession (section 2.3). The discussion of professional and occupational association will provide deeper insights in how freelance translators act as a professional group.

2.3 Pinpointing Translators as a Professional Group

Translators are members of the liberal professions (section 2.3.1), however they also belong to the creative industries. Their participation in the creative and

culture industries (section 2.3.2) is not yet widely recognized where most recent reports concerning the creative industries ignore translators as a growing professional group that belongs to certain creative industries, providing their services to them collectively. The concepts of Florida's creative class (section 2.3.3) and social network markets (section 2.3.4) offer further perspectives on the translation ecosystem and the role of professional (freelance) translators in the creative industries.

2.3.1 The Liberal Professions

Professional translators and interpreters are members of the liberal professions (BFB, 2012) and belong to the group of *language and information mediating professions*, together with journalists and writers.

Physicians, dentists, engineers, lawyers and architects, among others, are also members of the liberal professions who engage per definition in business

“activities which involve a marked intellectual character, require high-level qualifications and are usually subject to clear and strict professional regulation. In the exercise of such an activity, the personal element is of special importance and such exercise always involves a large measure of independence in the accomplishment of the professional activities.” (BFB, 2012)

It has been argued elsewhere that professional translators and interpreters do not meet the classification of the liberal professions per se, as they do not enjoy the “clear and strict professional regulation” (as defined by the European Court of Justice), memberships in guilds nor the support of own staff, as would be typical for members of the liberal professions (Betzelt & Gottschall, 2005). In contrary to most other liberal professions, translation and interpreting are non-regulated professions. General law applies, but there are no specific professional regulations, certification or education requirements. Anyone can work as a translator or interpreter.

Freelance translators are directly confronted with the market. Still, numerous studies relevant to highly skilled, high-wage freelancers in other industries (e.g. software engineers) claim they enjoy high levels of satisfaction with their working conditions (Betzelt & Gottschall, 2005; Osnowitz, 2010). Independent

of established frameworks and lobbyist representations that apply to other labor, these freelancers create their own strategies of establishing and maintaining long-term business relationships. These relationships provide regulatory control and carry professional norms (Osnowitz, 2007).

2.3.2 The Creative Industries

After the emergence of private and business Internet use, enabled by the invention of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) in 1989 and the first browser application in 1993 (Meschnig & Stuhr, 2001), the creative industries developed into hybrid industries, now relying on both traditional business models and the digital economy (Tapscott, 1995).

Various labels for the creative economy, its industries, sectors and actors have been introduced over the past century. Most of these terms are continuously refined and critically discussed by academics, media representatives and policy makers. While politicians and international organizations advertise the creative industries as an economic asset and a driver of cultural diversity, some academics address criticisms to this hype, claiming it refers to a field of industrial and non-industrial sectors, which remains difficult to define and of which we still do not know very much about (UNESCO, 2013).

The term *creative economy* “was popularized in 2001 by the British writer and media manager John Howkins, who applied it to 15 industries extending from the arts to science and technology” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 20). The term refers to the value of creative (and cultural) activities, processes and skills which influence a broad spectrum of industries, products and services originating in economic sectors that are not considered *creative* by nature (Kari, 2011). Several models of the creative economy exist, e.g. the British layers model described by Söndermann, Backes, Arndt, and Brünink (2009). Another detailed model was introduced by Petra Torjonne (as cited in Kari, 2011, p. 7-8) and explains the set-up of the creative economy as well as the roles of its four layers (figure 2.4).

Arts and cultural heritage constitute the core of the creative economy. The second layer includes entrepreneurship in arts and culture and is wrapped by a

third layer comprised of entrepreneurship in the creative industries. The outer layer includes business activity in all other, mostly traditional, sectors which make use of the knowledge and innovation of entrepreneurs in the creative industries (Kari, 2011).

Sometimes, another differentiation is made between creative, culture and copyright industries. These three will be discussed below, with a special emphasis on the creative industries.

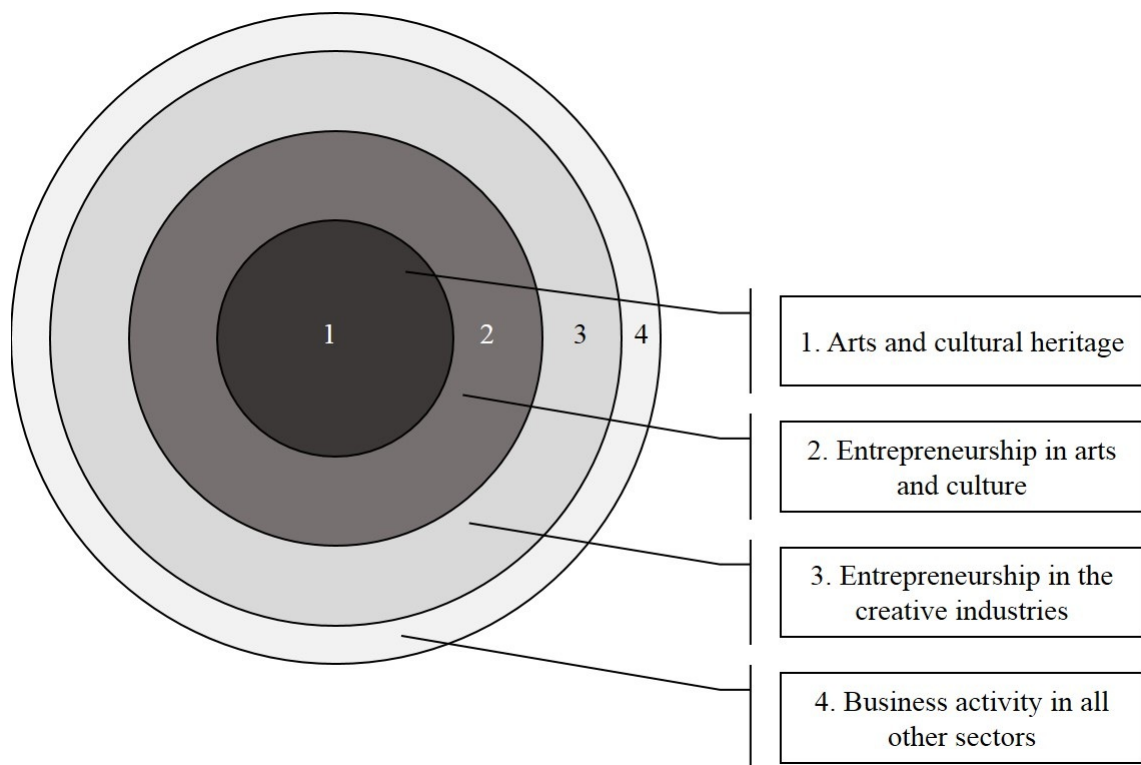


Fig. 2.4: Onion model of the creative economy, adapted from Kari (2011)

The term *cultural industries* was originally introduced by sociologists of the Frankfurt School in the early 20th century as a pejorative notion for the popular culture industry influenced by and carrying capitalist ideology (Horkheimer, 1982). Through the second half of the 20th century, it was recognized that the culture and economy do not necessarily have to be mutually hostile areas of activity. The commodification and productization of arts and culture is expected to foster economic development and is therefore promoted by UNESCO since the 1980ies. The cultural industries include music, art, writing, fashion and design, and media industries, such as radio,

publishing, film and television production. “Its scope is not limited to technology-intensive production as a great deal of cultural production in developing countries is crafts-intensive.” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 20)

Translators also belong to the *core copyright industries*, more specifically to the Press and Literature industry group, subgroup *authors, writers, translators*. “The core copyright industries are industries that are wholly engaged in creation, production and manufacturing, performance, broadcast, communication and exhibition, or distribution and sales of works and other protected subject matter.” (WIPO, n.d.)

The *creative industries* are defined as “a set of knowledge-based activities, focused on but not limited to arts, potentially generating revenues from trade and intellectual property rights”, offering “tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value and market objectives” and located at “the virtual cross-road among the artisan, services and industrial sector” (UNCTAD, 2008, p. 13). Another definition of the creative industries includes all “commercial enterprises that are engaged in the creation, production and (media) distribution of creative and cultural goods and services” (Müller, 2013, p.12).

The creative industries have been recognized as a new dynamic sector in world trade (UNCTAD, 2008) and a driver of growth, economic well-being, and new business models (Kari, 2011) particularly by western countries (figure 2.5). They are expected to create above-average growth and job creation and function as “vehicles of cultural identity that play an important role in fostering cultural diversity” (UNESCO, n.d.). In most developed countries, the creative industries are the fastest growing economic sector (Gutmann, 2014). This has of course been noticed by policy making authorities and many countries have launched programs for fostering and supporting entrepreneurial activities in these sectors (DCMS, 2008), which offer support with financial, educational and networking issues.

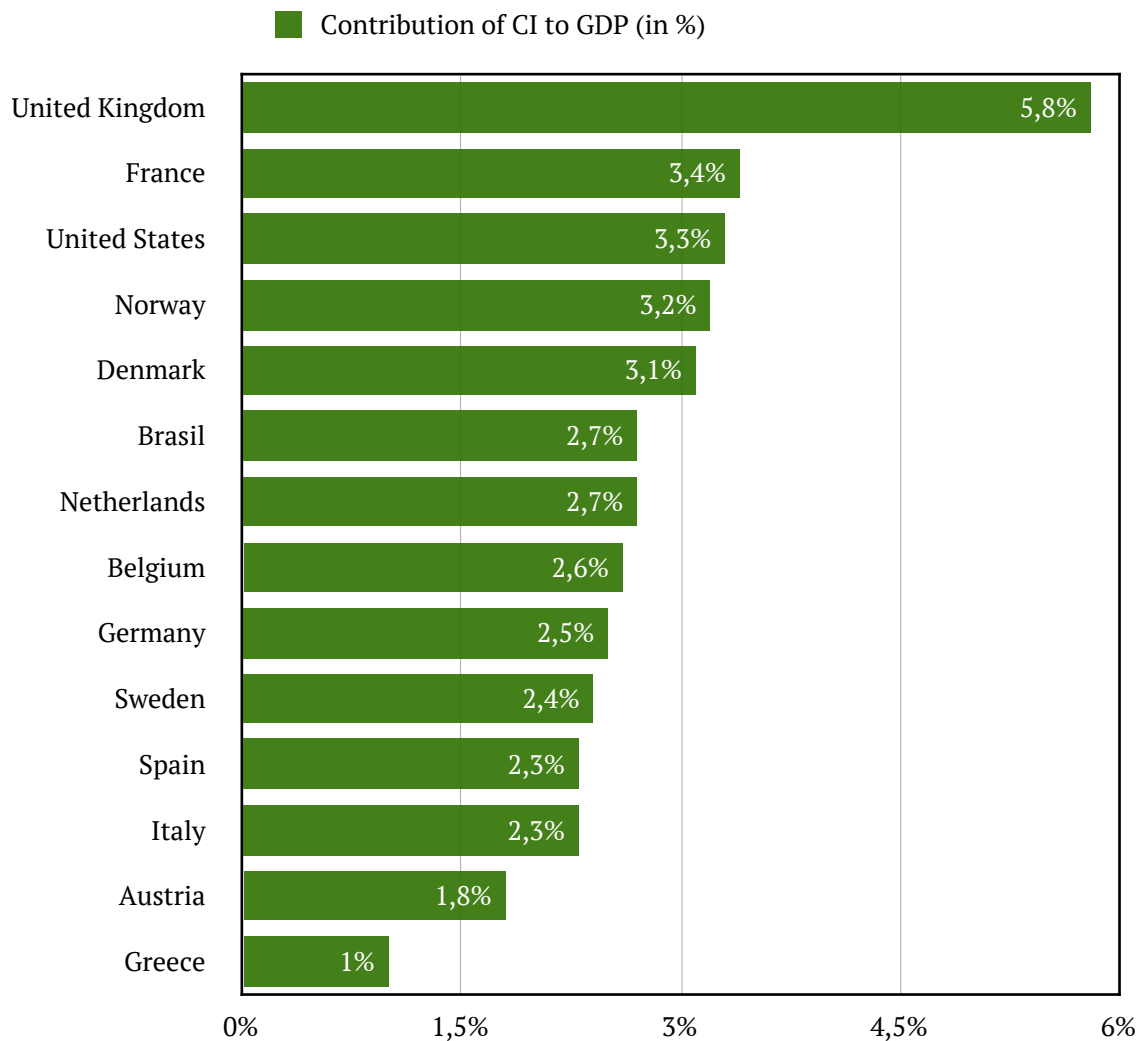


Fig. 2.5: Contribution of the creative industries to the gross domestic product of selected countries in 2010 (FIRJAN, 2012)

Critics argue that mere promotion, without changing the working conditions of individuals in the creative industries, may also foster negative effects: A growing workforce, consisting of younger freelance workers in particular, hold multiple jobs based on irregular, short-term contracts, offering little job protection. This leads to uncertain career prospects and earnings and, over the long-term, precarious living and even old-age poverty (Keller & Seifert, 2004).

“If that is so, then policies that argue for the radical expansion of these industries under present conditions, as ‘creative industries policies’ do, without attention to the conditions of creative labor, risk generating labor markets marked by irregular, insecure and unprotected work.” (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010, p. 5)

A general-purpose example of a list of the creative industries has been developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Similar to Torjonne's onion model of the creative economy (which has been introduced above), the UNCTAD classification allocates the distinct creative industries to the sectors heritage, arts, media and functional creations (figure 2.6). Translation is not mentioned in the UNCTAD reports (UNCTAD, 2008, 2010), despite the fact that translators obtain an important role in industries such as in Publishing and Printed Media, taking on significant parts of the production process of goods and services in industries such as Audiovisuals and New Media.

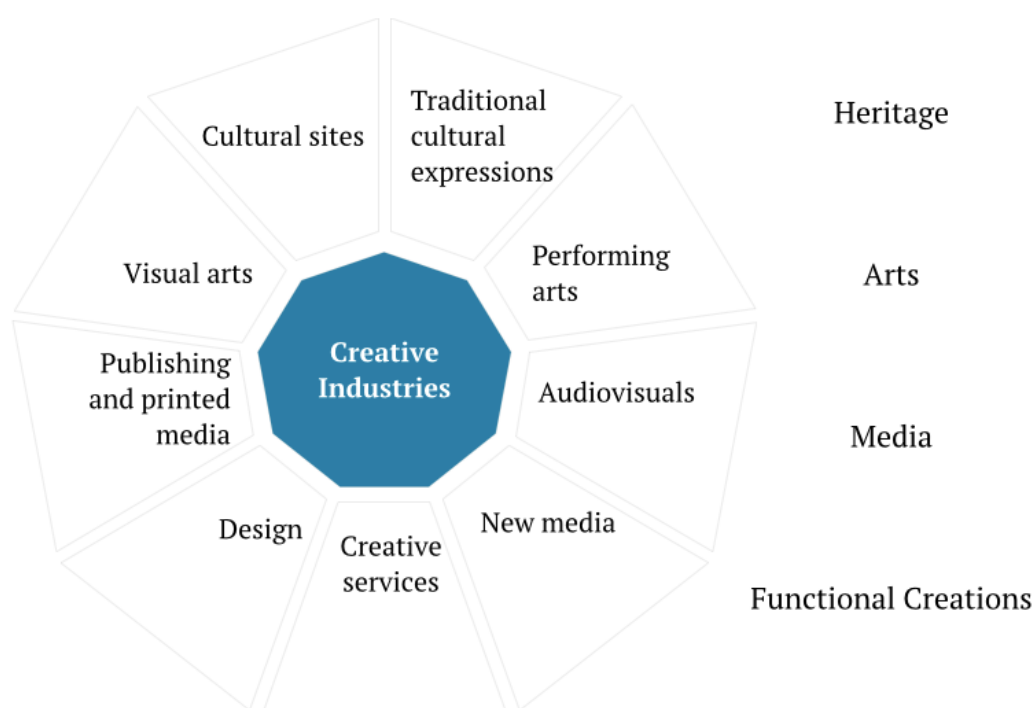


Fig. 2.6: Classification of the creative industries, adapted from UNCTAD (2008)

However, each nation takes their own approach at developing, supporting and classifying the creative industries according to their own governance and economic vision. When looking at the creative industries sectors in different countries at one point in time, one must consider that the field is in constant flux as to the technological development, advances rapidly and new innovative services and products appear on a continuing basis (Kari, 2011). Upon

examining official reports on the creative industries of a random selection of countries, it becomes obvious that the authors of these reports treat the translation industry inconsistently. A few examples:

The official report from **Switzerland** (ZHDK, 2008, p. 43) lists translators and interpreters as members of the *print media market*, with 650 firms employing a total of 1671 individuals.

In **Austria**, translators belong to the *cultural and creative professions* and the *content industry*, which includes film, literature, journalism, composition, acting, text creation and translating (Sturm, 2010, p. 4). In 2008, 2,643 individuals worked as “translators, interpreters and other linguists” (ÖISCO, 2008³).

In **Germany**, the government report “Monitoring of Selected Economic Key Data on Culture and Creative Industries” was first published in 2009 and did not mention translators. The most recent report, published in 2012, lists translators as members of the *book market*, and states that 4,711 self-employed translators were working in this sector in 2010 (Söndermann, 2010).

The authors of a report from the **United Kingdom** declare translation to be a non-creative professional activity, but still include it, as the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system does not leave them a choice:

“A sector which has passed the threshold is Translation and interpretation activities (SIC 74.30)⁴. It could be argued that this is a false position. The SOC code of relevance here is ‘Authors, writers and translators’ and it could be argued that: (i) while authors and writers are clearly creative, translators are less so, (ii) we note that all the creative people on this SIC group are undoubtedly Translators and (iii) so conclude that this SIC group is included because the

³ The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) belongs to the international family of economic and social classifications. It is one of the main international classifications for which the International Labor Organization is responsible. The recent version used is ISCO-08, dating back to year 2008.

(<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/>; retrieved March 5, 2014)

⁴ The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) is a system for classifying industries by a four-digit code. Established in the United States in 1937, it is used by government agencies to classify industry areas. (Definition taken from [wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_Industrial_Classification); Link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_Industrial_Classification; retrieved March 5, 2014)

SOC⁵ does not separate out sufficiently creative roles (authors and writers) from non-creative roles (translators).” (Spilsbury & Godward, 2013, p. 22)

The translation industry adds economic advantage to the *creative industries* in **Lebanon**, particularly in the capital Beirut, where the broadcasting and film sector is thriving:

“Beirut is the broadcasting center for the Arab world, with a Pan-Arab market of some 280m people. It is the production (and post-production) center for television programs, as well as for cinema, with regional advantages in terms of film locations, creative writers, actors and directors, a continuing influx of technical graduates from Lebanese university’s (although many choose to work abroad) and a comparative advantage in translators, with many creative people in Beirut fluent in (at least) three languages.” (Hill, 2008, p. 9)

In **Canada**, translators, terminologists and interpreters belong to the *Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport* with approximately 12,350 individuals working in these areas between 2009 and 2011 (Service Canada, 2013).

Selected reports from **Finland** (Kari, 2011) the **USA** (Keegan, Kleiman, Siegel, & Kane, 2005) and **Brasil** (FIRJAN, 2011) do not mention translators and interpreters.

Although not widely recognized as such, the translation industry can be referred to as a creative sector, which provides creative services to all other creative industries, including (but not limited to) pre-press and pre-media services for the publishing sector, sales and marketing material adaptation, international communications services and consulting, as well as language services for motion picture, video and TV post-production. Another important and quickly growing sector with a high demand in translation and localization services is the *software and game development* industry. This observation fits

5 The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is a United States government system of classifying occupations. It is used by U.S. federal government agencies collecting occupational data, enabling comparison of occupations across data sets. It is designed to cover all occupations in which work is performed for pay or profit, reflecting the current occupational structure in the United States. (Definition taken from wikipedia.org; Link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_Occupational_Classification_System; retrieved March 5, 2014)

well with the recommendation of the UNCTAD Creative Economy Report authors to base the classification of the creative industries on products and services instead of sectors, since the sub-sectors are very heterogeneous and a clear assignment is therefore impossible (UNCTAD, 2008).

2.3.3 The Creative Class

Florida's creative class (Florida, 2002) is "a cohort of professional, scientific and artistic workers whose presence generates economic, social and cultural dynamism, especially in urban areas." (UNCTAD, 2008, p. 16) Florida distinguishes between two groups, the *super-creative core* (scientists, engineers, actors, poets and designers) and the group of *creative professionals* (high-tech service professionals, lawyers and health care professionals). These professionals make up for a large group of freelance workers who occupy the top end of the labor market: "Slightly more than 10 million American workers, or seven percent of the workforce, are self-employed [...]. More than four million (43 percent) of those self-employed workers are members of the creative class" (Florida, 2013, n.p.). They are liberal and cosmopolitan, seeking a vibrant cultural life and cultural diversity. They all "share a common creative ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit" (UNCTAD, 2008, p. 16).

Florida's thesis has been both welcomed and criticized by policymakers and urban researchers (as discussed by Peck (2005) and Nathan (2007)). However, it provides a fresh perspective on how members of the creative class shape their occupations and new modes of working, based on self-management, peer recognition and intrinsic motivation (Coenen, 2006).

2.3.4 Social Network Markets

Potts and colleagues propose to refer to Florida's creative class as *social network markets*, arguing that these markets have emerged from an economic sector which was traditionally based on cultural services and personal imagination and, thus, was not subject to market-based mechanisms. In the recent past, however, a vibrant sector has developed, with a high market value and which is

seen to have positive impact on a country's economy. The creative class should therefore be regarded as an *emergent market economy* (Potts, Cunningham, Hartley, & Ormerod, 2008) and not as an industry (or industrial economy), because the market mechanisms of these economies are profoundly different:

“The central economic concern, we argue, is not with the character of inputs or outputs in production or consumption per se, or even with competitive structures, but with the character of the markets that coordinate this industry. We think they are both complex and social, and that this offers a useful analytic foundation.” (Potts et al., 2008, p. 170)

The distinctive difference of social network markets are, thus, the underlying complex social network structures. These play a significant role in signaling and coordination of business activities, e.g. in the form of social referrals: “The [creative industries] rely, to a greater extent than other socio-economic activity, on ‘word of mouth’ [...]” (ibid., p. 4) Creative services are mostly intangible and interested buyers do not possess the necessary information concerning the quality of the product they are going to buy. Additionally, the services and goods offered by the creative class have a certain degree of novelty, a characteristic which is wanted but also carries uncertainty. Other people's buying choices therefore carry valuable information for prospective clients and reduce the information asymmetry (Dunne, 2012) in the market.

In order to gain a better understanding of economic processes in the creative industries, and particularly the translation industry, it is essential to analyze the underlying social network structures as *tangible social constructions* (White, 2002), which organize these industries (Neff, 2005).

2.4 Boundaryless Careers in the Creative Industries

There are an increasing number of highly differentiated social and professional existences in the creative industries, of which self-employed workers constitute a growing group. In western countries, freelancers are widely regarded as privileged professional group (Bögenhold & Fachinger, 2010), with high social status and income. They are expected to create innovation and jobs, contribute to the growth and health of national and international economies (Europäische

Kommission, 2012) and foster the cultural revaluation of regions and business locations (Kari, 2011).

Others regard this development as a “gradual erosion of internal labor markets” (Shevchuk & Strebkov, 2012, p.3), which result in an increased risk and unpredictable careers for employees and contract workers (Osnowitz, 2010). This dualism led to an increased interest of researchers in entrepreneurship, small businesses and self-employed work (e.g. Osnowitz, 2006 and 2007; Bögenhold & Fachinger, 2010; Audretsch, 2012; Barnes, D. et al., 2012; Kitching & Smallbone, 2012; Anwar & Daniel, 2014).

Non-standard employment can take on different forms. In the creative industries, owners of micro-firms (i.e. consisting of only one person) are usually referred to as freelancers (section 2.4.1) or entrepreneurs (section 2.4.2) – two notions, which also apply to self-employed professionals in the translation industry. A common understanding all researchers share about successful non-standard careers is the importance of competencies, networking capabilities and entrepreneurial behavior (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). However, there is “no typical freelancer; they vary in personal, work and organizational characteristics and these are likely to influence business processes and outcomes” (Kitching & Smallbone, 2012, p. 86).

The vision of a global electronic market for freelancers – the e-lance market – (section 2.4.3.) has been thought up years before web-based and social technologies enabled online collaboration and e-business as we know it today. Freelancers in the creative industries spend a great deal of time on the preservation of steady employment and future employability (Batt, Christopherson, Rightor, & Van Jaarsveld, 2001). Companies who subcontract work, on the other hand, want to ensure they find the right professionals for their projects. This generates a growing market for web-based platforms, which provide a technical infrastructure for matching contracting professionals with projects and prospective clients (e.g. odesk.com), also in the language industry (e.g. ProZ.com).

2.4.1 Freelancing

The term *freelancer* or *freelance worker* is originally that jargon used by professionals in some industries (e.g. media, consulting) to refer to individuals who work on their own account, without employees, and engage in project-based work relationships with clients. Kitching and Smallbone (2012) present a comprehensive definition of the term freelancer, based on an extensive literature review on the topic:

“Freelancers might be defined as those genuinely in business on their own account, working alone or with co-owning partners or co-directors, responsible for generating their own work and income, but who do not employ others. [...] Freelancers operate under a range of legal business forms: as self-employed sole proprietors or partners in unincorporated businesses, as directors of their own limited companies, and as [pay-as-you-earn] umbrella company employees. Freelancers generally work for clients under a contract for services and are responsible for paying their own tax and national insurance [...]” (pp. 76-77)

This definition is certainly applicable to freelance translators (cf. section 3.1). In research literature, other terms are also used to refer to highly skilled freelancers, such as *independent contractors*, *contract professionals*, *independent service providers*, or *free agents*, and each of them carries a slightly distinct notion (Shevchuk & Strebkov, 2012).

The designation of freelancing as a *new career* carries a positive connotation. It is perceived to positively influence self-perception and allow greater control of one’s work-life-balance (Arnold & Jackson, 1997). Freelancers, and particularly those in the creative and new media industries, are also considered portfolio workers (Handy, 1990; Gold & Fraser, 2002).

The concept of *portfolio work* was first introduced by Charles Handy (1985), who proposed that people should consider everything they do – paid and unpaid work – as their careers. Portfolio workers are independent of any employer and combine their skills and competencies in various ways (Mallon, 1998) to do “multiple jobs [...] in multiple fields with multiple companies” (Chipman, 1993, p. 43). This notion attributes flexibility and control to individuals drawing on a portfolio of services to offer, and therefore, might enjoy a larger number of

project opportunities. Clinton and colleagues agree with this perception, however, they also found negative aspects of portfolio work, such as income insecurity, social isolation and a lack of control over working conditions. They argue that psychological strength is another important characteristic of these freelancers:

“portfolio work is a satisfying experience when there is financial security and control over what work is done. However, if these and other crucial elements are missing, the experience can become unpleasant. It seems that a successful portfolio worker must be able to manage a portfolio of critical psychological processes as well as a portfolio of work.” (Clinton, Totterdell, & Wood, 2006, p. 198)

A similar concept to portfolio work is that of the *boundaryless career* (Mirvis & Hall, 1994), which refers to the fact that freelancing is a type of non-standard employment which takes place outside the boundaries of an organization (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). These careers are also boundaryless in the sense that traditional assumptions of what a career is and the perception of an ongoing, vertical career following “a scripted progression of stages” (Osnowitz, 2010, p. 9) do no longer apply here. The term also embraces any “forms of outsourcing, project networking, the role of career breaks and trends towards multi-employer careers” (Gold & Fraser, 2002, p. 581).

A negatively connoted expression is the one of *contingent* work, carrying a notion of instability (Osnowitz, 2010). Although *contingency* is a broad term with no fixed definition, it is used for non-standard work arrangements (such as short-term assignments and part-time work) mostly occupied by women (Lombard, 2001), younger workers, and older workers near retirement (Osnowitz, 2010). Short-term and limited project-based contracts, irregular working hours and a low, insecure income are a common reality for these workers. The entrepreneurial risk is exceptionally high, since they participate in volatile markets subject to changing trends (Weckerle & Theler, 2010). Many self-employed workers do not have access to benefits and fallback systems established by traditional labor policy or labor unions (Maschke, 2005).

Other colloquial expressions for individuals running their own business without employees are *solopreneur* and *micropreneur*, both suggesting a situation of shifting for oneself, while acting and thinking entrepreneurially.

2.4.2 Entrepreneurship

Similar as in the scientific discussion about freelancing and boundaryless careers, there is an ongoing debate about the definition and interpretation of entrepreneurship, which changes over history. The activities and personality traits have attracted researchers, media and policy makers who believe that entrepreneurship helps economies to grow, drives innovation and generates new jobs. Many researchers agree on rather fuzzy adjectives to define the entrepreneur such as hardworking, flexible, and risk-taking (Howorth, Tempest, & Coupland, 2005), alert to opportunities (Kirzner, 1979), and point out that entrepreneurs found businesses (Gartner, W.B., 1989). Others criticize the stereotypes connected with the concept of entrepreneurship as too positive and ideologically biased (e.g. Bögenhold, Heinonen, & Akola, 2013): “Not all entrepreneurs aim at growing or creating wealth. Also, their job creation may be limited to themselves only. This does not imply, however, that their contribution would not be valuable or needed in society.”

Although entrepreneurship is not associated with translating by most Translation Studies researchers (see, e.g. Abdallah (2012), who refers to translators as *micro-entrepreneurs*), it is obvious that professional freelance translators have to act and think entrepreneurially in order to stay viable. According to Bögenhold and his colleagues, the public image of translators might not match with the popularly accepted perception of entrepreneurial behavior, nevertheless, they act “at the blurred boundaries between waged work and entrepreneurship” (2013, p. 6).

When entering the industry as newcomers, professional translators have to go through the same stages as all entrepreneurs: First, they think about starting their own business. Once they take action to put their plan into practice, they become nascent entrepreneurs and face the challenge of mastering the second transition to firm birth (Reynolds, Carter, Gartner, & Greene, 2004). Nascent

entrepreneurs are obliged to write a business plan, develop product models, create a legal identity, and organize a start-up team (ibid.). In this phase, they must activate tangible and intangible resources, such as potential clients and suppliers, financial capital, emotional support, as well as knowledge and experience (Batjargal, 2003; Liao & Welsch, 2005). These resources are most typically gained through social networks, first consisting of family, friends, former employers, and colleagues (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998). At a later stage, these social networks are extended by relations with other entrepreneurs, lawyers, financiers and others (Semrau & Werner, 2012). However, “rather than searching for one generalizable definition of the entrepreneur [researchers] should focus on a relevant aspect of what entrepreneurs do” (Howorth et al., 2005, p. 38).

It is known from anecdotal evidence that traditionally, nascent professional freelance translators build a professional network by establishing ties with more experienced professional translators, e.g. through joining a professional translators’ association, attending area meetings or trainings. Nowadays, these activities can be transitioned into the social web and specialized online communities and online marketplaces for translators appear to be used for these purposes (Risku & Dickinson, 2009).

2.4.3 The E-Lance Market

Already in 1998, Malone and Laubacher envisioned an electronic market for freelance workers, which they named the *E-Lance Market*:

“The fundamental unit of such an economy is not the corporation but the individual. Tasks aren’t assigned and controlled through a stable chain of management but rather are carried out autonomously by independent contractors. These electronically connected freelancers – e-lancers – join together into fluid and temporary networks to produce and sell goods and services. When the job is done – after a day, a month, a year – the network dissolves, and its members become independent agents again, circulating through the economy, seeking the next assignment.” (p. 146)

This vision of an electronic market for freelance workers has certainly become reality for many freelancers, although this might not hold true for the majority

of their business transactions. Gouadec emphasizes that, nowadays, every translator “is a virtual ‘expat’ whose skills and competences and language combination are available online at any time.” (Gouadec, 2007, p. 175)

However, contract professionals have been found to benefit most from assignments, which are generated from social relations. Anonymous transactions between clients and freelancers carry an increased risk of moral hazard (Shevchuk & Strebkov, 2012). As referrals from (former) clients and colleagues are the main source for new projects, freelancers are keen on maintaining trusted long-term business relationships with their clients (Fraser & Gold, 2001).

This vision of an e-lance market is just one example of economic action taking place in small temporary systems (Cattani, Ferriani, Frederiksen, & Täube, 2011) which have become reality with the emergence of the World Wide Web. This trend can also be observed in the translation industry, in the manifestation of *production networks*: “Production networks have been identified as the prevailing working environment in present-day translation industry [...], sets of inter-firm relationships that bind a group of firms of different sizes, including micro-entrepreneurs, into larger economic units.” (Abdallah, 2010, p. 6) As homeworkers, most freelance translators work remotely and depend on information and communication technology for collaborating with peers and clients.

The digitalization and the projectization of translation work has led to the birth, growth and diversification of the translation industry as we know it today (Shreve, 1998, 2000; Dunne & Dunne, 2011). And the rapid technological development causes further disruptions:

“As with previous technological breakthroughs, there are gains and losses in quality, and winners and losers at work in the process of technological change. [...] In relation to jobs, there have been major shifts in the composition of employment across the sector as a result of technological change – including growth in some areas and occupations, some relocation of work to other countries or sectors, and cutbacks in employment in specific segments and occupa-

tions. [...] some workers may accept contracts with lower pay and poorer conditions than in the past, rather than have no work at all.” (ILO, 2004, p. 14)

The World Wide Web as globally accessible virtual space for information, social interaction and production, functions as an enabler for collaboration and communication independent of location and time zone. As such, it is also an enabler for the division, outsourcing and offshoring of intellectual work.

2.5 The Promises of the Social Web

The World Wide Web was welcomed with great enthusiasm: “[The Internet] makes the market system [...] work better. Those parts of the world that embrace the Internet will find themselves better able to compete than those who lag behind.” (Cairncross, 1997, n.p.)

The second generation web-technologies – also referred to as Web 2.0 – enabled user-generated content, social networking and user participation (O’Reilly, 2005), and were announced to revolutionize virtual work: “The excitement is understandable. The potential for knowledge sharing today is unmatched in history. Never before have so many creative and knowledgeable people been connected by such an efficient, universal network.” (Gruber, 2008, p. 1) Large enterprises have adopted social technologies in order to gain more efficiency and innovative power by applying the participative principles of the social web to internal processes and work practices (Wolf, 2011). Andrew McAfee (2006) has coined the name *Enterprise 2.0* for these companies:

“These new digital platforms for generating, sharing and refining information are already popular on the Internet, where they’re collectively labeled ‘Web 2.0’ technologies. I use the term ‘Enterprise 2.0’ to focus only on those platforms that companies can buy or build in order to make visible the practices and outputs of their knowledge workers.” (p. 23)

Closely linked to globalization, this digital revolution led to a significant transformation of the creative industries and a convergence of the creative sectors with information and communication technology industries (ILO, 2004).

The emergence of the social web has had a significant impact on knowledge work and the information society. Particularly social networking services have developed into *collective knowledge systems* (Gruber, 2008), which support information sharing, virtual collaboration and social interaction on a global scale. Online marketplaces and communities which use these technologies are considered valuable for self-employed workers who want to acquire new clients and projects beyond their personal social networks.

The term *social web* refers to all web-based applications which support social structures, communication and collaboration. In scientific discourse, the term *social web* is often preferred over the buzzword *Web 2.0*, which indicates the social aspects of the worldwide web (WWW), but also comprises technological and design elements as well as typical web-based business models.

Tim O'Reilly first used the term Web 2.0 for the name of a conference on the next generation inter-web in 2007 and it attracted great interest by the media and the web-community. His definition highlights both social and technological aspects of Web 2.0:

“Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an ‘architecture of participation’, and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences.” (O'Reilly, 2007, p. 17)

The Web 2.0 had been quickly adopted by members of the creative industries and media professionals as a low-cost business infrastructure. Others rejected the new concept as hype, arguing that Web 2.0 was not as revolutionary as O'Reilly suggested⁶, but only a further development of already existing web-technologies and a better realization of its underlying principles and ideas.

Recently, social applications are regarded as strategic software tools for businesses (McKinsey, 2013). Gartner analysts rank social software applications

⁶ See Alby (2007) for a detailed discussion.

among the top ten strategic technologies of the future: “[By] 2016, social technologies will be integrated with most business applications. Companies should bring together their social CRM, internal communications and collaboration, and public social site initiatives into a coordinated strategy.” (2010, n.p.)

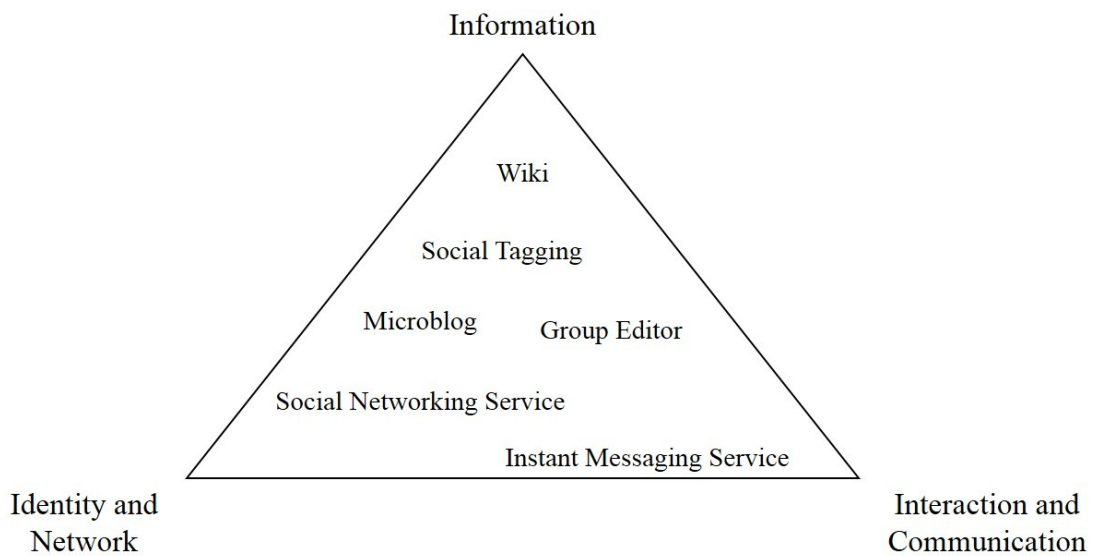


Fig. 2.7: The social software triangle, adapted from Koch and Richter (2009)

Social technologies use network and scaling effects, indirect and direct interpersonal interaction (coexistence, communication, coordination and cooperation) to reproduce and support the management of user identities and relationships (Koch & Richter, 2009). Examples of social technologies are weblogs, microblogs, wikis, group editors, applications for social tagging and social bookmarking, social networking services, and instant messaging⁷. These applications are classified according to the use cases they support (figure 2.7). According to Koch and Richter’s social software triangle (2009), a social networking service like Facebook or LinkedIn would be used to maintain a personal or professional network and build an online identity. A wiki (e.g. wikipedia.org) would be used to exchange and obtain information.

⁷ The applications listed here have already existed for about ten years now and are used in private and professional settings, and have received much media coverage as well. Therefore, I will spare a detailed explanation of the applications and would like to refer the readers to Koch and Richter (2009), if they wish to gain deeper insight into the matter.

Communication among individuals would take place in an instant messaging service (such as Skype chat or Windows messenger). Applications like weblogs can be used for several scenarios, for example the interaction and communication with a community of followers and the dissemination of information and ideas. Although it is not included in the social software triangle, weblogs are also used by professionals to build an online identity (i.e. their brand) and to maintain a social network of followers, friends, colleagues, (prospective) clients and competitors (Dam, 2013).

More than 20% of Internet users used web-based social applications in 2007 (Trump et. al., 2007). The majority of them (57%) were *active users*, which means that they created and edited content. 43% of social web users merely consumed content (i.e. read texts, watched videos) and are referred to as *passive users*. Active user participation is essential for the success of social applications, which rely on users who do both, to consume and produce contents. These users as producers (Folaron, 2012), or user-consumers, are also referred to as *prosumers*. However, the motivation for generating content has changed over time. Koch and Richter observe a development from the traditional *we*-mentality in the WWW towards an increasingly self-centered *me*-mentality in the social web. The focus of online participation is shifting from collective benefit to individual profit. Users do not gather in closed online communities. Instead, they build their own personal networks, which remain open. Individual actors join and leave networks, or build, use and abandon social connections just as it might fit their personal needs.

These open networks could be of greater benefit to professionals than traditional communities of practice, as they do not require individuals to subordinate their own interests to those of the group, as has been argued by Koch and Richter (2009). The theory of the *attention economy* (Davenport & Beck, 2001) further implies that (online) visibility and reputation are key prerequisites for successful businesses (Dutta, 2010). Particularly micro businesses seem to benefit from improved efficiency and enhanced external

communications accruing from Web 2.0 and its social technologies (Barnes, D. et al., 2012).

Several studies on freelancers in the creative industries, however, find that the most important source for project assignments are social network relations: “[In] contrast to the Internet’s spaceless, placeless image, new media workers are very much rooted in a place and to the personal networks that help them find jobs, identify and learn new skills, build careers, and secure their futures.” (Batt et al., 2001, p.2) Social relations to friends, colleagues or even former employers can provide freelancers with jobs and referrals to other potential clients. Personal and professional relationships provide all kinds of valuable resources to freelancers and literally function as safety nets (Gold & Fraser, 2002), particularly for nascent entrepreneurs. These relationships can provide financial security both in the form of financial support from family, friends or life partners, as well as in the form of end-of-contract gratuities and savings stemming from former employments. The same mechanisms have been found to apply to the translation industry. Translation buyers state that they prefer to find professional translators through already established network relations, e.g. with universities, through newsgroups or online communities (World Bank, 2004).

3 Previous Research

If we wish to gain an in-depth understanding of how professional freelance translators use the social web and how this influences their work practices and social networks, it is first necessary to examine existing scientific knowledge, to which a subsequent empirical study can then be based on.

An extensive literature review covered empirical studies which investigated freelance translators' working conditions (section 3.1), translators' networks within the translation industry (section 3.2), occupational communities of practice (section 3.3) as well as the use of information and communication technology, with a particular focus on the World Wide Web used for information retrieval and social interaction (section 3.4).

Since we are approaching the research questions (section 1.2) from a sociological perspective, evidence on translators' professional status and self-perception will be particularized in section 3.4. Issues of low job prestige and occupational status are an omnipresent discussion among professional translators and Translation Studies scholars (Dam & Zethsen, 2010; Sela-Sheffy & Shlesinger, 2011). It directly affects the translators' attitude towards other actors in the translation industry, as well as their working practices and the uptake of technology, tools and aids. The chapter concludes with a short remark on the role of gender on translation as a profession (section 3.6).

Previous research highlighted in this chapter illustrates translation as a profession with various facets, based on empirical evidence. Empirical research in this area is particularly sparse and there is a great need for further research on professional translators (Chesterman, 2009; Abdallah, 2012; Dam & Zethsen, 2013). It balances the often generalized and stereotyped notions (Silbermann & Hänseroth, 1985) of a persona-like approach towards "the translator", which is prevalent in Translation Studies theory.

The research findings presented below provide an important informative basis for the research design as well as the subsequent analysis and discussion of the study results.

3.1 Professional Translators' Working Conditions

The working conditions, income situation and levels of satisfaction with work differ widely among the global freelance workforce (ILO, 2001). Although professional freelance translators are a diverse group, they all share common working conditions. The majority of freelance translators' works from home (section 3.1.1) and experiences benefits and drawbacks from the spatial closeness of work and private life. Other benefits of freelancing (section 3.1.2) as perceived by professional translators are a sense of flexibility and control, whereas job insecurity and low income are reported as disadvantages (section 3.1.3).

3.1.1 Working at Home

The majority of professional translators are self-employed without employees (BDÜ, 2011; Pym et al., 2012). This type of non-standard work is also referred to as *contingent work* (Osnowitz 2007), *freelancing* (Fraser & Gold, 2000) or *contracting* (Shevchuk & Strebkov, 2012) (cf. section 2.4).

Many translators work from home, where they either use a dedicated home office or a room which is also used for other purposes, e.g. the living room. In such a setting, the place of work is not spatially divided from the living area (Nord, B., 2002) and might also be used by co-residents, such as family members. Blurring the lines between work and family, working at home can be a source of family conflict (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001) and – vice versa – might lead to distractions during work.

Translators are not *homeworkers* who, “are employed by a business and work at home. The spatial location may be the same but the relationship with the work-supplier is quite different” (Fraser & Gold, 2001, p. 682). They can rather be considered *online home based businesses*, which Anwar and Daniel (2014) define as

“a business entity operated by a *self-employed person* working either at home or from home and *who is using the internet to carry out a significant proportion of business activities* that may include sourcing, selling, providing services and

communicating with stakeholders. The business may be operated full or part-time.” (p. 12; my italics)

Ursula Huws and her colleagues count translators as a group of *teleworkers*, who depend on information and communication technology for working remotely. They found that those professionals who offer services such as editing, proofreading, and technical writing and translating are a highly ambiguous professional group, with high skill and education levels and an income situation ranging between relatively high and very low (Huws, 1994; Huws, Podro, Gunnarsson, Weijers, Arvanitaki, & Trova, 1996).

3.1.2 Benefits of Self-Employment

As outlined above, positive as well as negative notions of freelancing exist and freelancers experience negative and positive aspects of non-standard employment, accordingly. Freelancers act as autonomous service providers (Gallagher, 2008) and commonly engage in short-term business relationships with multiple clients (Shevchuck & Strebkov, 2012). Thus, freelancing is an extreme form of externalized labor (Ashford et al., 2007). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the occupational status of freelancers is both socially and individually constructed (Cohen & Mallon, 1999).

Benefits of self-employment for translators have been found by Fraser and Gold (2001), who point out that

“[t]ranslators’ labor market characteristics are interesting because their high levels of expertise, and the particular nature of their relationships with clients, mean that they enjoy a greater degree of autonomy and control over their working conditions than other, apparently comparable, groupings discussed in the literature.” (p. 679)

They further note that translators who belong to the group of self-employed professionals with relatively higher wages find “a measure of individual control unavailable in comparable standard employment.” (ibid.) These translators usually have a rather large and shifting client base, a condition which offers them a certain independence and the freedom to end negative business relationships.

3.1.3 Disadvantages of Self-Employment

Similar to other self-employed workers in the creative industries who work at home, translators struggle with isolation (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003), might experience a sense of displacement (ILO, 2001) and suffer from low income and job insecurity (Murdock, 2003).

How the high levels of individual risk associated with freelancing are perceived by the individuals is also shaped by public discourse. Neff (2007) criticizes that “the dot-com boom helped to glorify risks – and shifted social and economic uncertainties to individually accounted risks.” (p. 2)

Osnowitz (2006) finds various – even contradictory – mechanisms of control freelance workers are exposed to: Particularly low-wage temporary workers who tend to work with agencies have fewer options in choosing their clients, which “leaves them vulnerable to ongoing uncertainty, often manipulated by the agency, which controls access to the labor market” (p. 14). A similar issue is reported by Abdallah (2010), who found moral hazard and low social capital to be a common problem in the translation industry:

“The interviews reveal dilemmas of collective action, with severe problems arising from asymmetric information and goal conflicts between principals and agents [i.e. translation buyers, translation agencies, translators and translation users], such as moral hazard [...] and asymmetry of commitment. The factors that discourage the emergence of true cooperation and the creation of quality outcomes (translations) according to this research are a) lack of mutual trust between [actors involved], b) lack of support for the translator, and c) lack of necessary information.” (p. 41)

These findings suggest the high impact of other actors’ behavior on the working conditions of professional freelance translators. Economic relations have been found to be actively constructed through social relations (Grabher, 2002). Being a part of the translation ecosystem (Shreve, 2000), translators’ working conditions will always be influenced by other actors.

3.2 Social Interaction in the Translation Industry

The production of a translation is a process which involves numerous actors. The expectations of all actors involved define the framework of action in which

translators perform their work (Risku & Freihoff, 2000, p. 52). An investigation of how actors in the translation industry interact with each other offers valuable insights on the set-up of professional translators' social relations. In most Translation Studies literature, the triad author - translator - reader dominates the discussion, but the translation ecosystem involves more occupational roles.

Risku and Freihoff (2000) further mention the translation buyer (as initiator of the translation process) as important actors. Translation buyers (section 3.2.2) can be companies, organizations or private individuals who mandate translations, either to LSPs (which will then subcontract the project to a specialized service provider) (section 3.2.1) or directly to freelance translators or translation bureaus (cf. Dunne's (2012) outsourcing chain, as described in section 2.2.2). Translators (section 3.2.3) may engage with various specialized professionals, e.g. for access to background knowledge or specialized terminology required for a translation. Other examples of professionals who are at least partly involved in the translation process are communication and marketing specialists, writers, copy-editors or employees of advertising agencies.

The recipients of the translations are directly impacted by the translation processes' outcomes, but their interaction with translators is very limited. Nevertheless, translators see the target text readers as the *principals* in the translation process:

“[Translators] often feel a great sense of responsibility towards the reader, not only towards the party paying for their work. In actual fact, translators consider themselves the agents for the reader [...], translators, by way of their professional ethics, feel that the reader has delegated authority to them to represent their interests.” (Abdallah, 2010, p. 17)

3.2.1 Language Services Providers

Professional translators have mixed opinions of translation agencies and LSPs. Silbermann and Hänseroth (1985) report in their study that one interviewee called for a legal prohibition of translation agencies who act solely as brokers.

Dam and Zethsen (2010) also report that “translators [...] complain of agencies and unqualified translators who force prices down” (p. 206).

It has been argued that working with LSPs can be unrewarding and frustrating for translators (Abdallah, 2010, 2012), because they earn lower wages than with direct clients. The limited contact with clients also inhibits their possibility to show professionalism and is perceived as unsatisfactory.

“Some of the translators have also clearly become suspicious of the fact that the translation company acts in a dual role in production networks. If speed, flexibility and low price are the main criteria for translation quality, the question that comes to one’s mind is who benefits from such a definition. At least some translators feel that the beneficiary is the translation company who, by lowering the translator’s fee, gains a higher profit.” (Abdallah, 2010, p. 42)

Nevertheless, LSPs and translation agencies offer services such as terminology management and quality management, particularly for translation buyers with large translation projects requiring high output rates in short time frames, which freelance translators could not handle by themselves. In these project settings, LSPs take on an important role in the translation industry and are, at the same time, relevant sources of work for freelancers.

3.2.2 Regular Clients

Among translators, there is a shared belief that freelancers need at least twenty clients in order to be able to exist as a micro-business. However, the majority of translators work with a small number of clients only (Aparicio, Benis, & Cross, 2001). Freelance translators with a larger client base (of six to nine clients) enjoy higher levels of job satisfaction and autonomy than translators with a smaller client base (of one to five clients). For translators with a client base comprising more than ten clients, job satisfaction levels have been reported to decline again, probably due to the difficulty of managing heterogeneous client requirements (Fraser & Gold, 2001).

Long-term relationships with regular clients create working conditions in which translators can express professional qualities such as dedication and responsibility. It is also a landmark in a professional career, as it “demonstrates

success in creating a niche and in increasingly controlling working conditions” (Gold & Fraser, 2002, p. 592). Building and maintaining lasting business relationships with clients involves emotional bonding (Herriot & Pemberton, 1996). Most independent contractors find work through referrals from clients and colleagues (Meiksins & Whalley, 2002).

3.2.3 Fellow Translators

Most self-employed professionals see their colleagues as community and sources of mutual support (Osnowitz, 2007). Social interaction with fellow translators is vital for self-employed translators, as they can provide valuable tangible and intangible resources: “Participants commented on the solitariness of the profession, on the importance of ‘no longer feeling alone’ or of ‘having another resource to turn to’ when others had been exhausted.” (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 66) The majority of translators are eager to maintain professional relationships with their colleagues (Silbermann & Hänseroth, 1985). “Relations with colleagues or fellow translators are not generally a problem, because all translators know they are basically a fragile minority and that they are all in the same boat together.” (Gouadec, 2007, p. 230)

Competition with lay-translators is regarded as a lot more negative than competition among professional translators. Already in the mid-1980s, translators expressed their wish of the legal prohibition of “ruinous competition” (Silbermann & Hänseroth, 1985, p. 160) caused by laypeople like university professors, students, pensioners and housewives, which lead to a deterioration of prices and quality.

It is well known that translators use other translators as sources of information and knowledge (Kiraly, 1995). Long before dictionaries were widely available, translators asked other translators or subject matter experts for specialized information. Persons qualify as information resources through their general or specialized knowledge which they might have acquired through education or personal living conditions (Nord, B., 2002).

In her typology of translation aids, Britta Nord (2002) included a category *persons*, subdivided into *laypeople*, *colleagues* and *experts* (p. 160). Nord found in her study with freelance translators that the consultation of other persons accounted for 6.4% of all instances of translation aid usage. The possibilities of contacting fellow translators through e-mail were only used once. Because Nord conducted her field research in 1997, other web-based communication channels had not been used.

Only a few years later, professional translators have been found to make increased use of information and communications technology (ICT) for communicating with each other. Mailing lists and online communities (Fulford & Granell-Zafra, 2005; Gouadec, 2007) have become important resources for “knowledge exchange, individual learning, social and professional contact or commercial and professional issues” (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 66).

3.3 Business Networks

In the creative industries, engaging with other professionals serves as an informal training from which individuals adopt codes of conduct and habitus⁸, for example in the form of a shared language or a dress code (Grabher, 2002).

Professionals also gather in production networks (section 3.3.1), in which freelancers and organizations cooperate on a temporary basis. These forms of interaction in business networks help translators become members of occupational communities. The social interaction in these communities helps newcomers to become insiders: “[Aside] from explicit expert knowledge, peripheral participants are acquiring the embodied ability to behave as community members.” (Grabher, 2002, p. 254) Business networks are carriers of social rules, business ethics and shared standards (section 3.3.2).

⁸ The Bourdieusian concept of habitus refers to a system of habits (including perception, thought and action) which an individual has acquired over time. These habits subconsciously shape how individuals apprehend their environment and how they act in certain situations (Bourdieu, 1977).

Individuals who cooperate with each other and share the same values may also organize, either informally or formally, to be stronger in representing their interests (section 3.3.3).

“[Groups] of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger et al. 2002, p.4) are sometimes also referred to as *communities of practice*. This concept was introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) and draws on the traditional apprenticeship model (as known from guilds and crafts). It explains how experienced professionals pass their knowledge and experience on to newcomers through telling stories, by giving advice and introducing them to common practices, norms and rules of the profession.

3.3.1 Production Networks

How professionals in the translation industry cooperate with each other in the translation process has been investigated by Kristiina Abdallah (2010, 2012), who refers to the structures in which temporary cooperation projects take place as *production networks*: “A production network consists of inter-firm relationships that bind a group of firms of different sizes, ranging from multinational companies to micro-entrepreneurs (the owners of small businesses), into a larger economic unit [...]” (Abdallah, 2012, p. 1)

Production networks are a form of *neo-industrial organizing* (Ekstedt, Lundin, Söderholm, & Wirdenius, 1999) and can be defined as inter-organizational virtual organizations or temporary network organizations, in which independent companies and professionals join together.

“The enterprises utilize their core competencies in an attempt to create a best-of-everything organization in a Value-Adding Partnership (VAP), facilitated by Information and Communication Technology (ICT). As such, virtual organizations act in all appearances as a single organizational unit.” (Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 1998, p. 19)

This kind of cooperation can prove particularly useful in periods of excessive workload “to farm out work to other independents if they [...] do not want to turn down potentially valuable clients” (Meiksins & Whalley 2002, p. 161).

Although freelance translators work independently on most translation projects, they also cooperate with other translators, e.g. on larger projects or for quality management reasons. The EN 15038 quality standard for translation providers requires proofreading by a second translator and although translation bureaus are certified rather than self-employed translators, the latter also follow this rule and support each other with quality checks.

Also in other sectors of the creative industries (e.g. in advertising) strong mutual loyalties between in-house teams and external collaborators have been found: “[The] dyad of art directors and copywriters evolves into lasting partnerships. In fact, their careers are rather the career of a particular partnership than of separate individuals.” (Grabher, 2002, p. 251) In these settings, networks emerge from a small number of personal relationships. As new contacts add up over time, a pool of potential collaborators with differing specializations builds, which then develops into latent networks (Neff, 2005).

Collaborators are selected for recurrent collaboration based on experience from past cooperation projects and the potential for future alliances. Besides the specialization of a professional, feelings of fondness and comfort and the reliability of project members have been found to be crucial. Grabher derived from these findings, that “it is rather this particular ‘know who’ and to a lesser extent the ‘know how’” (2002, p. 252).

This approach to selecting collaborators in a project-based market, is also termed “networked individualism” (Wellman, 2001, p. 238). It is a community approach to production, based on the social ties of individuals, and drawing upon the social practices associated with the creative class (Florida, 2002).

3.3.2 Rules and Social Norms

The employability of freelance workers is ensured by following established rules and social norms of the professional group. This includes the necessity for

networking, “an informal process of establishing connections through collegial exchange” (Osnowitz, 2006, p. 13). In informal and formal social interactions, freelancers can demonstrate their expertise and experience. They can also prove that they are reliable and build a professional reputation.

Self-employed workers who belong to the same occupational group have been reported to exercise normative control among each other judge each other's professionalism and monitor other community members' behavior and adherence to – often unwritten, however strong – profession standards and rules. Noncompliance with these standards can result in informal sanctions by the community. This behavior is a mechanism of informal labor market regulation (Osnowitz, 2006). These findings shine a new light on market structures, which are often regarded as impersonal, but seem to rest much more on social relations than it is assumed (Meiksins & Whalley, 2002).

Social relationships in the occupational labor market provide vital resources to freelancers, such as referrals for project assignments, opportunities with prospects, building a boundaryless career, collegial exchange and self-promotion (Neff, 2005; Osnowitz, 2006). These network relations are built and maintained during project assignments as well as during professional events or trainings. However, the most important platform for business networking in the creative industry seem to be informal meetings and after-work parties, as Neff (2005) observed in a study of New York's creative professionals: “An industry's cocktail parties, seminars, and informal gatherings form its social backbone and are especially important to innovative industries that rely on the rapid dissemination of information.” (p. 135) She even concludes that professionals in sectors of the creative industries which rely very much on networking and information exchange during informal events “could also face severe disadvantages if they are unable to participate in the frenzy of nightlife activity” (Neff, 2005, p. 150).

These findings emphasize the importance of social norms in the creative industries, which might also be applicable to professional translators.

3.3.3 Formal and Informal Organizing

A more formal way of organizing is through a membership in a professional organization (Meiksins & Whalley, 2002), which is used by translators for various reasons: “[Translators] at all levels of experience tap it for [...] job leads, terminology, general advice, moral support.” (Sherwin, 1994, p. 24)

Numerous translators to mitigate the downsides of freelancing and an unregulated market use a membership in a professional association of translators (and interpreters). Whereas union membership might lead to an increase in gross hourly wage (as shown by Bryson (2002) for US employees), freelancers who are voluntary members of a professional associations might not enjoy the same benefits. A study based on data from the German Socio-Economic Panel Survey has found that these voluntarily organized freelancers have in fact a negative premium in gross hourly income (Rucha, 2010). The author of the study assumes that since there are no financial incentives for joining a professional association, and considering rising voluntary membership numbers, freelancers motivation must result from an increased contentment derived from organizing (ibid.).

These assumptions are confirmed by qualitative studies. Professional associations facilitate access to fellow translators and provide a sense of belonging (Gold & Fraser, 2002). Membership is also a signaling strategy for professionalism, as most professional associations have specific entry requirements, such as academic training, certifications or several years of working experience, and can therefore help to locate and obtain business (Meiksins & Whalley, 2002). Members also benefit from professional associations’ campaigns and advertising, which take place on a much larger scale than individual freelancers could achieve on their own.

Semi-formal organizing takes place in local groups – sometimes also called regulars’ tables – that can be either associated or independent. Members of local groups meet at regular intervals for information exchange on local economic conditions, the industry, as well as networking and collaboration. Members see these local groups as sources of help, job contacts and referrals

(Sherwin, 1994), the same tangible and intangible resources which have been found to be provided through informal (business) relations also (cf. section 3.3.2). This leads to the assumption that both informal and formal organizing are beneficial to translators and that it is upon their personal preferences and country-specific practices, how they approach networking. In Taiwan and Shanghai, for example, membership in professional associations is not popular among translators and interpreters, because personal connections are stronger than a collective feeling of professional community (Setton & Liangliang, 2009).

Organizing and social interaction can also be achieved in web-based communities. How professional translators use the social web is discussed below, in section 3.4.

3.4 Translators and the Social Web

Some studies have focused on the translators' use of information and communication technology in general (Fulford & Granell-Zafra, 2008) or Computer-Aided-Translation-tools (CAT-tools) (e.g. Fulford & Granell-Zafra, 2005) in particular. Only a small number of professional translators' activities in the social web exist, although the first findings on translators' social networks and their participation in online communities suggest that both provide the same resources and benefits to their members; "friendship is no less supportive for being expressed via cyberspace" (Gouadec, 2007, p. 269).

The rapid development of web-based technology and the elevated frequency of interaction and communication in the social web may require new approaches to translation, which may put a lot of stress on professional translators and their traditional business models (Garcia, 2009).

"Social media-relayed information in a global communication context [...] may require the use of MT for gist or a call for ad hoc volunteer translation services that are synchronous or asynchronous [...], depending on the profiles and immediacy of participating social actors." (Folaron, 2012, p. 27)

The following sections will discuss translators' use of the social web for information retrieval (section 3.4.1), for social interaction in discussion lists

(section 3.4.2) and online communities (section 3.4.3). Translators' approach to blogging will be highlighted in section 3.4.4). The benefits and difficulties of locating business online is discussed in section 3.4.5.

3.4.1 The Social Web as an Information Repository

Years before the World Wide Web became social, Austermühl (2001) indicated in his handbook *Electronic Tools for Translators* that “[the] way the Internet is changing the research habits of translators can be called a paradigm shift” (p. 38). He advises translators to elaborate their own professional strategy for Internet research, based on three questions:

- What information do I need?
- Which information resources are trustworthy?
- Whom do I trust?

He repeatedly emphasized that a lot of information online was inaccurate, unreliable or dubious and has to be used with caution: “Comparing the virtual world with the real one can sometimes help you identify trustworthy content suppliers.” (Austermühl, 2001, p. 52) Translation Studies scholars in general, regard the use of information repositories and translation aids critically: “External resources can provide the translator with missing pieces of the translation puzzle, but they cannot replace the experienced-based knowledge.” (Kiraly, 1995, p. 104)

Nevertheless, studies show that translators dedicate a significant time of the translation process to researching background information and terminology (Somers & McNaught, 1980; Groß, Adrian, & Budin, 2010). The Internet provides access to online dictionaries, glossaries, and large professional terminology databases, like the InterActive Terminology for Europe (IATE), a free service of EU institutions for the “collection, dissemination and shared management of EU-specific terminology” (IATE, n.d.).

The Web 2.0, with its vast amount of user-generated content – produced through technologies like blogs, wikis, social networking services, micro-

blogging platforms and discussion forums, which have all become ubiquitous through an increasing number of mobile devices – providing myriads of reference texts (many of them available in several languages) and information resources which can be used by translators.

A popular strategy for the validation of terms and phrases is the use of search engines. Based on the number of hits, the co- and context of the search term and the background information found in search results, translators can make decisions on terminology use and wording (Risku, 2004). The same strategy is applied by the online terminology search engine linguee.com, which searches internationalized websites and matches source text terms and phrases to their target text equivalents. Automated translation tools also make use of online data as a corpus of translation examples by matching equivalent expressions in different languages using statistical and semantic methods (Somers, 1999; Koehn et al., 2007; Schneider et al., 2014).

Over the past decade, numerous web-based online communities and discussion groups dedicated particularly to professional translators and interested laypeople have been established and are used for information sharing:

“Professionals share spaces with amateurs, volunteers, and fans, as Web portals (ProZ.com), volunteer associations (translatorswithoutborders.com, theosettafoundation.org), local localization networks (intgovforum.org), fan-translators of digital media (Facebook) and fansubbers of films and programs (including YouTube), all reflect. The spontaneous eruptions and manifestations (collaborative, collective, or individual) of translation and localization practices by users within the global Web are uniquely digital, the emergent properties of a network still in the process of ,becoming’.” (Folaron, 2012, pp. 26-27)

Without these social technologies, these networks would simply cease to exist.

3.4.2 Discussion Lists

In 2007, Gouadec published a study on the use and perceived benefits of e-mail discussion lists (i.e. moderated mailing lists and e-mail distribution lists of professional translators’ associations) as well as online community platforms (Gouadec refers to them as *portals*) which are used by professional translators.

He referred to the discussion lists as “mutual assistance tools” (2007, p. 268) and declared them as a type of translation aid.

Translators used e-mail discussion lists to discuss terminology, orthographical and linguistic issues. They also discussed matters which were not directly related with translating, e.g. job prestige, clients, maternity leave, CAT-tools, computer hardware, the Internet and search engines. Some translators also used e-mail lists to offer translation jobs to their peers, if they were not available to do the job themselves.

The study participants referred to the lists and discussion forums as “some kind of virtual extended family” (2007, p. 269) and a “living, closely-knit community” (ibid.). They also expressed the high levels of practical and emotional support list members provide each other with: “[In] cases where a member is in dire trouble, everyone comes together to provide psychological, moral or even financial support.” (ibid.)

Gouadec observed friendship as well as heated discussions and controversies among members. The main benefit he sees is in the sense of belonging facilitated by the group: “The list becomes a kind of virtual professional ‘club’ making freelance translators feel less isolated.” (2007, p. 268)

These results suggest that professional translators may have access to the same resources through both ways of informal organizing, their personal business networks and virtual social networks supported by web-based technology.

3.4.3 Online Communities

Freelance translators perceive benefits of social interaction from participating in online communities, to which they would otherwise only have limited access.

“Freelance workers increasingly look to such communities to fill a need in their working lives for collaboration, mutual learning or knowledge exchange. Membership is often voluntary, and people join because of their interest in the subject matter, making virtual communities ideal ‘places’ for constructive exchange.” (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 53)

Web-based services for building and maintaining social relations are often referred to as *social networks* in public discourse. The correct term for technological platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn or MySpace, however, is *social networking services* (Koch & Richter, 2009). The underlying technologies support the presentation, connection and management of relations between virtual identities of individuals and organizations (Bienert, 2007). Functionalities for identity management enable users to enrich their own online profiles with additional information. They can contact other users and interact with them (Koch & Richter, 2009). These social interactions gradually map each user's social relationships with others.

3.4.3.1 Categorizing Translators' Online Communities

Julie McDonough published a framework for the categorization and specification of online communities for translators in 2007. For this purpose, she analyzed the structure, the requirements for membership and the objectives of 40 translators' online communities, using English, Spanish or French as a communication language. Based on these results, McDonough analyzed and categorized another several dozens of online communities.

McDonough (2007) refers to these specialized online communities as *translation networks*, and defines them as virtual groups “of actors with shared interest in translation and/or related activities, including interpretation, terminology, bilingual revision and globalization, internationalization, localization, translation” (p. 794); a definition which is very similar to Wenger's (2002) definition of a community of practice.

McDonough observed that the interaction of members in the investigated translation networks included networking and sharing tangible as well as intangible resources: “relationships linking actors usually involved exchanges of material resources, such as translation for payment, or non-material resources such as questions, answers, advice and announcements related to translation, such as terminology, research and job opportunities” (2007, p. 794). Study participants further stated that they learned about new trends and innovations in these online communities.

Based on her analysis, McDonough suggests distinguishing between four types of translation networks, according to their focus, which can be profession-oriented, practice-oriented, education-oriented or research-oriented. Many of the online communities investigated belonged to more than one of these categories and the boundaries between categories are often blurred. The structures and characteristics of these networks can provide insight in the organizing behavior of professional translators and other professionals in the language industry.

Translation networks have been found to be influenced by a set of variables, in particular sub-topics, values, geographic focus, membership requirements, computer-mediated interaction, relationships of members and the governance model. In each translation network, several sub-topics (e.g. language pairs, text types, translation-related topics) are addressed. McDonough assumes that translators, who share an interest in a certain sub-topic, will have similar values and business norms. The geographic focus differs significantly among the evaluated networks and ranges from local to global. It is determinative of the language(s) used for communication within the communities. Membership requirements can also vary and have a major effect on the member base structure, which might consist e.g. of either professional translators, translation fans, or volunteers, or a mix of these, address associations, institutes or LSPs. Membership requirements can be the level of education, professional achievement, or nationality. As virtual social networks do not have clearly defined boundaries, network structures can change easily if membership requirements are not very strict.

Another important finding is that regional social networks seem to rely as much on the supporting social technology as international, spatially distributed networks do. Web-based interaction does not alter the strength of social relationships:

“The fact that interactions between actors in a network are almost entirely computer-mediated does not necessarily mean that ties among these actors will be weak. The notion that online ties can also be as strong as in-person ties is supported by Wellman and Gulia (1999: 345), who stress that both online and

offline relationships may share characteristics associated with strong ties: frequent, companionable contact, mutual support and long-term contact. Moreover, the Internet is often used to complement, rather than replace, offline relationships.” (McDonough, 2007, pp. 804-805)

McDonough also distinguishes between formal and informal translation networks. The first have a centralized structure, a panel, and a charter. Informal translation networks emerge from the interaction of at least two individuals. As quickly as they form, they can also dissolve, “because the purpose of the network has been met and the ties between the networks are no longer necessary” (2007, p. 803). There is no formal structure, interaction can happen spontaneously. The number of these informal networks cannot be determined, as – per definition – any interaction between two or more translators in which intangible or tangible resources are exchanged, can be referred to as an informal network.

3.4.3.2 Motivational Aspects of Translators’ Online Participation

Risku and Dickinson published another study of translators’ participation in professional, extra-organizational, online communities in 2009. The investigation aimed at finding motivational aspects of translators for joining an online community and sharing their personal knowledge with other members, without any financial incentives. For this purposes, a survey was conducted with 335 members of ProZ.com, a specialized online community and online marketplace for professional translators.

More than 80% of the participants were freelancers. Their motivation for participating were project acquisition (56%), feeling of community (54%), learning and benchmarking (42%), access to industry information (32%), networking and cooperation (30%). Active participants stated that they wanted to share their knowledge and help others (82%), develop their knowledge (46%), give something back to the community (38%) and cultivate their professional image (15%).

These results correspond with McDonough’s (2007) findings of a survey with 31 active participants of the translation network TranslatorsCafé.com. 87% of the

respondents agreed that active participation in the community enables them to share their personal experiences, 84% want to help others, 65% want to be part of the community, and 42% want to increase their own visibility in the community.

Translators referred to the translation network as “a good Samaritan“, “a warehouse of intelligent, helpful translators” and “a sound investment for tangible (job offers, KudoZ) and intangible (sense of community, exchange, friendship) benefits” (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 62). Membership and participation were reported to have positive effects on professional competencies (28%) and increase fun at work (10%), facilitating access to a global market (26%) and collaboration opportunities (23%). “Several members also reported having built up lasting professional and social friendships (both virtual and real-life) through membership.” (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 64)

Drawbacks can be virtual office politics freelancers usually do not experience. Respondents also find the participation in online communities time consuming and even addictive. They criticize the low rates of job offers advertised, negative postings, as well as the participation of dominant or non-professional members (Risku & Dickinson, 2009).

These findings suggest that translation networks provide an infrastructure for emotional and practical support, while helping to maintain standards.

3.4.4 Translators in the Blogosphere

A recent qualitative study by Helle Dam (2013) investigates the motivational aspects for blogging among professional translators, which topics their blogs cover. This study is part of a larger series of scientific studies about translators' occupational status. The author found that, in general, blogging translators present themselves as autonomous, highly paid professionals who are in control over their working conditions and, thus, enjoy high levels of job satisfaction. In their posts, they reflect on skills and attitudes needed for becoming a successful translator. Bloggers argue that a translators' income situation can be positively influenced by the demonstration of skills,

professionalism and expertise. These translators also blog about difficulties with technology and LSPs and appeal directly to other translators “urging them to take power over their own professional lives and not work for less than they are worth” (p. 32). The investigated blogs are connected with each other through linking, referencing and commenting and, thus, form a professional translation network, which also reaches into the physical world as bloggers promote professionals outside the blogosphere, of who they think are famous, inspiring or great translators. This attribution of fame to translators has not been empirically documented before and seems to be an emerging practice among blogging translators.

Dam concludes from her analysis that the blogging translators “both educate the general public and contribute to changing the existing discourse on translation as a low-skill activity into a discourse emphasizing translator expertise” (2013, p. 26). However, it is not evident whether the readers of these translation blogs belong to the translator-blogosphere⁹ themselves or if the blogs are read by a wider, non-translator, audience.

Gold and Fraser (2002) have already argued ten years earlier, that practices of this kind (self-promotion, actively shaping working conditions) are common among middle-ranking occupations who “attempt to achieve recognition as professions by gaining control over their market conditions” (p. 591). Formal and informal organizing are important tools for gaining professional status.

The sharing of social practices, along with spreading rumors, recommendations, trade folklore, and strategic (mis-)information are processes of negotiating meaning and of sense-making, which again lead to a dissemination of social norms and good practices within the professional community (Neff, 2005).

3.4.5 Finding Work on Online Marketplaces

“Previously, translators were available in and provided their services in a specific geographical area. There are no longer such limitations; in fact, most

⁹ The term „blogosphere“ refers to the virtual network of blogs.

translation services are offered and supplied through the Internet. For many freelance translators, this is their main and sometimes only means for attracting clients. Some agencies prefer to exist exclusively in virtual reality, whereas others have ‘physical’ premises in order to coordinate the work of their translation teams, but even so, these teams often service ‘virtual’ or online clients. Most business relationships are established via the Internet by means of the translator’s or agency’s portal or by means of the many directories that offer postings to freelancers free of charge.” (Olvera-Lobo et al., 2005, pp. 134-135)

This statement was published in a paper on translator training written by TS scholars from the University of Granada, Spain. It is quite similar to Malone’s and Laubacher’s (1998) vision of the *e-lance market*, claiming that “most” business relationships were established online and that the Internet was the “only means” for translators to ensure employability.

It is, indeed, a fact that several online marketplaces for contracting professionals have emerged and that particularly LSPs use their websites to attract prospective clients. Yet, the findings of the qualitative studies discussed above draw a different picture, in which social relations and referrals are still the most important source of work for most freelancers (not only in the creative industries) and the same seems to apply to self-employed translators (Gold & Fraser, 2002; Neff, 2005; Osnowitz, 2010; Gouadec, 2007).

LSPs who subcontract work to freelancers need a large pool of contracting professionals with different language combinations, specializations and a broad spectrum of additional services (such as proofreading), which allows them to cover requirements from a diverse client base. These agencies use online marketplaces and communities to recruit translators. Vice versa, these platforms can be convenient access points for freelance translators who want to locate business. Gouadec (2007), however, points out: “In practice, things are not so simple and the general idea is that portals and exchanges may work for some translators but not for all of them, with the complication that rates through portals are usually low to very low.” (p. 175)

Besides price dumping, Shevchuk and Strebkov (2012) have found several other risks of online contracting in a quantitative study of freelance professionals’

experience with online marketplaces in Russia. They surveyed 5,700 individuals, of which 10% were translators. The study revealed that freelancers who communicate mainly online with clients have an elevated risk of facing severe problems with clients (+16%), of a client disappearing in the course of the project (+68%) and of a client not paying (+16%), as compared to projects in which professionals and clients meet face-to-face.

The study results further reflected that severe problems occurred most often with arm-length relations, i.e. business transactions not based on a social relationship between the professional and the client. In projects that had been acquired online, the probability of facing problems during the project was elevated (+39%). The probability of a client disappearing in a project was 35% higher and the risk of the client not paying was 48% higher than in social contracting. Social contracting, in contrast, decreased the occurrence of problems in projects by 44%.

In other sectors of the creative industries, (e.g. publishing or the media industry), the labor market for contracting professionals looks back at a long tradition and social relationships are very well established, so freelancers do not have to worry about new contracting opportunities (Coser, Kadushin, & Powell, 1982; Granger, Stanworth, & Stanworth, 1995; Neff, 2005).

3.5 The Role of Professional Status and Job Prestige

In a society where people define themselves through their work and professional status, job prestige and self-perception is a determinant of job satisfaction for translators, too:

“The increased tendency to make positive evaluations of, for example, ‘entrepreneurism’ or enterprise is a direct consequence of the dominance of contemporary discourse [...]. Hence, sense-making about new status positions such as ‘freelance’ will also carry aspects of social identity. [...] How individuals experience the changed condition and ‘status’ of freelancing can be expected to be influenced by how their clients and their co-workers treat them, as well as their own interpretations.” (Storey, Salaman, & Platman, 2005, p. 1034)

It has been argued above that exercising professionalism is very important to translators. They regard it as the basis for “reliable employment or employability, including secure income and an expanding but select client base” (Gold & Fraser, 2002, p. 590). A profession is characterized by distinct skills, standards and public recognition. How members of the professional group exercise upon these characteristics, can be referred to as professionalism. Exercised and perceived professionalism (section 3.5.1) influences professional status as well as job satisfaction of self-employed workers. They even see it as a determinant for stable employability and adequate income. However, many freelance translators’ income situation (section 3.5.2) requires them to opt for a back-up source of income.

3.5.1 Professionalism and Professional Status

The attitudes of freelancers, their motivation, how they build and maintain business relations, as well as how they adhere to norms and standards is based on the concept of *professionalism*. Professionalism is defined as the control over the content of work and associated with discretion and high standards of performance (Abbott, 1991; Freidson, 2001). It further functions as a “cultural resource” (Tolbert & Barley, 1991, p. 5) and is a vehicle of values and expectations. Professionalism can only be activated in social interactions. A freelance translator is cited by Gold and Fraser (2002) with her perception of professionalism as “a good reputation, based on professional conduct and reliability, and peer recognition” (p. 590).

There is a large gap between the public image of translators’ professional status and their own professional self-perception. The German sociologists Silbermann and Hänseroth (1985) already pointed out some thirty years ago that the various stereotypes, which bias the professional image of translators, indicate a lack of independence and a marginal existence (see also Austerlühl (2005) and Jääskeläinen (2007)). They also discussed how difficult it was to locate translators within the occupational classification so that they will be appreciated as culture carrying professionals.

The stereotypes that the sociologists refer to show different levels of social status: *Sidekick*, *handyman* or *servant* are only a few examples for pejorative appellations. Concepts that are more positive include *language professional* and *culture or literature mediator*. A villainous stereotype is that of a *falsifier* or even a *literary parasite*, who lives on the work of others (Silbermann & Hänseroth, 1985). Simeoni (1998) attributes translators the professional habitus of servants: “efficient, punctual, hardworking, silent and yes, invisible” (p. 12). The apparent invisibility of translators’ activity and situation has also been discussed in-depth by Lawrence Venuti (1995) with regards to Anglo-American culture and literature and has been repeated (even to try and prove it wrong) and bemoaned ever since by various TS scholars (Bassnett, 1996; Gambier, 2006; Rosario Martín Ruano, 2006; Prunč, 2007; Sela-Sheffy, 2010).

However, the discussion and perception of the translators’ status is more important than might be evident at first: “it influences the circumstances under which translations are produced and thereby their quality, it affects the working conditions of practicing translators, and it has an impact on the potential of attracting young talents to a career in translation” (Dam, 2013, p. 33). Gold and Fraser (2002) also found that dedication and responsibility emerge from professional status.

“The opponents of high status can on the whole be summarized as lack of awareness in society about what constitutes translation competence and its complexity as well as lack of recognition of the importance of translation. Consequently, many people do not distinguish between a de facto translator, e.g. a bilingual secretary or a translator who has not received any training at all, and a state-authorized translator¹⁰. Translators are not considered experts and their occupation does not range as a proper profession.” (Dam & Zethsen, 2010, p. 205)

Nevertheless, self-employed translators have been repeatedly found to perceive their professional status as significantly higher than translators who are employed by an organization (Silbermann & Hänseroth, 1985; Fraser & Gold, 2001; Dam & Zethsen, 2012).

¹⁰ “State-authorized translator” is a legally protected title in Denmark.

A study on the status and job satisfaction among freelance and in-house Chinese to English conference interpreters in Shanghai as well as translators and interpreters in Taiwan reported high levels of job satisfaction, particularly if the professionals worked as interpreters and had relatively higher incomes. The public image of interpreters would be equivalent to lawyers and management consultants, whereas translators enjoy the same job prestige as teachers and journalists. Participants were “generally downplaying the ‘cultural mediator role’” (Setton & Liangliang, 2009, p. 235).

Based on an extensive literature research, Dam and Zethsen (2008; 2010) have come up with four hypotheses about why the status of professional translators is low. First, translation has a very short history as a professional occupation, having started around the middle of the twentieth century, developing into an industrial sector as we know it today (Dunne, 2012) Only about five decades ago Obrecht pointed out: “it should be understood that at least in America translation itself is not a profession” (1959, p. 83). Second, the characteristic of reproducing a text authored by someone else (Chamberlain, 1988) might lead some people to think of translating as a non-creative task (Spilsbury & Godward, 2013). Third, the subservient personality of translators and the femaleness of the profession may negatively influence the public’s perception of the profession. Ultimately, in close relation with the short professional tradition, translator training at higher education institutions is a novelty in many countries as, traditionally, translator training was closely coupled with secretarial training.

After finalizing a subsequent study on the professional status of Danish translators employed by the European Union and Danish companies, Dam and Zethsen (2012) finally concluded that “low status is a structural, inherent feature of the translation profession rather than a product of historical circumstances, such as low pay or inefficient gate-keeping systems” (p. 229).

Silbermann and Hänseroth (1985) argue that discussions about translators’ responsibilities, the necessity of translating or the important role of translators in society reinforce existing clichés and are unrewarding. They suggest a more

distant perspective based on the general assumption that numerous specialized professional groups (one of them being translators) and their interdependence ensure the functioning of our complex society. Setton and Liangliang (2009) promote a similar approach, however with a conclusion which appears somewhat surrendering: “Finally, pragmatic, business-like attitudes to [translation and interpreting] practice may show a more realistic attitude to the translator’s role as a neutral and basically powerless intermediary.” (Setton & Liangliang, 2009, p. 236)

3.5.2 The Income Situation of Freelance Translators

Income and profitability seems to be a difficult topic for many freelance translators. In her practical guide for self-employed translators, Miriam Neidhart (2012) cites findings of a BDÜ survey among German freelance translators according to which a quarter of those working full-time achieves an annual turnover of less than €17,500. Only half of the respondents (47%) claim to be able to make a living on translating, whereas 31% of the respondent would like to, but are unable realize sufficient earnings. In the United Kingdom, the situation seems to be even worse: “54.5% of respondents indicated that translation was not the main source of income for their household. Indeed many people pointed out that they wouldn’t survive on it if they had to.” (Aparicio et al., 2001, p. 23)

Already before the global financial crisis of 2009, rates stagnated. In combination with a continuing inflation, this results in the value of translations dropping constantly. This trend is highly probable to continue after 2009 until today (Cowan, 2003; Chan, 2005; Dunne, 2012).

Dunne (2012) explains the price pressure in the translation industry through economic concepts named *quality uncertainty* and *asymmetric information*:

“experienced freelancers know more about the quality of their services than generic buyers (i.e., LSPs with which the freelancers have not previously worked), but [...] since LSPs cannot tell good and bad translations apart, good and bad translations must sell at the same price.” (p. 148)

If good translators do not receive adequate payment for their services, they might decide to leave the market. This is referred to as *adverse selection*. As these translators leave the market, the overall translation quality drops and this again will have a negative impact on rates, as translation buyers know about their risk of purchasing a bad translation and are not willing to pay a premium for it. These market dynamics have been explained using the example of the second-hand car market and coined as *market for lemons* by Akerlof (1970). The market for lemons principle is a simple, however powerful concept for understanding the dynamics of the translation market. Along with the increasing trend of commoditizing translation services, it perfectly explains the prevailing price pressure particularly freelance translators' state to suffer from. Abdallah (2012) indicates another potential for conflict in reaching an adequate degree of profitability to lie within translators' internalized business ethics:

“On the one hand, there are the professional ethical expectations – the fiduciary duty to develop a legal and ethical relationship of trust with clients – that require translators to act as agents for translation users. On the other hand, as managers of their own small businesses, translators are forced by economic necessity to increase their efficiency and productivity. [...] [Freelance translators] have to operate concurrently within two different ethical systems, that of utilitarian business ethics and that of translators' deontological ethics as outlined in the various codes of conduct provided by professional associations [...]” (p. 35)

As outlined above, various market dynamics and attitudes of actors within the translation ecosystem have a significant impact on the development of freelance translators' and LSPs' rates and earnings.

3.6 A Short Remark on the Role of Gender

While some (however, relatively little) scientific literature on the impact of gender on translations and approaches to feminist translation theory (Chamberlain, 1988; von Flotow, 1997) exist, the role of gender in the translation industry and its impact on occupational status and roles have received almost no attention at all. Nevertheless, research from other areas,

e.g. on telework, freelancing and gender-related differences in income and careers, show that gender definitely has effects on individual working conditions.

According to the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ, 2011), over 60% of the professional translators in Germany are women, and a similar gender distribution exists in other countries: Women make up for 85% of the members of the Austrian Interpreters' and Translators' Association UNIVERSITAS (2011) and the Canadian Translation Bureau announced men to be an "endangered species in Canadian translation schools" (PWGSC Services, 2009, n.p.).

About thirty years ago, Silbermann and Hänseroth (1985) pointed out that translation was regarded as a side job, which offers additional earnings for housewives by many people. This perception still seems to be prevalent today:

"Translation is a female occupation with all it entails of e.g. low income and status. A translator is considered a housewife if she works freelance or a secretary/coffeemaker, with a slightly higher status, if she works in a company."
(Dam & Zethsen, 2010, p. 204)

The *State of Independence Report 2013* on the US freelance workforce concludes that "[w]omen and men turn to independence in equal numbers" (MBO, 2013, p. 9). However, each gender chooses self-employment for slightly different reasons: "Women want to control their lives; men want to control their work." (ibid.) According to the report, men work more hours than women work, and thus earn more money. Women perceive the flexibility of spending time with children and grandchildren as one major benefit they obtain from being self-employed.

The relationship between home-based telework and the management of family and household duties is approached by scholars in two different ways:

On the one hand, researchers see "new opportunities for flexibility" (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001, p. 124) in tele- and home-based work, particularly for women who would otherwise have no or very limited access to work due to their childcare responsibilities (Dooley, 1996).

Others argue that it reinforces the double burden of women who tend to work for a lower income than men *and* do most of the household and childcare work: “Proponents of this approach concentrate on the benefits of gender inequality to employers, seeing female home-based workers as an informal sector of the capital is economy that uses exploitative practices.” (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001, p. 125)

Huws et al. (1996), however, found that self-employed teleworkers individually shape their working conditions, which causes traditional gender roles to converge. However, the situation remains more complex than stereotyped views on work-related gender differences might suggest:

“The interviews revealed a wide range of types: The woman who is using teleworking as a short-term means of accommodating work, in a lifestyle primarily devoted to carrying out her traditional roles as a housewife and mother; the woman who is happy to work from home indefinitely as a primary breadwinner with a male ‘househusband’; the woman for whom teleworking provides some personal relief from her role as a carer of a frail adult; the solitary man who is only working from home because he cannot find a job elsewhere; the ‘new man’ fitting work in between his household chores while his wife goes out to work; the freedom-seeking individualist who sees teleworking as an escape from the shackles of the corporation. These cast doubt on crude models which assume that there are intrinsic differences between women’s labor market behavior and that of men. The results of this survey suggest that the relationship between domestic and economic circumstances and behavior is much more complex, and cannot be simply ‘read off’ from a worker’s gender.” (Huws et al., 1996, n.p.)

Self-employed teleworking men who also assume family responsibilities have been found to suffer the same disadvantages as women, such as contingent status, job insecurity and a relatively low income (ibid.). Overall, there seem to be few differences in social, cultural and financial capital of men and women in the liberal professions and among contracting professionals with a relatively high income. Eilsberger and Zwick (2008) explain this with the role of competences required and the level of job prestige as a determinant of income for contracting and liberal professionals.

4 Theory

Theories represent visions of the world and models of reality (Goodman, 1984). They function as frameworks through which the object of investigation can be observed. Theories provide preliminary versions of understanding about the research object. This basic understanding has to be reconsidered, adapted and extended throughout the research process (Flick, 2010).

Empirical research on freelance translators' working conditions and their behavior in the social web shows that business in the translation industry relies heavily on personal referrals and mutual fondness (Grabher, 2002; Gold & Fraser, 2002). Freelance translators access tangible and intangible resources from their contacts, e.g. information about the market, job referrals and support from fellow translators. On the other hand, there is a high risk of moral hazard in translation production networks, due to the low level of social capital in these networks.

Social network theory (section 4.1) can be used to explain these dynamics in the translation ecosystem. The concepts of social capital (section 4.2) and support networks explain why the translation industry is a socially regulated market, why emotional bonding with regular clients provides better working conditions for translators and how tangible and intangible resources can be activated through social network structures. The different qualities of these relationships can be explained based on Granovetter's (1973) theory of strong and weak ties (section 4.3). In order to be able to explain translators' interaction with social technologies and how non-human objects and human actors both shape translators' working environments, this work also draws on theories which consider heterogeneous networks (section 4.4) determinative for socio-material practices (Orlikowski, 2007). A brief overview of the theoretical framework used for the study design and data analysis will be given in section 4.5

4.1 Social Network Theory

It has been argued elsewhere that, in order to understand human behavior, it is important to recognize the context of human activity (Jansen & Diaz-Bone, 2011). Contemporary Translation Studies theory also assumes that the activity of translating takes place while embedded in a specific social situation and is therefore considered a “situated activity” (Risku, 2002).

Individuals’ increased usage of the social web for information retrieval and social interaction fosters the transition from local group dynamics (e.g. in the local sports club or at the workplace) to a global society (Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Castells, 2000). Social networking services facilitate interaction and communication independent of temporary or spatial boundaries.

Social network theory provides a rich theoretical basis for understanding and analyzing translators’ work practices and personal networks. After defining a social network (section 4.1.1), this section will discuss the types of networks which are referred to as ego-networks and first-order stars (section 4.1.2).

4.1.1 Social Networks – A Definition

A social network is defined as *a definite set of actors and the relations between them* (Esser, 2008; Jansen & Diaz-Bone, 2011). Actors in social networks can be individuals or groups of individuals (e.g. organizations or countries) (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social networks are often visually represented as a quantity of nodes (visualized with dots) which are connected by edges (visualized with lines). The nodes represent the actors and the edges represent the relationships of these actors. The structures of a network and the positions of its actors can be analyzed. The findings of a *social network analysis* reveal relational information, but cannot reveal information about the characteristics of individual actors (Scott, 2000).

Weyer (2011) points out that social networks are based on coordinated interactions and the trustworthy cooperation of autonomous actors. Actors within the network must be considerate of the interests of others for a better chance to realize their individual goals. Actors usually cooperate during a

limited time period. Once the cooperation has terminated, the social network dissolves and actors might join or establish other social networks.

Weyer (2011) differentiates four different types of networks:

- *Inter-organizational networks*, consisting of strategically motivated corporate actors. These network structures are used for coordination, risk mitigation or as an alternative to traditional forms of organizing such as markets or hierarchies. These networks are usually investigated using qualitative case studies.
- *Networks of social relationships* or friendships, which can be supported through Information and Communication Technology. These social networks are often investigated with ethnographic methods.
- *Data networks*, consisting of latent data structures. These are traced by researchers based on technology users' digital footprints. These structures are usually not transparent to technology users and can be analyzed with social network analysis software using data mining methods.
- *Large technical networks* (e.g. smart grids) can also be analyzed and optimized using social network analysis methods.

Social network structures are of interest for different research disciplines, e.g. migration research, organization research, or studies of particular milieus. Areas of research are strategic collaborations, policy networks, or also data networks. A multidisciplinary background of mathematics, anthropology, sociology and psychology (Hollstein, 2006) influences methods and theories of social network analysis.

4.1.2 Ego-Networks

The network of an individual actor is referred to as an ego-centered network (or short, an *ego-network*). An ego-centered network consists of “a focal actor, termed ego, a set of alters who have ties to ego, and measurements on the ties among these alters. [...] Such data are often referred to as *personal network data*” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 42; italics in the original). Ego-centered

study designs aim for gathering and analyzing only those types of relationships between ego and its alters, as well as among alters, that are assumed to provide the information needed to answer the research questions.

A research design, which is often used for analyzing ego-centered networks is the so-called *first-order star* (Barnes, J. A., 1969). In this approach, ego will only be asked about *direct* relationships and only data about first-degree relationships of ego and its alters will be gathered. If data regarding the relationships among ego's alters is included, the resulting network is referred to as *first-order zone* (ibid.). These data can reveal the existence of cliques and the density of a network, as well as the intensity of personal relationships among actors (Hollstein, 2006). Despite the fact that network structures do not offer information concerning the characteristics of single actors, they allow inferences about the behavior of actors: "At the micro-level, network structural and compositional characteristics are normally considered to explain different sorts of individual behavior." (de Miguel Luken & Tranmer, 2010, p. 3)

Ego-network data can be used to study *social support* among actors, which is defined as "social relationships that aid the health or well-being of an individual" (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 42). Jansen and Diaz-Bone (2011) propose – with reference to Bourdieu, Coleman and Burt – to capture the correlation of network structures and the behavior of individual actors with the concept of *social capital* (Jansen & Diaz-Bone, 2011, p. 75). It can be used to better understand non-monetary profits which result from social recognition, and how social resources become accessible through interaction processes. The Homo oeconomicus¹¹ model is not suitable for capturing complex business dynamics and cannot sufficiently explain value-oriented activities, communicative, strategic and solitary behavior among individuals (Weyer, 2011).

11 The concept of the Homo oeconomicus refers to the economic model of behavior. It is often criticized for drawing an unrealistic image of a perfectly informed, thoroughly rational human being (Dahrendorf, 1968, p. 21), a "walking computer which is fully informed and always decides as quickly as a flash of lightning" (Kirchgässner, 2008, p. 25).

4.2 Social Capital

The concept of *capital* refers to the stock of resources an actor controls (Esser, 2008). The concept of social capital was (in the sense of today) first introduced by Lyda J. Hanifan in the early twentieth century. Hanifan used it to describe “those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people” (1916, p. 130). He was particularly concerned with the development process of social relationships and sociability, based on individuals’ shared opinions and activities.

The first systematic approaches to the concept of social capital were taken into consideration independently of each other by James S. Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu. Coleman (1988) elaborated the concept in the social context of education, defining social capital based on its function as a facilitator of actions within a social network. Bourdieu, however, investigated the causal relations between social inequality and economic, cultural and social capital.

He refers to social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249).

However, only with the work of Putnam social capital became a widely used concept. He approached social capital as a “civic virtue” (Putnam, 2000):

“Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called ‘civic virtue’. The difference is that ‘social capital’ calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital.” (p. 19)

The concept is also used by the World Bank, referring to “institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions”. They further argue:

“Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together.” (2011, n.p.)

Esser also recognizes different aspects of the social capital concept in the sociological discussion: “Some understand social capital as the degree of social embeddedness; others think of it as a method to control resources over social relationships.” (2008, p. 22)

The more social capital actors can accumulate, the more successful they will be in their daily work and in reaching their personal goals (Burt, 1992), as well as in achieving a higher income (Burt, 1997).

A single actor can neither control nor command the entire social capital which exists in a social network:

“Due to its nature as a collective good, it is (comparatively) more heteronomous than other types of capital [...]. Furthermore, it is always bound to (comparatively) specific social environments, since personal relationships are always at the core of each type of social capital.” (Esser, 2008, p. 26)

Social capital is always relational capital. It can only exist between two or more actors and only if it is shared (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001). Social capital can be strategically invested in social relationships with the assumption that the investment will eventually pay off – just as all other types of capital. Nevertheless, a strictly rationally motivated investment into a personal relationship might not pay off as intended, if the other actor (alter) becomes aware of the fact that ego only maintains the relationship in order to optimize his or her social network (Esser, 2008). In this situation, alter would feel used and lose trust in ego. Without this trust, ego will not be able to activate the full amount of social capital from his or her relationship to alter.

4.2.1 Different Types of Social Capital

The emergence of social capital is oftentimes not transparent to actors of a social network. It is ‘produced’ *en passant*, as a result of social interaction and communication. The advantage of this characteristic is that no costs incur at its

production. A disadvantage is that the creation of social capital can neither be planned nor can the creation process be controlled (Jansen, 2006). The socialization processes involved in the creation and maintenance of social capital lead to members of a social network internalizing certain values and norms, which can be used by others to their own benefit (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001).

Social capital can take on various forms and emerge from diverse relationship structures. The following integral values and benefits of social capital can be found in scientific literature (Esser, 2008):

1. Family and group solidarity, and the willingness to help and support others
2. Capacity of groups to self-organize
3. Social control and trust in the validity of social norms, values and morality
4. Access to information and social gatherings
5. Chances to gain power and make profit
6. Willingness and availability to support others in risky endeavors
7. Climate of cooperation and trust in the network

The first three benefits are collective phenomena and, therefore, public property. These resulting goods are referred to as *system capital* and cannot be created through an individual's goal-directed action, but incidentally result from the structure of a whole-network. However, they are influenced by the behavior of actors within the network. Four through seven are individual actors' benefits which take effect on the micro-level. These types of social capital can be activated by an individual actor, if needed. The disposability of these resources depends on the individual's effort and can be transferred to good friends and acquaintances. This type of social capital is referred to as *relational capital*. Esser points out that these two types of social capital only differ in theory. In everyday life, however, the different characteristics can be found in all types of social capital.

4.2.2 A Social Capital Inventory

Narayan and Cassidy (2001) took a structured approach to analyzing determinants, dimensions and consequences of social capital, conducting an extensive review of social capital literature and studies. Based on an extensive literature review and a factor analysis, they came up with a recommended set of measures for investigating social capital (figure 4.1).

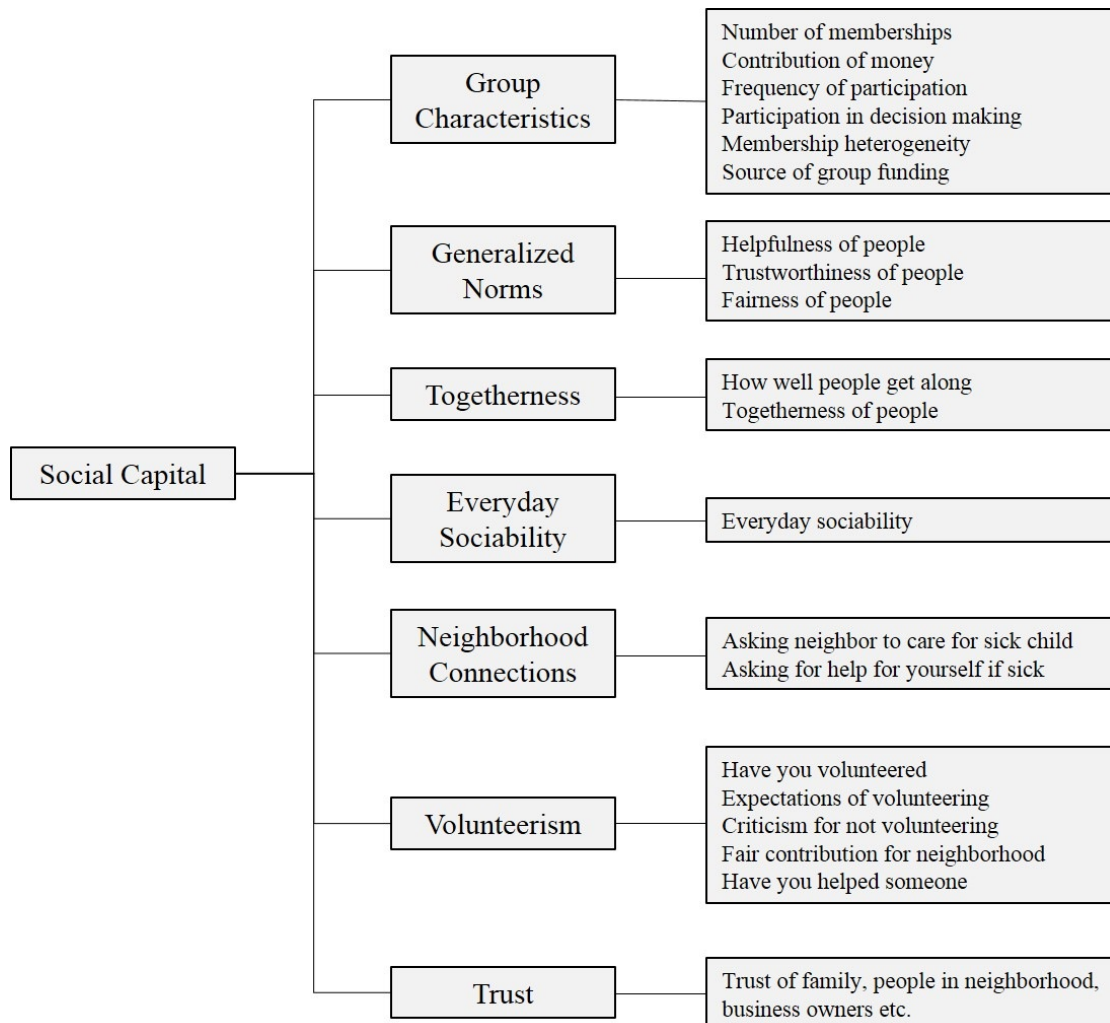


Fig. 4.1: The Dimensions of Social Capital, adapted from Narayan and Cassidy (2001)

Their work aimed at proving the validity of social capital measures in developing communities and is mainly based on literature and studies investigating social capital's effect on societal well-being (such as the World Values Survey (Inglehart, 1997), the New South Wales Study (Onyx & Bullen, 1997), The Barometer of Social Capital, Colombia (Sudarsky, 1999), and the Index of National Civic Health, USA (NCCR, 1996)).

Therefore, some of the dimensions of social capital and the corresponding measures may not be useful for investigating social capital in professional ego-centered networks as they are recommended by Narayan and Cassidy (2001). The authors' social capital inventory provides a set of dimensions of social capital and recommended questions for surveying and quantitatively measuring these dimensions. Since my study uses qualitative methods, I will not try to measure the social capital, which exists in the ego-networks of the study participants. However, the dimensions of social capital and the recommended questions will be integrated into the set of questions used in the qualitative interviews (section 5.2.2) and it will inform the analysis of the data gathered (chapter 6).

The dimensions of social capital and questions used (figure 4.1) are the following:

- *Group Characteristics*: This refers to the heterogeneity of the group members, e.g. with reference to their age, their education, the gender, religion, participation in group activities, donations of money (or other resources), and decision making.
- *Generalized Norms*: This dimension represents the perceived helpfulness, trustworthiness and fairness of people within the network or society.
- *Trust*: According to Narayan and Cassidy, trust is “empirically a strong and consistent dimension of social capital” (2001, p. 77). They suggest eliminating or including variables so the questions will be meaningful for the survey participants. They also point out that although the dimension *Generalized Norms* includes one variable related to trustworthiness and seems “conceptually related to trust, they are measuring a different construct” (ibid.).
- *Togetherness*: This dimension represents how well people get along in a network or a community.
- *Everyday Sociability*: Variables in this dimension include the frequency of participating in group activities and informal, recreational meetings, such as

playing cards, crafting, shopping and spending time together with family, friends and others.

- *Neighborhood Connections*: This dimension includes help among neighbors, e.g. caring for a sick child or asking neighbors for help if one becomes sick.
- *Volunteerism*: Variables in this dimension include whether it is expected to engage in community activities, whether people who do not volunteer are criticized or fined, and the frequency of volunteering.

Determinants for social capital are the pride and identity felt by individuals, communication (referring to self-directed media exposure, communication infrastructure and infrastructure in general). Some of the outcomes of social capital are the quality of governments, honesty and corruption of officials and businesses, competency of state organizations, the degree of peace, crime and safety in a state, and the degree of political engagement of citizens (note that these apply mostly to studies in the area of societal well-being).

Various studies operationalize the concept of social capital quite differently, e.g. to forecast community solidarity (Messner, Baumer, & Rosenfeld, 2004), to evaluate the adverse impact of government policy (van Oorschot & Arts, 2005) or to investigate the impact of social capital on economic growth (Knudsen, Florida, & Rousseau, 2005). Each study design therefore requires a thorough evaluation of the dimensions of social capital and its variables to be surveyed and the questions used to gather the data.

4.2.3 The Role of Trust

Although trust is regarded to be very important in social networks, for the creation of social capital and for functioning business relationships (Shaw, 1997; McAllister, 1997), it remains a complex concept, and numerous definitions of it exist. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the concept and cater to its importance in social network structures, this chapter looks into the phenomenon of trust and its role in more detail. Still, the following discussion will only provide an illustrative overview of the different perspectives on trust.

Generally speaking, trust can be defined as “an individual's belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another” (McAllister, 1995, p.25). It is closely related to the confidence in other individuals’ predictability, reliability and benevolent motives (Deutsch, 1960).

Trust research looks at trusting as either a mental or a social process (Möllering, 2013). As a social process, trusting is regarded as an interaction between actors, as a social context and a social effect. The socio-emotional dimensions of trust are integrity, goodwill and obligation. “Trusting as a social process entails behaviors such as signaling, negotiating, sense-making, contracting, cooperating, reciprocating, investing, imitating, or complying.” (Möllering, 2013, p. 288)

Some scholars consider trust development as a learning process (Barrera & van de Bunt, 2009), starting from a situation in which there is no trust at all and resulting in a trusting relationship. Actors are willing to feign trust (also referred to as ‘as-if-trust’) and so test the alter’s readiness to cooperate and reciprocate trusting (Hardin, 1990). “This ‘testing’ involves a willingness to be vulnerable, as is typical according to widely accepted definitions, but lacks the element of positive expectations in the face of uncertainty, which is another important element of trust definitions.” (Möllering, 2013, p. 293)

A similar concept is the *swift trust* in temporary groups. It is an early-stage trust, which might turn into proper trusting, if the learning process yields positive results for the actors involved (Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996). Actors who are members of the same community share trust histories.

Lewicki and Bunker (1996) define two types of trust: The *calculus-based trust*, which is based on calculations of rewards and punishments, and *knowledge-based trust*, which is based on information on another party, making someone's behavior more predictable.

“Consequently, with [knowledge-based trust] Party A has confident expectations about entering into a vulnerable situation because he has sufficient information regarding past behaviors, and an understanding of the party B’s in-

tentions such that he believes Party B will behave in a fashion which is consistent with Party A's welfare." (Saparito, 2000, n.p.)

A similar type of trust is *cognitive trust*, which is based on the understanding of someone's capabilities and intentions (McAllister, 1995). Appreciation and collective identity between actors might develop into *identification-based* or *relationship-based trust* (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). It is based on repeated interaction over time and information which flows from within the relationship. Through numerous interactions, a sense of identity between the interacting individuals develops.

As trust is believed to positively influence the efficiency and scale of economic activity (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2013), (virtual) organizations attempt to create environments which promote trust development and trusting behavior. For successful trust-building and cooperation in virtual organizations, a common business understanding must be established and strong business ethics have to be applied. Another important aspect is the communication of trustworthiness, which needs to be facilitated by reliable Information and Communication Technology (Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001).

However, there is also a downside to trust. Luhmann (1979) propagated the idea of trust as a *risky, supererogatory investment*. And also McAllister adverts to the "second face of trust" – negative aspects of too much enthusiasm for trust relationships which "leave individuals and organizations open to betrayal and abuse" (1997, p. 93).

"Indeed trust failures take place whenever trust relationships are taken advantage of as well as when trust is inappropriately vested by trusting parties in relationship parties, and these relationships can persist as long as trusting parties are unaware of, or unwilling to admit to, the failings of trust relationships." (McAllister, 1997, p. 103)

4.2.4 Support Networks

Interest in social support has grown over the years, particularly in research focusing on health maintenance (Cohen & Wills, 1985), the well-being of older adults (Rook & Schuster, 1996), coping with stressful life events (Brown &

Gary, 1987) and in studies on entrepreneurship (Birley, 1985; Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Kacperczyk, 2013) and family businesses (Rosenblatt, de Mik, Anderson, & Johnson, 1985).

The concept of the *support network* has been criticized for its missing conceptual clarity and for its selectivity, as it is not possible to distinguish it clearly from social capital. There is no single, distinct definition of support networks and it does not offer an isolated theory. However, the concept provides a rich basis for the analysis of informal exchange processes. It is important to distinguish between the structure of social relationships and their substance.

The concept of social support networks is easier to define if it is divided into segments: *Social network* refers to the infrastructure of the production and dissemination of social support. Merely that a social network exists cannot lead to the conclusion that there is also social support among the actors of the network. *Network* refers to the formal properties of social relationships and social networks. *Support* is the quality and the substance of relationships.

Characteristics of social relationships and social networks are the duration of their existence, the frequency of interaction, their origin, their type (family, neighborhood, relatives etc.), the size of the network, the density and the connectivity. However, these properties do not reveal any information regarding the substance and the qualities of a social relationship or a social network, such as social support. A particularly fuzzy area is *friendship*, which can be a characteristic as well as a quality.

Social support is a type of social capital. It is based on informal relationships which are relevant for the achievement of societally expected and important personal objectives (Diewald & Sattler, 2010). However, there may also be *negative* manifestations of *social support*, such as conflicts of any kind, belied expectations, undesirable social control, or non-ethical disregard of individuals (in the form of social closure or nepotism). Those who provide support, may experience mental, temporal or material burdens and limitations in the pursuit of their own aims in life. Those who receive support may perceive it as a mental

burden, for example when having feelings of shame, inferiority, or undesirable obligations (Rook & Schuster, 1996).

The various manifestations of support are defined differently throughout scientific literature. A very detailed list was compiled by Martin Diewald (1991), based on an extensive literature review. Diewald differentiates between empirically observable activities and the communication of cognitions as well as of emotions. The following list is a slightly condensed version of it, as published in Diewald and Sattler (2010).

The various dimensions might not always be easy to distinguish empirically from each other, due to the multifunctionality of social relations and interactions (Diewald & Sattler, 2010). The selection of the dimensions which are to be captured in a survey and analyzed depends on the research question and the underlying theory of a study design (Stokman & Vieth, 2006).

Manifestations of Support: Observable Interactions

- *Practical aid*, either people-related (e.g. help with grocery shopping for someone who is sick) or commodity-related (e.g. help with repairs in the garden or household)
- *Care* (e.g. of the sick or of elderly people)
- *Tangible support* (e.g. financial support or non-cash benefits)
- *Intervention* (e.g. putting in a word for somebody, in order to reconcile differences or to give somebody an advantage over someone else)
- *Information* (e.g. about job openings, welfare state offers, good physicians or bargains)
- *Consulting and personal advice*, both of impersonal and personal nature (e.g. with difficult professional or private decisions)
- *Sociability*, for fun and causing positive emotions
- *Everyday interactions*, in the form of meaningful and stabilizing rituals

Manifestations of Support: Cognitions

- *Recognition*, both in terms of personal appreciation and as social status (e.g. being an esteemed member of an organization or the community)
- *Orientation*, in terms of conveying behavior models and social norms, including positive social control of adequate behavior
- *Sense of belonging*, which is the awareness of being a member of a community or a social network, involving communication and engagement. A special case is the opportunity for nurturing others (Weiss, 1974); a sense of being needed by others
- *The sense of receiving supportive behavior* or help from others, whenever needed
- *Learning from others*

Manifestations of Support: Emotions

- *Emotional security*, as a feeling of being in good hands with someone without having to do something for it
- *Love* and affection
- *Motivation*, encouragement and uplifting, particularly after setbacks

Social capital can also have regulatory or even negative aspects, for example if the regulations within a network are so strong that they inhibit innovation, differing behavior of individuals or the freedom to express own opinions.

Fraser and Gold (2001) found that social capital has regulatory effects in (production) networks of professional translators. These social norms and rules exclude poor performing translators from the social network and, thus, make it more difficult for those individuals to participate in the market.

4.3 Weak and Strong Ties

Mark Granovetter (1973), based on his studies about social capital and career paths, discovered and coined the concept of strong and weak ties. *Strong ties* are the foundation of solidarity, trust and social influence in networks. Building

and maintaining strong ties requires a great deal of time and effort. Individual actors need to *invest* in these relationships to make their strength last. As any resources are limited and actors can only invest a certain time and effort into building and maintaining strong ties, the number of strong ties an individual actor can maintain is limited. Strong ties are the basis on which social capital builds, particularly for the coordination of group solidarity and group action.

Networks form when a number of strong ties are integrated into a social network, e.g. when friends of a friend become friends themselves. This effect is called *social closure* (Jansen & Diaz-Bone, 2011) and supports the constitution and effectivity of social norms and establishment of collective identity. Social closure can also have negative effects, for example if entire social networks isolate themselves from others or if it provides the basis for distrust in others and discrimination. Similar to Granovetter's strong ties, Uzzi (1997) found *embedded ties*, which he describes as lasting and cooperative, important for trust, detailed information and cooperative problem solving strategies. Opportunistic behavior is sanctioned and actors who do not act according to accepted social norms are excluded from the network.

Weak ties are less redundant, connect distant networks and can be the source of novel and differing information. An actor who bridges two networks that would otherwise have no connection with one another, acts as a broker. His position is strategically advantageous, as he closes a *structural hole* (Burt, 2004) and thus receives non-redundant information earlier than actors within the networks. He also profits from heterogeneous connections with others. Actors in such a position enjoy structural autonomy. They are free of restraints and even have the power to play others off against each other (Jansen & Diaz-Bone, 2011). Weak ties only offer weak solidarity among actors and cannot provide support in situations of high insecurity. From his study in the Italian textile industry, Uzzi (1997) also finds a type of relationship he calls *arm-length ties*. These are short-term business relationships which form based on the price of a transaction, are calculating and self-serving.

The influence of social capital is “most profound when relationships are among heterogeneous groups” (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001, p. 60). Embeddedness is of advantage if an actor cooperates with another actor who enjoys higher status: Companies strive for cooperating with other firms which have more prestige on the market, in order to obtain advantages for their own status through the cooperation. The perceived social capital and prestige of one firm – manifested as the level of embeddedness in a cooperation network with other prestigious companies – develops into a perceived competitive advantage when it becomes symbolic capital (Jansen & Diaz-Bone, 2011).

4.4 On Socio-Material Entanglements

We live in a material world, i.e. a world of material objects that are closely entangled with how we live and act, how we produce and reproduce our realities. With the emergence of the World Wide Web and the dissemination of mobile devices, not only physical, but also virtual artifacts and objects shape our realities and are shaped by us. Orlikowski (2007) argues that the social study of technologies in organizations either neglect technology and artifacts and, therefore, does not pay enough attention to materiality. Other research focuses excessively on technologies, thereby losing sight of human and social aspects prevalent in organizations. According to Orlikowski (2007), materiality is constitutive of everyday life and should be considered as such:

“I want to suggest that we can gain considerable analytical insight if we give up on treating the social and the material as distinct and largely independent spheres of organizational life. In particular, this requires replacing the idea of materiality as ‘pre-formed substances’ with that of ‘performed relations’, in order to characterize the recursive intertwining of the social and material as these emerge in ongoing, situated practice [...]” (p. 1438)

In order to understand the professional networks of knowledge workers, one must not only look at human actors and their interactions. It is also important to include knowledge objects in the analysis. This is important because of two things: First, distributed knowledge work is “a fragile, recursive network in which humans are both the principle knowledge workers and also the principle knowledge objects” (Boland, 2004, p. 120). Second, because knowledge objects,

data repositories, documents and all other non-human objects, which are involved in the processes of distributed knowledge work, are shaped by human actors and, on the other side, shape their working practices.

“Technology and organization are, in essence, two sides of the same coin. That coin, called the social relations of production, comprises all the material and nonmaterial means and techniques used to produce goods and services. Thus, social relations of production include tools and machines used, the skills needed, the formal and informal group structure utilized, and the structure of the larger organization and its relation to other organizations in society.” (Hodson & Sullivan, 2011, p. 157)

Orlikowski (2007), Mol (2002) and Suchman (2007) refer to these processes as *socio-material practices*. A similar view on distributed knowledge work in virtual organizations has been elaborated upon by Boland (2004). He calls these phenomena “an ecology of knowledge workers, mediations, knowledge objects, documents and data repositories” (p. 119) Taking place in any kind of information technology, either intra-organizational, inter-organizational or even in large societal information systems.

Another important sociological approach that aims to understand interactions of human actors and objects (referred to as non-human *actants* in this context), is Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1998; Law, 1992). ANT is not a theory per se, but rather a framework of theories and approaches to describing, analyzing and understanding socio-technical networks: “ANT is a practice-oriented method concerned with tracing new associations between actors in a network. In ANT a network is a tool or concept to help describe something - not what is being described.” (Glud, Albrechtslund, & Harder, 2009, p. 1) Using the network concept as a tool to describe how actors interact with each other and with technology has also evoked some interest of TS scholars (e.g. Buzelin, 2005; Abdallah, 2012), who find ANT offering a rich set of ideas and concept which help to study translators’ working practices:

“While this theory is not applicable in toto to Translation Studies [...], it does offer ideas that we could develop in the study of translation practices. For instance, we might wish to establish what networks exist (in a given context): what the various nodes are, both human and non-human; what the range of the

network is; what use is made of each of these nodes; the frequency of links in different directions; the flexibility of the network, the extent to which it remains stable or expands or contracts over time; even the ways in which compromises are born and become necessary. How do translators build and maintain their networks?” (Chesterman, 2006, p. 22)

The basic assumption of ANT is that society is not only based on social relations. Instead, material, non-social *things* support and stabilize social relations (Peuker, 2010). In order to satisfy these assumptions in scientific research, ANT postulates the equal treatment of humans and non-humans, setting its sights on researching and describing the connections between them. ANT assumes that actors (both human and non-human) do not have certain characteristics of their own accord. These characteristics emerge from the interaction of all entities in the network.

ANT will not be used as a theoretical basis in this thesis. However, it is important to appreciate that sociological theories exist, which – in contrast to pure social network theory – assume that social networks consist of heterogeneous, socio-material (Orlikowski, 2007) or socio-technical (Weyer, 2011) interactions and that both human and non-human (such as artifacts, discursive concepts, technology, or knowledge objects) entities significantly influence and shape network structures. I will therefore consider translators’ social networks as heterogeneous networks, in which human actors (e.g. colleagues, clients and experts) as well as objects and artifacts are constitutive of translators’ work practices and working conditions.

4.5 Putting the Theory Together

This study draws on social network theory for analyzing the social networks of professional freelance translators. It will focus on ego-networks of single, focal actors who work as freelancers in the translation industry. Previous research has shown that self-employed workers retrieve vital resources from their social networks, including social support and social capital. The concept of social capital refers to all resources an actor can possibly activate, including tangibles and intangibles, as well as shared values, trustworthiness and (sometimes even

negative manifestations of) social control. It is also used to refer to the degree of embeddedness an actor enjoys, pointing out its nature of relational capital. Narayan and Cassidy (2001) prepared an inventory of determinants and variables of social capital, which comprises group characteristics, generalized norms, trust, togetherness, everyday sociability, neighborhood connections and volunteerism.

A special manifestation of social capital is social support. Social support emerges from informal relationships and enables actors to achieve societally expected, as well as personal objectives. Manifestations of social support are, among others, practical aid, tangible support, personal advice, recognition, learning, motivation and encouragement, as well as a sense of belonging. Success and job satisfaction levels have been found to be influenced by translators' access to resources of these kinds, which are facilitated through their in-person and virtual social networks (cf. chapter 3).

Particularly those relationships which develop on solidarity, trust and social influence are the basis for social capital. Individuals must invest in building these strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) and can only maintain a limited number of them. Whereas strong ties and embeddedness (Uzzi, 1997) are essential for coordinative action and group solidarity, weak ties connect distant networks, providing access to heterogeneous sources of information. Actors who close structural holes (Burt, 2004) by acting as brokers between two networks have been found to hold strategically advantageous positions.

Theories which aim at understanding the role of things in social networks argue that material, non-social things support and stabilize social relations between actors. Work practices are not only shaped by social practices, but also by practices involving (physical as well as virtual) artifacts, objects and tools. The concept of socio-material practices "allows us to explicitly signify, through our language, the constitutive entanglement of the social and the material in everyday organizational life" (Orlikowski, 2007, p. 1438).

These theories and concepts help to understand how and why social relations can provide freelance translators with crucial resources. The notion of socio-

material entanglement helps to eliminate the barrier between studying social practices and the use of technologies which support them.

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter will immediately inform the methods (chapter 5) used in this study, as well as the analysis and discussion of the study results (chapters 6 and 7).

5 Methods

This study draws on social sciences methods for gathering and analyzing data. This comes naturally, as the research questions are of a sociological nature. As an inter-discipline, Translation Studies have always been open to methods and theories from other disciplines. And rightfully so: “Interdisciplinarity [...] also means inter-methodology. Disciplines and research patterns from psychology, phenomenology, natural sciences and social sciences provide empirical translation research with useful tools, methods and techniques.” (Hansen, 2006, p. 6)

This study uses a qualitative, mixed-method approach (section 5.1). The study design (section 5.2) used ethnographic and social network analysis methods: Professional freelance translators were *observed* at their personal workplaces. During the observation, they were asked to think aloud while they were translating, in order to obtain *think-aloud protocols*. The workplace observation was conducted for gathering data on the usage of online communities or other virtual resources which can be referred to as types of support.

In *guideline based interviews*, participants were asked about various types of support they receive from social relationships, the information resources and translation aids they use, as well as about actors within their social networks who are relevant for their translation businesses. These relationships were surveyed as *ego-centered networks*, using *social network maps* and a standardized *name generator*. The recordings of the interviews, the think-aloud protocols and network maps were then *transcribed* and the resulting data material was thoroughly analyzed based on the qualitative content analysis method developed by Mayring (2001, 2003) and advanced by Gläser and Laudel (2010).

The approach to defining the field (section 5.3), the material selection (section 5.4), data preparation (section 5.5) and data analysis methods (section 5.6) will be explained below in further detail.

5.1 A Brief Introduction to Qualitative Research

The times in which qualitative research had to defend its right to exist and its advocates hoped for more acceptance by quantitatively oriented researchers are, fortunately, over. Nowadays, qualitatively and quantitatively oriented (social) scientists look at both approaches as complementary and use synergy effects of both approaches (Jick, 1979; Mayring, 2001).

Qualitative research focuses on specific social problems and aims at gaining insights for those affected based on transparency and equality (Wiesinger, n.d.). It recognizes the impact of the research process on the research situation and comprises a focus on interpretation, an emphasis on subjectivity and allows flexibility in the process of conducting research. Qualitative approaches assure orientation toward process and context, “regarding behavior and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience” (Cassell & Symon, 1994, p. 7). These approaches help researchers to understand complex social phenomena.

Qualitative data and methods comprise all techniques of empirical social studies which aim for reconstructing and understanding meaning and connotations in the sense of a methodically controlled comprehension from outside (Hollstein, 2010).

In qualitative social research, the researcher has to approach the object of investigation and its reality in a step-by-step approach. Hollstein recommends to keep a measure of standardization so the generalizability will be assured. Standardization can be implemented through the use of checklists in guideline based interviews, or the surveying of biographical and demographic data in open interviews (Hollstein, 2006).

Qualitative research also follows the principle of openness, which means that the researcher has to explicitly state personal presuppositions and existing knowledge of the object of research (see chapters 2 and 3). The research design must further allow openness to new and unexpected insights (Hopf, 1979). Thus, the surveying instrument must be constructed to capture a broad data

stream. The exclusion of data based on presuppositions and limitations of the research design is to be avoided (Hollstein, 2006).

I chose a qualitative, exploratory approach for this study since the investigation of emotional and functional support as well as the exchange of resources in social networks of professional freelance translators is a new area of study, of which little insight exists.

The complexity of professional networks and support resources in an under-researched field is best met using mixed-method approaches: “[...] the combination and mixing of different research methods bears an enormous potential for the advancement of social research.” (Kohlbacher, 2006, n.p.) By combining observation, interviews and social network analysis methods, this study will gather a broad range of data and is expected to capture issues which have not been hypothesized previously and might come as a surprise or even propose contradictions to the prior understanding explicated above.

5.2 Study Design

The study design consists of a participatory observation, followed by a guideline based interview and the assessment of each participant’s first-order star. The ego-network was surveyed using a name generator and a name interpreter, with which the multiplicity of the reported social relationships could be determined. The methods used will be explained below in more detail.

5.2.1 Observation at the Personal Workplace

Participant observation is a method which was developed in ethnographic research and is used to understand perspectives and perceptions of a research population. The aim of observing the study population in their own environment is to understand “the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and people’s behaviors and activities – what they do, how frequently, and with whom” (Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p. 13). Ethnographic research methods are used when there is a “need for an in-depth understanding of why, how and in

what ways technology affects work practices in the fast-changing world of information systems” (Barnes, S. A. et al., 2009, p. 15). The combination of observation methods with other surveying instruments has proven to be very efficient for gathering data in complex, exploratory research settings (Bechky, 2008).

The observation at the participants’ workplaces complies with the understanding of Translation Studies researchers, that in studies conducted in a laboratory environment, or with non-professional translators (e.g. Translation Studies students), translation and work processes might be significantly altered. Künzli criticizes previous studies of translators’ work processes and translation aid use, which were conducted in laboratories instead of at translators’ personal workplaces. He argues that translators are not able to use their individual information resources and translation aids if they work under laboratory conditions: “La création d’un cadre d’observation naturel permettant aux sujets [...] de travailler à leur poste de travail habituel et avec les sources d’information qu’ils ont coutume d’utiliser.” (Künzli, 2001, p. 510) Künzli further demands a detailed disclosure of study designs in order to make research results replicable and transparent.

I chose the observation method at the personal workplace of the professional translators that participated in the study in order to observe possible collaborative behavior and interaction with other actors (e.g. other translators, subject matter experts, clients). I also hoped to observe any kind of sharing, passing on or receiving of support resources of any kind – either through the social web or other communication (or interaction) channels.

5.2.1.1 The Degree of Participation

In observation, the degree of participation may vary. In some observation settings, the researchers do not interact with the research population, they might even remain unnoticed. Participant observation studies require the researcher to participate in activities or even everyday life of the research population. In this study, the degree of participation by the researcher was kept low. However, I was present at the participants’ workplaces and they were

aware of being observed. For the participants, this was an unfamiliar situation, as they normally work alone in their home offices. Furthermore, they were asked to explicate their thoughts so I could record so-called *think-aloud protocols* (see chapter 5.2.1.2 for more detail). Sometimes, the participants also used me as an information resource when discussing terminology choices together with me.

Although I tried not to interfere in the natural work process, it is apparent that my presence, the awareness of being observed (as well as the notion of being assessed) and the verbalization of thoughts had an impact on the participants' behavior.

5.2.1.2 The Think-Aloud Protocols

This method, called *thinking aloud* or *concurrent verbalization* (Jääskeläinen, 2010), has been frequently used in cognitive translation process research (e.g. Krings, 1986; Jääskeläinen, 1999; Gile, 2004; Hansen, 2006; Göpferich, 2008). It was originally developed and used in psychological research (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Kuusela & Paul, 2000) and has been widely adopted by researchers that are interested in cognition and behavioral research, e.g. in the area of software and usability testing (van den Haak, de Jong, & Schellens, 2003).

The method of concurrent verbalization is simple, but effective: Study participants are asked to complete a task (e.g. navigating through a website or playing chess) and constantly verbalize their thoughts while doing so. These verbalizations are recorded with an audio recording device and transcribed by the researcher later on. The transcripts are referred to as think-aloud protocols (TAPs).

Limitations of the method include an excessively high cognitive effort, which may lead to participants not being able to fulfill the assigned task and/or to verbalize their thoughts. Furthermore, only thoughts which are consciously processed by the participants can be explicated (Jääskeläinen, 2010). However,

in most cases, the verbalization only causes a slight process deceleration (Ericsson & Simon, 1993).

For this study, the professional translators were asked to work on any of their current translation projects and to think aloud along the process. The recordings of the think-aloud comments were later transferred into verbal transcripts for further analysis, using the specialized transcription software f5 (cf. section 5.5.1).

5.2.1.3 The Observation Procedure

The observations were conducted prior to the guideline based interviews. All observations lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. In most cases, they were either interrupted or followed by rest periods during which a more informal discussion developed. These talks can be referred to as open, unstructured interview sections, during which I was able to ask questions about the observed behavior. Participants also used the opportunity to explain their own working practices retrospectively, providing further information on working conditions and relationships with translation buyers.

5.2.1.4 Field Notes and Observation Protocols

“The quality of the data [in participant observation] depends on the diligence of the researcher” (Mack et al., 2005, p. 14), therefore it is recommended to take notes of all observations as thoroughly and promptly as possible.

During the observation, I took field notes about anything I thought could be valuable for a further analysis. The field notes included any observable behavior that was not explicated by the participants themselves in the think-aloud protocols, e.g. tools used or websites visited.

Immediately after each observation and/or interview, I sat down and maintained an observation/interview protocol. The field notes and protocols are also incorporated into the data analysis process.

5.2.1.5 Self-Observation Protocol

One participant was not available for a participant observation, due to time restrictions. She offered, on her own initiative, to prepare a self-observation

protocol. In this document, she explained which tools and aids she normally used during the translation process. She sent this document via e-mail prior to the interview. The self-observation protocol is included in the material for analysis.

5.2.1.6 Limitations of Participant Observation

While observation methods allow for insights in individual and group behavior, as well as a deeper understanding of complex relationships, it also has some limitations and weaknesses. Observing behavior is subjective and it therefore requires an effort of conscious objectivity by the researcher (Mack et al., 2005). As explained above (see chapter 5.2.1.1), in participant observation the research population is aware of being studied. This may have an effect on their behavior.

5.2.2 Qualitative Interviews

Interviewing is one of the methods most used in sociological research (Fink, 2000). Interview designs range from unstructured, open, explorative approaches to highly structured, survey-based interviews which serve as a data capturing method for quantitative studies.

The purpose of qualitative interviews “is to obtain description of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1996, p. 5).

Guideline based interviews are a qualitative research method and range somewhere in the middle between unstructured and highly structured approaches. A guideline is developed based on the issues the researcher wants to address. The interview can resemble an informal conversation. However, the researcher must make sure that the topics defined in the guideline will be covered. How the questions are asked is not predefined, however, researchers should be aware of the various types of interview questions (such as introducing, follow-up, structuring, direct and indirect, specifying or probing questions) and know how to use them sensibly (Kvale, 1996). In guideline based interviews, open questions should be used as often as possible.

Interviews can be carried out using different techniques, e.g. e-mail interviews, messenger (chat) interviews, phone interviews and face-to-face interviews (Opdenakker, 2006).

Face-to-face interviews feature synchronous communication, as the interviewer and the interviewee are at the same place at the same time. In this setting, a personal conversation takes places, in which the researcher can take advantage of much more information than the spoken word, disclosed by non-verbal behavior (such as body language, intonation, voice etc.) This additional information is referred to as *social cues* (Forbes & Jackson, 1980). A difficult aspect of the interactive nature of face-to-face interviews is that the researcher has to pay close attention to both

“the informant's responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and, at the same time, you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your questions are liable to get answered within the fixed time at the level of depth and detail that you need.” (Wengraf, 2001, p.194)

5.2.2.1 Expert Interviews

For this study, I chose the expert interview method, a special qualitative, guideline based research method developed in social research. The interviewee is regarded as a representative of an expert group – in this case, of professional freelance translators. The focal interest of the interview is on the views and experiences of the interviewee, being the expert of a specific sphere of activity (Flick, 2010). Experts, in this context, are defined as particularly competent in the issue of interest (Deeke, 1995).

Experts dispose of technical and process knowledge in a professional or occupational action field. Expert knowledge is not only systematic and reflexive technical or specialized knowledge. It also includes practical and actionable knowledge, influenced by professional maxims as well as group or individual rules and norms (Bogner & Menz, 2002).

The expert interview method is very effective for gathering data on professional translators' support networks and the impact of the social web on these networks and on translators' professional practices. As Bogner and Menz

(2002) point out, experts influence their professional environments by applying practical knowledge and thus take effect on action conditions of other actors in these environments. Data gathered in expert interviews reveal practical knowledge and perspectives of the professional practices of the interviewees. The aim of expert interviews is to reveal insights about shared knowledge, concepts of reality, structures of relevance and interpretive patterns which are common among members of the group of professional translators. Expert interviews are used in explorative studies in order to thematically structure the research field (Burger, 2011).

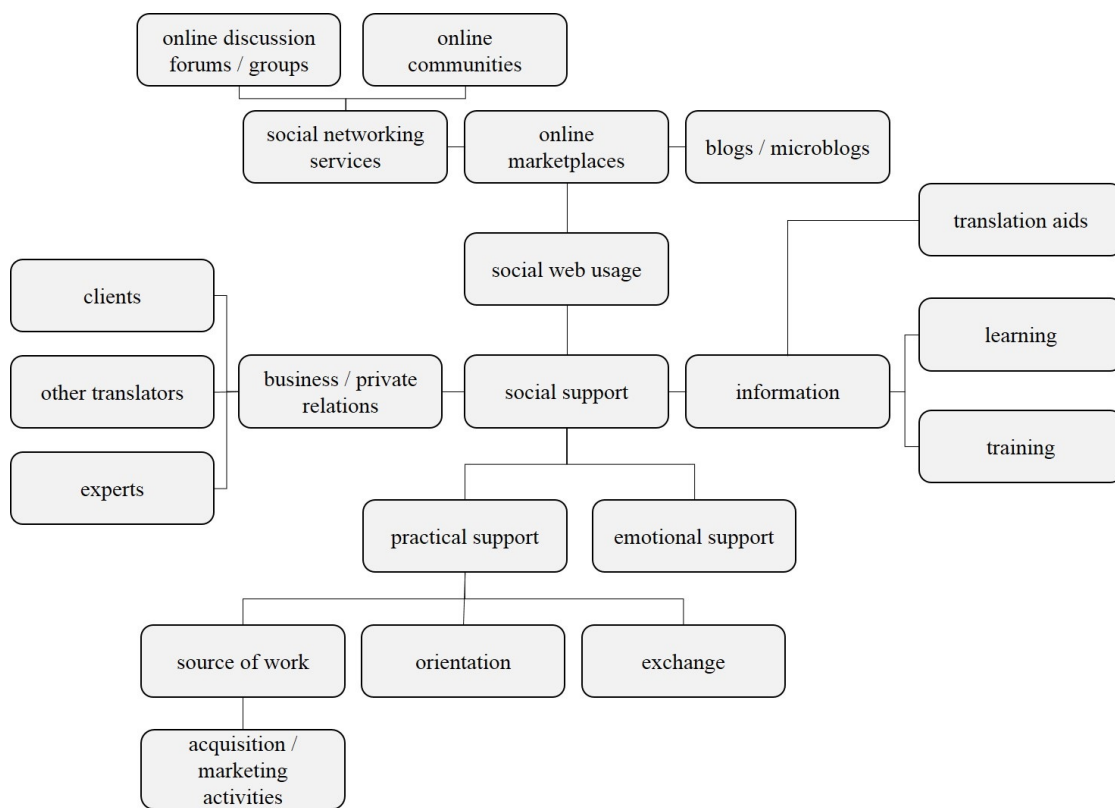


Fig. 5.1: Visualization of focal topics addressed in the interviews

The interviews conducted for this study lasted around 30 to 45 minutes each. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed using the transcription software f5 (cf. chapter 5.5.1). During the interviews, I took field notes and followed up after each interview by writing an interview protocol.

Each interview was introduced by eight standardized questions about professional status and demographic data (gender, age range, place of

residence, professional status, professional experience, fields of expertise and specializations, languages covered, mother language). After the standardized questions were answered, the conversation centered around topics such as resources for information and learning, translation aids used, social web usage (e.g. membership in online communities or online marketplaces, reading and writing of blogs, passive and active Twitter use etc.), relationships to clients, subject matter experts, translators and other actors of the translation industry (figure 5.1).

5.2.2.2 Surveying First-Order Stars for a Qualitative Network Analysis

The first-order star is a type of ego-centered network, which represents only first-level social relations between ego and his/her alters. In this study, the social relations were only captured if they were relevant to professional translating. Alters could be natural persons, but also organizations (e.g. professional associations or companies). The interviewees were asked to draw their network relations on network maps, their remarks during the processes were recorded with an electronic recording device and subsequently transcribed using the transcription software f5.

Network Maps

Social network structures are always complex and not easy to capture. Most of the time, their meaning and qualities remain hidden. Visualization techniques help to capture the social relations, patterns of activities and meaningful structures.

One method for visualizing social network structures is the drawing of network maps. This visualization method was first used in the 1930s and systematically further developed by Moreno (1954). Network maps for surveying ego-networks usually consist of concentric circles, with ego in the very center. Other network mapping techniques allow free drawing and interviewees can choose where to locate the various actors within their ego-networks, including their own positions (Straus, 2006).

The social relations were captured manually by the interviewees on a network map, printed on DIN A4 paper. The network map consisted of three concentric circles, with a black dot labeled with the word “ICH” (German for “ME”). The circles were labeled as “very important“, “important“, “less important“, from the inner to the outer circle. The space outside the outer circle, the periphery, could also be used by the interviewees to capture relations with alters who did not fit into the three categories of importance, but still had some relevance to them.

Strengths of the network maps technique are:

- Structured and explorative approaches can be combined in one interview. Drawing on the network map triggers explanations of the participants about their personal networks and their alters. (Bernardi, Keim, & von der Lippe 2006; Höfer, Keupp, & Straus, 2006)
- The use of network maps supports the cognitive effort of participants and the interviewer. It serves as a mnemonic device and clearly shows the network structures and alter which have been talked about and simultaneously captured on the map. (Bernardi et al., 2006; Straus, 2006).
- Interviewees usually do not refuse to draw a network map. Particularly pre-structured maps (such as the one used in this study) are happily used (Reisbeck, Edinger, Junker, Keupp, & Knoll, 1993; Scheibelhofer, 2006; Straus, 2006).
- Network maps deliver a systematic and comprehensive overview of the network relationships of a person; even more systematic than quantitative approaches (Baumgarten & Lahusen, 2006).

Name Generator

For capturing the ego-centered networks and surveying emotional and functional support, I developed a name generator based on the Fischer-Network (developed by Fischer (1982) and also used and adapted by Bailey and Marsden (1999), or Burt (1984)), the social capital inventory (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001) and theories on social support (cf. section 4.2.4):

The name generator comprised six standardized questions about the professional network, learning and information resources, practical support, emotional support, and help.

The questions asked were the following:

- *Cooperation*: Looking back over the past six months, who are the people with whom you have worked together on a translation project?
- *Knowledge exchange*: With whom do you talk about your work on a regular basis?
- *Information resources*: Who do you contact if you need background information or help with terminology when you are translating?
- *Help*: If you are facing difficulties with a translation or in a situation with a customer, who do you ask for help?
- *Functional support*: If you are not well or indisposed for any reason, is there someone who takes on a translation project for you?
- *Advice*: If you need to make a professional decision, who do you ask for their opinion or for advice?
- *Feedback & four-eyes-principle*: Who gives you feedback on your work?

Name Interpreter

A name interpreter was used to capture characteristics of the social relations such as density and multiplicity.

Density was surveyed with the following prompt: “Please also draw a line between people who know each other well and maintain a social relationship with each other, either professionally or privately.”

Multifunctionality was surveyed with the following request: “Please highlight the people who you maintain a social relationship with beyond your translation business, e.g. who you meet regularly for recreational activities such as sports, going to the movies etc.”

5.3 Defining the Field

The research population or research field of this study is not easy to delineate. What is certain is that “[f]reelance translators make up the largest single group of industry stakeholders, with hundreds of thousands throughout the world.” (Kelly, DePalma, & Hegde, 2012, n.p.) However, as discussed above in greater detail (cf. section 2.2), it is not evident how many individuals work as freelance translators worldwide, in the US, in countries of the European Union or in the German-speaking region (Germany, Austria, and parts of Switzerland). Several figures and estimations about the number of active translators and interpreters, the market size and industry trends are published regularly by market researchers, professional associations, the European Commission’s Directorate General for Translation and other scientific institutions. Also, the personal income tax reports of some countries can be consulted to gain an approximate number of freelance translators. However, all these numbers differ significantly from each other, as they rely on varying data sources and use divergent estimation methods.

In fact, the exact number of professional freelance translators, no matter in which country, seems impossible to determine. This is also due to the situation that the professional title *translator* is not protected in most countries. This means that anyone can offer translation services. Another reason is the fact that “the translator”, as a stereotyped notion, does not exist. It has been stated several times elsewhere that the language industry is highly fragmented (e.g. Kelly et al., 2012). This is also true for the large group of freelance translators, whose professional manifestations are diverse: Being self-employed portfolio workers, freelance translators work anything between full- and part-time, they work on a project-basis, so in between translation projects (or concurrently) they work also as interpreters, lecturers, editors, web-designers or do other, non-language related work. Many of them – particularly literary translators – are even “forced to find other sources of income” and translate only during their leisure time, due to the increasingly poor income situation in the industry

(PETRA, 2011, p. 25). Therefore, some studies distinguish between active and passive translators (e.g. CEATL, 2008)

For my study, translators qualify as a research population based on their professionalization, their professional activities (Prunč, 2007), and their socially constructed role, as

“‘translatorship’ amounts first and foremost to being able to play a social role, i.e., to fulfill a function allotted by a community – to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products – in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference.” (Toury, 1995, p. 53)

5.3.1 Sampling

In qualitative research, sampling is especially challenging. In most cases, researchers work with only a small number of cases. Nevertheless, the sample cases must satisfy the claim for generalizability. Starting point of the sampling are hypotheses about which characteristics a typical case or representative of the research population should have (Flick, 2010).

For the exploration of the impact of the social web on the socio-material working environment of professional freelance translators, all those individuals qualify who earn their living partly or in total through translating. Whether the freelancers to be recruited had a higher education degree in Translation Studies was not relevant for sampling. However, participants should take a professional approach toward translation services, which means that they should at least earn a significant part of their income from translating or translation-related services.

As a matter of resources, I had to recruit participants who have their location of work and residence close to where I live, so I could easily travel to their work locations for the observations and interviews. Therefore, I defined a perimeter of 100 kilometers around Mannheim, Germany (figure 5.2) as a section of *the field* I would recruit study participants from. For a convenient access to the

field and in order to comply with the professionalism paradigm¹², I chose to use the members list of the Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators, Germany (Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer, BDÜ), which is the largest German professional association of translators and interpreters, to recruit the study participants from. The resulting sample can be referred to as a *cluster sample* (Nord, B., 2002).



Fig. 5.2: Map of Germany with a pointer on the city of Mannheim (source: Google Maps)

12 The admission criteria of the BDÜ are very strict: "Membership of the BDÜ is a sure mark of quality: All potential members are required to present evidence of their professional qualifications before they can join the Association. This offers an additional safeguard for clients commissioning linguistic services and enhances the professional standing of BDÜ members." (retrieved from www.bdue.de)

Newcomers with a different background or no higher education degree have to prove several years of professional working experience as a translator or interpreter to gain membership status. In the translation industry, there is an ongoing debate about which requirements should be fulfilled by an individual to offer translation services. I chose to recruit from the list for the sake of convenience. This choice does not mirror any personal opinion of whether a Translation Studies degree should be the *sine qua non* of offering translation services.

5.3.2 Gaining Access to the Field

The German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators, BDÜ, is the largest European professional association for translators and interpreters, with more than 7,700 members (as of November 2013¹³). 6,100 (79%) members are women, 1,600 (21%) are men. More than 4,200 members work as translators, about 700 work as interpreters and about 2,800 individuals refer to themselves as both, interpreters and translators.

The BDÜ website features a searchable members list¹⁴. Various filter criteria, such as the language pair, qualifications, special subject, or the postal area code, can be used to narrow down the search results. From this list, translators located close to Mannheim were selected by entering the area code of the city of Mannheim (68161) and selecting 100 kilometers in the entry field “Search within a radius of x from zipcode”. As a necessary qualification “Translator (for written texts)” was selected. Language, mother tongue and special subjects were intentionally left undefined, because these criteria were negligible in sampling.

The individuals on the results list were contacted via personalized e-mails in early August 2011. The e-mails were sent out in waves, until the desired number of ten participants had been reached.

An overall number of 234 personalized e-mails with an explanation of the research aim and design had been sent out in three waves. The e-mails also contained a link to a website which had been set up for further information. The website offered a detailed explanation of the study’s motivation, the participant observation, the guideline based interviews, and the anonymization

13 According to BDÜ media data (<http://www.bdue.de/de/homeframe.php?page=070602>; last accessed April 9, 2014).

14 The members directory can be accessed on the BDÜ website: <http://bdue.de/de/homeframe.php?page=050100> (last accessed April 9, 2014).

of the data retrieved. It also referenced the compliance with the code of ethics of the German Sociological Association (GSA)¹⁵.

The possibility to obtain further information on the research project through the project website was used by the e-mail recipients, as can be seen from the number of user views in August 2011 (figure 5.3), which increased by about 250% to more than 400 page views and dropped back to below 100 page views in September 2011.

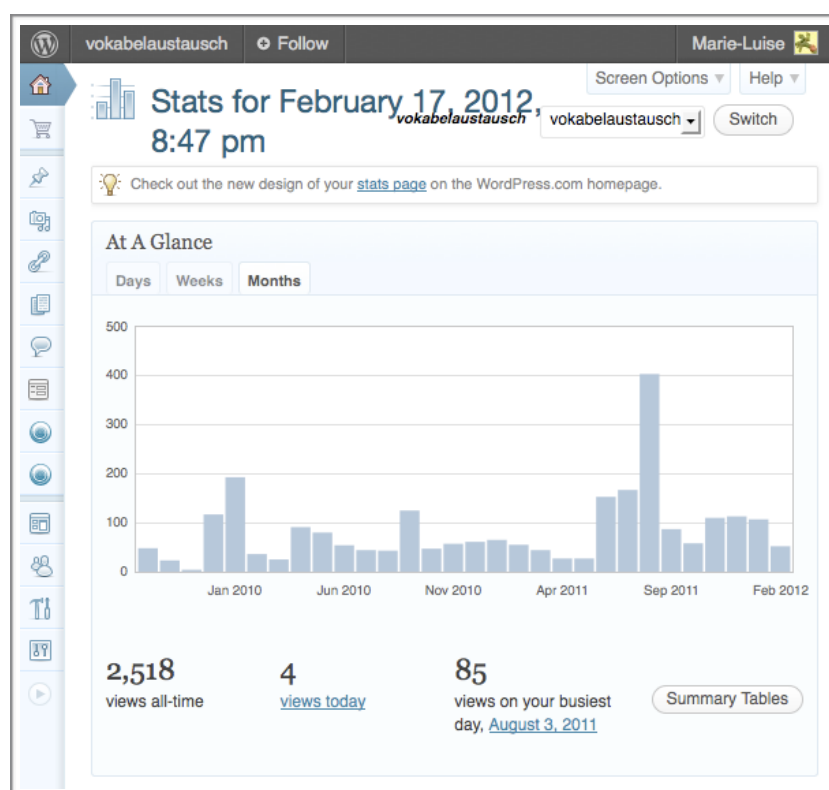


Fig. 5.3: Increase of page views in August 2011, caused by study participant recruiting activities (screen grab of the dashboard of the Wordpress content management system)

The overall response rate to the recruiting activities was 23.5%. 6.4% were positive responses. The participant observations and interviews could be conducted with 4.3% of the persons contacted.

Common reasons for refusal were lack of time, either because the individuals contacted were on vacation or had to cope with a high work load. Some BDÜ members stated they were not actively working as translators at the time.

¹⁵ The GSA code of ethics can be accessed on the GSA website (German only): <http://www.soziologie.de/en/gsa/code-of-ethics.html> (last accessed April 9, 2014)

Some translators mentioned not being comfortable with an observation at their workplace, either because they felt it was inconvenient or due to irregular working hours or childcare duties.

As a surprise came refusals due to the fact that the translators considered themselves as of no interest for the study: “I believe we are too unappealing for your study. There should be better and more suitable research subjects than us.”¹⁶ responded one translator.

5.3.3 The Sample Structure

The sample consists of ten individuals. Nine of the ten work as freelance translators, either full- or part-time, and some of them in combination with other occupational activities such as interpreting, language training or lecturing at a university. One translator is a full-time employee of a small translation agency.

All study participants live and or work in the wider area of Mannheim, Germany. Eight of the ten participants are women and two are men, with an age range of 27 to 62 years. The gender and age distribution corresponds well with the overall demographic structure of BDÜ members and it should therefore resemble a realistic representation of professional (freelance) translators (although the sample in qualitative research is not expected to be representative). Nine of the ten participants work as specialist translators, one as a literary translator. The translators have between five and 35 years of professional experience in translating.

Five of the ten translators were available for the participant observation, the guideline based interviews and the social network survey. The other five participants were available for the guideline based interviews and the social network survey. This group was not available for the participant observations due to time constraints, as they had no regular workplace, or because their

¹⁶ German original: „Ich glaube, wir sind viel zu uninteressant für Ihr Vorhaben – da gibt es sicher bessere und für Sie brauchbarere Informationsquellen als wir.“

workplace is located in their home and they referred to it as inadequate for attending visitors.

5.4 Material Selection

The explorative approach of the study and the paradigm of openness in qualitative research determine that any data should be captured and any material collected, which – in the researcher’s opinion – could be relevant and revelatory (Flick, 2010).

In this study, the collected material includes sketches of translators’ workplaces or – more specifically – of artifacts and tools on their desks, the think-aloud protocols of the observation, field notes, interview and observation protocols, recordings of the interviews and the network maps.

In the phase of data analysis, the question of which data of the collected material should be analyzed or used for particularly detailed evaluation arose a second time (Flick, 2010) and will be discussed in more detail in section 5.6.

5.5 Data Preparation

The preparation of the collected data is an important process step before the analysis and interpretation of the data can begin. The following chapters explain how the data was prepared and which tools were used for that.

5.5.1 Transcription of the Think-Aloud Protocols and the Interviews

The entire audio material (i.e., think-aloud protocols of the participant observation and of the guideline based interviews, including the social network surveys) were transcribed with the transcription software f5. *Transcription* refers to the written documentation of audio material and is an important intermediate step prior to data evaluation (Flick, 2010). Different transcription methods exist, each developed for a distinguished purpose of data analysis. However, there is no standardized procedure. I followed the recommendation of Flick to transcribe “only as much and as precisely as the research question requires” (2010, p. 380; my translation), in order to ensure an economic procedure. Kuckartz (2010, p. 44) also recommends to use easy transcription

rules, aiming to “smooth out” the language and, thus, facilitating direct access to meaningful structures and semantics within the text material:

1. Transcription is done on a word-for-word-basis, noises and dialects are not transcribed.
2. Language and punctuation are adjusted to written language.
3. All information, which can be used to identify an individual, must be anonymized.
4. Long pauses are marked with (...).
5. Emphasized words are underlined.
6. Affirmative utterances of the interviewer (uh-huh, I see) are not transcribed, as long as these do not interrupt the interviewee’s answers.
7. Interjections are enclosed in brackets.
8. Utterances, which illustrate what was said (e.g. sighing, laughing) are transcribed in brackets.
9. The interviewer’s paragraphs are indicated with “I:” and the interviewees’ paragraphs are indicated with “B:”.
10. Each switch of speakers is indicated by two line breaks, in order to guarantee better readability.

The transcriptions were proof-read subsequently, by listening to the audio material and comparing the recordings with the transcribed material.

5.5.2 Transcription of the Field Notes

The field notes were hand-written, paper-based notes. This material was also transferred into electronic documents, either through transcription using word processing software or by scanning the sketches and scribbles.

5.5.3 Digitalizing the Network Maps

The ego-centered networks of the participants were captured on paper-based network maps during the interviews. These data had to be digitalized as well.

For this purpose, the social network mapping software VennMaker¹⁷ was used. VennMaker is an application especially developed for participatory social network analysis, which means that study participants themselves can capture their social network with the application.

I chose to use paper-based network maps, because drawing with a pen is more intuitive and subsequently bears no risk of study participants being overwhelmed with the interview situation (after several hours of being observed during work and having to verbalize their thoughts) while having to use a new software program they are not familiar with.

Transferring the network maps to VennMaker was very convenient. In a first step, I copied the network maps one to one into VennMaker. In a second step, I could then rearrange the actors within their sections (i.e. very important, important, less important, periphery) and thus analyze the network data for clusters and cliques. VennMaker also captures quantitative data of the social networks, such as density and counting, which can be used for further analysis.

5.6 Analysis of Data

After preparation, the collected data was analyzed and interpreted according to the data type and the research question. The analysis will be explained in detail in the following sections.

5.6.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

The qualitative content analysis method was developed by Philipp Mayring (2000, 2003). He developed this method as a “systematic, rule guided qualitative text analysis, which tries to preserve some methodological strengths of quantitative content analysis” (Mayring, 2000, p. 1). It is a category-based approach (Kuckartz, 2010), and draws on quantitative content analysis, which was originally developed and used in communication studies. It shares four main characteristics with classic content analysis: A model of

¹⁷ <http://www.vennmaker.com/>

communication, rules of analysis, categories, and criteria of reliability and validity.

The aim of qualitative content analysis is a systematic analysis of the material, achieved by segmentation and progressive processing. The development of the category system is theory driven, and all analytical aspects are predefined (Mayring, 2000; Kuckartz, 2010). Mayring (2003) distinguishes between three types of interpretation: Summarizing, explicating and structuring. The first type – summarizing – is used to reduce the material and create an abstract corpus which still mirrors the overall data material used. Summarizing qualitative content analysis is particularly suitable to answer research questions in areas where there is only limited prior knowledge and exploration has priority (Kuckartz, 2010).

5.6.1.1 Coding the Text Material

The analysis and interpretation of the text material begins with reading the text material thoroughly. The text material will then be segmented and categorized. This is referred to as *coding*. Kuckartz (2010) defines a category as a term or phrase, which is defined by the researcher and used to label a specific text passage. To give an example: The term *emotional support* is used to label all interview passages in which the participants refer to any kind of emotional support or related issues (such as the absence or the need for emotional support).

In qualitative content analysis, categories are developed both inductively and deductively. After the text analysis and the category development, the categories themselves are analyzed and their relations and correlations interpreted.

The text material was coded and analyzed using MAXQDA¹⁸ software, a specialized application for computer-supported qualitative content analysis. With MAXQDA, large text corpora can be systematically analyzed. The software supports the intellectual work done by the researcher with visualization of

¹⁸ <http://www.maxqda.de/>

category usage in the text, code libraries, the possibility to add memos to text passages and codes, a search function, etc. It allows the text material analysis to be completed in an efficient and orderly manner. Automated analyses are only possible to a very limited extent (e.g. quantitative analyses like word count).

Gläser and Laudel (2010) argue that Mayring's approach stays too close to quantitative approaches and thus limits the synthesis of openness and theory-based procedures. Therefore, they suggest using multidimensional, nominally scaled constructs (Gläser & Laudel, 1999), which allow for inductive category development and verbal descriptions of study findings. Characteristics of variables can be directly extracted from the text material. This approach allows for openness and unexpected results in the research process.

5.6.1.2 Inductive Category Development

Inductive category development is an explorative approach:

“The main idea of the procedure is to formulate a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question, which determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account.” (Mayring, 2000, n.p.)

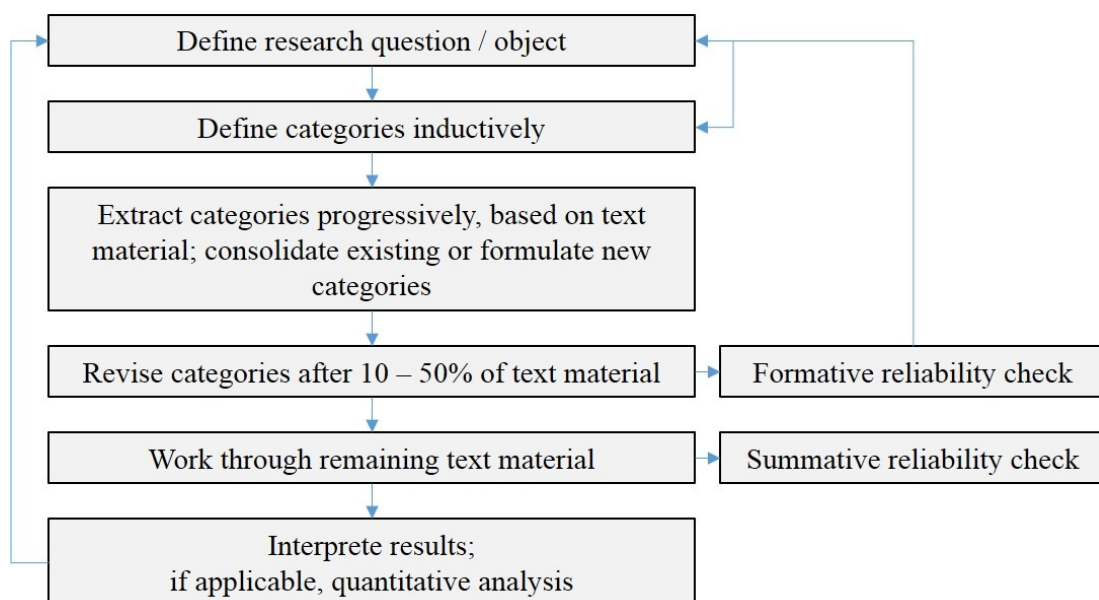


Fig. 5.4: Flow of inductive category development, adapted from Mayring (2000)

The text material is worked through in detail and the categories are progressively developed from the text material during the analysis (figure 5.4). A phenomenon which is manifested in the text material is regarded as an indicator for a theoretical fact (Kuckartz, 2010).

5.6.1.3 Deductive Category Development

Categories developed deductively are formulated prior to the text analysis, based on theoretical assumptions and knowledge (figure 5.5).

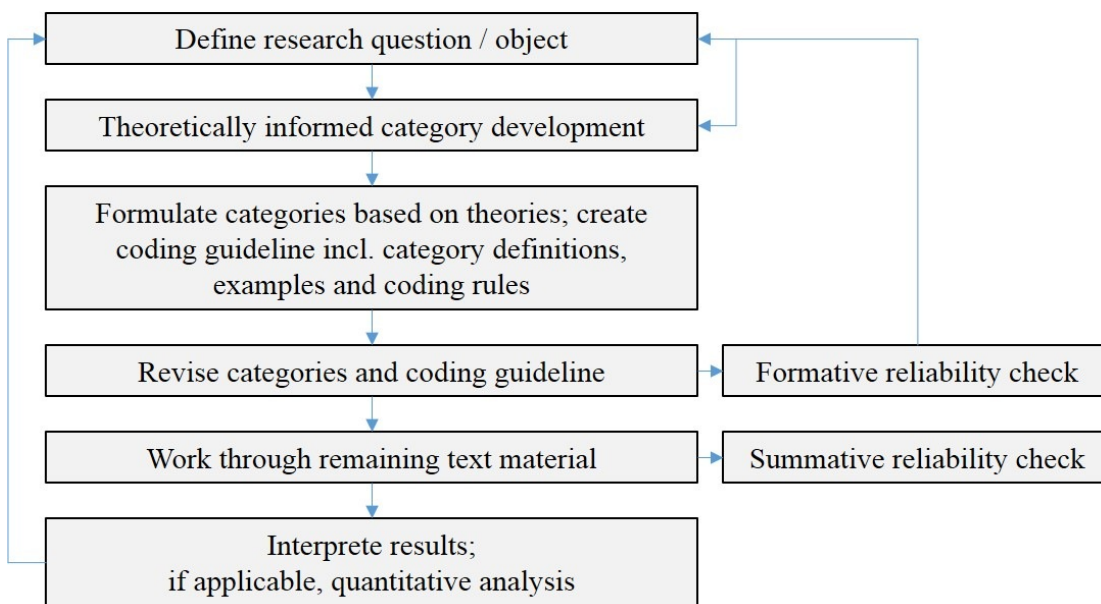


Fig. 5.5: Flow of deductive category application, adapted from Mayring (2000)

Exact definitions, examples and coding rules are defined for each category and listed in a coding guideline. An overview of the deductively developed categories for the text material analysis of this study is given in the coding guideline.

The deductive categories were developed based on the types of social support (cf. section 4.2.4), as well as the findings from previous research (cf. chapter 3).

5.6.1.4 Interpreting the Material

According to Mayring (2003), three different approaches to interpreting the text material exist: Summarizing, explicating and structuring interpreting.

The summarizing interpreting approach was used in this study, as it allows a reduction of material in order to achieve a specific level of abstraction.

After the segments are defined, the text segments with substantial importance are paraphrased, then reduced by selecting the most meaningful and discarding synonymous paraphrases. The resulting text material is further reduced by bundling and integrating paraphrases on an even more abstract level. The results can then be used to define a new system of categories, which can then be verified at the text material (Kuckartz, 2010).

Paraphrasing is done in three steps (Mayring, 2003; Kuckartz, 2010):

1. All text segments that do not carry significant meaning or are repetitions, clarifications or aggrandizements will be discarded.
2. The remaining text segments will then be 'translated' into a unified language.
3. The resulting paraphrases will then be transformed into grammatically shortened versions.

5.6.2 Qualitative Social Network Analysis

The network maps were analyzed together with the text material from the guideline based interviews using qualitative social network analysis methods (Straus, 2010). In this approach, the interpretation of the data has priority. It allows to relate the network characteristics with actions of individual actors: "Theories such as social capital comprise constructs that are inherently abstract and require subjective interpretation in their translation into operational measures." (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001, p. 61)

Who belongs to a social network and where the boundaries of the network are located is defined by the researcher (Hollstein, 2006). Qualitative approaches can be used in explorative studies to find answers to research questions in under-researched areas. Subjective views and individual structures of meaning as well as actors' overall judgments of network structures can be captured (Diaz-Bone, 2007). Explorative observation and interview methods allow the reconstruction of specific practices, interactions and actions of individuals in the particular contexts. Thus, networking, i.e. the work of building and maintaining social networks can be analyzed (Hollstein, 2006).

The social network maps are interpreted along with the data obtained in the interviews. The focus of qualitative social network analysis does not lie on the characteristics of individual actors, but on the relations between actors and their embeddedness in an existing structure. The network structure shows the pattern of social relationships the actors maintain with each other (Jansen & Diaz-Bone, 2011).

The findings of the data analysis are particularized in Chapter 6.

6 Results

In order to answer the research question, the actors within the support networks of professional freelance translators were systematically identified from the transcribed interviews and the network maps. The relationships between the translators and their alters were analyzed considering them as resources for social support. The analysis of the data gathered also helps to understand how the professional translators who participated in this study make use of the Social Web as a virtual space for social interaction, collaboration and business.

The findings provide an understanding of which of the intangible and tangible resources translators obtain from their support networks (section 6.1). The analysis of the ego-networks is presented in the form of case studies, which briefly introduce the participants and wrap up statements about their social networks from the interviews (section 6.2). It has become evident that social networking services and online marketplaces are hardly used by the participants of this study. Just how the interviewees perceive the impact of the Social Web on the translation industry and how they use social technologies will be discussed in section 6.3.

6.1 Translators' Social Networks

The analysis of participants' social networks had resulted in an overview of alters in translators' networks (section 6.1.1), as well as quantitative data (section 6.1.2) such as the density and the number of alters.

6.1.1 Systematic Overview of Translators' Alters

The interviews and the social network analysis of the participants' ego-networks had returned a list of actors, which is significantly longer than Translation Studies literature usually suggests. In the analysis, their roles had been consolidated and summarized (table 6.1). Organizations had been mentioned as important alters (e.g. publishing houses or professional associations), and sometimes translators only referred to contact persons from these organizations that have a special role (e.g. experts).

Alters	Examples Given by Interviewees
“Mr. Google”	search engine Google Search, jokingly referred to as alter contacted for background information
accountant	accounting services provider
acquaintance	former fellow students, direct clients, individuals who recommend ego to a prospective client
assistant	assistant to owner of a translation bureau
author	novelists, technical writers, engineers
client	direct clients, regular clients, translation agencies
colleague	other freelance translators and interpreters, in-house translators
contact person at a professional association	secretary, employee
contact person at the client’s	employee in the technical writing department, secretary
editor	contact person at a publishing house
expert	physician, medical technical assistant, baker, butcher, mechanic, service hotline of the German dictionary DUDEN, fellow translators who are considered experts in a certain field, IT professionals, client’s employees: engineers, lawyers, professionals in research & development
family member	marriage/life partners, children, siblings
friend	individuals that possess specialized knowledge from their studies, jobs, mother language and cultural background, or because they live in a foreign country; fellow translators and interpreters; former fellow students
literary critic	individual who writes literary criticism in newspapers and magazines
local group	regional members’ groups of professional associations
neighbor	individual who lives next to the translator
online discussion forum for translators	ProZ.com, translatorscafe.com, VdÜ/BDÜ online discussion forum
online marketplace	ProZ.com, translatorscafe.com
professional association	German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ); Association of German-speaking Literary and Scientific Translators (VdÜ)
project manager	employee of a translation agency, colleague of in-house translator
regular translator	regular subcontractors of a translation bureau
supervisor	manager of an in-house translator, owner of a translation bureau

Alters	Examples Given by Interviewees
tax advisor	tax services provider
translation agency	in this case, abstract notion of translation agencies in general
university lecturer	colleagues, mentors
Web designer	works for the same client; mutual referrals

Tab. 6.1: Alters in translators' social networks

Social networking services and online marketplaces were also mentioned as sources of information and work and are – for the sake of completeness – also listed here. The same applies to the search engine Google Search (google.com), where one participant had been mentioned jokingly as “Mr. Google”.

6.1.2 Key Data of the Social Networks

The analysis of the ego-networks also resulted in quantitative data. Although the small scale of this study would not allow generalizing these results to all translators, the data provides an additional perspective on the differences and common features of participants' social networks. The density of the ego-networks and the number of alters differ from participant to participant. Based on the quantitative data, there is no pattern evident (e.g. caused by the age or gender of the participants). An explanation of this data is only possible together with the qualitative data presented in section 6.2.

However, it might be valuable for creating hypotheses for further (quantitative) research on professional translators' or freelancers' social networks on a larger scale.

6.1.2.1 Network Density

The density of participants' ego-networks ranges from 0.11 to 0.58, including ego, or between 0.02 to 0.57, without ego (figure 6.1). “The density of a subgraph expresses the proportion of ties that are present among a subset of the actors in a network. This measure is used to evaluate the cohesiveness of subgroups [...]” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 102-103)

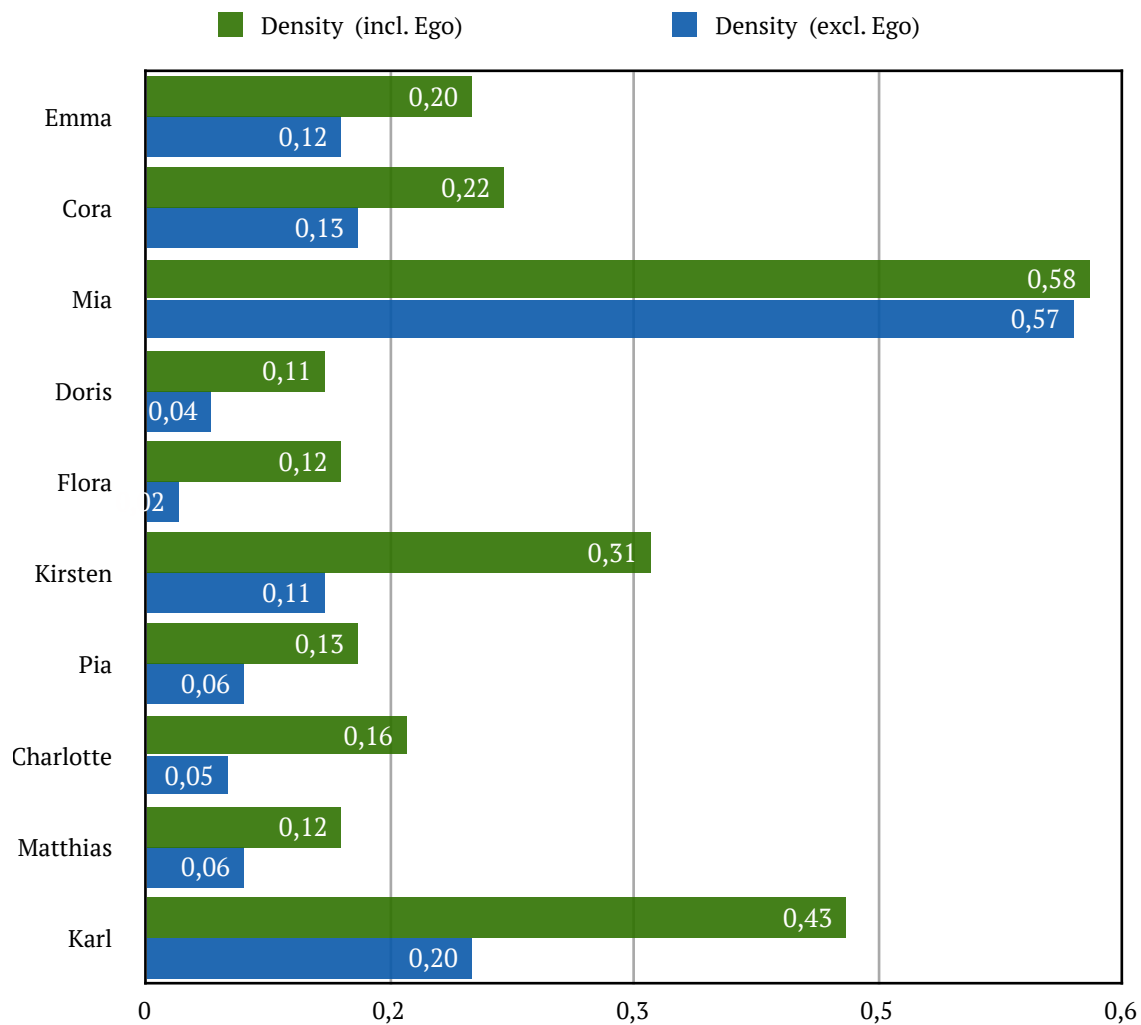


Fig. 6.1: Density of translators' social networks

From figure 6.1 it becomes evident, that Mia's (the in-house translator) ego-network has a high level of group cohesion. Whereas Doris', Flora's Charlottes's and Matthias' ego-networks consist of more heterogeneous network relations, with a lower number of alters who possess bonds linking them to one another.

Gender	Work experience	Density (incl. Ego)	Density (excl. Ego)
male	25	0.28	0.13
female	13.5	0.23	0.14

Tab. 6.2: Average density of participants' social networks by gender

The network density in relation to participants' gender is illustrated in table 6.2. From the data, no distinct differences between male and female participants' network density can be recognized.

It should be noted that the network density of the two male participants Karl (0.43) and Matthias (0.12) differs widely. The average, however, is similar to those of the female participants' networks, which also shows varied numbers (figure 6.1), ranging between 0.12 and 0.58 (incl. ego).

An overview of the network density in relation to participants' age and years of working experience is shown in table 6.3. Looking at the data more closely, it becomes evident that the network density among the group of freelance translators who participated in this study changes over the course of their careers.

Age	Work experience	Density (incl. Ego)	Density (excl. Ego)
20 - 29	3	0.20	0.12
30 - 39	12.5	0.31	0.21
40 - 49	15	0.11	0.04
50 - 59	20	0.15	0.06
60 - 69	30	0.43	0.2

Tab. 6.3: Age and working experience of participants and density of their social networks

From the qualitative data gathered in the interviews, it is evident that some participants have business approaches that vary from those of the freelance translators:

- **Kirsten** mainly works for translation agencies and has no regular direct clients.
- **Charlotte** owns a translation agency and language school. She had stated in the interview that she will only record the alters that are relevant for the language combination she covers in her role as a translator. She might have more alters in her overall professional role as a translator, language teacher and manager than the network map indicates.
- **Mia** is an in-house translator and her alters are primarily colleagues of hers who also work in the same translation agency.

After eliminating the data of Kirsten, Charlotte and Mia from the diagram, a visualization of network density suggests how group cohesion in participants' ego networks differs according to years of working experience (figure 6.2).

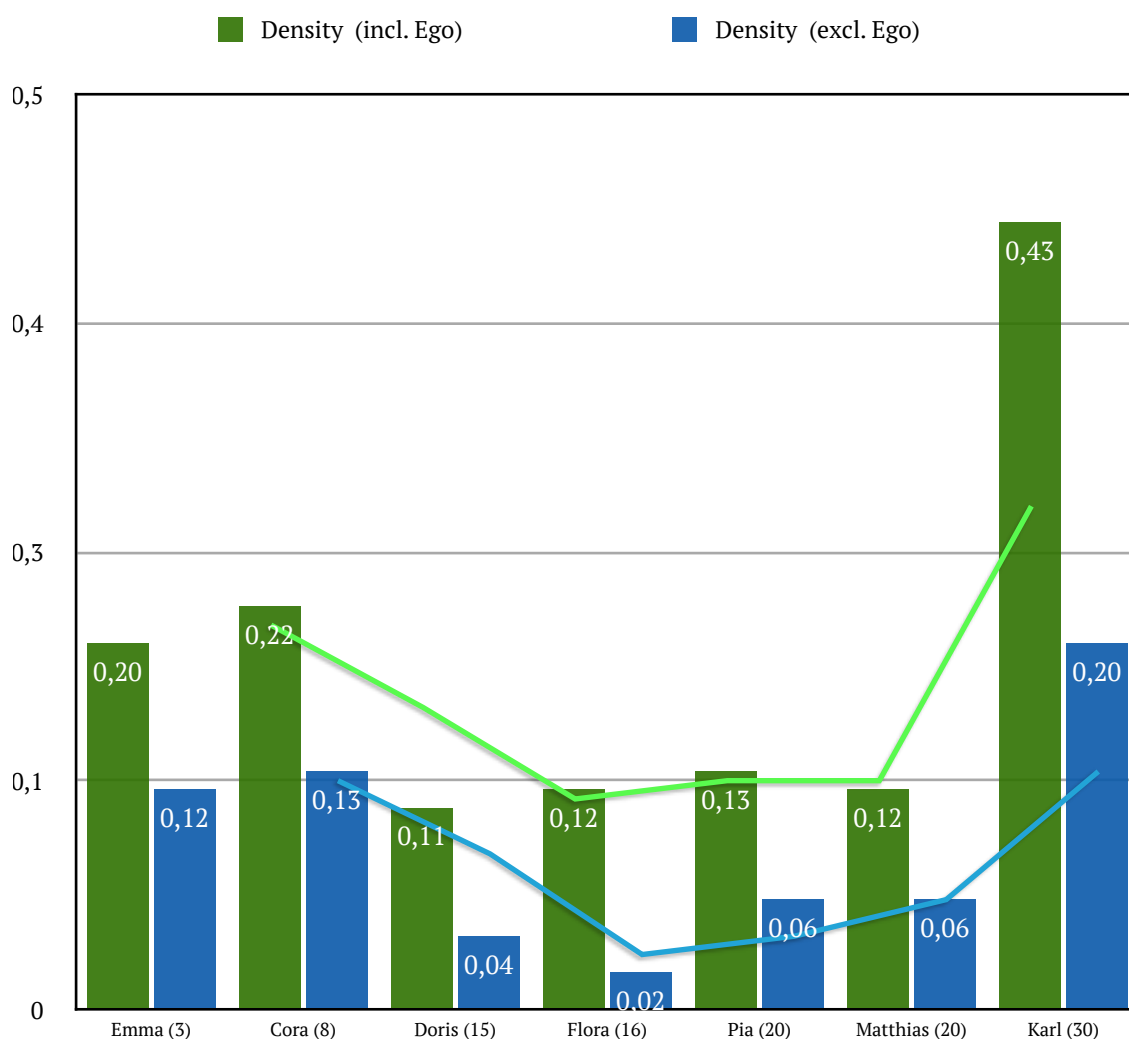


Fig. 6.2: Network density with moving averages (excl. Mia, Kirsten and Charlotte)

The freelance translators who have a considerable amount of working experience and are well-established professionals (i.e. Doris, Flora, Pia, and Matthias) have rather heterogeneous network relations. These non-redundant (weak) ties, developed over the course of their career, are important carriers of novel information (Granovetter, 2005) and sources of competitive capabilities (Zaheer & McEvily, 1999). The data suggests relatively stronger group cohesion in the beginning of a freelance translator's career as well as a trend of increasing network heterogeneity in the first two decades of translators' careers and a sharp increase in group cohesion towards the end of professional life.

6.1.2.2 Egos' Nodal degrees

The nodal degrees of the participants range from six participants to 27 (figure 6.2). The participants have an average nodal degree of 17.9, with 6.6 of the relations to alters being considered “very important”, 6.1 “important” and 4.1 “less important”.

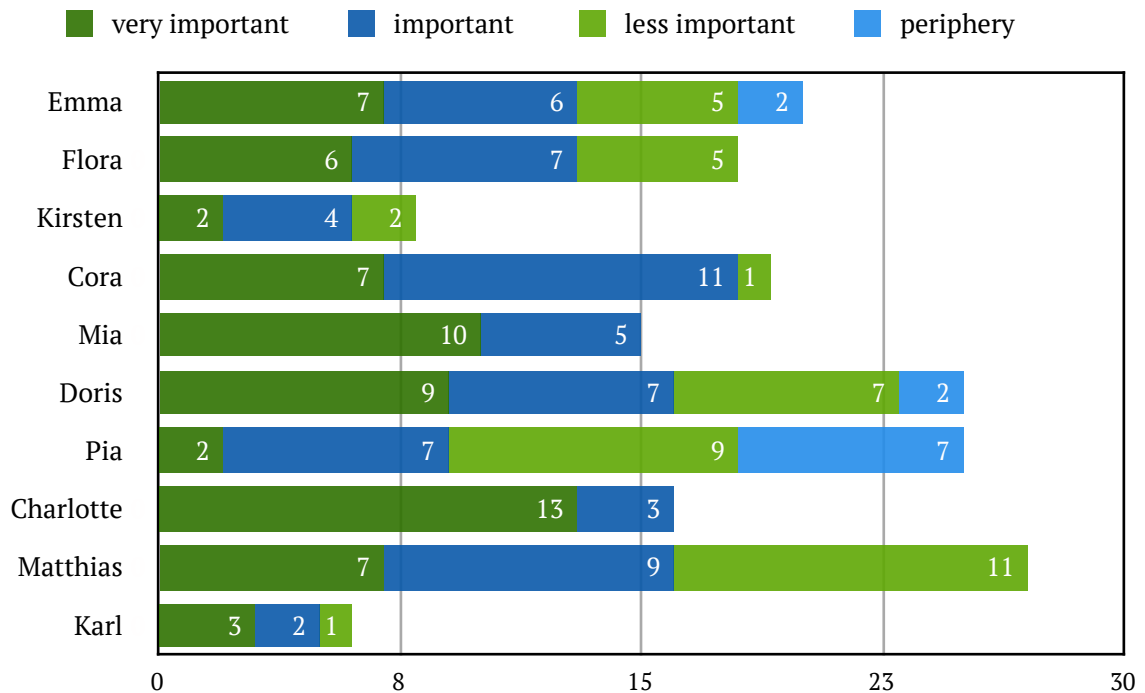


Fig. 6.3: Number of alters in participants' social networks

Some participants have also mentioned alters which do not belong into these three circles, however, are somewhat important for them in their role as a translator. An overview of the years of working experience and the corresponding number of alters among the participants is visualized in figure 6.4.

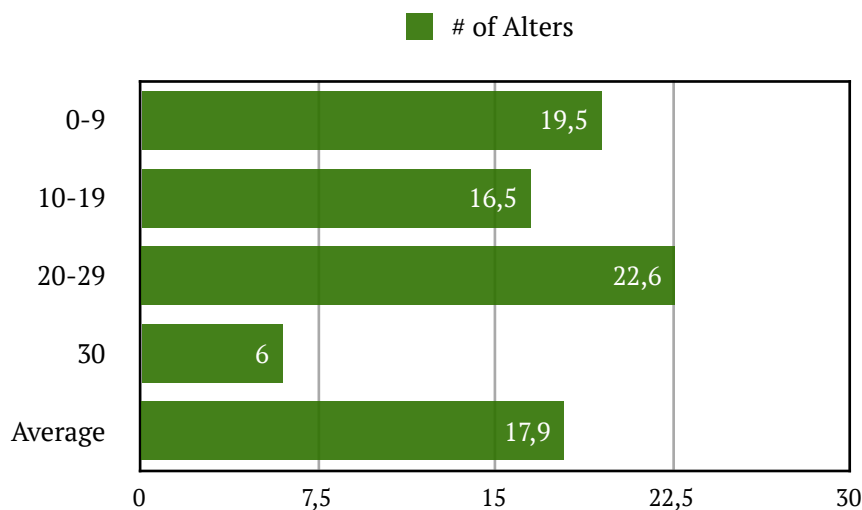


Fig. 6.4: Number of alters according to the years of working experience

Figure 6.5 shows the study participants sorted by the number of years of working experience (in brackets; increasing from left to right). It becomes apparent that some participants have a lower number of alters than others.

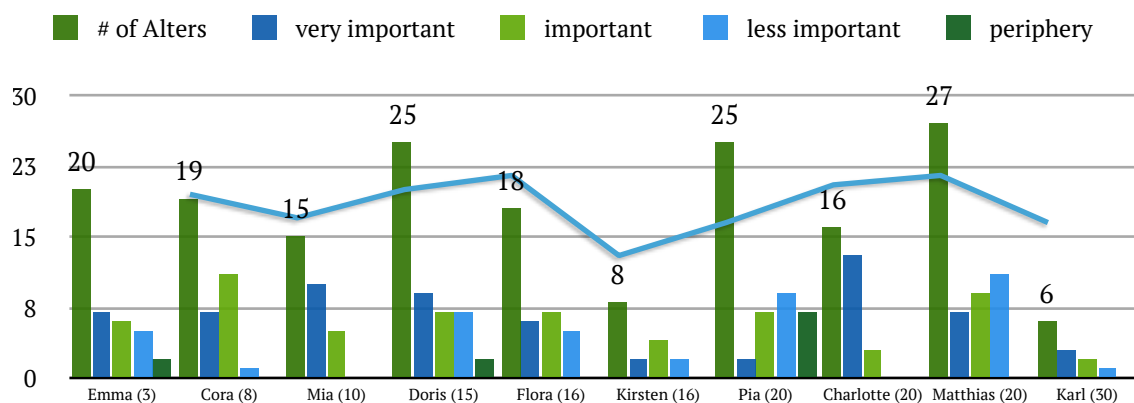


Fig. 6.5: Overall number of alters with moving average

Again, after eliminating the network data of Kirsten, Charlotte and Mia from the diagram, the data shows a different trend and might indicate how translators' social networks develop with increasing working experience.

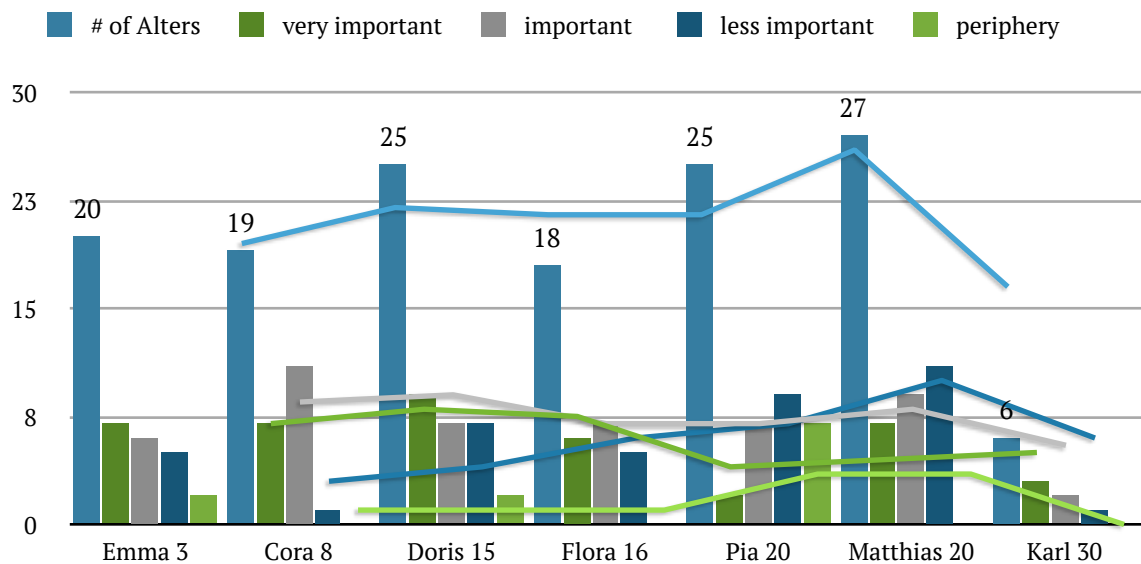


Fig. 6.6: Overall number of alters with moving averages (excl. Mia, Kirsten and Charlotte)

Figure 6.6 now shows a trend of an increasing number of alters with increasing working experience, until it sharply declines in the last decade of professional life. The number of *very important* and *important alters* seems to decrease slightly with increasing work experience. The number of weak ties (number of *less important actors* and *actors in the periphery* of the network map) increases steadily with growing work experience and drops sharply in the last decade of professional life.

6.2 The Participant Case Studies

Ten translators participated in the study. Five of them participated in both, the participant observation at their personal workplace as well as the interview; the other five translators were available for an interview. The group of participants is quite heterogeneous, with a broad range of working experience, between 3 and 30 years (table 6.4), and various specializations.

The translators and their ego-networks will be presented in case studies. The interviewees' names have been changed in order to assure anonymous participation. The lists of alters who act as sources of social support presented below feature a condensed version of the list of alters (table 6.1) presented in section 6.1.1. The visualizations of network maps have been created with Vennmaker.

Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	Work experience
Emma (f)	20 - 29	3
Cora (f)	30 - 39	8
Mia (f)	30 - 39	10
Doris (f)	40 - 49	15
Flora (f)	30 - 39	16
Kirsten (f)	30 - 39	16
Charlotte (f)	50 - 59	20
Pia (f)	50 - 59	20
Matthias (m)	50 - 59	20
Karl (m)	60 - 69	30
Average	ca. 40 years	15.8

Tab. 6.4: Overview of participants' age and work experience

6.2.1 Doris

Doris works as a freelance interpreter and translator for the language combinations German-English and English-German. She is in her early forties and has more than 15 years of work experience. She had been raised multilingual with German and English. She specializes in legal translations (particularly contracts), and texts in the areas of road construction, quality management and process instructions. Doris mainly works as an interpreter and only takes on translation assignments if these have to adhere to high quality standards and, as a result, are well remunerated.

Doris refers to her life partner and colleagues who she trusts (interpreters and/or translators) for consulting and personal advice in professional decisions. These alters she considers “very important” and noted them down in the inner circle of the network map. She communicates with colleagues on a regular basis, although more often with other interpreters when they meet during assignments or sit together after their assignments.

Doris enjoys working alone, because it gives her a sense of independence and she is not subject to social control exercised by colleagues. She had shared an office with other translators in the past, but the cooperative did not work out due to differing individual plans. Doris sees a difficulty in being not recognized as a professional business partner because she is a freelancer. As a signaling strategy, she wants to mitigate this risk by promoting herself as a translation bureau.

Doris has a heterogeneous social network (figure 6.7), which consists of numerous freelance translators and/or interpreters who she can subcontract work to. She pointed out in the interview that many of these individuals are not on the map, since the ties to these alters are rather weak. However, she had subcontracted work to them in the past and could contact them for help in an emergency situation.

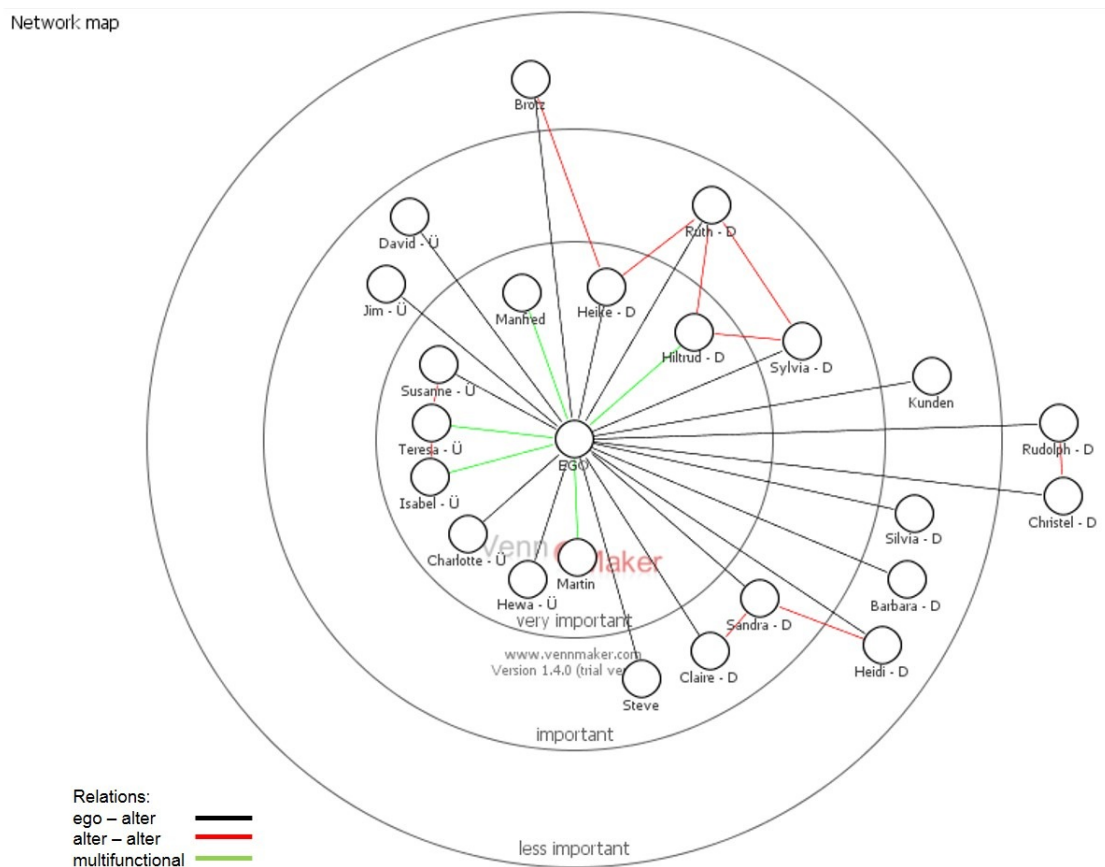


Fig. 6.7: First order star of participant Doris

Doris explained that the lack of recognition by translation buyers or contact persons at the client's level is a common problem for translators. She applies safeguarding strategies (e.g. taking detailed translator's notes if a client is not willing to answer her questions). She feels that she needs to safeguard herself, because "everyone thinks they know English. And sometimes, there comes some wise guy and wants to show off and prove to their boss how smart they are. And they do it on my back."

Network map

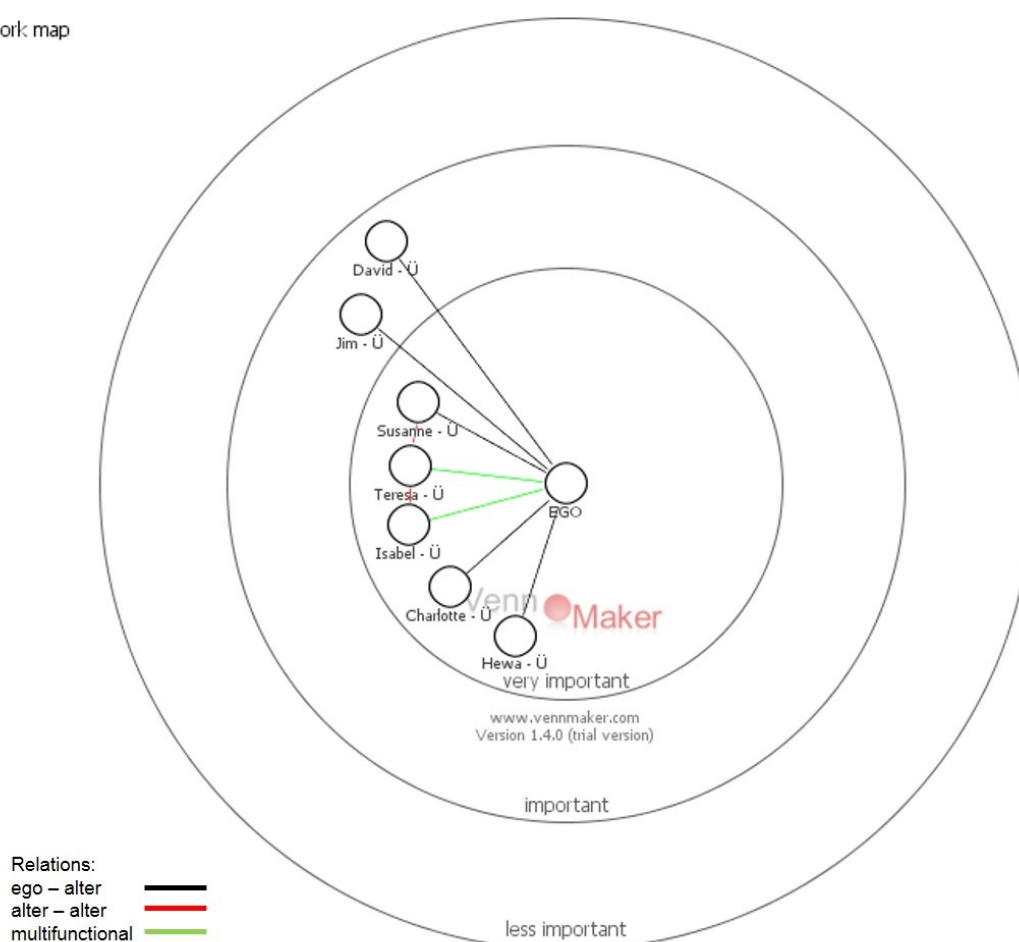


Fig. 6.8: Translators in the ego-network of participant Doris, marked with "Ü" for "Übersetzer" (German for translator)

Another source of conflict she refers to is her affiliation with the contact person(s) for one of her regular clients. Her contact persons change frequently and she has to start anew with establishing a trusted relationship whenever a change takes place. Over time, Doris gained significant experience and expertise, but her contact persons are mostly young, inexperienced women that do not recognize her as a skilled professional and manager of her own business.

Doris occupies two social niches, one in her professional role as a translator and one in her role as an interpreter. Her first order star includes seven alters that she had marked as translators (figure 6.8). Doris maintains multifunctional relationships with two of them. Eleven alters are interpreters, with one relationship between Doris and one alter being multifunctional (figure 6.9).

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
clients	information	interactions
clients	practical aid	interactions
clients	recognition (lack of)	cognitions
clients	source of work	interactions
colleagues	consulting and personal advice	interactions
colleagues	feedback	interactions
colleagues	information	interactions
colleagues	learning from others	cognitions
colleagues	motivation	emotions
colleagues	orientation	cognitions
colleagues	practical aid	interactions
colleagues	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
colleagues	sociability	interactions
colleagues	social control	cognitions
colleagues	source of work	interactions
experts	information	interactions
life partner	consulting and personal advice	interactions

Tab. 6.5: Doris' sources of social support

From the network map, it becomes apparent that the subgraph of the interpreters is less dense (0.26 incl. Doris) than the subgraph of translators (0.32 incl. Doris), which suggests that the cohesiveness among the translators is greater than among the interpreters (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) and a greater heterogeneity of the group of interpreters Doris cooperates with (as compared with the group of translators). The two interpreters in the periphery and two other alters (interpreters) in the “less important” circle are work source for her.

Network map

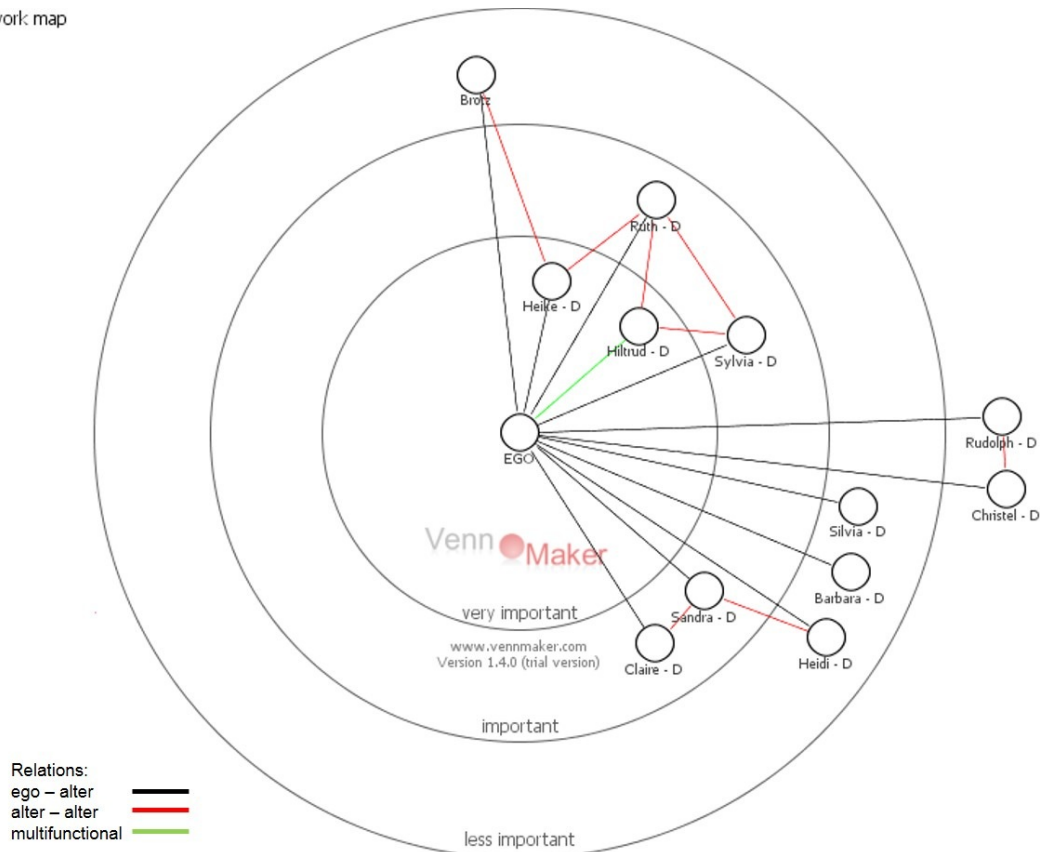


Fig. 6.9: Interpreters in the ego-network of participant Doris, marked with “D” for “Dolmetscher” (German for interpreter) or referred to as interpreter in the interview

Doris would contact all alters from the “most important” circle for advice with difficult decisions or for help as these are the persons she trusts.

6.2.2 Pia

Pia is a sworn freelance translator and interpreter. She is a German native speaker and covers the language combinations German-French, French-German and Arab-German. Pia is in her early fifties and has more than twenty years of work experience. Pia specializes in translating public administration texts (minutes of proceedings, correspondence, project briefs, etc.) and legal texts. She is also a literary translator, which she refers to as a “luxury” that she devotes time to in addition to the specialized translations (to earn her living).

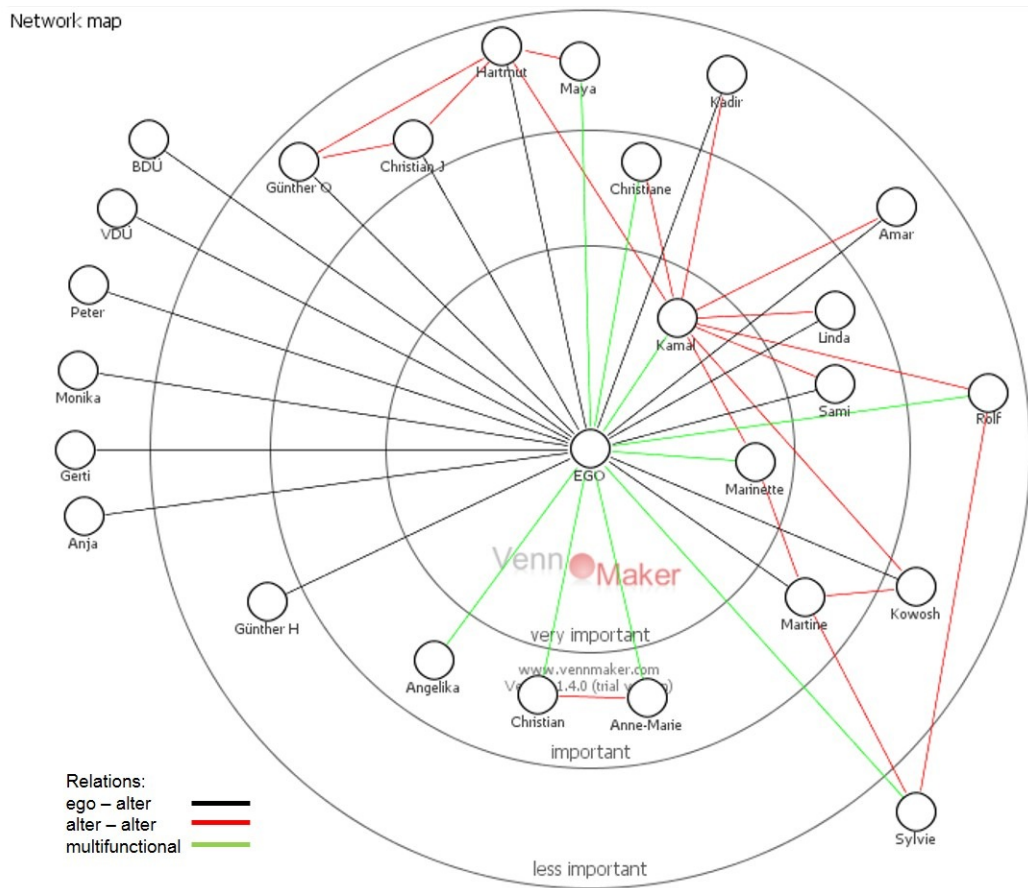


Fig. 6.10: First order star of participant Pia

Pia works alone in her home office. In the past, she had shared an office with other translators in the past, which she enjoyed and would like to do again in the future.

Pia is not fond of using social networking services as sources of social support. During the interviews, she reasoned that she is not used to engaging in online discussions and that she does not trust in other users' competences. Usually, she will first monitor colleagues closely to see if they are competent and if she can trust their advice.

For advice in business decisions, she turns to different alters. Her accountant and tax advisor offer advice for financial decisions. For general business decisions, she asks one colleague with whom she has established a trusted relationship with, or her friends. She pointed out that she always comes to a final decision based on her intuition.

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
clients	feedback	interactions
clients	information	interactions
clients	learning from others	cognitions
clients	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
clients	source of work	interactions
clients	social control	cognitions
colleagues	consulting and personal advice	interactions
colleagues	cooperation	interactions
colleagues	information (based on trust)	interactions
colleagues	intervention	interactions
colleagues	learning from others	cognitions
colleagues	practical aid	interactions
colleagues	sense of belonging	cognitions
colleagues	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
colleagues	sociability	interactions
colleagues	sociability = source of conflict	interactions
colleagues	social control	cognitions
colleagues	source of work	interactions
colleagues	feedback	interactions
colleagues	practical aid	interactions
experts	consulting and personal advice	interactions
friends	consulting and personal advice	interactions
professional associations	sense of belonging	cognitions
professional associations	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
professional associations	sociability	interactions

Tab. 6.6: Pia's sources of social support

Pia received support by experienced colleagues when she was a newcomer, and now tries to help newcomers with advice and work herself. She monitors their professional work behavior. The relationships with these individuals vary,

depending on how well they cooperate with one other and if the newcomers still need work from her after having established themselves on their own. Pia also sees this as an investment in her social network, because alters who she supported will also help her if she needs support.

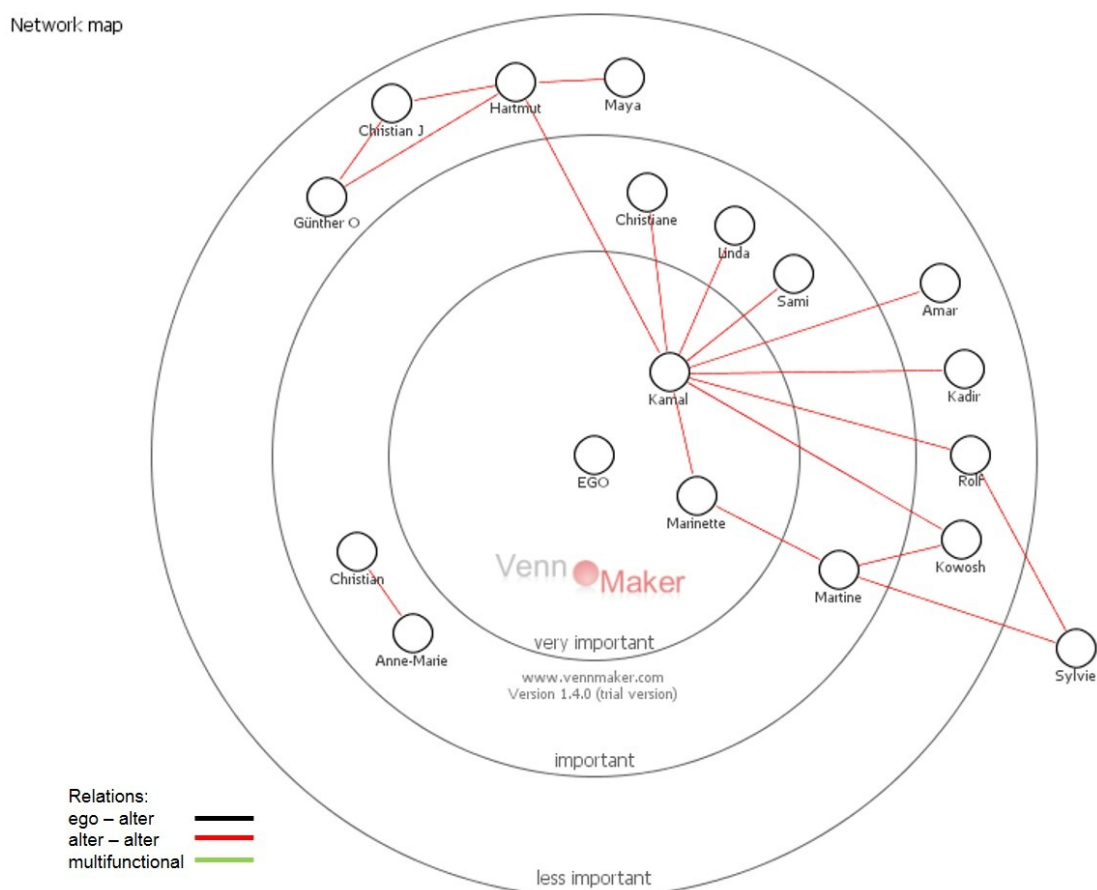


Fig. 6.11: Relationships among alters in Pia's ego-network

Pia stated in the interview that she belongs to two types of social networks: One comprised of alters who are important for her as a literary translator (figure 6.11) and another one that is important for her as a specialist translator. She said that after many years of specialized translating, these assignments have become her breadwinning job. More exciting for her are the literary translations. In this field, she is eager to develop new collaborations with colleagues, also seeking regular exchange with other literary translators. Combined actions with colleagues are not only an important source for emotional support, but also help ease the burden of high workloads. Pia also receives feedback on her work from colleagues, e.g. if they proofread her

translations. She gains most of the background information and terminology she needs from Internet searches. Back in the days, when the Internet had not yet existed, she called colleagues or experts for information, but today this is no longer necessary.

The professional association BDÜ is a source of support and sociability for Pia. However, this sociability can also be a source of conflict. The alters in the periphery on the network map are individuals who are associated with the BDÜ or BDÜ employees. She had overseen the local members' group for twelve years, however no longer has the time to attend the regulars' table on a regular basis. As can be seen on the network map, Pia maintains multifunctional relations with seven alters. She reported that she had developed a trusted business relationship with a colleague she had cooperated with in a large project.

When asked about colleagues who could substitute for her if she became ill, Pia explained that she could not subcontract the work of clients who expected her to do the translation personally. In her opinion, substitution makes a bad impression on the client. In cases of sickness or any other inability to work, she would talk to the client first. She has some agreements that need to be prioritized and cannot decline work; otherwise her regular clients would be disappointed.

Pia obtains much of her work from regular clients and personal referrals. She pointed out that she does not receive her work "through the Internet", i.e. through her website or profiles on online marketplaces.

6.2.3 Charlotte

Charlotte owns a translation company and a language school. Besides her role as the manager of the company, she also works as a translator and a language teacher. Charlotte is in her mid-fifties, has been self-employed for almost thirty years now and claims almost twenty years work experience as a translator. She is a German native speaker and covers the language combinations English-German, German-English, and (less frequently) French-German. Her

specializations are engineering, medical texts and legal translations. She consults law firms in lawsuits and inheritance cases. Charlotte is a sworn translator and offers authorized translations of birth and death certificates, divorce decrees and last wills. Charlotte has her own office in the facilities of the language school, next to the office of her assistant and the training rooms. She also has a second office in her home, where she withdraws to if she has to work on important or urgent projects and needs a more peaceful working environment.

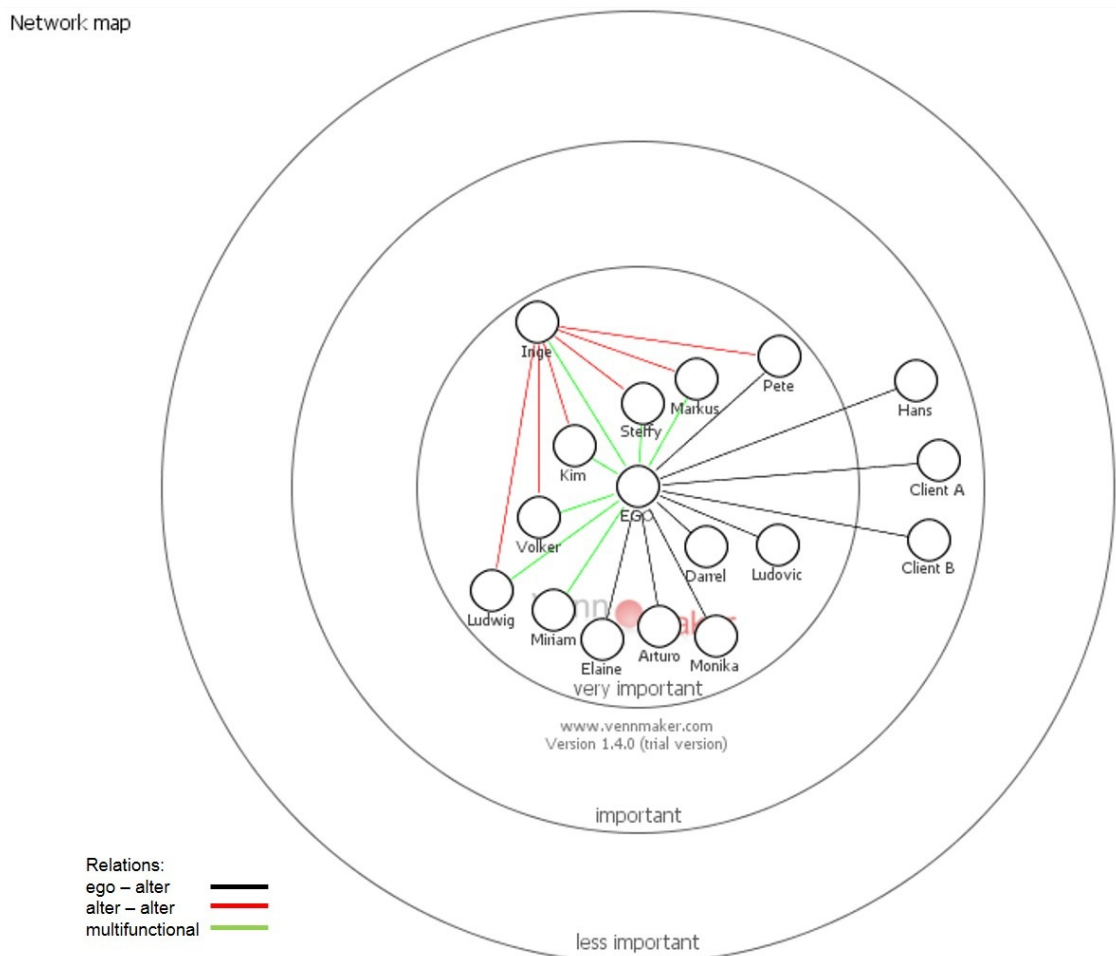


Fig. 6.12: First order star of participant Charlotte

Charlotte has drawn her first order star in her role of a translator (figure 6.12). As can be seen on the network map, there are mostly strong ties in Charlotte's ego network. These are alters who can substitute for her in the event of sickness, with whom she cooperates and talks to about her work.

The two clients (A and B, generic for different clients) in the “important” circle are sources of background information and terminology. She usually has a contact person with each of the client’s who either works in the technical writing department or in the engineering or research and development departments.

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
clients	feedback	interactions
clients	information	interactions
clients	learning from others	cognitions
clients	practical aid	interactions
clients	recognition	cognitions
clients	source of work	interactions
collaborator	source of work	interactions
colleagues	cooperation	interactions
colleagues	feedback	interactions
colleagues	information (based on trust)	interactions
colleagues	learning from others	cognitions
colleagues	practical aid	interactions
colleagues	recognition	cognitions
colleagues	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
colleagues	sociability (based on trust)	interactions
colleagues	source of work	interactions
colleagues	stabilizing rituals (based on trust)	interactions
colleagues	togetherness (reciprocal)	interactions
colleagues	trust (reciprocal)	interactions
colleagues who are friends	consulting and personal advice	interactions
ego to colleagues	consulting and personal advice	interactions
ego to colleagues	source of work	interactions
employees	practical aid	interactions
employees	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
professional associations	sense of belonging	cognitions

Tab. 6.7: Charlotte’s sources of social support

She has several alters who she can approach for advice with difficult business decisions. Only one alter (Hans) is rated as “important”, because Charlotte had not approached him for a while. She explained that he had given her very good advice and is a good friend, however now having gained ample (work and life) experience herself, she no longer requires his advice.

Charlotte had helped one of her newcomer colleagues to gain a foothold in the industry. She now has her own company; each year they meet and talk about business, consult with each other and exchange their experiences. Inge is her assistant and therefore knows most of Charlottes alters who she cooperates with or subcontracts work to. With half of her alters (excl. clients), Charlotte maintains a multifunctional relationship.

She receives feedback on her work from clients, but also from colleagues she cooperates with and who proofread her translations. She pointed out that constructive criticism, reliability and fairness are vital conditions of collaborations between colleagues and clients. All business relationships with subcontractors and colleagues are long-term relationships. The tie to her assistant Inge is also very strong, as Charlotte claimed that she can absolutely rely on her in any given situation.

Referrals from clients are an important source of work for Charlotte. She also hands out her business cards during language training sessions and also advertises in the regional yellow pages. Charlotte has a professional website that was conceptualized by a local web design company. She and the web design company both refer clients to one other on a regular basis.

6.2.4 Emma

Emma is a sworn translator in the language combinations of German-English and English-German, German-Italian and Italian-German, as well as French-German. Emma is in her late twenties and has three years of work experience as a freelance translator. She is a German native speaker and specializes in medical translations, engineering, and legal translations (documents and contracts). She works part-time as a translator and also has a 50%-contract at a

university where she teaches translation. She said in the interview that her work as a freelance translator is important for her to gain practical experience, which better qualifies her as a university lecturer. As she only teaches one language, translating helps to prevent her from forgetting the other languages she had learned during her studies.

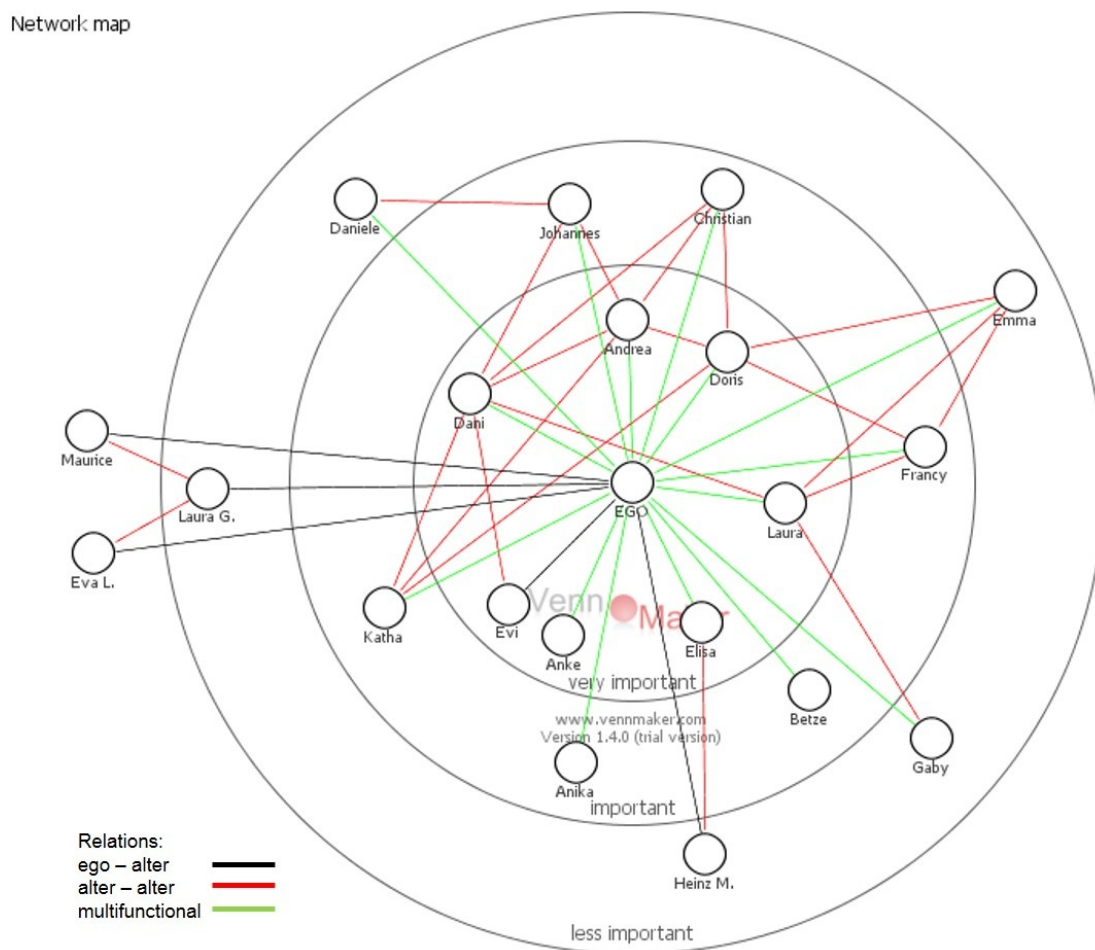


Fig. 6.13: First order star of participant Emma

Emma translates mostly in her home office. On occasion she works from her office at the university. However, the university’s infrastructure (e.g. the libraries, the international community and social interactions with other lecturers who also work as translators) are valuable for her freelance work.

Emma asks colleagues for advice with whom she is also friends with (figure 6.13). If she is unsure in a business situation, e.g. when tendering for a translation job, she asks these colleagues for advice. When she started as a freelancer, Emma would have liked to have experienced colleagues to support

and advise her in the beginning, however she did not know anyone. Emma attended a local regulars' table several times, however missed out on an open exchange of experiences. She felt that the other translators were mostly solitary fighters.

Sources of information (either for general information concerning the industry, working practices and language matters, or for background information and terminology) are her friends, her clients and experienced colleagues at the university institute she works at.

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
colleagues	consulting and personal advice	interactions
colleagues	information	interactions
colleagues	sense of belonging	cognitions
colleagues	sociability	interactions
colleagues	source of work	interactions
colleagues who are friends	consulting and personal advice	interactions
experts	information	interactions
friends	information	interactions
friends	learning from others	cognitions
friends	practical aid	interactions
friends	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
friends	source of work	interactions

Tab. 6.8: Emma's sources of social support

Emma stated that she has a large heterogeneous network of experts she can contact if she needs help with a translation problem. These are individuals who are native speakers of the foreign languages she covers, or friends and acquaintances who are subject matter experts based on their occupation or education. Friends and acquaintances (e.g. the parents of old school mates who own a company) are also an important source of work for her. Being a sworn translator, she gets quite a number of personal referrals for certified translations. Another source of work are her colleagues who also work at the university.

6.2.5 Flora

Flora works part-time as a freelance translator. She specializes in engineering texts (mechanical engineering, plant engineering, environmental technology as well as hoisting and conveying engineering). She is a German native speaker and covers the language combinations of Spanish-German and German-Spanish. Flora is in her early forties and has 16 years of working experience. In addition, she is a lecturer at a university where she is also working on her Ph.D. in Translation Studies. She works from home, but hardly uses her home office. Instead, she prefers to work where she feels comfortable, e.g. in the garden or at the kitchen table.

Network map

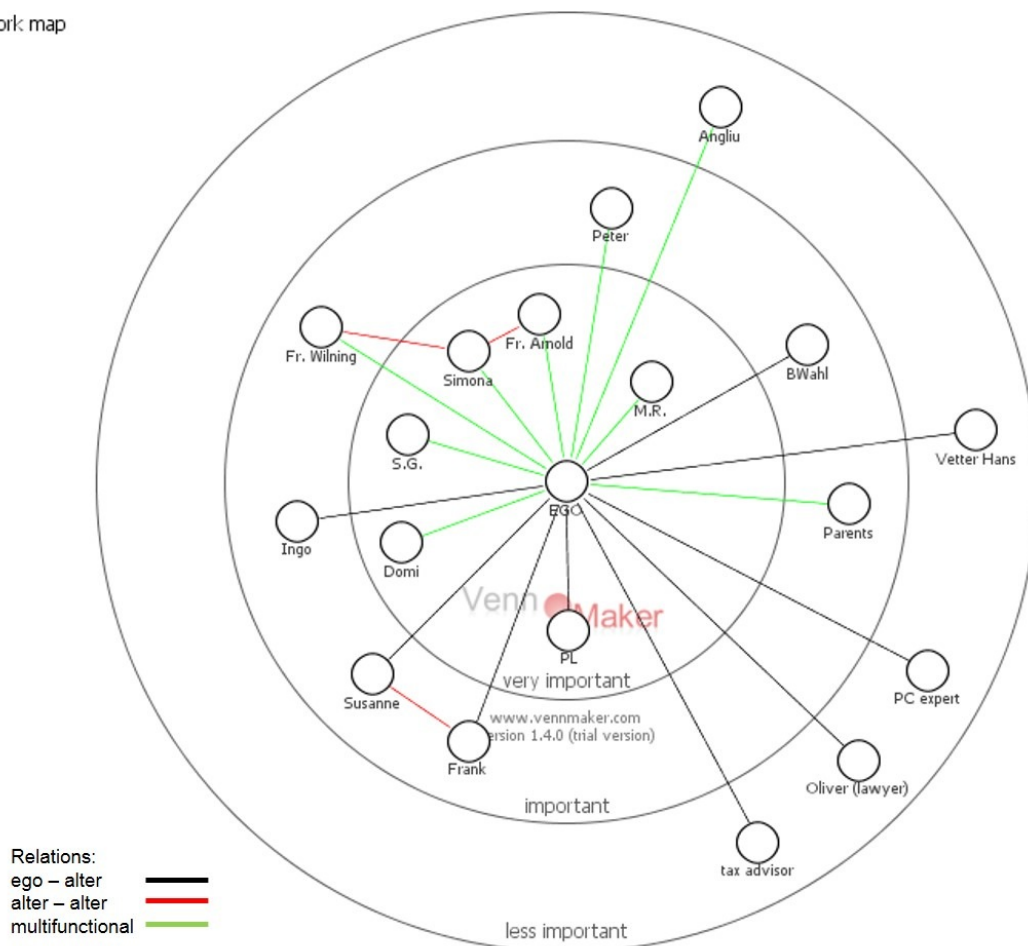


Fig. 6.14: First order star of participant Flora

Flora consults her husband for advice with difficult business decisions. She also talks regularly about her work with colleagues, particularly from her local language group, which is associated with the professional association BDÜ.

She stated during the interview that she had become friends with many of her colleagues in this group. They are competent contact persons for her if she needs background information or help with a translation problem. The group consists of other freelancers who also cover the languages Spanish and German.

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
colleagues	information	interactions
colleagues	motivation	emotions
colleagues	sense of belonging	cognitions
colleagues	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
colleagues	sociability	interactions
experts	information	interactions
marriage partner	consulting and personal advice	interactions
professional associations	information	interactions
professional associations	motivation	emotions
professional associations	sense of belonging	cognitions
professional associations	sociability	interactions

Tab. 6.9: Flora's sources of social support

Together, they cover a broad range of specializations. The group is also an important source of emotional support and motivation for Flora, enabling sociability and giving her a sense of belonging. She pointed out that her colleagues are the number one resource for any kind of support for her in her role as a freelance translator. There seems to be little or no competition between the translators in the group. Flora emphasized that they would never “go fishing in another colleague's pond”, as the saying goes. She maintains contact with colleagues from her former place of residence, e.g. through e-mail or telephone. Furthermore, she regularly communicates with the colleagues from the BDÜ group and attends their bi-annual meetings. Additional sources

Alter	Resource	Type of support
clients	recognition (lack of)	cognitions
colleagues	consulting and personal advice	interactions
colleagues	cooperation	interactions
colleagues	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
neighbor	neighborly help	interactions
translation agency	practical aid	interactions
translation agency	source of work	interactions

Tab. 6.10: Kirsten's sources of social support

Her primary source of work comes are translation agencies. A substitute translator is not necessary in the event of illness, as the agencies she works for will take care of this when the need arises. Kirsten pointed out that this would be something to establish if she worked for direct clients. Kirsten emphasized that a negative aspect of missing social capital in her network is the lack of recognition from the translation buyer. She is very pragmatic during her work processes and only researches for information if absolutely necessary, since the client does not appreciate nor remunerate these efforts. Kirstin criticizes the lack of consistency of the translation memories and that some clients do not maintain terminology management, although they have a frequent demand for translations.

Over the past months prior to the interview, she had cooperated with two colleagues. One of them she knows from the university. They both met again at a professional training session and just happen to work for the same agency. Sometimes they work on projects together for this one agency. They know each other well and she can contact him for help with translation problems. Kirsten stated that colleagues are important to help “blow off steam” together with if they feel down and out. In the interview, Kirsten stated that she usually does not talk about her work with anyone, except the colleague she sometimes cooperates with. Usually, she does not contact anyone for information, because her alters were not in a position to help with her translations. She would like to

establish a collaboration with one colleague, where she would be the only individual that was to be contacted for information regarding projects they do together. Sometimes her neighbor invites her over for lunch, which is a case of neighborly support and also a source of social capital. In the outer circle of the network map, Kirsten made note of a general project manager who represents the contact persons at the agencies she works for, as well as the BDÜ forum that also serves as a source of information when she needs it.

The network map reflects a rather small social network (as could be determined with the name generator). This is most likely based on her primarily working for translation agencies. Kirsten presumably has a much larger network than anticipated as she leads the regional BDÜ group and also organizes events at a university. She did not, however, mention many alters from whom she gains social support in her role as a freelance translator.

6.2.7 Cora

Cora is a sworn translator for the language combination English-German. She also translates from German to English and from Spanish to German. Cora is in her mid-thirties and has eight years of working experience. After her graduation from university, she worked as an in-house translator at a software provider in the USA for one year.

She then lost her work permit in the US and had to return to Germany due to a merger of her company with a larger competitor. She decided to work as a freelance translator until she could find a new job in the USA that would allow her to go back. Unexpectedly, her micro-business turned out to be very successful and so she decided to stay in Germany. Cora is a German native speaker and specializes in software localization and medical translations. She works alone in her home office.

In case of sickness or any other inability to work, Cora would have to organize a replacement. It never happened in the past, however she is confident that she could ask colleagues for help for whom she herself had substituted once before, e.g. if they had to take care of their children or were sick. She did

mention, on the other hand, that she would still be able to work with chills and fever since she works from home. These alters are also the individuals she contacts for information or discussions about work.

Network map

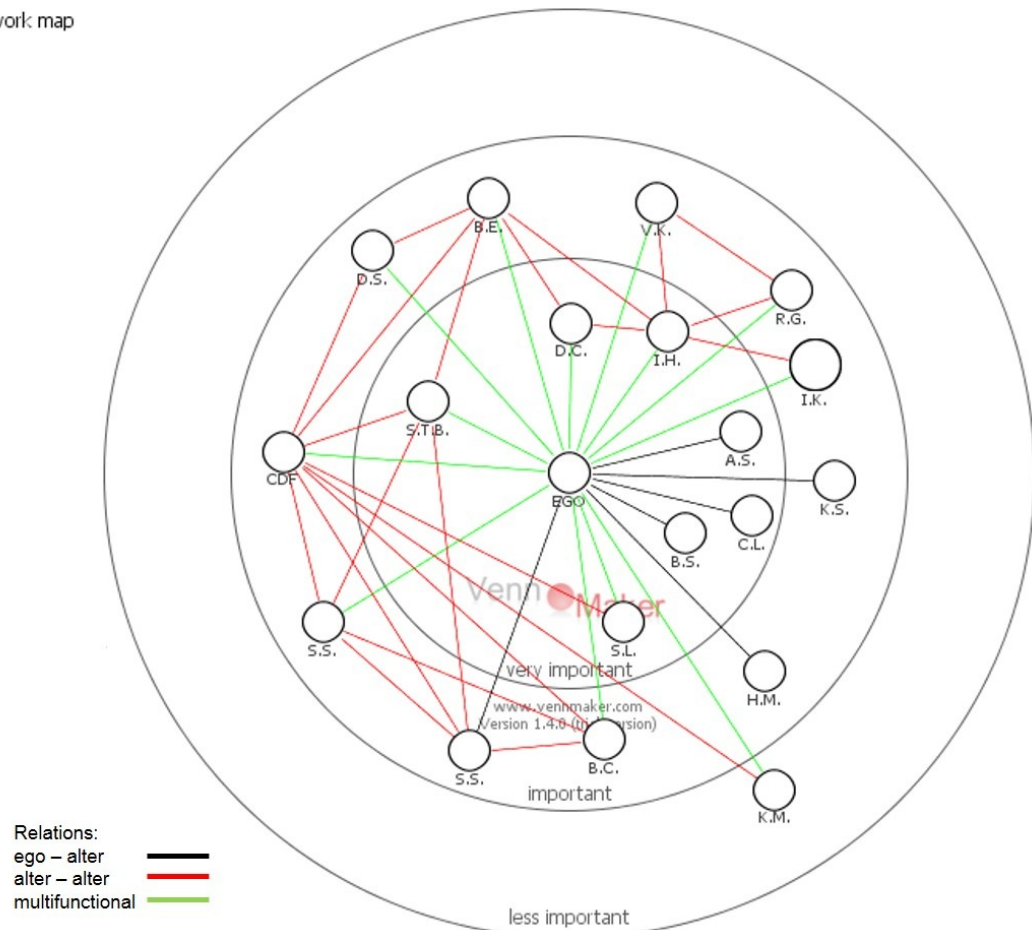


Fig. 6.16: First order star of participant Cora

For the most part, she asks other freelance translators for help and also knows engineers that can help her out when needed. She could also ask her brother who is a chemist, if she needed help with a text from this subject area. When contacting colleagues for help (for medical texts only), she usually writes an e-mail or sends a copy of the text, very quickly receiving a competent answer.

Some of the alters on the network map are project managers from agencies, although Cora pointed out that only the most important of them had been mapped due to their plentitude. Besides agencies, she works for regular clients as well as one-time clients in the case of certified translations of certificates, CVs, birth certificates and the like.

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
clients	source of work	interactions
colleagues	information	interactions
colleagues	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
colleagues	source of work	interactions
colleagues	tangible support	interactions
experts	information	interactions
friends	source of work	interactions
professional associations	learning from others	cognitions

Tab. 6.11: Cora's sources of social support

An important source of learning for Cora is the BDÜ. She had attended several BDÜ trainings during the early stage of her career (e.g., medical translations, legal translations, translations of certificates, self-employment, accounting, marketing etc.). As a newcomer, she received support from experienced colleagues, mostly in the form of work assignments. Cora stated that she does not engage in a lot of marketing. She hands out her business cards at events and clients contact her because she is on the BDÜ member list. At the beginning of her career, she had sent her CV to translation agencies who still contact her. However, personal referrals and regular clients (translation agencies as well as direct clients) are the most important source of work for her.

6.2.8 Matthias

Matthias is a freelance translator who translates from English into German. Sometimes, he translates from German to English, but mostly subcontracts assignments with this language combination to native speakers. He is in his early fifties and has more than twenty years of work experience. Matthias specializes in information technology, measuring devices, medical translations, as well as automotive and mechanical engineering. He is a German native speaker and works alone in his home office.

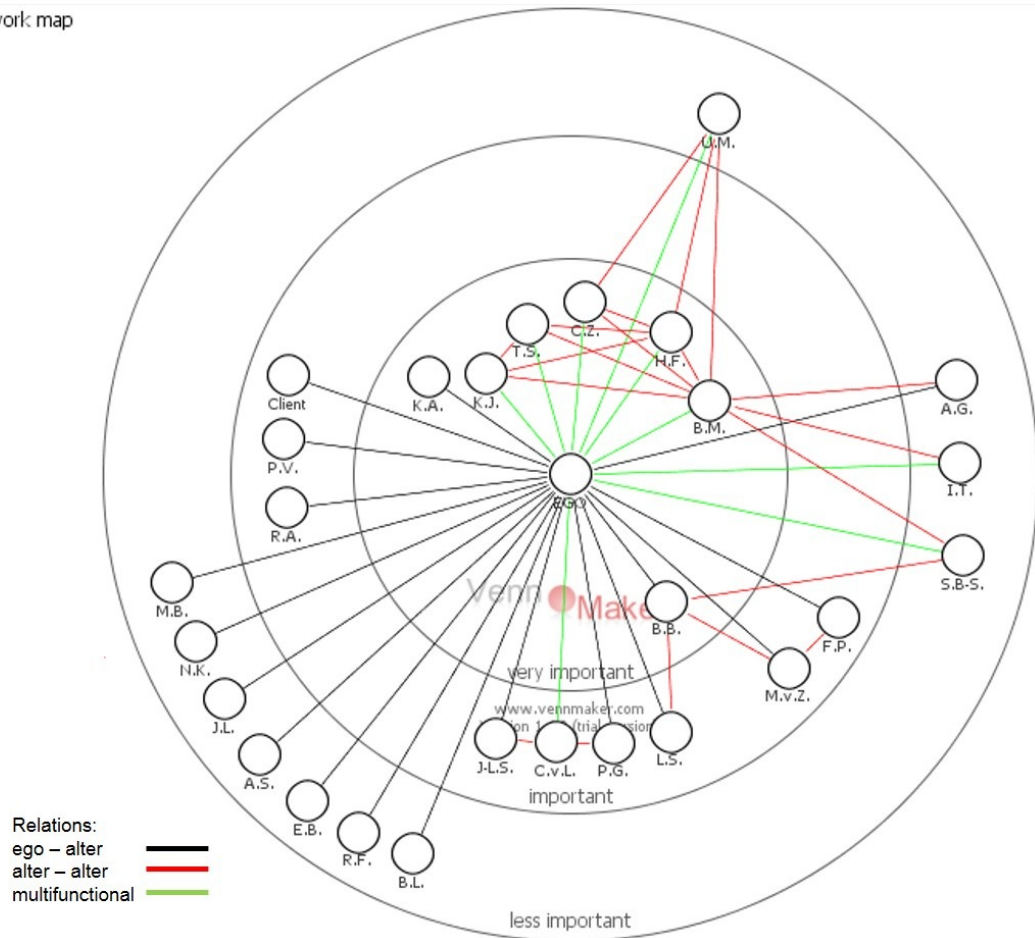


Fig. 6.17: First order star of participant Matthias

Matthias emphasized during the interview that expert knowledge is the most important resource. This, however, is mostly neglected as a great deal of the information needed can be found online. He explained that in the past, he would talk to his mechanic and ask him how his car engine works, for example, and what the different parts are called. This gave him a sense of the language that experienced insiders use.

Matthias “rediscovered” the BDÜ a few years ago, which for him is a source of sociability. He met another translator during one of the BDÜ meetings with whom he would like to build a business network with, that would function as an “insider organization” where members would join based on referrals only.

His ego network is very heterogeneous and seems to consist of several cliques (figure 6.17). The density of these subgraphs is considerably higher (0.27) than the overall network density (0.12). To the alters in one of these cliques,

Matthias maintains an exceptional number of multifunctional relationships (see figure 6.18).

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
clients	source of work	interactions
colleagues	cooperation	interactions
experts	information	interactions
PA	sense of belonging	cognitions
translation agencies	source of work	interactions

Tab. 6.12: Matthias' sources of social support

As a newcomer, Matthias received work from experienced colleagues, who now contact him if they need help with software or computer problems, which is a form of (asynchronous) mutual support.

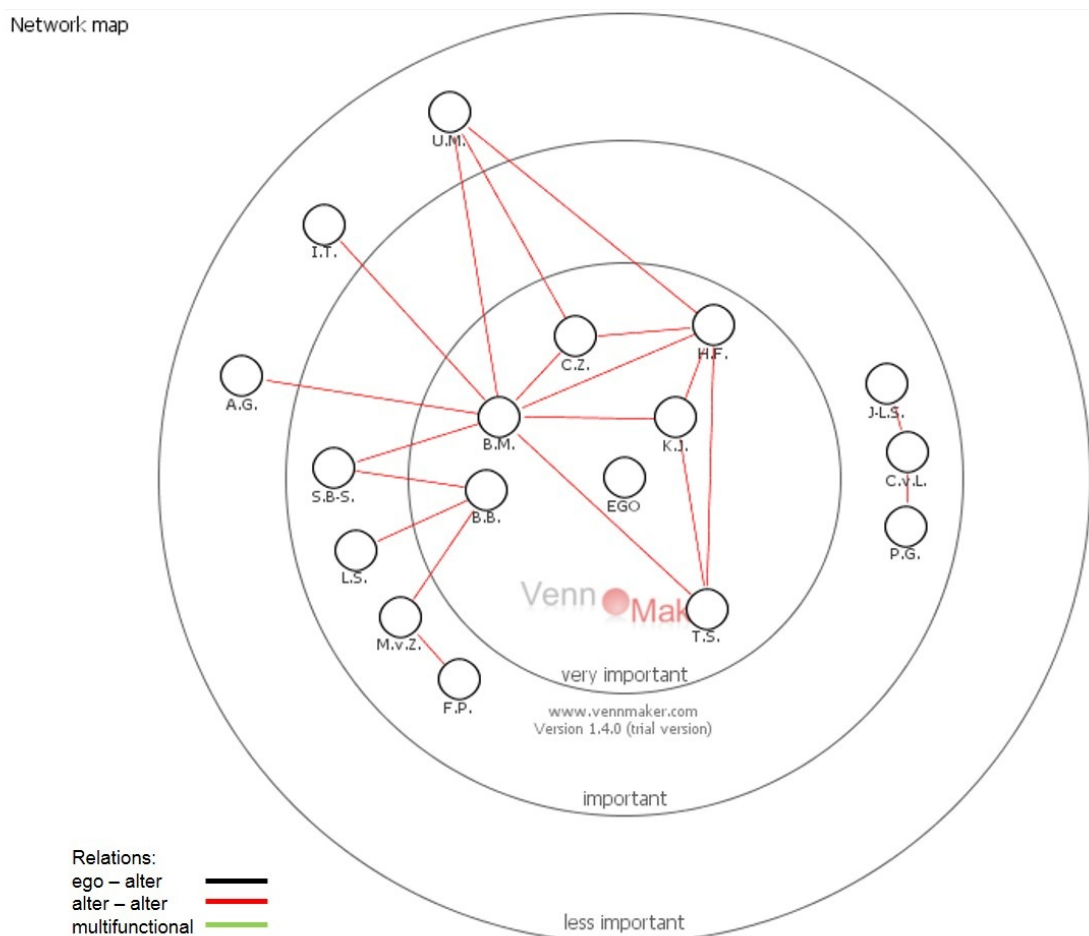


Fig. 6.18: Visualization of the clique

Translation agencies and regular clients are an important source of work for Matthias. He also subcontracts work to other translators and sometimes uses the web platform ProZ.com for finding subcontractors, although he criticizes the “sell off” of the translation industry, which is commonly found on such online marketplaces. He explained that translation agencies artificially increase competition among freelance translators, where usually there actually is none, by suggesting that “5 cents per word was a competitive rate”.

6.2.9 Mia

Mia is an in-house translator at a small translation office for the language combination of English-German. She is in her mid-thirties and has roughly ten years of work experience as a translator. After her studies, she worked for a different translation company for eight years before joining the company she now works for one year ago. She is a German native speaker and specializes in engineering (particularly machine engineering and electrical engineering). In her daily work, she also translates texts in other specialized areas, e.g. software manuals, financial reports, marketing texts or texts related to the European Union. This broad range of topics covered is required by the company she works for. Although they each specialize in one area, every translator has to be able to do any type of translation required.

Mia shares her office with two colleagues. Other colleagues, most of them translators, are situated in neighboring offices or on the first floor of the building. All employees meet during the afternoon at the coffee machine to chat or they sit outside in the sun. These are stabilizing rituals and important sources of information, and give a sense of belonging. All in-house translators help one other with translation problems and proofread each other's texts (which is required by the internal process). Mia pointed out that for her, translation is teamwork.

Mia's first order star is very dense, since the majority of her alters know each other as they all work in the same company.

Network map

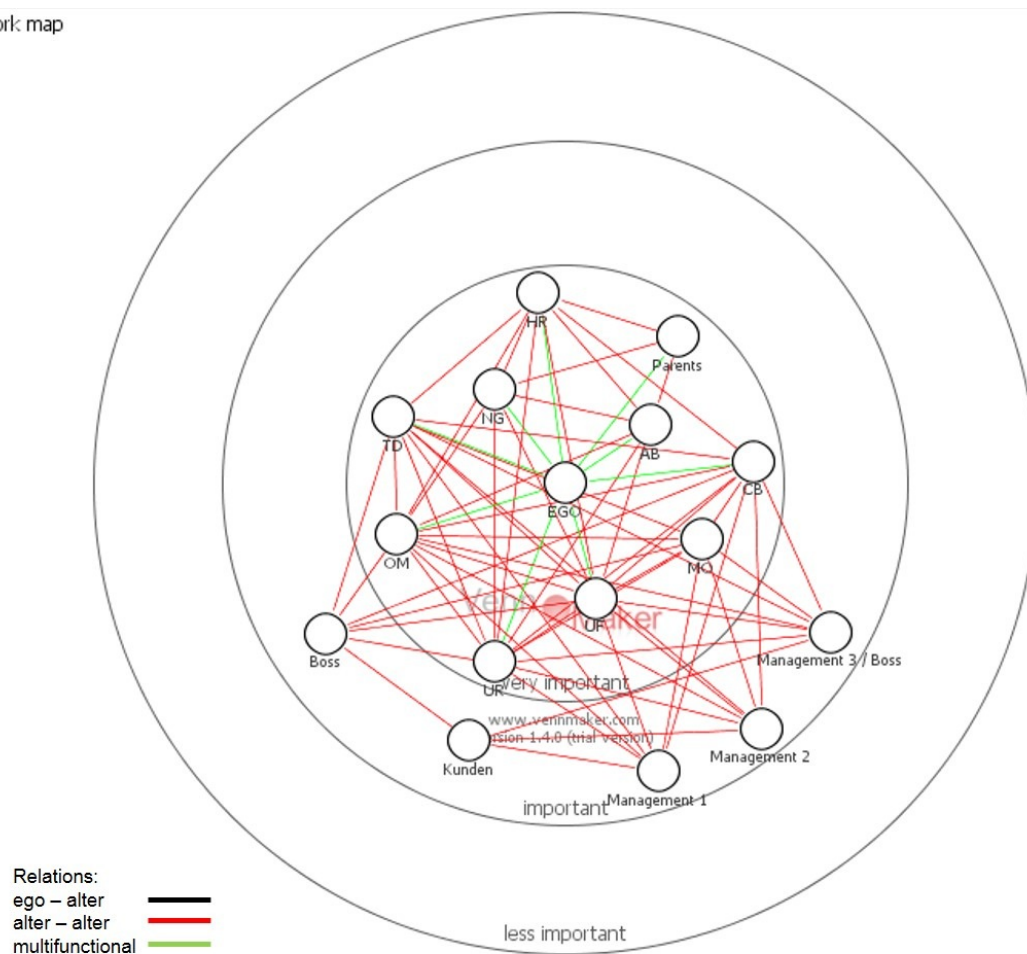


Fig. 6.19: First order star of participant Mia

The majority of alters who are important sources of support for Mia in her role as a translator, are her colleagues who work in the same translation bureau.

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
clients	information	interactions
clients	source of work	interactions
colleagues	cooperation	interactions
colleagues	information	interactions
colleagues	learning from others	cognitions
colleagues	stabilizing rituals (daily)	interactions
translation agencies	source of work	interactions

Tab. 6.13: Mia's sources of social support

The relationship to her parents is also “very important”, e.g. if she needs advice with a difficult decision related to her job. She ranks relations with her supervisors and company managers, as well as clients, as “important”. The circle with relations to alters which would be “less important” remains empty. Besides the tie to her parents, Mia has multifunctional relations with seven alters – that are all but one, alters in the inner circle. Strikingly, Mia did not mention friends (who are only friends and not other translators) as sources of support, which could be attributed to her being an in-house translator, reflecting a more solid boundary between work and private life as compared to freelancers.

6.2.10 Karl

Karl is a literary translator¹⁹ and refers to himself as an 'old hand' in the translation industry. He works alone in his home office, and sometimes uses the opportunity to ask family members for their opinion of a translated word or phrase if they are around. As a newcomer, he had received a great deal of support from a secretary working at the German Professional Association of Literary and Scientific Translators, VdÜ. She gave him advice on which grants or competitions he could apply for, which resulted in tangible support since these are vital sources of financial support for literary translators. The VdÜ had also been an important source of sociability for Karl, where he met experienced colleagues who helped him as a newcomer. Karl emphasized that it is very difficult to start up as a literary translator. Publishing houses usually already have their regular subcontractors. Newcomers would have to prove themselves as trustworthy and competent professionals.

Publishing houses are the most important sources of work for Karl. After 30 years in the business, he no longer engages in marketing or acquisition activities. Publishing houses know him and contact him if they have a

19 In order to ensure this participant's anonymity, I will not provide more information (e.g. the language combinations he covers), which could help to identify him.

translation demand. Karl receives feedback on his work from literary critics (e.g. of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, a German newspaper).

Network map

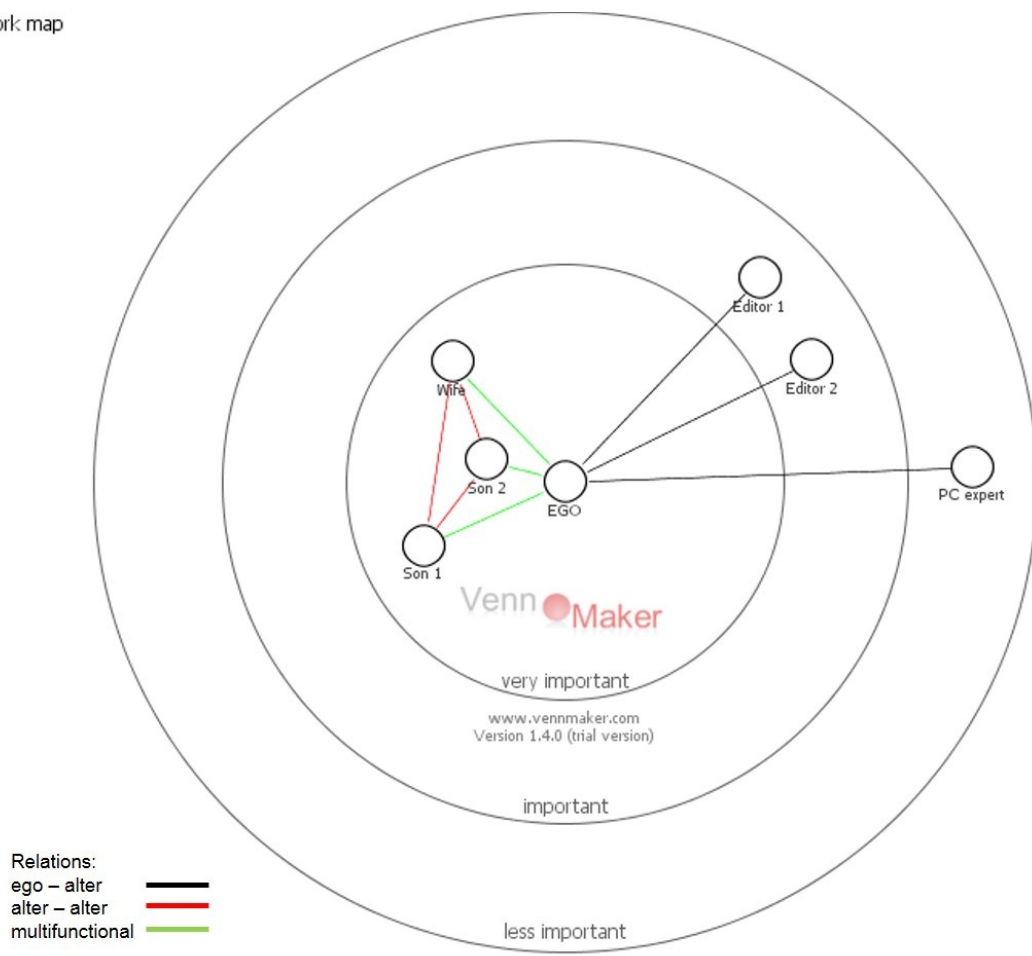


Fig. 6.20: First order star of participant Karl

Editors forward this feedback to him; however he does not specifically ask anyone for feedback. If he needs help with a translation problem, he can contact other competent colleagues through the VdÜ online discussion forum. He explained that some ten years ago he made use of this particular resource. These days, he rarely engages in online discussions anymore.

He also pointed out that the weak ties he had maintained to experts from other occupations have disappeared, as he can find all information he needs online and does not have to ask other people for help anymore. Karl also stated that the number of ties with colleagues decreases the longer he is in the business. This happens due to several reasons, e.g. some former colleagues retired and

moved to other countries or he does not need their support anymore, since he has become one of the most experienced professionals in the industry.

Alter	Resource	Type of Support
clients	recognition	cognitions
colleagues	consulting and personal advice	interactions
colleagues	information	interactions
colleagues	practical aid	interactions
colleagues	sense of belonging	cognitions
colleagues	sense of receiving supportive behavior	cognitions
colleagues	sociability	interactions
literary critics	recognition	cognitions
professional association	consulting and personal advice	interactions
professional association	information	interactions
professional association	sense of belonging	cognitions
publishing houses	source of work	interactions

Tab. 6.14: Karl's sources of social support

The alters that he maintains strong ties with and who are important for him as a translator are the members of his family. Other important alters are the editors who are contact persons at the publishing houses he works for, as well as his computer expert.

Karl made friends with all authors he had translated for. He met most of them in person to gain insight into their demeanor so he could better transfer their work. Based on these relationships with his authors, he is also able to contact them regarding background information.

6.2.11 Support for Alters

Although the interviews' focus was on the support that translators receive from their alters, the interviewees reported that they also provide social support to others. Table 6.15 provides an overview of the resources the study participant provides their alters with.

# of times mentioned	Recipient	Resource	Type of Support
2	clients	learning from others	cognitions
2	colleagues	consulting and personal advice	interactions
2	colleagues	feedback	interactions
8	colleagues	practical help	interactions
4	colleagues	source of work	interactions
2	colleagues	willingness and availability to support others in risky endeavors	interactions

Tab. 6.15: Social support provided by translators to their alters

The interviewees mainly provide support in the form of interactions to their alters. Fellow translators are able to activate resources such as consulting in business situations, where they receive feedback and practical help with translations. The study participants are also a source of work for their colleagues, which means they either subcontract work or refer clients and translation jobs to others. A special resource is the willingness and availability to support others in risky endeavors, which takes effect when translators establish a cooperative together; a business which enables them to act as a translation agency by working together and subcontracting work to other professionals.

Providing and receiving support is a reciprocal process. As the interviewees had stated repeatedly, it is based on trust and trustworthiness. The mutual exchange of tangible and intangible support takes place if one of the actors involved first decides to invest in the relationship, as Pia explained in the interview:

Pia: There are several colleagues who I smoothed the way into the industry for with my... well, I don't want to say with my leftovers, but rather with an overabundance in the stockpile of my assignments. Or let's say I've groomed them. There really are several people. [...] It becomes evident after a while with whom I can cooperate well. [...] And they are ready and throw themselves into it, if I really need them.

Two interviewees mentioned that they had educated some of their regular clients about requirements for quality translations. However, both mentioned that this learning process can only take place in long-term business relations and if the client is open to it.

6.3 Participation in the Social Web

The results of this study present rather surprising results. The majority of the participants do not use social networking services or other social technologies to gain access to support networks. The Social Web is mainly used as an information repository. Most participants are only passive users (readers) of discussion forums and refrain from using social networking services for business and private purposes.

Study participants stated they use social networking services to find highly competent professionals and also as a (however, infrequent) source of work. They connect with prospects, establishing an online presence. One translator stated she finds professional help with translation problems, simultaneously helping other translators online. Other interviewees use the Social Web as a source of knowledge for non-translation related topics, e.g. if they need help with their computer.

Participants also mentioned negative aspects of social networking services and reasons why they do not actively use social technologies. Some participants indicated a general aversion against SNS, as these are known to collect and store personal data. Furthermore, SNS did not prove to be a good source of work, as the rates offered in online tenders are too low and auctions foster a perceived “sell off” of the translation industry. Most translators claimed that

social contracting is their main source of work. All participants are passive users of online discussion forums, either because they search for information on the respective platforms or because threads are returned as search results by a search engine.

SNS	Use	% study participants (n=10)
Facebook	-	0 %
ProZ.com	Doris, Emma, Kirsten, Cora	40 %
TranslatorsCafé.com	Cora	10 %
XING	Flora, Kirsten, Cora, Matthias, Mia	50 %
LinkedIn	Kirsten, Cora, Matthias	30 %
VdÜ online discussion forum for German-Spanish literary translators	Karl	10 %

Tab. 6.16 Overview of SNS use among study participants

Some participants stated they were active users in the past, but not anymore. The reasons given for this development were problems of non-disclosure, a feeling of weariness, or boredom caused by discussions and questions by other users. Some interviewees experienced a fear of losing themselves while sifting through discussion threads and blogs. One translator criticized that SNS generate too much noise and the majority of online communication is not goal-directed. Others mentioned the high effort and large amounts of time active participation in the Social Web requires. Furthermore, they feel insecure about how competent the other users are and find that most discussion forums on online dictionaries are more useful for neophytes. Most translators prefer to directly contact their colleagues whom they trust and consider competent. One interviewee explained that she had no experience with these means of communicating and networking with others. In general, the interviewees consider an online representation through their own websites as sufficient.

Overall, the study participants seem to have a sufficient number of alternate social networking options, e.g. through professional associations, or because they have already established a professional social network they can rely on.

6.3.1 Participants' Use of Social Networking Services

Emma, Kirsten and Cora use the dedicated social networking services for translators and language professionals ProZ (proz.com) and TranslatorsCafé (translatorscafe.com). Emma is an active ProZ user. She starts new threads when she has a translation problem and also answers questions posed by other users. She even returns to her threads after finding a solution to the problem herself and closes the thread by explaining her solution. Kirsten and Cora both have a profile on ProZ, although Kirsten stated that she is only a passive user, because active participation takes too much time.

Cora also has a profile on Translators Café. They both state that they sometimes receive requests for translation assignments through these platforms. Cora is even contacted by headhunters who offer her permanent positions, although she set up her profiles years ago and does not maintain them. Doris uses ProZ.com as an information repository for searching terminology, however does not have a profile there.

The other interviewees refuse to use translators' networks, for various reasons:

Pia questions the qualifications of other users: "How can I be sure that [...] the other person is more knowledgeable than I am?", but ponders her doubts as a matter of age: "but maybe I would think differently if... [online discussion forums] would have already existed back in the days." She further points out that she had sometimes read discussions (when she came across them by chance, while doing an Internet search), but was always disappointed in the content: "Let's say maybe ten times I had accidentally [*laughing*] read such a thing... I thought: Well... this is not really the ultimate source of... I would have known that myself, also, wouldn't I? This is not the ultimate source of novelty."

Charlotte occasionally searches through ProZ forums if she is looking for specialized terminology. She says that she does not actively participate in the

forums, in that it takes too much time and effort and she is sometimes too impatient and does not want to wait for an answer.

Emma claimed to be a passive user of ProZ in 80% of the consultations. For the other 20%, she presents questions herself and answers the questions of others. If she had found a valuable piece of information that would answer a question in the forum, she first finishes the translation and then returns to the discussion thread afterwards, sharing her solution with the others. She stated that she would never actively use the discussion forums on online dictionaries (e.g. leo.org). Emma further argued that these discussions are not led on a professional level and that professional translators would approach translation problems much differently than a novice.

Flora reads through discussion forums, finding it helpful on occasion. She said her forum of choice was her local members' group of the BDÜ, where she had access to colleagues who possess "a broad area of expertise".

Cora searches through discussion forums if she has problems with her computer or specialized translation software. She does not pose any questions in a discussion forum because it takes too long to receive an answer. In these cases, she prefers to call on a colleague.

Mia discussed the aspect of non-disclosure, which had not been mentioned by the freelance translators:

I: Do you use online discussion forums?

Mia: [harrumphing] Not actively. Of course, we read through certain forums if the Internet search returns a hit. Sometimes the issue is very specific and we can't find anything. I assume that despite the BDÜ discussion forums, which are not very helpful for actual translation problems, no one from our company is actually an active user of any discussion forums for questions or other inquiries.

I: Why not?

Mia: I don't know. I think research does not go that far. The question would have to be absolutely unanswerable for us in order to consult others. Certainly this is also a matter of secrecy. We would have to sanitize the text or somehow white out certain

parts so the client can't be recognized. I can't just put any random text passages online. If someone does a search and finds them... We can't do that. And without sufficient context, nobody will be able to help me with the translation.

6.3.2 Use of Web-Based Information Repositories

The participant observation of five study participants reinforces the assertions made during the interviews. During the observation, the consultations of translation aids and information repositories were recorded, both in the think-aloud protocols and an observation log. Figure 6.21 shows the number of web-based information repositories consulted during the observations. The analysis of the data shows considerable differences among the five participants. Doris, who translated a legal text, did a lot of Internet research before and during the translation process. Therefore, she used the search engine Google.com 40 times. She also used the translation search engine Linguee.com and Wikipedia.org once, respectively.

Pia translated a meeting protocol of a government department. She worked in Trados and had access to information resources (e.g. reference texts) through the extranet of her client. She did not consult many information repositories during the observation, the only web-based repositories being the terminology database Inter-Active Terminology for Europe (IATE) and Google.com (one search each).

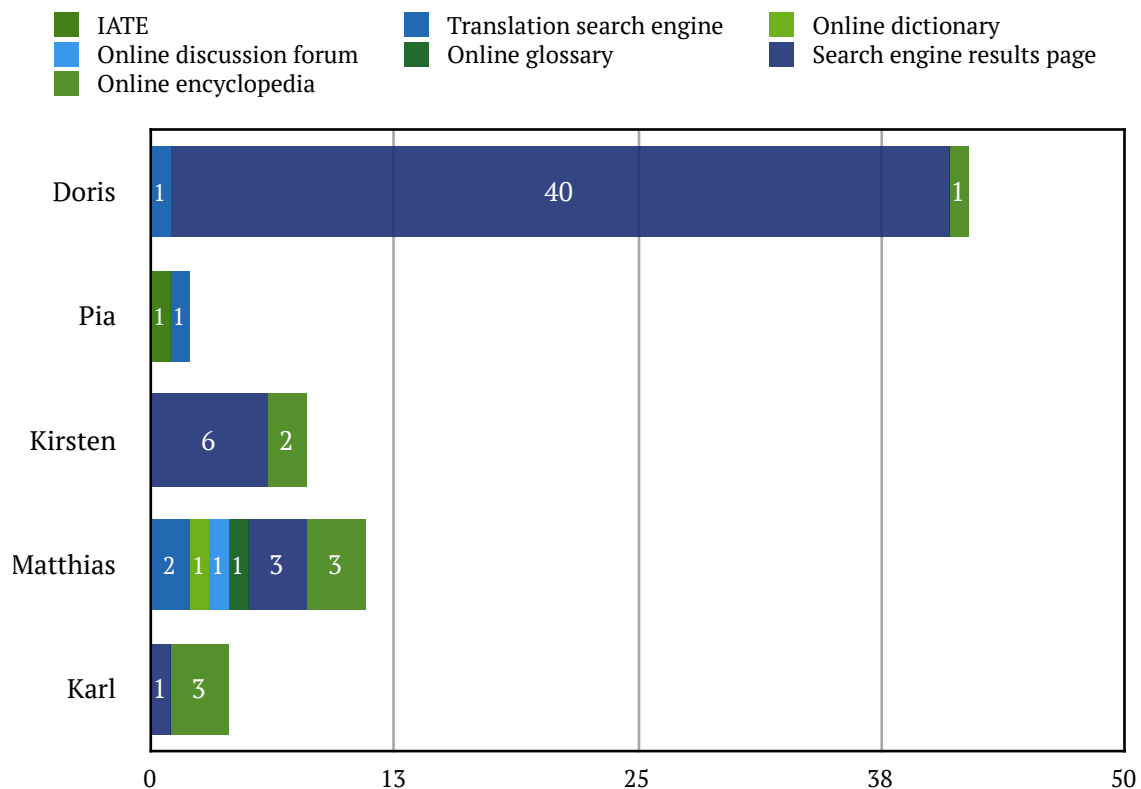


Fig. 6.21: Overview of web-based information repositories used among observation participants

Kirsten translated a user manual for a consumer electronics device. She also worked in Trados and conducted the majority of her terminology searches in the translation memory. During the observation, she used the Google search engine six times and consulted Wikipedia.org twice.

Matthias used multiple web-based repositories during the translation of a product sheet. He used Linguee.com to look up terminology twice, as well as the online discussion forum of the online dictionary leo.org, an online glossary, as well as different search engines.

Karl worked on the translation of a novel. He searched for background information in Google Books (books.google.com) once and consulted Wikipedia.org for background information and terminology three times.

After consulting search engine results pages (SERPs), the translators sometimes proceeded to websites listed among the search results. Reading reference texts on websites was not counted as usage of web-based information repositories.

Overall, the participants addressed 216 queries to translation aids and digital information repositories. Print reference works were only consulted in three cases and only if online or desktop repositories did not return any useful results.

6.3.2 Gaining Visibility Online

Half of the interviewees have XING profiles and three have profiles on LinkedIn. However, they all report that these profiles are not very useful for them. None of the XING and LinkedIn users receive any project assignments through these SNS.

Flora established a few interesting contacts, which could develop into future collaborations. She points out that this might be due to her specialization. A colleague of hers specializes in non-fiction book translations and receives numerous job offers through XING, as many editors are active XING users. She is also a member of a number of specialized engineering groups, where she follows the various discussions. She argues, however, that these are not relevant for translating and she only follows them out of personal interest. Matthias joined a translators' group on XING in which translation assignments are announced. Mia set up her XING profile when she lost her job a few years ago and thought it was a good idea to be present on a professional SNS. She does not maintain her profile and has only a small number of connections.

Karl participates in a dedicated online discussion forum for German-Spanish literary translators exclusively (hosted by the German Association for Literary and Scientific Translators, VdÜ). He stated that he had been enthusiastically using the forum quite often in the past, but not anymore:

Karl: We have a forum, an Internet forum, where we can raise questions to competent people, namely our colleagues, who plunge into it, brainstorm and only a few minutes later, if you're lucky, they have an answer ready. We have that. I do that from time to time. However, rarely. There was a time when I used it very often. It's a great thing. But, as I said, it's an elitist coterie, which is not accessible for everybody.

I: Why don't you use it as much anymore?

Karl: No, I use it less, much less. I answer much less and I also raise a lot less questions... I don't know why... A lack of solidarity, weariness, I don't know... Sometimes... questions are raised that annoy me, that put me off and... But probably the others feel the same about my questions... I don't know, it has become less frequent. I don't participate with the same ardent enthusiasm anymore than I did some ten years ago.

Matthias also stated that he was an active user of discussion forums in the 1990s, but not anymore due to the lack of goal-directed communications he experienced in these forums. He claims that there was too much noise generated and he came to the conclusion that participating in these forums was “a waste of time” for him.

Facebook is not used by any of the study participants. Emma cites her role as a university lecturer as her reason to refrain from using Facebook (as well as XING and LinkedIn): “I avoid [SNS] on purpose, because of my role as a university teacher. I don't want to have discussions on Facebook with my students.” She also argues that she prefers professional translators' SNS: “Discussions on social networking services don't do it for me, because they are not really professional. I prefer professional online discussion forums, e.g. ProZ.” This opinion is also shared by Doris and Pia.

One half of the participant group has their own website. However, translators refer to their website as a type of electronic business card, which is a reference for interested translation buyers.

6.4 Resources from Support Networks and Social Capital

6.4.1 Cooperation

Most of the interviewees referred to themselves as solitary fighters. Working alone, with limited contact to others with whom translators can discuss their work requires them to cultivate a certain alertness to their own knowledge gaps and insecurities:

Pia: It's a question of whether you take notice of [a translation problem]. Do you even notice [laughing] that you have to do some research? This is the key problem. You work alone. Nobody is there to discuss, whether... whether you should search for terminology or if it can just be written like that. That's the problem.

However, a cooperation (i.e. working together for a mutual benefit) is very much appreciated by the translators, although rare. Translators cooperate with other translators for various reasons. A common reason is the division of labor, based on cooperation partners skills (language combination, mother language) and strengths (areas of specialization, text types).

Alter	Type of Cooperation
author	friendly relationship, source of information
client	mutual learning process in a long-term business relationship
colleague	labor division: based on skills and strengths
colleague	labor division: based on work steps (translating, proofreading)
colleague	labor division: handle large projects together
colleague	long-term business cooperation
colleague	subcontract work to other translators (on a regular basis)
colleague	substitute in case of sickness or inability to work

Tab. 6.17: Overview of types of cooperation with various alters

Charlotte, who owns a translation bureau, subcontracts translations into languages that she does not cover herself to freelance translators. These collaborations are long-term business relationships and she refers to the subcontractors as “regular translators”, who she knows quite well and who also know each other, at least from e-mail communications.

Mia, who works in a translation office, also reports that the translation process is split up into three work steps: Translation, proofreading, and correction, which are covered by different translators. This strategy is also used by freelance translators, either for quality assurance reasons or to reduce the individual workload. The translators that work in the translation office all have different specializations, but everyone must be capable of completing all types of translations for knowledge diversification. As everyone has at least a basic

knowledge of each area of specialization covered by the company, translators can ask each other for help with translation problems. Mia pointed out that in her company, translation is teamwork.

The freelance translators also team up with other freelancers in order to handle translation projects together (either in established cooperatives or based on a personal business relationship). These can be either multilingual projects or large translation projects that require a high throughput rate in a short time period. Pia, for example, has developed a long-term cooperation with another freelance translator, which she describes as a special relationship based on mutual trust. The cooperation with this colleague worked very well; only when they had involved other translators with whom they had not worked with before did the cooperation become chaotic. Mastering all difficulties together and being able to resolve conflicts establishes a stable basis for a cooperation. This relationship enabled her to better cope with stressful situations during a long-term project with a massive workload. She pointed out that she likes teamwork, but she prefers to have her own office.

Some freelancers also fill in for one another in case of illness or a massive workload if they do not want to turn a (regular) client down. The cooperation with regular clients proves satisfactory for freelance translators, as they develop an understanding of the clients' work, language, products and internal processes etc. This enables translators to provide a better service to clients. Vice versa, experienced translators argued that they educated their regular clients regarding the requirements for quality translations.

Karl (the literary translator) stated that he always makes friends with the authors of the books he translates and even tries to meet them in person. This way, he gets a feeling for how they talk and act, and for who they are, which helps him to translate. He can also contact them with questions. He finds this kind of cooperation and friendly relationship very enjoyable. However, he claimed to be a lone fighter. He prefers to work alone and think for himself. He noticed very early in his career that he cannot work together with other translators.

Working together on a strictly transactional basis is not considered a cooperation by the translators. It can rather be referred to as *collaboration*. Particularly the collaboration with translation agencies lacks cooperative characteristics, although translators would appreciate these. Matthias explained that he sees translation agencies as brokers who purchase and resell his work. According to his experiences, only a few translation agencies work professionally and according to the established tools of the trade (e.g. terminology management or quality management).

6.4.2 Observable Interactions

6.4.2.1 Practical Aid

Practical aid in the context of this study refers to practical help with a translation problem. This can be either the lack of background knowledge or terminology, or a lack of experience with a certain type of text. Sharing information and personal knowledge is a form of practical aid in the translation context. Therefore, the resources information and practical aid are closely related.

Translators receive practical aid with their translations from fellow translators, subcontractors and also from the clients contact persons (experts, such as engineers or technical writers). Charlotte gets help from her assistant and Emma explained that she had many friends who are native speakers of the languages she covers. If she faces a translation problem or feels unsure about a text passage, she asks a friend for help in exchange for a cup of coffee.

Translators can also be quite resourceful when they need help: If an Internet search does not provide helpful results and her contact persons are not available, Doris searches online for institutions or experts in the same field and calls them, explains her situation and asks them for help. Doris states that she always receives positive reactions using this strategy.

Matthias explained that he had received work from experienced colleagues early in his career. Today, the colleagues who supported him back then call him for advice and help in ICT matters.

6.4.2.2 Tangible Support

A form of tangible support is the referral of work to self-employed professionals. Access to sources of work is considered an important form of social capital. Most interviewees had mentioned clients (these can be translation agencies or direct clients) and colleagues as the most important sources of work, followed by friends and acquaintances, collaborators (e.g. web design companies) or publishing houses. The role of trust and fair behavior was also mentioned in this context. Charlotte pointed out that she can trust her subcontractors to be reliable and deliver good work, whereas they can trust her to settle the bills timely. Pia explained that the most important aspect for clients was the professionalism and reliability of the translator: “The clients want translations which won’t cause any further work or trouble for them.” Four interviewees also claimed to be a source of work for other translators, either because they subcontract work to others or through personal referrals.

Another type of tangible support is the willingness to support and join others in risky endeavors. For freelance translators, tangible support seems to be directly related to cooperative behavior, e.g. as collaboration in large translation projects, or in joining together in a translators’ cooperative.

6.4.2.3 Information

Information, in the context of this study, refers to any kind of valuable information that translators require during the translation process (e.g. background information or terminology), as well as general information on the translation industry, the clients, and translating. Providing information or helping out with personal knowledge can also be considered “practical aid” in the context of knowledge work and – in this case – translating.

All interviewees had mentioned information as an important resource they get from their support networks. Two of them explicitly stated that asking alters for information is also related with trust, either in the relationship among ego and alter in general, or as trust in the competence and trustworthiness of alter.

Fellow translators and experts are the most consulted sources of information. Clients are also valuable, but translators do not want to stress relationships with clients too much and usually only turn to clients as a prio 3 resource. All experienced translators explained that nowadays, Internet research has substituted the contacting of colleagues for information. As Matthias pointed out: “Expert advice is the most neglected resource”, however, it remains to be the most important one, he concluded. Another source of information are the professional associations, e.g. through their publications. IT problems are solved with the support of IT specialists, knowledgeable fellow translators or by consulting online discussion forums.

Online information resources are used the most. Printed dictionaries and the like are seldom used. Freelance translators mentioned the client as an important source of background information. The employed translator stated they first use company-internal information resources as well as asking colleagues before contacting the client as a last measure.

6.4.2.4 Consulting and Personal Advice

Translators seek consulting and advice with (difficult) professional decisions only from alters they have trusted relationships with. The most important sources for advice are colleagues and particularly colleagues who can also be considered friends. Other friends (that do not work as translators) and the life or marriage partners are also consulted in business decisions. Some of the interviewees ask experts for their opinion, e.g. in matters of financial investments or with ICT decisions. Employees of professional associations were also mentioned as knowledgeable consultants who could help with business matters.

Emma criticized the missing trust and openness during the regulars’ table meetings she had attended early in her career. She stated that she would have preferred to receive personal advice from more experienced translators, but rather had the impression that the other attendees were not discussing openly and appeared to be solitary fighters.

Interviewees also stated that they consult their colleagues (e.g. Pia, who supports newcomers). Most interviewees pointed out that *consulting and personal advice* from experienced colleagues (i.e. other freelance translators) had been particularly important during the beginning of their freelancing careers. Karl received valuable advice about information repositories, access to literary translators' social networks and financial resources, such as grants and competitions from an employee (secretary) of the German Professional Association of Literary Translators.

Translators also ask their life or marriage partners and friends (who also work as freelance translators) for advice with business decisions or for obtaining a second opinion on a professional matter. Tax advisors and accountants are consulted for advice on financial matters, e.g. investments in software or changing the office. The basis for asking others for advice is always a trusted relationship and the trust in the alter's competences and professional experience.

Translators with many years of work experience stated that the affiliations with experienced translators who supported them with their advice during their early careers had vanished. Conversely, Pia reported that she supports newcomers during the early stage of their careers with advice and work. However, these relationships are not stable. Existing relationships may vanish when newcomers can survive on their own or when the cooperation did not prove to be reliable. New relationships develop with other newcomers.

6.4.2.5 Sociability

Although (or maybe just because) freelance translators mostly work alone, sociability is considered an important and valuable source of social support. Social interaction is a means for establishing trust, as translators observe each others' behavior closely:

Pia: I went to regulars' tables and trainings and the like. And there I asked other people for information. But I looked at them closely to recognize if they have – let's say – the ability to think for oneself. And then I trusted in their competence, because

of the way we talked with each other, I trusted that they don't just do the wise guy, but that they really think about what they say. Or one colleague had graduated from a law school in France. So I knew that if I asked him something about law, he will respond with something solid.

An important source of sociability is the membership in a professional association and the participation in meetings and activities of regional members' groups (e.g. regulars' tables, barbecues etc.), professional events and trainings. The *togetherness* of the professional translators' overall community had not been mentioned. However, togetherness in translators' small social networks and cliques seem to be considered important for personal success, as it is the very basis for intangible and tangible resources.

Sociability is mostly regarded to generate fun and positive emotions. It can also be a source of conflict, however, if social relations take a turn to the bad. Pia mentioned that she once had a severe conflict with a fellow translator that resulted in a termination of the social relationship.

6.4.2.6 Everyday Interactions

Interactions which take place on a frequent basis become meaningful and stabilizing rituals among actors in a support network. Mia, who works as an in-house translator in a translation company, reported that she and her colleagues meet everyday in the afternoon at the coffee machine just to take a short break together and chat.

Kirsten: I know him quite well and if one of us is down and out we can talk with each other and let off steam. [laughing]

Flora: Once in a while we all need to let off steam.

Charlotte meets with a colleague on an annual basis and explained that these encounters are very important to her. Flora described during the interview that the meetings of her regional members' group follow more or less the same rituals: Translators meet and then mostly talk about the same things and "let off steam".

6.4.3 Cognitions

6.4.3.1 Recognition

The interviewees did not mention many sources of recognition. They all showed a certain degree of appreciation to fellow translators, particularly if they received other resources, such as advice or information from them. An important, however scarce source of recognition seemed to be the client. Particularly during long-term relationships with regular clients did translators enjoy the client's appreciation of their work and professionalism. However, translators also reported a lack of personal and professional appreciation and, as a result, a low occupational status, which can be a source of conflict.

Karl, the literary translator, also receives recognition from literary critics, although he does not read the articles himself, but gets them forwarded by his editors.

6.4.3.2 Orientation

Translators gain orientation from their colleagues. Particularly newcomers who had just started their careers as freelance translators rely on learning behavior models and social norms from their experienced colleagues. Interviewees who enjoyed support and orientation in the early stages of their careers reported that this was of great help. Emma, the youngest interviewee with the least work experience mentioned that she would have preferred to have experienced colleagues giving her advice and orientation, but she did not know anyone.

Freelance translators receive support from experienced freelance translators in the forms of:

- work, by either subcontracting or referrals of prospective clients or assignments
- practical aid, in the form of help with terminology or translation problems
- information of any kind (about resources, sources of work, good practices)
- consulting and personal advice on how to start up as a freelancer or tendering

- orientation, in the form of behavior models and social norms
- a sense of belonging

Orientation also can also take on the form of social control of adequate behavior, as Pia explained:

Pia: Some people, they approach me or I somehow meet them and I learn: Ah, they just start their freelance business. And then I observe how these persons do and how they position themselves and... whether they do good work, of course. And then I support them a little bit, with work, until they'll have both feet on the ground.

Social control is not only exercised among colleagues, but also by regular clients.

6.4.3.3 Sense of Belonging

Four of the interviewees mentioned that their freelancer colleagues made them feel they had a sense of belonging to a community. Five interviewees claimed to receive this feeling from their membership in a professional association. This is evident by the translators' commitment in professional associations, e.g. by writing articles for the members' magazines or by leading local groups and organizing regulars' tables.

Pia further pointed out that she supports the newcomers, as she herself had received a very warm welcome into the freelance translators' community back when she started her freelancing career. This is a type of sense of belonging, which is accompanied by the awareness of being a member of a community and involves communication and engagement, e.g. the opportunity for nurturing others or a sense of being needed by others (Weiss, 1974).

A special case of this sense of belonging is the opportunity for nurturing others (Weiss, 1974) as well as a sense of being needed by others, which is brought to expression by helping newcomers, like Pia does.

6.4.3.4 Sense of Receiving Supportive Behavior

Supportive behavior or help is mostly provided by colleagues, as six interviewees stated. Charlotte, the owner of the translation agency and

language school, also mentions her assistant as a very important source of support. The translators' mentioned friends and the professional association as alters who give them a sense of receiving help whenever they need it.

6.4.3.5 Learning from Others

Learning only happens if ego trusts in the competences of the alter that ego learns from. (Experienced) colleagues are the persons most interviewees learned from, followed by clients, friends and the trainings offered by the professional associations. Translators also stated that they educate their clients if the relationship is a long-term one. This is necessary, because many clients do not know what the translators need to do their work properly. In a learning process, translators teach clients the requirements for translating (examples mentioned were: Quality source texts, interns or secretaries should not translate parts of the source texts, companies should manage their terminology etc.).

Another source of learning is the feedback translators receive concerning their work. The interviewees receive feedback from their clients, from colleagues, and from subcontractors (as a result of proofreading). Translators also give feedback to colleagues and subcontractors. Constructive criticism is considered professional business behavior and a valuable source for learning.

6.4.4 Emotions

Emotional security, as well as love and affection, were not mentioned by the interviewees. *Motivation*, encouragement and uplifting were said to be important resources that freelancers receive from colleagues and, in general, from their membership in – or in interaction with employees of – professional associations. However, emotional support as a resource was only explicitly mentioned by two interviewees.

Friendship has a different connotation in German than in English. Here, the notion of friendship refers to a strong, emotionally bonding relationship with a relatively high level of trust.

6.5 Reported Impact of the World Wide Web on Translators' Work

All interviewees share the same opinions about the change induced by the rapid technological development. They all mentioned an increased professionalization of the industry. The access to online information repositories makes searching for terminology easier and faster, which is seen as a positive development:

Karl: It's an engineering marvel! Back in the days, I still remember when I started, that was thirty years ago, when I first started as a literary translator. In this case, I would have had to look the information up in the Brockhaus [a German-language encyclopedia] or I would have marched into the university library to see what some [author] had written about [a certain topic]. So I would have had spent half a day with research, eh? If today I enter [the author's name] in Google, I can see instantly which book he wrote and what it's about. The gain in time it brings is fantastic!

While translations can be produced in less time today, the overall quality of translations has also increased. The interviewees see the Internet as an essential information repository. Dictionaries (particularly print) are rarely used anymore, because they are not updated quickly enough and do not mirror the further development of subject areas.

These changes also cause negative effects: Interviewees report an increased complexity and constant changes in their areas of specialization, which requires greater terminology searching and leads to less creativity in the translation process. This makes the translators' job more difficult and exhausting, as they cannot rely on their existing knowledge anymore. Translators feel that their clients expect them to know everything, because a lot of information and terminology can be found online, as Pia explained:

Pia: This is really laborious, I mean, translating, since everything can be found [online] and everything must be searched for, and all... it's not anymore... it's really a lot, a lot of terminology searching. [...] They cite some... title of a, of just any EU Regulation or a text passage from an EU Regulation, or whatever. And I have to plod through this stuff and search for it, right? And... and then put a sentence together from the bits and pieces I had found, which sometimes isn't really funny. [laughing]

Another change is a decrease in communications with colleagues and other professionals as a source of knowledge and learning. All interviewees who have been working as translators before the Internet existed reported to have contacted colleagues for knowledge exchange. Pia and Karl mentioned that they do not do this anymore. Matthias pointed out that, back in the days, he had spoken with other professionals (e.g. mechanics) to understand how they speak and the terminology they use. Today, he finds all this information online. He refers to expert knowledge as a neglected resource and thinks that the cessation of these connections is “a real pity”.

The study participants criticize the system of bidding on online marketplaces, ultimately leading to price dumping. Matthias has a dichotomous opinion regarding online marketplaces, such as ProZ. On one side, he uses them to find freelance translators who he can subcontract work to. On the other side, he observes a “sell off” of the translation profession. In his opinion, translation agencies suggest an artificial, non-existent competition among translators and suggest low rates as “competitive”. Other interviewees also stated that they did not want to join ProZ and other online communities (e.g. XING groups, TranslatorsCafé.com) which also serve as online marketplaces, because tendering practices on these platforms lead to price dumping and are counterproductive for freelancers. Kirsten pointed out that particularly inexperienced translators work for low rates, as they are still unsure about the worth of their work. Doris also criticizes women that do not rely on translating as a breadwinning job and accept low rates, as they only translate as a hobby.

The study results will be discussed and compared with findings from previous research in the next chapter.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study is to investigate how the social web impacts the social networks of freelance translators, based on the assumption that online home based businesses can benefit from virtual networks by gaining access to valuable tangible and intangible resources. On the other hand, however, previous research suggests that personal support networks and social contracting are key elements to freelancers' viability and emotional wellbeing. These seemingly opposing findings regarding support networks led to three research questions this thesis sought to answer:

- Which resources do freelance translators receive from their personal and virtual social relationships?
- How do professional freelance translators make use of the social web as a virtual space for social interaction, collaboration and business?
- Do virtual and personal network relations converge or oppose each other?

To find an answer to these questions, this study employed a qualitative, exploratory approach, combining ethnographic methods (i.e. participant observations and think-aloud protocols) with guideline-based interviews and the analysis of translators' ego-networks. The material gathered was then analyzed using content analysis and qualitative social network analysis.

The contributions of this study (section 7.1), its limitations (section 7.2) and implications for further research (section 7.3) will be discussed below.

7.1 Contributions

The study results yield remarkable findings. Social technologies and online marketplaces are only scarcely used by the professional translators who participated in this study. Furthermore, translators' social networks comprise of considerably more and different alters than Translation Studies literature suggests. Alters can be *individuals* that translators have private or professional relations with (or both), *organizations* such as professional associations, translation agencies or client companies, *groups* such as the local members'

group of a professional association, and *virtual counterparts* such as the users of virtual discussion forums. The study participants receive most of their tangible and intangible resources from their personal networks, which they mostly establish face-to-face and maintain either personally or through the use of e-mail and telephone.

7.1.1 Discussion of Translators' Ego-Network Structures

The network structures of the participants differ considerably and seem to be determined by the translators' portfolios. Interviewees reported that they combine translating with other business activities such as interpreting, brokerage of language services (i.e. subcontracting work to others, like an agency) or teaching at a university. Offering diverse translation services, such as specialist translation and literary translation, also affects the number of ties in translators' ego-networks.

Moreover, the network structures seem to change with increasing working experience.

The data suggests a trend of an increasing nodal degree (i.e. number of alters) with increasing working experience, until it sharply declines in the last decade of professional life. The number of *very important* and *important alters* seems to decrease slightly with increasing work experience. The number of weak ties (number of *less important* actors and actors in the *periphery* of the network map) increases steadily with growing work experience and drops sharply in the last decade of professional life. Similarly, in the beginning of freelance translators' careers there seems to be a relatively strong group cohesion, which decreases over the first two decades of professional life, as translators establish an increased number of heterogeneous relations for ensuring professional success. Group cohesion then decreases again towards the end of professional life.

The reasons for this could lie in the need to establish weak ties for heterogeneous information and increased employability (cf. Zaheer & McEvily, 1999; Granovetter, 2005). The number of weak ties which are important for the

activation of these resources increases with time, as freelancers establish their networks and become more professional. In doing so, they create their own *professional niches*:

“Interdependent entrepreneurs must have access to various resources associated with their production. An entrepreneur’s social niche can be defined as the subgroup of the colleagues with whom he or she has particularly dense, multi-functional, and durable relationships linked, directly or indirectly, with his or her production activities.” (Lazega, 2009, p. 12)

Once established in the market, translators subcontract work to others, e.g. to less experienced newcomers.

Emma – being a newcomer – also has a large network. However, it consists more of ties with friends as compared with the networks of the experienced translators. This corresponds to findings from entrepreneurship studies which show that nascent entrepreneurs must activate tangible and intangible resources, such as potential clients and suppliers, financial capital, emotional support, as well as knowledge and experience (Batjargal, 2003; Liao & Welsch, 2005). These resources are typically gained through social networks, first consisting of family, friends, former employers, and colleagues (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998). At a later stage, these social networks are extended by relations with other entrepreneurs, lawyers, financiers and others (Semrau & Werner, 2012). In this phase, the number of weak ties grows.

At the late stage of professional life, these weak ties disappear and the strong ties remain. This is not only due to former colleagues retiring. Another reason is being well-established in the market with few regular clients and less business activities such as subcontracting or establishing cooperatives, which translators in the productive phase of their businesses undertake. It seems to be a phase of downsizing business relations (i.e. weak ties) and preserving strong ties, which are based on emotional bonding and trust.

7.1.2 Support Networks and Resources

The participants receive all tangible and intangible support resources through their personal social networks (table 7.1).

Information is the only resource they obtain from the social web, and mostly as passive users. Most participants reported that they did not have to engage in marketing or client acquisition, since they can rely on referrals and regular clients, with whom they have established long-term business relationships as a *source of work*. The lack of *recognition* of translation buyers was only mentioned by one participant, who stated that her occupational status was low and she was, therefore, sometimes not treated as a professional by her clients. Other translators stated that particularly their regular clients recognized their professionalism and the quality of their work. Professional associations were mentioned as important sources of support resources by most participants. Professional associations are an important source of sociability, particularly for newcomers in the industry. Translators further gain a sense of belonging and supportive behavior, motivation, information and learning, as well as advice from other members and from employees of professional associations.

Social support also serves as social control exercised among translators (e.g. if experienced translators decide to support newcomers if they are deemed to act accordingly) and also by clients, who expect reliability and availability from the translator.

Resource	Alter (Source)
consulting and personal advice	colleagues, experts, friends, life partners, professional associations
cooperation	colleagues
feedback	clients, colleagues, subcontractors
information	clients, colleagues, experts, friends, WWW, professional associations
intervention	colleagues
learning from others	clients, colleagues, friends, professional associations
motivation	colleagues, professional associations
orientation	colleagues
practical aid	clients, colleagues, employees, friends, subcontractors
recognition (also lack of recognition)	clients, colleagues, literary critics

Resource	Alter (Source)
sense of belonging	colleagues, professional associations
sense of receiving supportive behavior	clients, colleagues, employees, friends, professional associations
sociability (also source of conflict)	colleagues, professional associations
social control	clients, colleagues
source of work	clients, collaborators, colleagues, friends, publishing houses, translation agencies
stabilizing rituals	colleagues
tangible support	colleagues
togetherness	colleagues

Tab. 7.1: Overview of social support resources

7.1.3 Translators' Use of the Social Web

Digital and web-based information repositories are the main source of information for professional translators. This has led to an increase in weak ties with technical experts who had been contacted in the past (back when the WWW did not yet exist) for background information and terminology.

The study participants do not use social technologies to collaborate with their alters. They use translators' online discussion forums passively, i.e. they search for terminology or background information in discussion forums or read discussion threads if they are returned as search results. Only Emma, who is the youngest participant, actively participates in online discussions, asking and answering questions.

Some participants reasoned that they do not trust in the competences of users that they do not know. Furthermore, most participants have access to competent colleagues with whom they had trusted relationships. Asking for information or advice is a reciprocal activity, and helping one other can be seen as an investment in the relationship. Some translators' also stated that the most important source of information is the client. Particularly in business relationships with regular clients, translators have expert contact persons at the client's (e.g. engineers) whom they can approach.

Matthias and Karl were active participants in translators' discussion forums in the past, but have lost their enthusiasm for it. They even think it is a waste of time because a great deal of "noise" was generated and online discussions were often unrewarding. Both translators could not further expound on the reasons for losing their interest. An explanation could be their increased level of expertise: The topics discussed in the forums are not interesting for them anymore, as they are already well experienced and possess a sufficient level of professional knowledge. Another explanation could be a feeling of disillusionment, which occurs if the (originally high) expectations have not been met by the technology (Friedland, Hürst, Knipping, & Mühlhäuser, 2009).

The XING and LinkedIn users among the participants claimed that they set up their profiles hoping to gain improved employment opportunities (Flora, Kirsten, Cora, Matthias in the form of translation assignments and Mia looking for a steady job). However, they all reported that this was to no avail. All freelance translators mostly gain their work through social contracting with regular clients (i.e. direct clients and translation agencies) and through personal referrals.

Flora mentioned a colleague who regularly receives job assignments through XING, because her clients (editors of non-fiction) use XING for establishing and maintaining their own business networks. She concludes that the effectiveness of XING profiles is related to the translator's specialization: If prospective clients use XING and translators can engage with their prospects on the platform, it might work out well. If professionals of other industries (e.g. engineers) use XING only for building their own online reputation, the translator has no chance of engaging with them. Furthermore, the engineers or expert professionals of companies are usually not responsible for tendering translation projects, which would be the function of the technical writing department, the purchasing department, or administrative staff.

Compared to the results of McDonough (2007), Risku & Dickinson (2009) or Gouadec (2007), the participants of this study see different use cases for professional SNS. Whereas previous research suggests that users draw

emotional and practical support from participating in SNS, the participants in this study pointed out that they were rather looking for tangible resources such as information and work assignments. SNS, however, did not prove to be successful for them for these purposes. Online marketplaces, which base their business models on auctions, are criticized even by freelance translators with them witnessing price declination and a “sell off” of the industry. Participants mentioned that the participation in online marketplaces does not make sense for translators that attempt to differentiate themselves through quality and a professional work attitude.

The often mentioned lack of visibility does not seem to be an important issue among the participants. Through their weak and strong ties with different individuals and organizations, they seem to be confident with the visibility and recognition they receive from their alters.

Overall, most participants secure their work mainly through social contracting (i.e. regular clients and personal referrals). They already have their support networks established and do not require further access to resources.

7.1.4 Summary

The study participants receive all tangible and intangible resources from their personal support networks. The social web serves mainly as an information repository and only one of the ten translators engages actively in translators’ online discussion forums. The reasons for non-participation are a lack of interest in virtual social interaction, a lack of trust in the expertise of other users, issues of non-disclosure and the significant amount of time required to actively participate in a Web 2.0 environment. Social interaction and collaboration take place either face-to-face or via e-mail and telephone. The social web is not an important source of work either, as the participants obtain most assignment through social contracting. They further criticize online marketplaces for applying auction models which lead to dumping prices and are perceived as counter-productive to service providers that differentiate their work through quality and professionalism. As the World Wide Web has become

the main source of information for professional translators, weak ties to technical experts have vanished.

7.2 Limitations

This study is limited in its broader generalizability by the number of participants. However, the data gathered allows hypotheses which can be verified in further (quantitative) studies.

Further limitations are caused by using network maps, which carry the risk of incompleteness and force complex network structures into a two-dimensional format (Straus, 2010). A suggestion for the future use of network maps would be to not only work with a network generator, but also to have the interviewees fill out the network maps over the course of the interviews in order to gain more information regarding the alters.

The reciprocity of social support was sometimes mentioned by interviewees, but it was not a focus of the study. However, it would be interesting to gain additional insight into reciprocal behavior and different types of support which are exchanged among professional freelance translators. Surveying the relations among alters (i.e. the so-called *first order zones*) and reciprocal support between them would also provide a more concise understanding of cliques and embeddedness in translators' support networks.

7.3 Future Research

Two main areas of further research emerge from the findings presented above:

First of all, two types of organizational work seems to exist for professional translators. Either they receive support through personal interactions and professional organizations, or through online communities. Both ways of organizing seem to have the same effects for translators (cf. McDonough, 2007; Gouadec, 2007; Risku & Dickinson, 2009). The question is, why do they decide for organizing one way or another? Virtual organizing could be easier, since most online communities do not have membership requirements and the threshold for joining is lower than for joining a professional organization. Furthermore, newcomers to the industry might not get to know other

translators easily (e.g. from their personal networks or in their surrounding area) and therefore, turn to online communities for establishing contact with fellow translators. In this case, it would be of interest to investigate why incipient professional translators choose either way of organizing, how their choice affects their start into the industry and how it affects social norms and business ethics of the translation practice.

Another important research question triggers the technical support of social contracting and freelancers' support networks. As it became evident from this study, freelance translators' support networks are very complex and rely on mutual trust, social norms and emotional bonding. SNS and online marketplaces do scarcely mirror these complexities. Particularly social regulation and the matter of establishing and nurturing trust and emotional bonding are not well supported. However, these *social network markets* (Potts et al., 2008) have very special requirements towards the technical support of signaling and the coordination of business activities, e.g. in the form of social referrals.

Future research in this area will certainly reveal more interesting results, helping us to understand how professional freelance translators work. With this knowledge, Translation Studies scholars and practitioners in the translation industry have the means to actively shape their working conditions, tools and business models.

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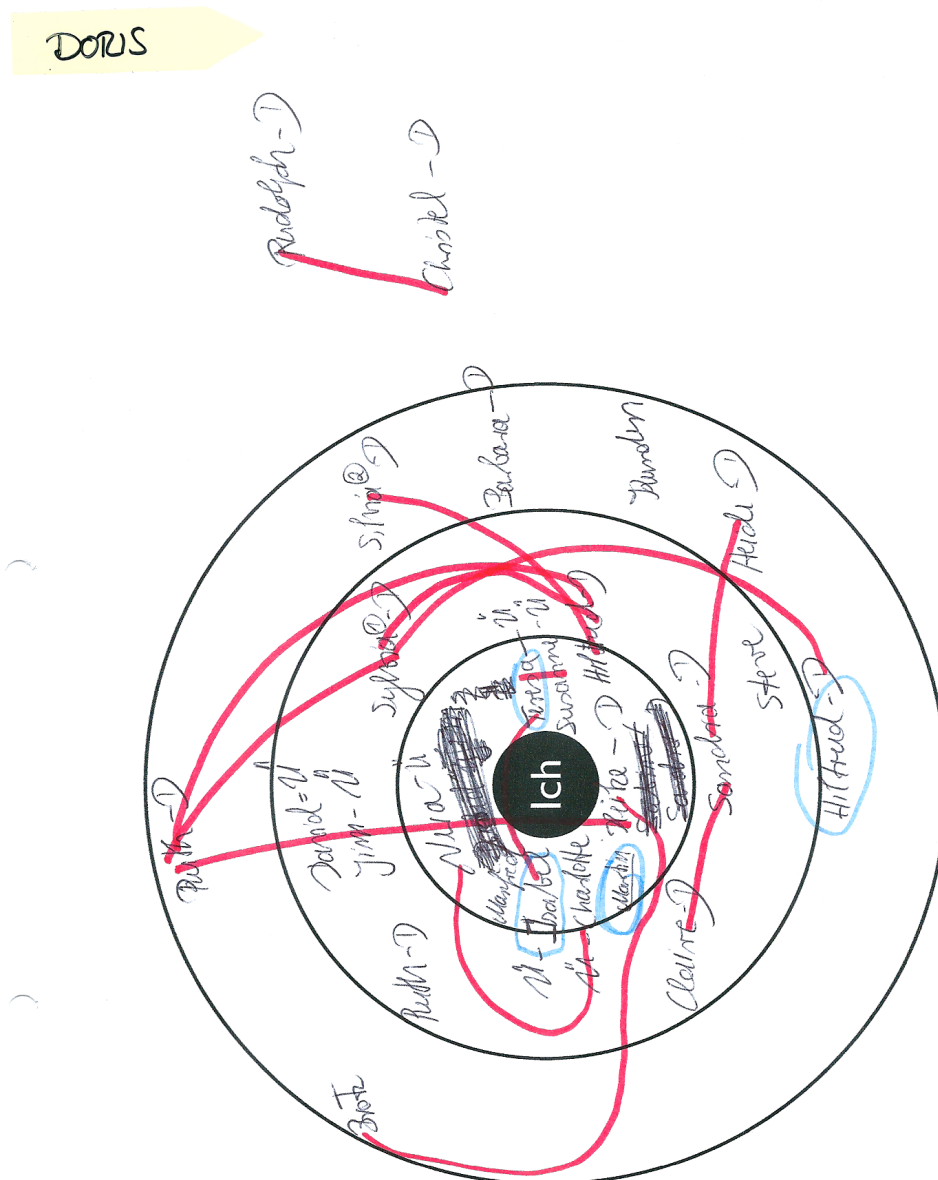
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9 Appendices

9.1 Scans of Network Maps

9.1.1 Doris

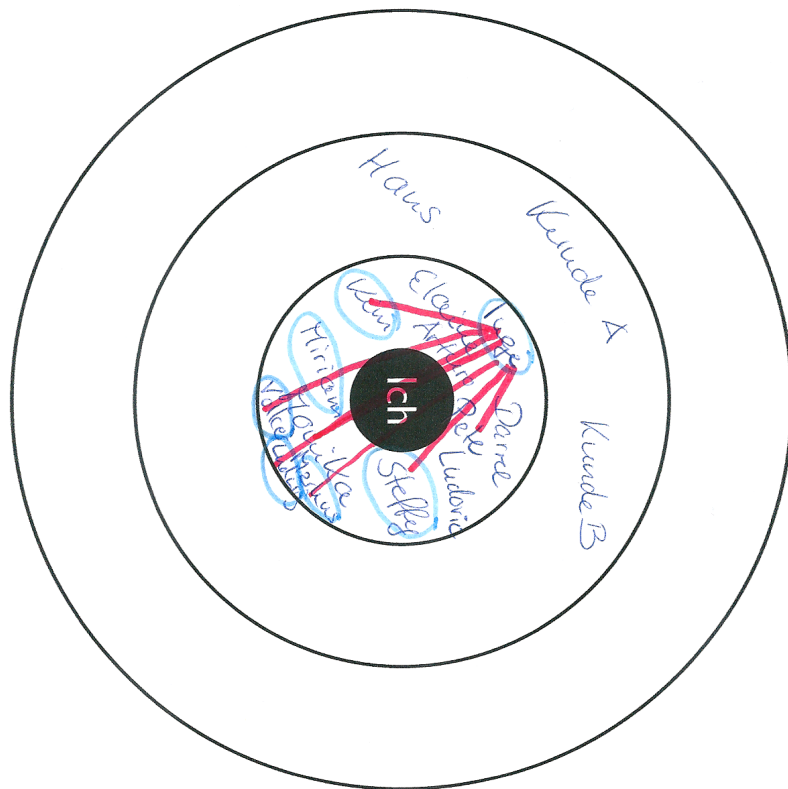


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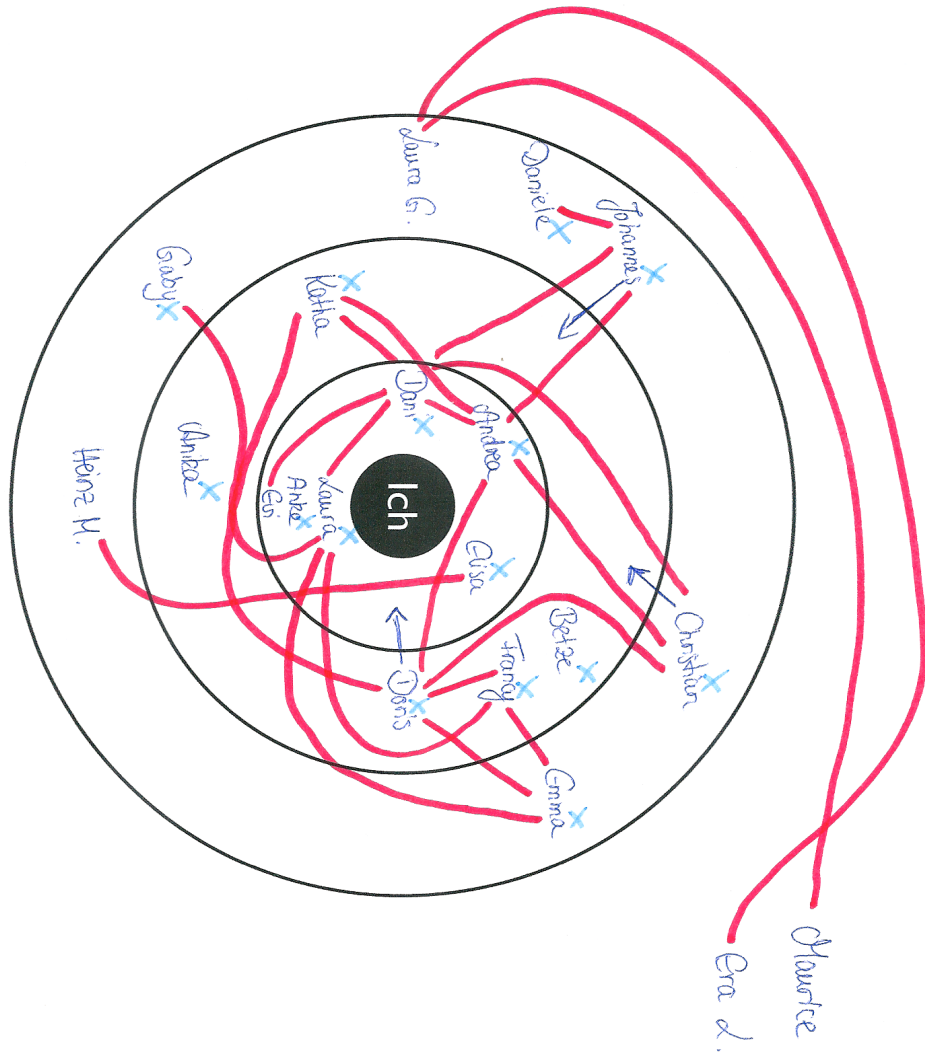
9.1.3 Charlotte

CHARLOTTE



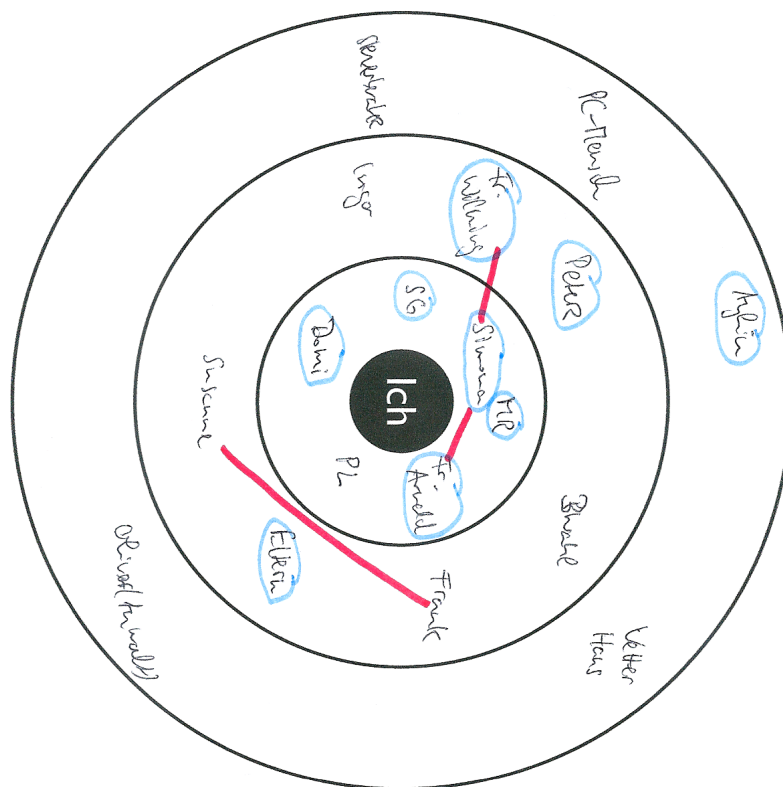
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EMMA



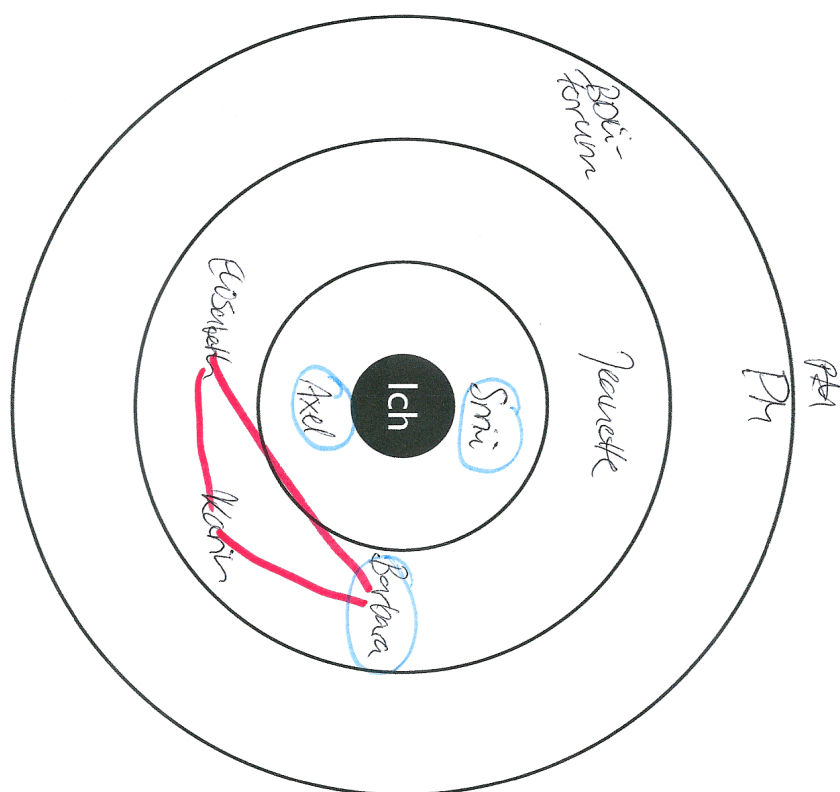
9.1.5 Flora

FLORA



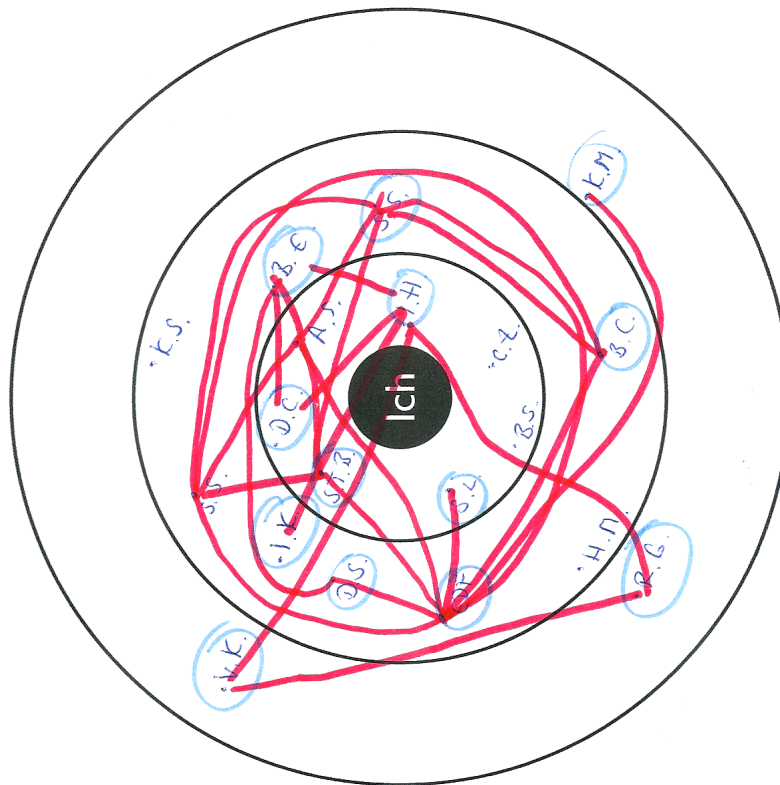
9.1.6 Kirsten

KIRSTEN



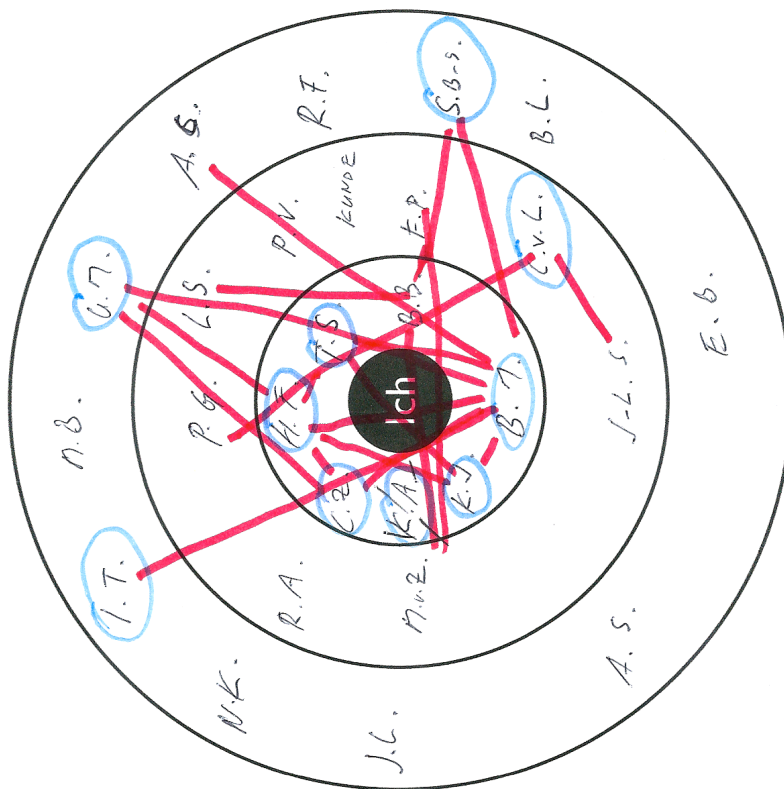
9.1.7 Cora

CORA

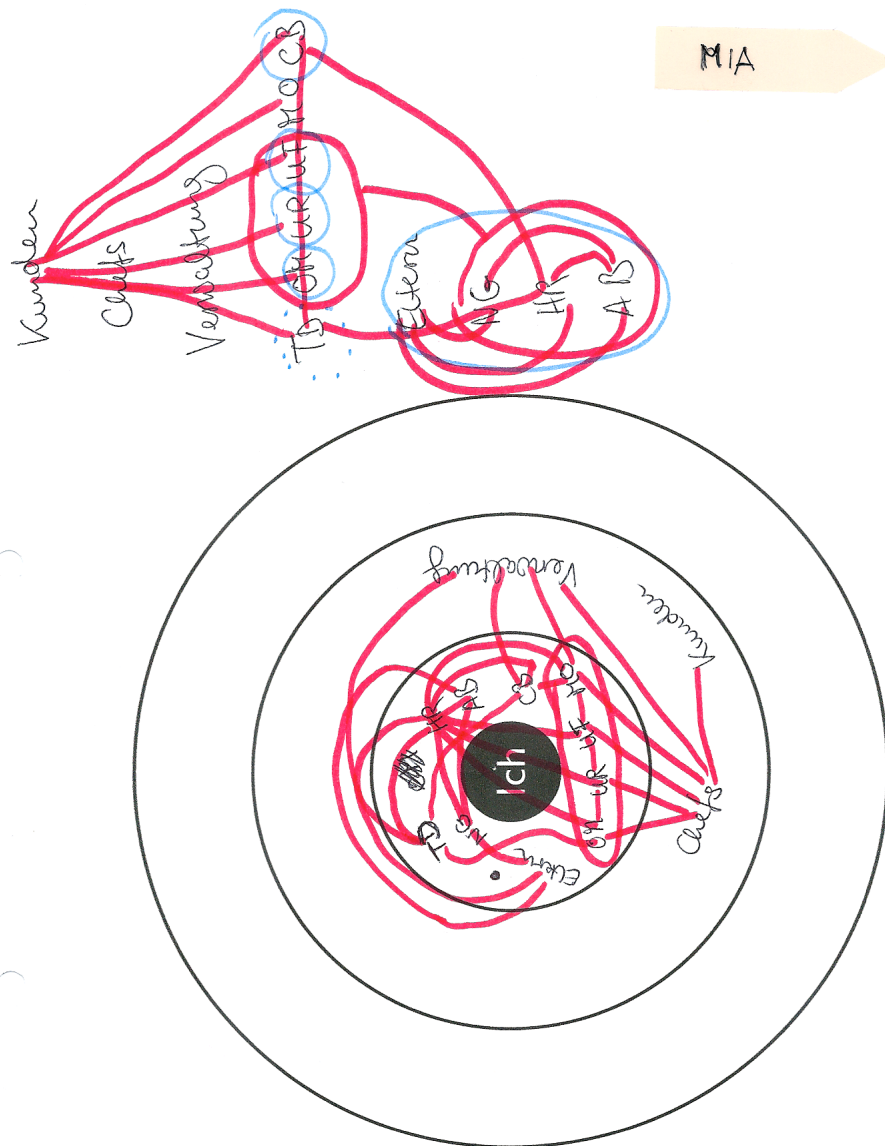


9.1.8 Matthias

MATTHIAS

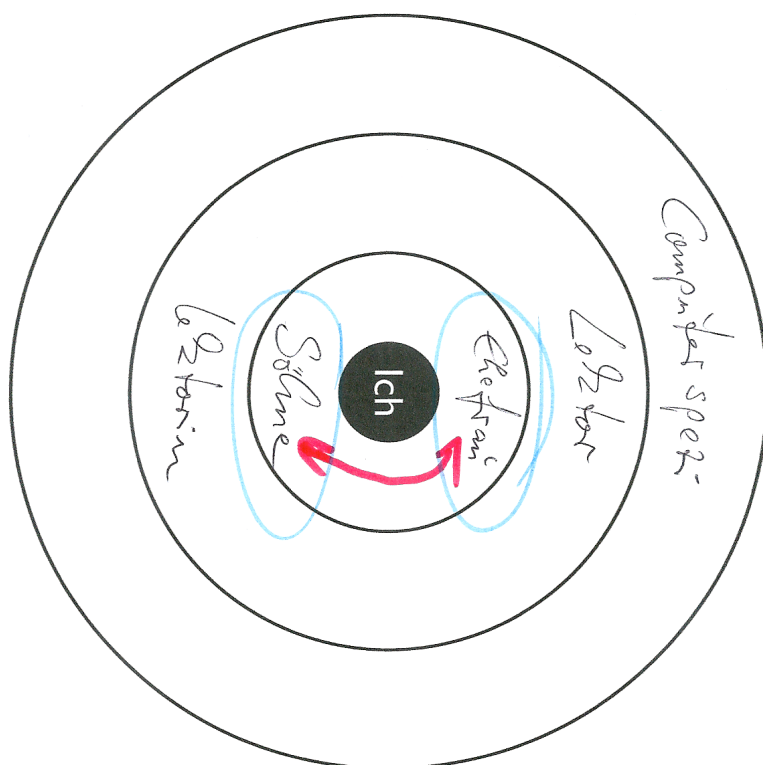


9.1.9 Mia



9.1.10 Karl

KARL



List of Abbreviations

ANT	Actor Network Theory
BDÜ	German federal association of interpreters and translators (Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V.)
CAT	Computer-aided translation
CRM	Customer Relationship Management (software)
IATE	InterActive Terminology for Europe
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LSP	Language services provider
MAHT	Machine-aided human translation
SIC	Standard Industrial Classification
SNS	Social Networking Service
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
TAP	Think-aloud protocol
TS	Translation Studies
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIVERSITAS	Austrian Interpreters' and Translators' Association
VAP	Value-adding partnership
VAT	Value-added tax
WWW	Worldwide Web

Abstract – English

The social web allows to easily maintain relationships with other persons across spatial and temporal boundaries. Particularly self-employed professionals, who rely heavily on tangible and intangible resources from their support networks for their professional success, are expected to benefit from web-based social technologies by enjoying greater visibility, efficient collaboration with clients and partners, and easy access to information and work.

Freelance translators have been found to use dedicated online discussion forums and online marketplaces for knowledge exchange, social support and as a source of work. However, other research suggests that personal networks that are based on face-to-face interactions are the backbone of social network markets like the translation industry. The objective of this study is, therefore, to investigate which influence the social web has on the personal support networks of professional translators.

This thesis presents the results of a study conducted with a group of professional freelance and in-house translators, investigating the structures of their personal and professional ego-networks using qualitative social network analysis and ethnographic methods. Surprisingly and despite research findings from previous studies on translators' participation in online communities, the participants of this study have been found to be rather passive users of the social web. Social capital is mostly generated from strong ties within personal and professional networks. Trust and attributed competences are the main drivers of relationship building and maintenance among colleagues. The WWW has become the main source of information, which caused a decrease of weak ties, as relationships with technical experts who may be contacted in case of translation problems have turned obsolete.

Abstract – German

Dank dem Social Web – dem sozialen, kollaborativen World Wide Web – können zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen über Zeit- und Ländergrenzen hinweg aufgebaut und gepflegt werden. Insbesondere Freiberufler, die für ihren beruflichen Erfolg auf ihre informellen und formellen Netzwerkbeziehungen angewiesen sind, sollen von web-basierten, sozialen Technologien profitieren, beispielsweise durch mehr Sichtbarkeit auf dem Markt, effizientere virtuelle Zusammenarbeit mit Kunden und Partnern, sowie schnellem und einfachem Zugang zu benötigter Information und möglichen Auftraggebern.

Freiberufliche Übersetzer nutzen spezielle Online-Foren und Online-Marktplätze, um sich untereinander auszutauschen, emotionale und praktische Unterstützung zu erhalten und um Aufträge zu erhalten. Dennoch zeigen Studien, dass es gerade die persönlichen Beziehungen sind, die jene Märkte aufrecht erhalten, die auf sozialer Interaktion und Netzwerken basieren – wie die Übersetzungsbranche. Daher ist es die Zielsetzung dieser Arbeit, den Einfluss des Social Web auf die persönlichen Unterstützungsnetzwerke freiberuflicher Übersetzer genauer zu erforschen.

Zu diesem Zweck wurde eine Studie mit professionellen Übersetzern durchgeführt, die die Strukturen ihrer privaten und beruflichen Ego-Netzwerke erfasst und mittels qualitativer Methoden der Netzwerkforschung und der Ethnographie analysiert. Überraschenderweise und im Gegensatz zu bereits existierenden Forschungsergebnissen zur Nutzung von Übersetzer-Communitys im WWW, sind die Teilnehmer dieser Studie überwiegend passive Nutzer sozialer Technologien. Sozialkapital wird überwiegend in starken, persönlichen Beziehungen generiert. Vertrauen und Kompetenz bilden die Grundlage für private und berufliche Netzwerke der Übersetzer. Das WWW ist heute die wichtigste Informationsressource. Diese Entwicklung hat dazu geführt, dass schwache Beziehungen zu Fachexperten, die ehemals zu Informationszwecken kontaktiert wurden, nicht mehr existieren.

CV Marie-Luise Groß

Experience in Academia and Research

Since 2014	Lecturer <i>Knowledge Management 2.0,</i> Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University Mannheim, Germany
Since 2011	Lecturer <i>Knowledge Management Methods and Technologies</i> Wilhelm Büchner University of Applied Sciences, Pfungstadt, Germany
2009 – 2014	Doctoral studies (Dr. phil.) Center for Translation Studies, University of Vienna <i>Title: The impact of the social web on freelance translators’ support networks.</i>
2009	R&D project CLTR Semantic Search, Bilfinger SE Mannheim, Germany
2007 – 2008	Diploma thesis Virtual Office of the Future Competence Center, German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence, Kaiserslautern, Germany <i>Title: The Web 2.0 as a Research Landscape for Professional Translators.</i>

Professional Experience

2012 – 2013	Knowledge Manager Research & Knowledge Services Horváth & Partner GmbH, Stuttgart, Germany
2009 – 2012	Social Media & Knowledge Transfer Consultant Rich Media & Collaboration Services SAP AG, Walldorf, Germany
2006 – 2009	Working Student Virtual Collaboration, Intranet Management, Field Services SAP AG, Walldorf, Germany
2006	Intern Project Management eCircle Ltd., London, UK
2005	Intern e-Marketing GSI Commerce Europe, S.L, Barcelona, Spain
2004 – 2005	Working Student Financial Services Quality Management SAP AG, Walldorf, Germany

Education

2003 – 2008	Translation Studies at Ruprecht-Karls University Heidelberg, Germany
2000 – 2001	Central Aroostook Senior High School, Mars Hill, ME, USA
1995 – 2003	Hohenstaufen-Gymnasium, Göppingen, Germany

Awards & Honors

2013	Finalist “Young Innovator of the Year”, Falling Walls Lab
2011	Scholarship Marie Jahoda Summer School of Sociology University of Vienna
2010	Scholarship ACM International Conference on Intercultural Collaboration, Copenhagen
2009	Finalist Knowledge Management Young Talent Award 2009 AKWM Karlsruhe e.V.
2007	Member of the SAP FastTrack program, SAP AG
2003	1st Laureate of the Jugendkulturring Rheda-Wiedenbrück Youth Literary Award
2000	Member of the National Honor Society, Mars Hill, ME, USA

Recent Personal Dedication

2013	International awareness campaign for translators LOVE YOUR TRANSLATOR (loveyourtranslator.com)
2013	Science blog project ENTREPRINI (entreprini.com)
2009 – 2011	Reading tutor, City Pre-School Mannheim
2006 – 2007	International art project “Interartural”, Heidelberg

Publications

Groß, M. (2014): “Something wicked this way comes? The impact of the Social Web on the Translation Ecosystem.” Proceedings of the FIT 20th World Congress 2014, Berlin. **forthcoming**

Groß, M. (2013): “Personal Knowledge Management and Social Media: What Students Need to Learn for Business Life” In: „Social Media in Higher Education: Teaching in Web 2.0” Editors: Monica Patrut (Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacau, Romania) and Bogdan Patrut (Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacau, Romania), IGI Global, USA.

Groß, M. (2012): “Networked lone fighters? Knowledge flows and functional support in social networks of freelance translators.” In: Zybatow, L., Petrova, A., Ustaszewski, M. (Hrsg.) (2012): Translationswissenschaft: Alte und neue Arten der Translation in Theorie und Praxis. Frankfurt am Main u.a.: Peter Lang.

Dobiéy, D. et. al. (2011): “Vom Unternehmensportal zum Mitarbeiternetzwerk. Wie SAP durch Social Media im Unternehmen Unternehmensgrenzen überwindet und die Prozesseffizienz steigert” In: Wolf, F. (Hrsg.) (2011): “Social Intranet. Kommunikation fördern, Wissen teilen, Effizient zusammenarbeiten.” Hanser, München.

Groß, M. (2011): “It’s tools! It’s people! – Communicating KM initiatives.” In: Proceedings of 7th International PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FACTS CONFERENCE 2010 – “LEARNING – COMPETENCE – PERFORMANCE”. October 20-21, Fraunhofer IAO Stuttgart, Germany.

Groß, M. (2011): “Synergien im Kooperationswettbewerb. Eine Analyse der Kooperationsnetzwerke freiberuflicher Übersetzer.” In: LICTRA 2010 Conference Proceedings.

Groß, M. (2010): “Personal Knowledge Management and Collaborative Actions: Synergies in Social Networks of Professional Translators” In: Proceedings of PKM2010 – Workshop on Personal Knowledge Management; GI-Edition-Lecture Notes in Informatics (LNI).

Groß, M.; Adrian, B.; Budin, G. (2009): “Study: The Web 2.0 – a high capacity research landscape for professional translators?” In: Tochtermann, K.; Maurer, H. (Eds.) (2009): Proceedings of I-KNOW ’09 and I-SEMANTICS ’09. International Conference on Knowledge Management and New Media Technology (I-KNOW-09), Journal of Universal Computer Science, Graz, Austria.

Talks

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 08/2014 | <i>Something wicked this way comes? The impact of the Social Web on the Translation Ecosystem. FIT 20th World Congress 2014, Berlin</i> |
| 11/2013 | <i>The Transformation of a Hidden Industry: Freelance Translators and the Social Web. Early Stage Researchers Colloquium, Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society, Berlin</i> |
| 11/2013 | <i>Breaking the Wall of Fair Translations</i>
Falling Walls Lab 2013, Berlin |
| 05/2013 | <i>The Impact of the Social Web on Freelance Translators' Support Networks. XXXIII Sunbelt Social Networks Conference, Hamburg</i> |
| 07/2011 | <i>Wissensarbeit im Wechselspiel von Virtualität und Realität</i>
Marie Jahoda Summer School of Sociology, Vienna |
| 05/2011 | <i>Vernetzte Einzelkämpfer? Unterstützungshandlungen in Kooperationsnetzwerken freiberuflicher Übersetzer.</i>
1st TRANSLATA International Conference, Innsbruck |
| 10/2010 | <i>It’s tools! It’s people! – Communicating KM Initiatives</i>
Professional Training Facts, Fraunhofer-Institut für Arbeitswirtschaft und Organisation, Stuttgart |
| 09/2010 | <i>Social Network Analysis und Expertennetzwerke</i>
Arbeitskreis Wissensmanagement Karlsruhe e.V., Karlsruhe |

- 08/2010 *Knowledge Management for Professional Translators:
Increased Network Synergies through Collaborative Actions in a
web-based Environment.*
ACM International Conference for Intercultural Collaboration '10,
Copenhagen
- 05/2010 *Synergien im Kooperationswettbewerb.
Eine Analyse der Kooperationsnetzwerke freiberuflicher Übersetzer.*
LICTRA 2010, Leipzig
- 03/2009 *Study: The Web 2.0 – a high capacity research landscape for
professional translators?* Poster Session; I-KNOW '09, Graz