Placebos and nocebos for translators:
a model of anticipatory cognition in translation production

Expectations are a critical cognitive mechanism that we constantly rely on to navigate the world – both in the literal sense of moving through space, and metaphorically, across multiple domains of experience. Medicine, which is alluded to in the project's title, is just one of the disciplines where expectations have been researched extensively. On the other hand, translation is one domain in which the power of expectations has not been directly addressed and remains sorely unexplored.

The project aims to empirically explore and understand the role of expectations in decision-making as evidenced in how translations – of both texts and films – are produced. The hypothesis that **translators' expectations associated with the translation task influence their decision-making performance on the task** will be tested in a series of experiments involving professional translators as well as trainees.

More specifically, we will ascertain if generating expectations about the translation task or source text (e.g. its difficulty or interestingness) leads translators to engage in different types of processing than triggering converse expectations or not triggering any specific expectations. If that were to be the case, translators may produce target texts that significantly differ on some critical parameters. In addition to translations created by our participants, data on translatorial cognitive processing will be obtained with the use of think-aloud protocols, questionnaires and eye tracking.

Seen more broadly, the project contributes to the interdisciplinary debate on the nature of human judgment. Arguments in that debate can traditionally be seen as two-fold. On the one hand, human reasoning is seen as based exclusively on declarative information which is analysed in a principled procedure leading to rational and stable decisions. Alternatively, judgment is seen as motivated also by (non-declarative) factors which go well beyond the sole input to be computed. This project investigates the latter line of argument against the backdrop of translation, building on previous work, mostly in psychology, which produced compelling evidence of how decisions are shaped by different (often inconspicuous) forces.