

**Still looking for the proper place?
A view on Machine Translation from a translation science
perspective**

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Round about three decades ago Martin Kay wrote his well-known paper “*The Proper Place of Men and Machines in Translation*”. Some ten years ago the paper, which until then had only been published as an internal report, had not lost its topicality, and so it was reprinted in a 1997 issue of the “*Machine Translation*” journal. Kay’s major argument was that automating translation requires a modest and granular approach, starting with tools for machine-aided human translation and then, little by little, moving towards translation proper. Yet, since then several research projects have followed the opposite, much more ambitious line which, unfortunately, was much more promising with respect to the acquisition of research funds, so that until recently most of the tools relevant to translation service providers have been developed by companies having hands-on know-how in the translation business, but little interest and experience in methods related to computational linguistics in general and to MT in particular. Since the late 1970’s machine translation has seen many ups and downs, a “paradigm shift” from rule-based to statistical approaches, a transformation from a rather exclusive and expensive technology that only few can afford to a piece of software that is available in computer shops, bookshops, and department stores or even accessible at your fingertips via the Internet. Like a city map the “MT roadmap” seems to contain dead-end streets and road works but also highways and sign posts. The presentation will take a look at both promising and less promising pathways from a translation-oriented viewpoint that is based on an action-theoretical approach in the tradition of Justa Holz-Mänttari and other scholars.