Back to the past and a glance to the future
LOCALIZATION HISTORY

Localization is the best you can do to reach international markets and boost your global sales. It was crucial for expansion a few decades ago and it will be crucial in the decades to come

The 80s

- Sun Microsystems and Microsoft solidified an expansion movement in Japan and in Europe
- PC evolved from being an industrial product to a home product
- Mid-80s Spanish Goverment approved the used of the "ñ". Internationalization is born ☺
- INK became one of the first companies to provide translation services and created the first translation commercial tool (INK TextTools)
- In-house localization was the model to translate software being the "translators under the same roof" the prefered approach

The 90s

- Ireland became the hub of the Localization industry after the Irish government provided "turnkey" factories where companies were offered a government subsidy per employee and a corporate tax rate of 10% as an incentive to invest in Ireland.
- Many US-based companies decide to base their European headquarters or distribution centers in Dublin.
- Translators, localization engineers and project managers were recruited from all over Europe to be trained and employed as localizers in Ireland. I was one of those! 😄
- Outsourcing movement in the Localization industry is born once software publishers increasingly realized that localization was not part of their core business and should ideally be outsourced to external service providers.
- Source files, mostly RTF or HTML documents, are translated, and a compilation and testing phase follows
- Trados launched the initial version of the Translator's Workbench Translation Memory
- Eat the competition movement is started with many vendors consolidating their services via merge and acquisitions

The 00s

- Evolution of the Global Management System to what we know today as Translation Management System
- "Simship" of software product (simultaneous shipping becomes the new way of work)
- Emergence of open standards, professional associations and organisations (LISA, TMX, xliff)
- Consolidation of Translation Memory workflows
- Software user interface localization tools now all offer support for Microsoft's .NET programming environment.
- New Kids on the Block. Bowne Global Solutions acquired Berlitz GlobalNET ME&TA to become the largest localization service provider. During the decade was more consolidation to create giant localization providers such as Lionbridge or SDL

The 10s

- With the boom of mobile device as "personal computers" the Localization industry embraces the Continuos Localization model as a way to release software
- Machine Translation and Neural Machine Translation become buzzwords everywhere and many companies and LSPs include them as a service and as solution
- TMS evolved to become a combination of TMS/CMS integrated in the continuos localization workflow
- Rate per word goes down due to Globalizatin competition and MT pressure

To the infinite and beyond!

- Artificial Intelligence
- Post COVID'19 era - eLearning/Training Translation
- Boom of subtitle translation to cover streaming platforms (Netflix, Disney, HBO, Apple TV, Prime ...)
- More and more of Machine Translation+Post editing
- Content evolution - Transcreation
- Voice over Localization (and voice search)
- #chatbots with multilingual support
- More languages localization, rise of the next billion on-line users