

# BELTRANS

## Intra-Belgian literary translations since 1970

### DURATION

15/12/2020 - 15/03/2025

### BUDGET

820 085 €

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

BELTRANS studies the untold history of literary translation flows in Belgium between French and Dutch in the period 1970-2020. This project examines the link between intra-Belgian cultural transfers and the mutual knowledge and perception of each other's culture in a period of increasing regionalisation of the state, which caused a growing distance between Belgium's linguistic and cultural communities. To this end, we will gather, link, enrich and disseminate data on Belgian authors and their works, knowing that they are currently dispersed and disconnected in various collections. This way, the project adds greatly to the preservation of Belgium's cultural heritage at a national and international level and renders large quantities of new and FAIR data available for scientific research, as well as for book professionals and a broad public.

Until now, intra-Belgian literary translation flows have never been studied at a large and systematic scale, neither quantitatively nor qualitatively, for the past fifty years. This history remains a blind spot. There has not yet been extensive research on the embeddedness of translation history in the broader political, social and institutional evolutions within multilingual Belgium. Although some qualitative studies have already been devoted to intra-Belgian translation, until now research mainly focused on literary translation from Dutch into French, primarily in periodicals, and covered only a small selection of translators and mediators often situated in early Belgian history (e.g. the interwar period) or limited corpora.

Moreover, existing databases containing translation data require cross-referencing to verify their completeness. The national deposit library of Belgium, KBR, has already gathered a vast collection of contemporary Belgian publications through legal deposit, but the 'Bibliography of Belgium' still contains some lacunae and exhaustive FAIR datasets regarding Belgian contemporary authors and intra-Belgian translations have not yet been published as open data, nor have they been integrated in global open science data repositories.

In this project, we will fill these gaps by 1) providing as complete a picture as possible of what kind of books from Belgian authors have been translated into French and Dutch since 1970 till 2020, within Belgium and abroad; 2) by looking at book translations of different literary genres that circulate in the public sphere, not only highbrow translated literature, but also more popular segments of literary production; 3) by mapping an unexplored period of cross-cultural actors, translators and networks in Belgian translation history, and also paying attention to gender aspects for the specific period, inter alia the pioneer role played by women in translation activities; 4) by linking literary book translations to reciprocal cultural perception between Flanders and Francophone Belgium, to regional and national identity and to political developments; 5) by fine-tuning the concepts and methodologies of existing quantitative and qualitative studies of translational cultural exchanges for multilingual states; 6) by studying the interaction between political governance structures and cultural cohabitation, and finally 7) by developing policy guidelines.

# BELTRANS

By doing so, the project combines an innovative and interdisciplinary approach with strategic goals and aims to make an impact on various domains:

- Science: generate knowledge about Belgium, as a society and a cultural space, in a diachronic perspective, and about research data management.
- Economy: have an impact on the Belgian book industry by providing translation policy guidelines and by valorising Belgian authors and their (translated) works, both within Belgium and abroad.
- Society: disseminate the project's results not only in research communities but also among a broad reading audience, with the aim to inform Belgian readers about each other's literature in translation and thus ease the mutual access and create a Belgian readership.
- Culture: rewrite recent Belgian cultural history by stressing the importance of translations and translators as cultural gateways and gatekeepers within Belgium.
- Policy and public services: provide translation policy guidelines for the future by showing which strategies have shown themselves to be the most effective ones in promoting or circulating Belgian authors and their (translated) works.
- Conservation and valorisation of KBR's collections: help KBR to identify the gaps in the Belgian Bibliography and to collect the missing editions, either via the legal deposit or via purchase.

A range of specific valorisation, dissemination and exploitation activities will be undertaken during the project: scientific and professional publications, conferences, workshops and a final colloquium, public events, a dedicated webpage and social media posts, and data uploads in open data repositories.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Coordinator

#### Sophie Vandepontseele

Royal Library of Belgium (KBR)

Contemporary Collections

[sophie.vandepontseele@kbr.be](mailto:sophie.vandepontseele@kbr.be)

### Partners

#### Elke Brems

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven)

Research group Translation and Intercultural Transfer (VICT)

[elke.brems@kuleuven.be](mailto:elke.brems@kuleuven.be)

#### Stéphanie Vanasten

Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain)

Institute for the Study of Civilisations, Arts and Letters (INCAL),

Centre de Recherche en Ecriture, Création et Représentation :

littératures et arts de la scène (ECR) & Laboratoire de

Recherches Historiques (LaRHis)

[stephanie.vanasten@uclouvain.be](mailto:stephanie.vanasten@uclouvain.be)

## LINKS

<https://www.kbr.be/en/projects/beltrans/>