

BELTRANS

Intra-Belgian literary translations since 1970

Contract - B2/202/P2/BELTRANS

SUMMARY

BELTRANS studied the untold history of literary translation flows in Belgium between French and Dutch in the period 1970–2020. The project examined the link between intra-Belgian cultural transfers and the mutual knowledge and perception of each other's culture during a period of increasing regionalisation of the state, which caused a growing distance between Belgium's linguistic and cultural communities. To this end, the project gathered, linked, enriched and disseminated data on Belgian authors and their works, which had previously been dispersed and disconnected across various collections. In this way, the project contributed significantly to the preservation of Belgium's cultural heritage at both national and international levels and made 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 had never been studied at a large and systematic scale, neither quantitatively nor qualitatively, for the previous fifty years. This history remained a blind spot. There had 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 had already been devoted to intra-Belgian translation, research had mainly focused on literary translation from Dutch into French, primarily in periodicals, and had covered only a small selection of translators and mediators often situated in early Belgian history or limited corpora. Moreover, existing databases containing translation data required cross-referencing to verify their completeness. KBR had already gathered a vast collection of contemporary Belgian publications through legal deposit, but the Belgian Bibliography still contained some lacunae, and exhaustive FAIR datasets regarding Belgian authors and intra-Belgian translations had not yet been published as open data, nor had they been integrated into global open science data repositories. In this project, these gaps were addressed by 1) providing as complete a picture as possible of what kinds of books by Belgian authors have been translated into French and Dutch between 1970 and 2020, both within Belgium and abroad; 2) examining book translations across different literary genres circulating in the public sphere, not only highbrow translated literature but also more popular segments of literary production; 3) mapping an unexplored period of cross-cultural actors, translators and networks in Belgian translation history, while also paying attention to gender aspects for the specific period, including the pioneering role played by women in translation activities; 4) linking literary book translations to reciprocal cultural perception between Flanders

and Francophone Belgium, to regional and national identity, and to political developments; 5) fine-tuning the concepts and methodologies of existing quantitative and qualitative studies of translational cultural exchanges in multilingual states; 6) studying the interaction between political structures and cultural cohabitation, and finally 7) developing policy guidelines. By doing so, BELTRANS combined an innovative and interdisciplinary approach with strategic goals about the scientific, societal and institutional valorisation of Belgium's cultural heritage.

Keywords: Belgian literature, cultural identity and history, translation, reception, FAIR data, policy