

BOUNCING BACK

The Return of Missionaries in the Low Countries

CALL FOR PAPERS

In the 19th and 20th century churches and religious societies and associations in Belgium and the Netherlands developed an impressive missionary activity that was not limited to the intensive colonial territories of both countries, but spread out over the entire world. Tens of thousands of male and female missionaries - Catholic, Protestant, independent or organized - left for different countries; engaged with foreign cultures, and staged a variety of initiatives on different fields beyond the strictly religious realm, including health care, education, and science. Over the last past years, a multidisciplinary body of scholars has analyzed the impact and legacy of these missionary activities, mainly from the perspectives of the countries of destination or of the missionaries themselves. The expansion of missionary activities, however, also had an impact on society, culture and religion in Belgium and the Netherlands. The transnational networks and exchanges generated by missionary activities bounced, in different ways, back to both countries, and had a much wider effect than anticipated. These aspects entered the broader history of the Low Countries during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Trajecta conference “Bouncing back: The Return of Missionaries in the Low Countries” aims to analyze how missionary history can be seen as an integral part of the religious, cultural and social history of the Low Countries. The conference is especially interested in the ways in which missionary activity affected Belgian and Dutch societies during the 19th and 20th centuries. More specifically, we are looking for papers that address one of the following three themes:

Practical

The conference takes place on **22-23 September 2022** in Leuven.

The conference organizers provide accommodation for all invited speakers.

Please send your proposal (max. 500 words) and a CV to kim.christiaens@kuleuven.be **before 1 May 2022**.

The selection will be made and communicated before 15 May. Accepted papers will, after peer-review, be published in a special issue of *Trajecta*.

Organizing committee

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1. Rooted missionary networks: how did missionaries active in distant countries relate to home communities? What were the channels of communication? How and to what extent did they create spaces of activism and knowledge in Belgium/the Netherlands? What was the role of returned missionaries?
2. Mission ad intra and internationalization: both Belgium and the Netherlands were not only sending countries, they also became a site of missionary activities. International missionary work was often deeply entangled with internal missions. The Low Countries offered an operating base for foreign missionaries, expelled from other countries (such as France) or sent out to evangelize and convert local population. Especially in more recent years, an increasing number of foreign priests and pastors has become active in both countries. How did these actors connect to local societies? How did Belgian and Dutch churches and missionary orders and congregations reach out to foreign members?
3. Heritage: the missionary activity of Belgian and Dutch missionaries left a variety of historical traces and heritage in Belgium and the Netherlands, ranging from buildings, public memories, oral stories, and archives. How is this legacy today remembered? How and to what extent is it integrated in broader notions of “cultural heritage” and (post)colonial heritage? What is its future?