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What the Americas Can or Cannot Learn from Belgium

This introductory paper will mainly comprise questions and suggest some very diverging answers. That is the advantage of an introductory talk. At a moment where the principle of “determinatorialization” is in vogue in Translation Studies, the organizers of this conference have turned to a book on ‘the Americas’ as a starting point for reflection and discussion. That might seem strange, because ‘the Americas’ refer to a territory, or at least to a kind of geographical entity. The question of borderlines and non-borderlines is essential to modern thinking about the Americas, as it is to modern thinking about Translation Studies as a discipline. The interplay of borderlines, territory and cultural and linguistic power relationships also directly refers to the geographical and political entity called Belgium. In post-nationalist (some will say: naïve) discourse, Belgium can be understood as a multi-nation or an inter-nation, which in one way or another parallels the discussion about Translation Studies being a multidiscipline or an interdiscipline. This paper will be about the relative desirability of developing both the Americas and Translation Studies according to the Belgian model. It will be about risks and pitfalls.