

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

NO 4 - FEBRUARY 2014

[nl](#) [fr](#) [en](#)

FUNDAMENTAL WWI RESEARCH IS LAUNCHED

On 1 March, two historians will start their PhD research in Cegesoma on the First World War, focusing on specific social groups and the memory of war. The projects are financed by the federal programme BRAIN. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2490)

EVENING DEBATE ON "IN VLAAMSE VELDEN"

On the evening of Monday 17 March, Cegesoma organises, with the Institute for Public History of Ghent University, a debate on the television series "In Vlaamse Velden". Experts and the makers will exchange views on the subject of history and fiction on television. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2480)

JBH : A NEW ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ISSUE HAS BEEN PUBLISHED

The second English-language issue after the relaunch of the journal includes four innovative articles, a Debate Forum and a section 'Current Issues in Belgian History'. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2475)

THE LANDSCAPE OF FIRST WORLD WAR COMMEMORATION PROGRAMMES IN BELGIUM

On all governmental levels, authorities are preparing for the commemoration of the centenary of the Great War. We present an overview of the different commemoration programmes. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2487)

THE GREAT WAR IN OUR LIBRARY

Cegesoma only started to focus on the First World War in the 1990s. In spite of persisting gaps, our catching-up efforts have delivered their results. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2493)

BRAIN – Two Research Projects on the First World War

The Social Impact of the War on Members of the Resistance and Collaborators & Memorial Traces of 14-18 Liège and Antwerp

Within the framework of the BRAIN programme (/Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks/, Federal Science Policy), [Karla Vanraepenbusch](#) and [Florent Verfaillie](#) started in March 2014 their PhD research on the First World War. Through these research projects, CegeSoma holds an essential place in the field of new fundamental WWI-research in Belgium.

The project of [Florent Verfaillie](#) (CegeSoma/UGent) is part of the research network « The Great War from Below » (coordinated by [Nico Wouters](#), with partners including the KU Leuven, UGent and UNamur. This research project aims to analyse the impact of the First World War on specific social groups. The research network includes three PhD researchers and one postdoctoral researcher.

Florent Verfaillie's research **focuses on the members of the resistance and on collaborators of the First World War**. He will give particular attention to the prison experiences of these groups, as well as on the diversity of their post-war trajectories. He highlights the diversity in behaviour of Belgian citizens during the occupation and tries to define certain reasons for individual choices. Other than behaviour during the occupation period, this research project also analyses the impact of prison experiences on the representation of patriotic and social identities, as well as on different life trajectories.

Research directors: Nico Wouters (CegeSoma) and Bruno De Wever (UGent)

The research project undertaken by [Karla Vanraepenbusch](#) (CegeSoma/UCL) is part of the research network [Memex](#) - Recognition and Resentment: experiences and memories of the Great War in Belgium (coordinated by Laurence Van Ypersele). Partners include the UCL, ULB, UGent, KU Leuven and CegeSoma. The project aims to connect the experiences of traumatic war events on the one hand with collective and/or individual representations after the war. The network includes four PhD researchers and one postdoctoral researcher.

In her thesis, Karla Vanraepenbusch lists and analyses **all the memorial traces (monuments, commemorative plaques and street names) of the Great War in the urban landscape of Antwerp and Liège**. At first sight, Antwerp, the first port town in Flanders, and Liège, the first industrial town in Wallonia, seem two very different cities. Yet, both have been besieged, invaded and occupied by the Germans. They share a relatively comparable war experience – the occupation – which is very different from that of the 'martyr cities' or the front. The researcher intends to answer the following questions: does this comparable war experience lead to a comparable collective memory? And if not, what are the specificities of the urban memory of 1914-1918 for each of these cities?

Research directors: Laurence van Ypersele (UCL) and [Chantal Kesteloot](#) (CegeSoma)

Website : <http://www.memex-ww1.be/>

Twitter: @memexww1



Inauguration of the Inter-Allied Memorial in Liège, in the presence of King Leopold III, 20 July 1937. (Photo CegeSoma, n° 37597)

◀ [Back](#) ▶

The Great War on Television

The Role of History and Fiction in the Television Series "In Vlaamse Velden"

The Flemish television channel *Eén* currently broadcasts *In Vlaamse Velden*, a First World War fiction series aimed at the wider public. On **Monday 17 March**, the day after the last episode, the makers of the series will debate with a few experts on the subject of the representation of the First World War in the series. Venue of the debate is Ghent, the city where the Boesman family lives.

In Vlaamse Velden follows in ten episodes the vicissitudes of the Ghent bourgeois family Boesman throughout the First World War. Its members lead the viewer to the history of the German occupation, activism, medical care, survival strategies and the battle of the Yser. Fiction is a powerful medium when evoking historical realities. But how can history be turned into a succesful television series ? What were the choices made by the producers of *In Vlaamse Velden*, and why ? What were the limits they came up against ? How did they endeavour to make a credible and plausible series?

On Monday evening 17 March, CEGESOMA and the Institute of Public History of Ghent invite the makers of *In Vlaamse Velden* and a few First World War and Public History experts to share their views with the public. The debate will be moderated by Bruno De Wever (*UGent*, Institute of Public History). Participants are Kees Ribbens (*NIOD - Erasmus Universiteit Amsterdam*), Antoon Vrints (*UGent*), Luc Vandeweyer (State Archives), Roel Vandewinkel (*Universiteit Antwerpen - LUCA School of Arts*), series director Jan Matthys, screenwriter Geert Vermeulen, designer Mark De Geest and historical advisor Dominiek Dendooven (*In Flanders Fields museum*).

Practical information :

Place : Auditorium of the Political and Social Sciences faculty, Paddenhoek 1-3, 9000 Ghent.

Time : Monday 17 March, from 8 to 10 p.m. (doors open at 7.30 p.m.).

Participation is free, but in view of the limited number of seats, advance registration is requested via cegesoma@cegesoma.be ou 02/556.92.11.



*The actress Lize Feryn, who plays the role of Marie Boesman.
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Journal of Belgian History - 2013, no. 4

The fourth issue of the *Journal of Belgian History* (2013) has been published. This is the second English-language issue of the journal after its relaunch in 2012.

The English-language issue of the *JBH* focuses on international aspects of nineteenth and twentieth century Belgian history. This issue includes four articles:

- *Left to Their Own Devices. Belgium's Ambiguous Annexation of Eupen-Malmédy* (Vincent O'Connell).
- *Learning from Entrepreneurial Failure. Leo Baekeland's Exit from Europe* (Joris Mercelis).
- *Human rights, multinationals, and transnational networks. The Belgian mobilization against repression in Brazil and its significance for Third World solidarity activism in the 1970s and beyond.* (Kim Christiaens).
- *An unlikely minority ? The Development and Use of 'Minority Rhetoric' among the Francophones of Flanders, 1918-1932* (David Hensley).

The journal also includes a Debate Forum (*Beyond Belgium: Encounters, Exchanges and Entanglements, 1900-1925*), and a section Current Issues in Belgian History (conference reports on theory of history and on environmental history). Finally, there is the overview of recent doctoral theses and a review section which holds elaborate reviews of a few English-language publications on Belgian history.

To subscribe or order an individual issue : Willem Erauw, Cegesoma, square de l'Aviation, 29, 1070 Brussels, jbh-admin@cegesoma.be, tel. + 32 (0)2 556 92 27

For more information, visit the [website of the journal](#).

Willem Erauw
21/01/2014

◀ [Back](#) ▶



The Centenary of the Great War in Belgium

Overview of the Commemorative Projects

As in many other countries, Belgium is preparing for a series of commemorations on an unprecedented scale. Nearly every day, new activities, exhibitions or tourist circuits along the remnants of the Great War are announced (cf the list of internet sites below). In the absence of a central information point, it may prove difficult to get a good idea of the whole of the commemorative events. The [attached text](#) proposes an overview of the initiatives under way.

Flanders took the lead in launching the preparations of an ambitious commemorative programme. Already a few years ago, it released considerable resources to this end. It sees the commemorations as an opportunity for tourist development and at the same time a means to enhance its visibility abroad. With the help of an ad hoc Investment Fund, the government has developed the tourist and recreational infrastructure and has drawn up an agenda of prestigious cultural events linked to the First World War. A striking aspect of the Flemish commemorative programme is the central place given to the Westhoek, the region where the majority of the remnants of the old frontline are concentrated. Thus, the commemorative project focuses on the static warfare experience (the battles, the injured, the daily life of the soldiers, life behind the lines...). Because of the strong focus on this particular aspect of the war, some Flemish provinces and cities have focused on other features of the conflict by organising major thematic exhibitions.

The two francophone governments (the Région wallonne and the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles) decided in 2012 to unite forces for the celebration of the centenary, and are also making a considerable financial effort. Whereas the Flemish government focuses on one region, the Westhoek, and one aspect of the war, the front, the francophone project, in a holistic approach, wants to cover the global war experience in Belgium : the battles of August 1914, violence against civilians, trench warfare, occupied Belgium and the post-war period.

Although Flanders and the two francophone governments are at the heart of the commemorations, the federal government and the other federal authorities also wish to make their mark. The federal government acts primarily as organizer of ceremonies of international outreach, but is equally a provider of funds. If the funding is inferior to the one of the federal authorities, it is particularly welcome to sustain initiatives whose geographic scope reaches beyond Flanders and Wallonia, and the rare projects which are the result of a cooperation between federal authorities. The Région de Bruxelles-Capitale intends to highlight the specificity of its war experience : it is the only capital in Western Europe to have been occupied throughout the war. As for the authorities of the German-speaking community, their position with regard to the war past is precarious since, a hundred years ago, its municipalities belonged to the German Empire. They have chosen to support initiatives outside the official commemoration programme.

[This overview](#) presents the major projects by (or funded by) the different governments, before listing the initiatives of Cegesoma.

Main Belgian sites devoted to the Commemorations

Flanders :

<http://www.vlaanderen.be/int/100-jaar-groote-oorlog-2014-18>

<http://www.flandersfields.be/en>

<http://www.antwerpen1914-1918.be/en>

<http://www.antwerpen14-18.be/en>

<http://www.west-vlaanderen.be/genieten/vrijetijd/gonewest/english/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.limburg1914-1918.be/>

Région Wallonne and Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles :

<http://www.commemorer14-18.be/>

<http://www.provincedeliege.be/fr/evenement/1?nid=6876&from=actu>

<http://www.paysdesvallees.be/fr/commemorer-14-18.html?IDC=27855>

<http://www.mons.be/decouvrir/histoire/1914-1918>

Federal authorities :

<http://www.be14-18.be/en>

Région de Bruxelles-Capitale :

http://visitbrussels.be/bitc/BE_en/mini-site/18804/2014-18-in-brussels.do

Cross-border projects:

<http://www.1418remembered.co.uk/>

[Mélanie Bost](#)

12 / 2 / 2014



Each year, on 11 November, a commemorative ceremony takes place on place Riga in Schaerbeek in front of the monument of the veterans of the Congolese Force publique. The monument was erected in 1970 and pays special homage to the fighters involved in the capture of Tabora, a 'Belgian' feat of historical importance during the First World War. The Institut des Vétérans honours the 27 Congolese soldiers who fought at the Yser (with a publication and an itinerant exhibition), but Congo's war effort on the African front remains one of the blind spots in the commemorative programmes in Belgium. (Photo IV-INGNIOOO Jérusalem Piérard)

The Library of CEGESOMA and the Great War, a Chance Encounter ?

Originally focused primarily on the Second World War, Cegesoma has extended its field of research to the First World War only from the 1990s. It is equally remarkable that the works related to the Great War constitute only about 15 % of the titles concerning the two main 20th century conflicts, which is more than 5,000 works.

This should be seen in perspective. Thanks to a quite substantial budget and some help of the State Archives who generously donated part of their documentation on this theme, Cegesoma has, over the last fifteen years, been able to constitute an interesting collection.

Thus, general keywords such as « guerre mondiale (1914-1918)--belgique », or « guerre mondiale (1914-1918)--campagnes et batailles » generally refer to essential reference works, interesting in hindsight, for example, the *L'épopée belge dans la Grande Guerre racontée par les écrivains et les combattants belges* (1923, 4 vol.). Furthermore, they sometimes include more specific publications such as *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale* (1928) by Henri Pirenne, which was a pioneering publication.

Considering a concept powerfully correlated to that time, 'pangermanisme' which is then specifically associated to the First World War via, for instance, the keywords « pangermanisme--1914-1918 » and « imperialism--Allemagne--1914-1918 », the result proves equally interesting. Thus, the first keyword refers to 16 titles, among which the classic *Mitteuropa* by Friedrich Neumann (1915), but also the quite recent study on *La Wallonie et la Première Guerre mondiale. Pour une histoire de la séparation administrative* by Paul Delforge (2008). And then there are the many contributions of a so-called scientific nature, but with ill-concealed political and polemic goals, such as *Flandern und Deutschland. Die Flamen und wir*, by Kurt Kerlen (1915).

The keyword « imperialism--Allemagne--1914-1918 » holds even more riches: it collects 42 works, of which quite a few are in German, as well as sometimes their equivalents in French, Dutch or English. Appearing in a haphazard way are studies, sources, and, over the years, as they should, studies which have become sources. We mention, among other evocative works : Herman Losch, *Der mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsblock und das Schicksal Belgiens*, 1914 ; Heinrich Theodor List, *Deutschland und Mitteleuropa : Grundzüge und Lehren unserer Politik der Errichtung des deutschen Reiches*, 1916 ; Steffen Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volkstaat : die 'Ideen von 1914' und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 2003, and finally the recent collective bibliography written by Thomas F. Schneider and his team, *Die Autoren und Bücher der deutschsprachigen Literatur zum 1. Weltkrieg 1914-1939*, 2008.

This collection, with a bird's eye view, presents a common characteristic: a production in German which is strongly present, competing with Anglo-Saxon productions. French or Dutch editions are slightly in decline and Flemish publications— whether they are sources or studies – approach things from a very regional angle. As for recent studies, they are generally of high quality.

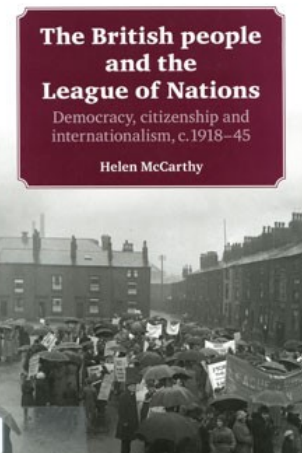
The reader who wishes to gather more information by consulting similar keywords (for instance « pangermanisme--Belgique ») will find essential information to nourish his intellectual reflections. Cegesoma holds several works of the very prolific André Chéradame, who started his fight against pan-Germanism in 1902 and continued his quest in New-York forty years later with *La clef du monde et de la victoire*, as well as the study by Fritz Fischer, *Les buts de guerre de l'Allemagne impériale* (1970), highly publicized in its time, and finally the semi-apocryphal *Testament politique du Baron von Bissing*.

The display of these 'richesses' should not create illusion. In spite of a few very well documented subjects (the keyword « guerre mondiale (1914-1918)--belgique--activisme » for instance refers to 146 titles), large gaps persist with regard to the period 1914-1918 but also the 1920's and the beginning of the First World War. To stay on the subject of the concept of 'pangermanisme', we neither possess the book by Joseph-Ludwig Reimer, *Eine pangermanisches Deutschland* (1905), nor the 'bible' of General Bernhardt, *Deutschland und der Naächste Krieg* (1911), essential studies to understand the mentality of the ruling classes of the German empire on the eve of the war and which had been translated in the major European languages ...

Time has proved too short. But our determination remains as well as the generous benefactors who will hopefully continue to contribute to a research and documentation centre in constant development... Their documentation will always be most welcome.

[Alain Colignon](#)

12 / 2 / 2014



Cover of the book by Helen McCarthy, *The British people and the League of Nations. Democracy, citizenship and internationalism, c. 1918-45*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2011.

◀ [Back](#) ▶