

**Position: One PhD in History** on CRA-funded project **RE-MEMBER**

**Full-time position for 48 months**

UCLouvain - Belgium



**The transmission of memories related to stigmatisation:**

**Official and family memories related to collaboration and colonisation in Belgium**

### **Team**

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### **General framework of the research project**

Conflictual contexts often lead to contentious memories. Protagonists negotiate for the recognition and acceptance of their interpretation of a disputed past, as well as for its preservation as an official narrative. In some cases, commemorative landscapes and public accounts exacerbate conflict within a community. But with the passing of time, the socially constructed nature of memory allows for the possibility for change — even if change is neither easy nor systematic — and, therefore, creates opportunities for conflict transformation. New generations may appropriate this past in light of their own understanding of history and their knowledge of their family’s involvement. As a result, the interest here lies in the liminal space family and official narratives, especially when dealing with personal stories from people who have found themselves on the “wrong side of history”.

In this research project, we aim to conduct analyses of the official and family narratives of two controversial episodes in the Belgian national past: the repression of collaboration after WWII and the return of Belgian colonists to Belgium in 1960 (after the independence of Congo). As we will demonstrate, these events have led to divergent memories. The project has two major objectives. First, it will explore the inescapable tension between public and private practices of remembrance, and between official and underground memories. Second, it will examine the transmission of memories across three generations. This innovative multilayered analysis will be possible thanks to the interdisciplinary dimension of the research team (political sciences, history and psychology).

The project will determine and articulate the role of three main variables in the construction of these controversial pasts and their consequences for individuals and groups: (1) the degree of stigma (contextual variable), (2) the linguistic community (French speakers vs Dutch speakers), and (3) the generational dimension (G1: one of the children of the collaborator/colonist, G2: one of their grandchildren, G3: one of their great-grandchildren). From a methodological perspective, we will combine three main approaches: discourse analysis of a corpus of official speeches; interviews with families affected by the repression of collaborators or the return of colonists (across three generations); and experimental studies. Each of these methods will jointly be conducted by two researchers from different disciplines.

## About the position

The first step of this general research will be completed by a **PhD candidate in History** who will focus on the first main variable described above: *the degree of stigma (context)*. She/he will examine the evolution of public perception (and the level of social blame in particular) in the Belgian State and society towards collaborators since 1944 and colonists from 1960 until today.

The study will survey official speeches from all levels of government (legislative and executive; the federal state and federal institutions) as well as references to collaboration and colonisation in textbooks used in general French and Dutch-speaking secondary schools. In addition to the data obtained from these sources, the PhD candidate will also carry out an analysis of press coverage based on a sample of French- and Dutch-speaking newspapers reflecting various ideological views within the country.

Through various methods (archival work, critical discourse analysis...) the research aims to measure shifts in attitude over time and to better grasp the factors influencing the diversity of perceptions in the two main linguistic communities in the country. The ultimate objective is thus to establish a systematic inventory of fluctuations in the level of stigma associated with each phenomenon (collaboration and colonisation) according to time and linguistic affiliation. This will constitute a benchmarking framework which will be used by other members of the research team during the next steps of the general project, as described above.

## Research environment and working conditions

The PhD candidate in History will be supervised by a bi-disciplinary team (one professor in history and one in political science). The candidate will collaborate closely with psychology and political science researchers working on the other dimensions of the project, as well as with their international networks. Team spirit is thus crucial as the candidate will be joining an enthusiastic and dynamic team of researchers.

She/he will be employed **full-time** for the duration of **48 months** by the UCLouvain, Belgium, starting on **September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020**. Presence on site will be required, as archives centers are located in Belgium.

By the end of this period, she/he will have to submit a PhD dissertation.

## Requirements

The candidate must hold a master degree in history.

He/she must be able to demonstrate strong synthesis, argumentation and scientific writing skills, as well as a keen interest in teamwork.

Methodologically, the candidate must demonstrate experience in archival research; qualitative and/or quantitative data analysis, proficient use of discourse analysis software are an asset.

Previous research in colonial history, history of memory or history of the Second World War is an asset as well.

The candidate must have a strong command of English and be proficient in French and Dutch.

## Selection process

The application deadline is **June 1, 2020**.

Candidates are asked to submit their application (in French or English) in one PDF file to [anne-sophie.gijs@uclouvain.be](mailto:anne-sophie.gijs@uclouvain.be) :

- a cover letter
- a detailed CV; please include your level of French and Dutch across 3 disciplines (speaking, writing, and reading).
- one PhD project/research proposal laying out a plan, structure and work methodology based on the content of this call, as described above (max. 1000 words).
- one writing sample (chapter of master thesis, article, paper, book chapter...)
- one letter of recommendation

Interviews will be scheduled at **the end of June 2020** in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium (or by Skype/Teams, depending on the evolution of the containment measures). The invited applicants will receive further information about this meeting in June.