

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

NO 44 - FEBRUARY 2019

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CONFERENCE VENUE

Are you looking for a well-equipped and centrally located venue for your conferences, seminars?

Discover what we have to offer. [\[MORE INFO\]](#) (http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/location_en.php)

INVITATION

Appointment at CegeSoma on 20 March 2019 from 12:30 to 14:00 for the second 'Encounters in Public History' : a conference and debate on the impact of the First World War in a colonial context with Anne Cornet and Enika Ngongo.

[\[MORE INFO\]](#) (http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3845&pag0nbr=79&pagofs=0)

RESEARCH FELLOW EHRI

Interview with a Swedish researcher about his work on the memories of former Waffen-SS fighters : their stories and legitimization.

[\[MORE INFO\]](#) (http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3841)

ANNIVERSARIES 2019

A festive year with the 50th anniversaries of CegeSoma and of the JBH, as well as the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Brussels. Discover our activities, events and book publications.

[\[MORE INFO\]](#) (http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3848&pag0nbr=79&pagofs=0)

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Meeting Room Rental



You are looking for a meeting room in a superb Art Deco/Art Nouveau listed building a stone's throw from Gare du Midi?

The conference room of the CegeSoma is the ideal location for the organization of your events, seminars, international meetings, workshops ...

This 120 m2 hall is fully modular and can accommodate up to 80 persons. It is equipped with projection equipment, two interpreter booths, a laptop and microphones.



Price lists

- Rental costs: 360€ for a full day, 200€ for half a day
- Additional cleaning costs: 70€
- Coffee break: 5€ per person/cup of coffee
- Catering: to be paid by the renters; a range of restaurant facilities is within close reach; We can advise you on this matter as well as on the possibilities of accommodation in the surrounding area.
- The reception of participants (check of registrations, distribution of folders) is the responsibility of the renters. However, CegeSoma can, on request, take care of this aspect. In this case, additional costs per rental will be charged.



The venue can be rented from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. This schedule can, on demand, be extended if necessary.

For a site visit or a non-binding request for an offer, please contact isabelle.ponteville@arch.be - 02/556.92.11.

Last articles

[The Belgian War Press: a User-Friendly Access to the Digitised War Press](#)

[Military History Museum WWI Press Retrievable Online](#)

[Third Public History Encounter at the CegeSoma](#)

[Double invitation CegeSoma by CIVA](#)

[FWO - 'Research Grant' for research about the civic purge](#)

BELGIUM

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From Tuesday to Friday
without interruption from 9 a.m.
to 4.30 p.m.



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EHRI-fellowship on European Waffen-SS veterans

An interview with Steffen Werther (Institute of Contemporary History - Södertörn University / Sweden), EHRI-fellow in CegeSoma from 4 – 15 February 2019.

CegeSoma: Can you describe your current research ? Why was it important for you to conduct research in Belgium ?

S. Werther: My project deals with the memory work of European *Waffen-SS* veterans, as well as the legacy of the *Waffen-SS* within different groups of next-generation sympathizers and admirers. I focus on the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union and concentrated so far on groups from Germany, Norway and Denmark, to which I want to add the Flemish case. In addition, I draw on source material from several other countries and collaborate closely with researchers investigating similar cases in Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Finland and Romania.

In the analyzed publications of veteran organizations and sympathizing groups, contacts with Flemish brothers in arms are frequently mentioned, but so far I did not have had the opportunity to compare my findings with Flemish sources, which was the reason for my EHRI-fellowship.

CegeSoma: How did you start here in Brussels, what were the first steps you took during your research-stay ?

S. Werther: Luckily, I could kickstart my visit with a meeting with prof. Bruno De Wever (University of Ghent), one of the main experts for this topic. Prof. De Wever was so kind to discuss my working hypothesis and gave me indications where to start my research and what sources to look for. In face of the overwhelming amount of available material, this was very helpful. Dirk Luyten (Cegesoma) was during the following days equally supportive, answered endless questions during, and introduced me to the peculiarities of Belgian social and political organization. Furthermore, I had a productive talk about the possibilities for future cooperation with Cegesoma's director Nico Wouters.

During the term of the fellowship I collected and partly analyzed the main publications of Flemish *SS* veterans Berkenkruis and Periodiek Contact. I had also the chance to view several other relevant sources, some of which regarding Walloon *SS* veterans. To guarantee comparability, I concentrated my search on the period after 1990 and four main tropes, that I had identified regarding Scandinavian and German veterans: a) the *Waffen-SS* veterans' European Narrative; b) the establishment, legitimisation and public celebration of *Waffen-SS* grave-sites and memorials, especially in Eastern Europe; c) the discourse about war-crimes and Holocaust, and d) the 'handing over' of the *Waffen-SS* torch to a younger generation.

CegeSoma: It is obviously premature to talk about final conclusions, but could you nevertheless shed some light on your preliminary findings ?

S. Werther : The fate of the Flemish veterans differs from their Norwegian and Danish brothers in arms in several regards. For instance, they claimed a double victimization as both traitors and separatists at the hands of the 'Belgian oppressors'. Also, the proportion of Flemish *Waffen-SS* veterans who formed lasting associations is much larger, and they maintained a disproportionate public presence. There are, however, many similarities between the different groups, one being the regular reference to Europe in the discourse, which is prevalent also in Flemish veteran media, despite a rather nationalistic profile. The emphasis of collective victimhood and the desire to (re)write history is an additional common characteristic.

Another important aspect concerns the memory work of *SS*-veterans in the post-Soviet space. West-European veterans and their supporters were quick to exploit new opportunities which occurred in wake of the events around 1990-1991: they organized pilgrimages to East European battle-grounds and graveyards, joined Estonian, Latvian and Hungarian commemorations of 'freedom fighters', and establishing memorials specifically dedicated to themselves. For instance, Norwegian and Flemish veterans both erected memorials in Krasnoje Selo, close to Sankt Petersburg, apparently using the same Russian contacts and channels to advance this project. Similarly, in Estonian Vaivara we find today memory stones dedicated to Danish, Norwegian and Flemish *Waffen-SS* units side by side.

CegeSoma: You are an EHRI-fellow, so we assume that the Jewish persecution and the Holocaust are important aspects of your research. Can you elaborate on that ?

S. Werther : The exclusion – not necessarily denial – of war crimes and the Holocaust is an important element, if not the foundation, of the veteran's memory work: racist elements in the *SS* ideology and the murderous anti-Semitism were ignored or erased. Instead, spokesmen emphasized the *Waffen-SS*'s European idealism and military heroism, highlighted atrocities committed by the Allies and claimed victimhood for themselves.

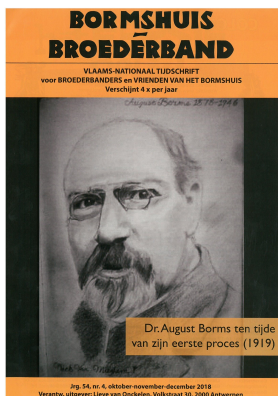
The exclusion of the Holocaust from the veteran's narrative was both in Belgium and Scandinavia facilitated by the fact that former *Waffen-SS* men were persecuted for 'enlistment with the enemy', rather than for involvement in war crimes, which were only an issue in the trials, if committed in the respective country itself. Accordingly, public denouncement and social exclusion was up to the 1980s justified mainly with the accusation of treason, while the contribution of non-German *Waffen-SS* men to the Holocaust became first during the last decades a topic. After 1990 veterans could then benefit from the fact that in parts of the post-Soviet space, as Stefan Troebst puts it, 'Gulag trumps Holocaust', which led to a climate where the 'moral lesson of the Holocaust' – by then widely accepted in the West – was marginalized again.



CegeSoma: And what about the Flemish specificity?

S. Werther : In the Flemish case an interesting division of the veteran movement regarding this topic is visible: while Berkenkruis, the organ of the *Sint Maartenfonds*, shows great similarities with veteran media from other parts of Europe and highlights atrocities committed by the enemy rather than to tackle Holocaust accusations directly, *Periodiek Contact*, the publication of *Hertog Jan van Brabant* choose another path. Here, active Holocaust denial can be found in nearly every issue.

CegeSoma : We wish you all the best in your further research and we look forward to the published results.



'Bormshuis Broederband': Broederband (which has merged with the journal of the 'Bormshuis') is one of the journals from our collection that Steffen Werther consulted for his research.

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2019 : A festive year at the CegeSoma!

Fifty years ago, in 1969, an enthusiastic team of six young researchers came together to initiate pioneering work on the history of the Second World War ... The Centre for Research and historical Studies on the Second World War (CREHSGM), the predecessor to the CegeSoma, was born! Also in 1969, the first edition of the *Journal of Belgian History* appeared, which is published by CegeSoma/the State Archives since 2011. Seventy years ago, in the evening of September 3, 1944, Brussels was liberated by British troops accompanied by Belgians of the Brigade Piron.

Therefore, in 2019 we celebrate three anniversaries.

Throughout this year of celebration, CegeSoma (State Archives) is planning a range of activities, events and book releases.

Programme :

- The overhaul and renewal of our current website into a new thematic website, which, we hope, will serve even better to meet your needs and expectations;
- The second "Public history meeting" of CegeSoma **on March 20**, where Anne Cornet and Enika Ngongo will discuss the impact of the First World War in a colonial context;
- **On April 25**, as part of the UGESCO project, a conference on crowdsourcing followed by a practical application of the crowdsourcing model with an 'editathon' on the topic of "Brussels during the Second World War" in the evening;
- **On June 3**, a day for French-speaking local history associations on the topic "From Liberation to Victory : local history revisited";
- **On June 17**, a day for Dutch-speaking local history associations on the same topic;
- **In the autumn**, the publication of two new books in the series "*Villes en guerre*" (Cities at War) published by *La Renaissance du Livre*: "*La Wallonie libérée*" (Liberated Wallonia) and "*Bruxelles, ville libérée*" (Brussels, a liberated city);
- **On October 3**, presentation and discussion of the results of the project TRANSMEMO (in the Belgian Senate);
- **In December**, a study day dedicated to the 50th anniversary of CegeSoma and the 75th anniversary of the Liberation, during which the thematic issue of the *Journal of Belgian History*, "75 years of the history of the Second World War", will be presented;
- And, a sneak preview of the following year: **in spring 2020**, the release of a guide to the sources of the history of the resistance, following the same model laid out by the book published in 2017, "Papy était-il un nazi?" (Was Grandfather a Nazi?).



Liberation of Brussels by the Allies, September 1944, Photo 29474, © State Archives.

In addition to all these events, CegeSoma will continue to invite you to its public history meetings, its day dedicated to young Master-students and many other activities.

And last but not least, our online platform "Belgium WW II" will continue to integrate new themes and publish new texts.

* *Editathon*: A collaborative event during which editors create, modify and improve articles about a given topic or a particular type of content.

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