



Castle Talks on
Cross-Border Cooperation
Crisis of peace? The scars of history: reconciliation in border regions

Conflict, Memory, Heritage: some Franco-Belgian cases

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- **Conflict, collective memory and heritage**
 - About the Franco-Belgian border
 - Three cases
 - What to learn?

Conflict and Memory (Wagoner et al, 2016; Odak, 2014)

Conflict and memory are often two sides of the same coin.

- On one hand, **conflicts deeply mark the memories** of both individuals and collectives.
- On the other hand, **memory is behind many conflicts**, it brings the past into the present and with it the old scars.

The study of memory is important in as much as « the past becomes a tool for creating change or stability as well as promoting or inhibiting conflicts” (Wagoner).

Conflict and Collective Memory (Wagoner et al, 2016; Odak, 2014)

Collective memory suggests that :

- shared narratives and symbols of the past are essential for the development of group identity and social life.

Taking memory into account can therefore help us to better understand

- **how certain uses may revive, perpetuate or originate conflicts.**

In contrast to the dominant cultural tropes that conceptualize memory as a type of repository (either an archive or a monument), we propose “to compare the collective memory of conflict as a wounded body” (Odak).

Conflict, Collective Memory and Heritage (Wagoner et al, 2016; Odak, 2014)

Collective memory of conflict exhibits ambiguous characteristics:

- On one hand, it can serve as a framework for the development of **group solidarity** and empathy,
- on the other hand, it can be a reason for the exclusion and **demonization** of other groups.

Narratives are taken as cultural tools that mediate collective memory; they can be used in order to **give meanings** to texts, material objects or geographical spaces and transformed them into heritage.

Conflict, memory and heritage

Transforming texts, material objects or geographical spaces into **heritage** means

- a collective understanding of the « event » (which does not mean a historical or scientific understanding),
- its collective endorsement and a link with a collective memory,
- a process of revealing and advertising,
- the inclusion in a collective project (which can be the development of a touristic and/or a political agenda).

Conflict, Collective Memory and Heritage

Our Question:

- How old conflicts and their heritage are used today and can mediate « new » collective memory.

Our Methodology:

- The use of three geographical spaces/places of memory and the connected narratives (located in Belgium);
- Three components: a description, the narratives, the heritage and its impacts.

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The Franco-Belgian Border

620 km delineated in 1839 according to the limits between France and the Netherlands (Treaty of Kortrijk, 1820)

Based on:

- Treaties in XVI and XVII;
- Between France and the United Provinces, the Spanish and Austrian Netherlands or the Prince-Bishopric of Liege.

The Franco-Belgian border zone was a buffer zone and an intensely disputed area until the independence of the country.

Today, the Belgian border houses 2 EGTC and a very large number of CBC projects.

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King Louis XIV at Mons



King Louis XIV at Mons



The siege of Mons from 15 March – 10 April, 1691, in the Spanish Netherlands.

“The investment was begun on 15 March... In one of the most intense attacks of all King Louis’ wars, two batteries, each consisting of 12 mortars, bombarded the city in preparation for the assault;

by 30 March, the French had fired 7,000 cannonballs and 3,000 mortar shells. Inevitably, on 8 April, the besieged inhabitants beat the chamade; conditions were settled, and the remaining men of the garrison marched out two days later.”

King Louis XIV at Mons



The cannon-balls are still in the Mons walls. They prove the « French invasion ».

They are shown and defined as the track of a « Franco-Belgian » war even if Belgium was not an independent country at that time.

The Battle of Jemappes



The Battle of Jemappes



The Battle of Jemappes: 6 Nov, 1792 in the Austrian Netherlands

“During the French Revolutionary Wars, the battle of Jemappes was one of the first major offensive battles of the war, it was a victory for the armies of the infant French Republic, and saw the French Armée du Nord, which included many inexperienced volunteers, defeat a substantially smaller regular Austrian army.

Jemappes was won by costly but effective charges against the Austrian army.”

The Battle of Jemappes



A monument “Le Coq” was erected in 1911 to celebrate the French friendship.



Jean-Pol GRANDMONT

The Battle of Jemappes



Jean-Pol GRANDMONT

The Walloon League organized various events there since 1937.

By 1938, the day was chosen to celebrate the Franco-Walloon friendship.

In 1962, the Walloon movement celebrated the 160th anniversary of the battle of Jemappes

but

today, very few people know even the meaning of the building...

The Battle of the Golden Spurs



The Battle of the Golden Spurs



The Battle of the Golden Spurs: 11 July, 1302, at Kortrijk in Flanders

“After two years of French military occupation, many cities in Flanders revolted. King Philip IV of France organized an expedition to put down the rebellion.

More than 10,000 men from the civic militias of several Flemish cities, Namur, Liege, Zeeland and England countered the expected French attack.

The result was a rout of the French nobles. The 500 pairs of spurs that were captured gave the battle its name.”

The Battle of the Golden Spurs



In 1830, the Battle of the Golden Spurs was celebrated as a Belgian victory.

In the late 1830's, the battle became a symbol of resistance to foreign rule, to French control and a "milestone" in the historic struggle for Flemish national liberation, against France and a French speaking Belgium.

Flemish nationalists wrote poems and songs about the battle and celebrated its leaders.

In 1973, the day was chosen to be the date of the official holiday of the Flemish community.

The Battle of the Golden Spurs



The Groeninge Gate (Groeningepoort) and the Groeninge monument (Groeningemonument) were constructed to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle of the Golden Spurs



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What to learn?

The collective memory of conflicts, its heritage and its narratives are used to develop collective identity, solidarity and cohesion,

We versus you

Belgium versus France

But they can also be (re)designed, transformed and used to create and originate new exclusions or potential conflicts.

We, Wallonia

We, Flanders

1915

La main dans la main

BELGIQUE

FRANCE