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## The Great War and Peace

An introduction to peace-oriented remembrance of WWI in *Flanders Fields*

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## 1 Memories of war and peace

‘No more war’: an exclamation heard all around the world when the Great War, the ‘war to end all wars’, ended in November 1918. Though often marginalized by other, more nationalistic and victorious discourses, the urging for a lasting peace also resonated in the memorialization of the First World War, not only in public commemorations but also in small-scale remembrance initiatives such as those of veterans’ associations. These *peace-oriented* remembrance practices gave meaning to the experience and the memory of the war in terms of a call for reconciliation and peace through mutual recognition of grief and suffering. They were self-consciously aimed at challenging the system of militarized interstate rivalry and actively promoting a culture of peace.

In Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region in Belgium<sup>a</sup>, peace-minded narratives have always been a salient element in the remembrance and commemoration of the Great War. In view of the upcoming centenary commemoration of the war in 2014-2018, significantly, the regional Flemish government has even declared that conveying a message of peace will constitute one of the main objectives of its commemorative effort. This objective is shaped further by the ambition to ‘sensitize current and future generations in Flanders concerning themes such as tolerance, intercultural dialogue and international understanding in light of an open and tolerant society and an active international orientation’.<sup>1</sup> These are ambitious and, one might add, by no means self-evident objectives. In this paper, I want to shed some light on the background of the Flemish government’s objectives to link the memory of the war with the theme of peace as well as on how, in the broader international context of current WWI commemorations, this can be acted out during the centennial. First, the paper gives an historical overview of the tradition of peace-oriented remembrance of the Great War, reading this particular commemorative strand in the wider context of WWI remembrance. In this historical account I look both at international as well as at very local memorial traditions. This historical overview then sets the stage for the second part of the paper, in which I point to one of the challenges with which a government-sponsored, peace-minded commemoration of WWI is faced. Commemorating war to promote peace indeed is, as mentioned, not without its problems and thorny issues. A major problem, for instance, is the relationship between various forms of public remembrance practices and history, or, more precisely, between state-sponsored commemoration and scientific historiography. A number of tensions and risks characterize this relationship. On numerous occasions historians have made critical remarks with regard to how formal public commemoration initiatives make ‘use’ (or even ‘abuse’) of history. Historians in particular have emphasized that the use of history in the light of contemporary objectives (such as reinforcing nationhood, strengthening community identity, etc.) risks resulting in one-sided and politically-guided instrumentalizations of history. These risks, of course, also exists when the commemoration of the First World War is framed to convey a

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<sup>a</sup> Belgium is a federal state with a complex state structure. Flanders is in fact a generic name for the Northern, Dutch speaking part of the country. Officially, the country is divided into three regions (Flemish Region, Walloon region and Brussels-Capital Region) and three communities (Flemish Community, French Community and German-speaking Community). Political power is devolved to three levels: the federal level, the regional level and the community level. The communities and regions are responsible for a variety of domains relating to commemoration policy, such as heritage, education and tourism. Flanders counts close to 6.5 million inhabitants, out of a Belgian total of 11 million.

message of peace. Belgian historians have already criticized the Flemish government on this account.<sup>b</sup> In this paper, however, I will not address this question but rather turn to another problem: how can (or, to move things on a more normative plane, should) a peace-oriented commemoration project, such as it is planned by the Flemish government, deal with the plurality and complexity and oftentimes contested nature of war remembrance practices? For instance: what position should a government-sponsored peace-oriented commemoration project take vis-à-vis rituals and memorials which are characterized by militaristic or nationalistic sacrificial symbolism? The case of Flanders/Belgium is interesting in view of this question, not in the least because the Belgian sector of the front, better known as *Flanders Fields*, offers a complex and diverse landscape of memorialization, where various traditions of commemoration co-exist: those of the British Commonwealth, the Belgian nation, the Flemish-nationalist movement, and of local remembrance cultures.

## 2 Peace-oriented remembrance of the First World War in a historical perspective

### 2.1 The nation, mourning, and peace

In the aftermath of the First World War, the issue of how to come to terms with and memorialize the war experience, which for many veterans and countless families had been extremely traumatic, was posed in an acute form. The losses brought about by this war were massive. What is more, it was not professional armies which fought a life and death struggle for four years in the trenches, but armies of the people, composed of ordinary citizens who were dispatched or drawn to the front in the name of powerful nation-states and colonial empires. Many never returned. Those who did return, as well as the many civilians who suffered because of the war, were scarred by the traumatic experiences of trench-warfare and violence. After the war, some sense of meaning for this gigantic loss of human life had to be found, not just by the nation and society but also by the veterans and the families of the dead and wounded. Commemorations and various forms of remembrance practices played a crucial role in this. In the years immediately following the war, a key question for the various societies involved in the conflict was how the war and its many victims should be commemorated. The very diverse answers given to this question generated a wide plurality in the forms of commemoration. As a result, First World War commemorations and remembrance sites to this very day are characterised by great historical and sociological complexity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> For instance, historians have criticized pro-peace remembrance initiatives when they leave no space for the heroism, or even the spectacle of war, which were indispensable elements of the war experience of 1914-18. Sophie De Schaepdrijver for instance remarked that “as a historian I have to recognise that there must remain space for the fascination with war. Without taking this fascination into account, one cannot fully understand what happened there. Those soldiers, incidentally, were certainly not only victims. There were also adventurers among them, and perpetrators. So yes, leave space in the memory of the war for the idea that some viewed the war as one big adventure.” (S. De Schaepdrijver (2008), ‘We blijven gefascineerd door hun offervaardigheid’, *De Standaard*, 8 November 2008. For a broader inquiry into of the uses/abuses of history in Margaret MacMillan (2010), *The uses and abuses of history*, London: Profile.

Historical, sociological and political science research into the commemoration of the First World War has approached this complexity in various ways. T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, for instance, distinguish two important historiographic schools, each of which focuses on a specific aspect of the commemoration of the war.<sup>3</sup> A first school interprets war commemorations as a political practice that is closely related to the rituals of national identification and the construction of collective national identities. The First World War presented an enormous challenge to the nation-state. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the nation-state had grounded its power of attraction and its strength in the promise of well-being that it would provide for its people. Then came the war, and hundreds of thousands of soldiers and citizens lost their lives in the name of the fatherland. Once the hostilities were over, it was thus vital for the nation-state to give some meaning to this wholesale slaughter. This was done by representing the deaths of frontline soldiers as a sacrifice for the nation, a patriotic martyrdom that the soldiers took upon themselves to save the fatherland from the existential threat of the enemy. One of the best-known examples is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier<sup>4</sup>, but there are myriad examples of war memorials that are nationally and patriotically inspired. Written on the Menin Gate in Ypres – originally conceived as a triumphal arch but eventually established as a memorial in honour of the British war dead – are the inscriptions, '*pro patria*' (for the homeland) and '*pro rege*' (for the king). Thus elements of a patriotic-imperialistic idiom found their way on to this monument that was dedicated to the memory of the British war dead.<sup>5</sup> In Belgium, the patriotic discourse of commemoration takes concrete form for instance in the *Cross of Fire* medals presented to every soldier who came under fire at the front. The slogan, '*salus patriae, suprema lex*' (the good of the country is the supreme law) occupies a prominent place on the medal. The same slogan can also be found on some local war monuments. While the commemoration of the First World War has evolved radically over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, elements of this nationalist, patriotic and imperialistic discourse of commemoration remain present even today in the commemorative landscape, often in the petrified form of war monuments and memorials.

A second historiographic approach distinguished by Ashplant, Dawson and Roper studies First World War commemorations first and foremost as expressions of mourning. Jay Winter's research, for instance, investigates how groups of veterans, families and relatives – often on a small scale – attempted to give meaning to the massive scale of death and suffering caused by the war. According to Winter, all too much attention has been given in the literature on commemoration to the interpretation and manipulation of war memories by political and cultural elites. Rather, he points out that many of the remembrance initiatives within societies – particularly after tragic events – happen spontaneously, in bottom-up fashion, not merely guided from above. These spontaneous remembrance initiatives result from exchanges among members of social networks, which sometimes existed before the war but were often created as a result of it. According to Winter, the rituals and objects emerging from these forms of remembrance and commemoration should not be seen as reflections of political authority or of a general consensus (although they could sometimes be this as well), but as an amalgam of profound expressions of the strength of a society. It is for this reason that he focuses his attention on the remembrance initiatives by families and groups of veterans, whom he sees as "small-scale agents of remembrance", ordinary people who came together to reflect upon what happened to them, their loved ones and their particular social environment when the war so brutally intervened in their lives.<sup>6</sup>

Since both historiographic schools – given their specific focus – fail to shed light on all relevant aspects of war commemoration, they are not mutually exclusive. Ashplant, Dawson and Roper try to integrate the insights from both paradigms by stressing the interconnectedness and politically loaded nature of remembrance and commemorative initiatives in *all* their forms: both the patriotic commemorative practices of the national elites, and the grief felt and expressed by families and veterans. War remembrance, they suggest, is made up of the complex interactions between individuals, society and the state. While some commemorative narratives gained a dominant role in the process, others remained ‘oppositional or marginal’.<sup>7</sup> The numerous war memorials erected in many towns and communities after the war provide an example of how these mechanisms have worked. These monuments, where the individual names of the fallen are recorded, gave public recognition to the suffering of the families. They created a medium through which the afflicted could share their feelings of sorrow with other afflicted families as well as with the broader local community. By setting up monuments, the community was able in turn to demonstrate its gratitude to the fallen and to their families. At the same time, the personal loss and suffering of the bereaved were also linked to the state.<sup>8</sup> This is clear from the idiom used in many of the local memorials. Traditional and familiar romantic and religious elements, such as the female figures tending to a fallen soldier, are combined with patriotic symbolism. Thus local war monuments were not only able to offer solace to mourners, but also offered them a way to transform the feelings of sorrow and loss into feelings of pride because of the contribution they had made to local and national solidarity.

In her book, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, Jenny Edkins explores in greater depth the political dimensions of the remembrance of war and political violence. Edkins argues that traumatic war violence and the memory thereof within society may lead to the formation of emancipation and resistance movements (or bring their existence clearly into focus), and may also create specific possibilities for social groups to oppose centralised political power. More specifically, she describes how the remembrance of traumatic violence may be used to promote change and to challenge the political systems that produced the violence of war in the first place. Commemoration thus can generate transformational movements. Because official commemoration sites such as monuments and memorials are closely interwoven with the values that the sovereign state seeks to promulgate, they are often precisely the places where people wanting to resist dominant commemorative discourses or state power choose to organize themselves. This effort for resistance or emancipation can take various forms. Resistance movements can be very explicit, such as the student protest at Tiananmen Square in Beijing – an important place in the Chinese commemorative landscape. Other versions of liberation are more subtle or implicit. Edkins for example extensively discusses the Cenotaph in London, designed by Edwin Lutyens in 1919. In her reading that monument does not convey any explicit national symbolism, but rather emphasizes the trauma of the war and the mourning by veterans and surviving relatives. While the British Government in 1918-19 foresaw only a secondary role for the Cenotaph in the commemoration ceremonies to mark the end of the war and the British victory, the monument would eventually come to play a very significant role in the British culture of remembrance. This had everything to do with the unprecedented success of the monument among veterans and grieving surviving relatives. They were better able to recognise themselves

in the simplicity of the Cenotaph than in the ceremonies the government had planned, which were intended to be joyful and to celebrate the military.<sup>9</sup>

Edkins' insights are interesting in the context of Belgian commemoration of the First World War. After the war, the Flemish struggle for equal (language) rights, which had gained momentum with the Flemish 'Front Movement' during the First World War<sup>10</sup>, developed its own tradition of commemoration in the Westhoek region (in English known as *Flanders Fields*). The Yser Tower, where an annual pilgrimage came to be organised, was built in Diksmuide in the Yser plain which was defended by the Belgian army during the war. The tradition of pro-Flemish commemoration challenged the patriotic commemoration practices of the Belgian state by propagating a narrative with equally nationalistic undertones. Thus gravestones special to Flanders were designed that differed from official Belgian gravestones, whose inscription, '*Mort pour la Belgique* ('Died for Belgium') was seen as offensive. The Flemish Movement generated its own Association of Flemish Veterans (VOS); and the war experiences of Flemish frontline soldiers are remembered in terms of a sacrifice for the Flemish cause: "Here our blood, when our rights?". In this way the pro-Flemish tradition of commemoration played an important role in the struggle for Flemish self-rule and the formation of Flemish national awareness.<sup>11</sup>

The emancipatory and transformative potential of war remembrance that Jenny Edkins writes about can also be found in *peace-minded* forms of commemoration. Until now, these have not been given a great deal of attention in the historical and sociological literature on war commemoration. Nevertheless, from the immediate post-war up to the present, these ways of commemorating have always been a part of the commemoration of the First World War, however much they might have come under pressure from the more patriotic and militaristic-inspired display of remembrance.

## 2.2 Pacifist war commemoration

During the interwar period various commemorative practices arose, on the initiative of both veterans and civic organisations, that linked the commemoration of the war with the message 'No More War'. The experience of the horror of war was transformed into a call to avoid and banish war for ever. If the war of 1914-1918 could signify the end of all wars, then at least some meaning could be found for the boundless slaughter of the war, and the sacrifice of the frontline soldiers would not have been in vain. These initiatives not only distanced themselves from patriotic and militaristic forms of commemoration, they also often constituted a passionate plea for a far-reaching transformation of the international state system. Pacifists argued that this system necessarily led to war because it was based on the military-imperialist rivalry between sovereign states and on an intensive arms race. These wars only benefited powerful elites and rich industrialists. As an alternative to this old, war-addicted system, the focus was placed on newly founded international institutions such as the League of Nations and the supremacy of international law. Pacifist forms of war commemoration arose in various European countries in the 1920s and gained popularity in the 1930s when the prospect of a sustainable peace was clouded by the rise of revengeful and warmongering fascist dictatorial regimes. They were reinforced by a wave of sometimes extremely critical and bitter war novels by soldiers and

veterans such as Henri Barbusse, Gabriel Chevallier, Erich Maria Remarque and Robert Graves. These books were received with great interest by the public, but also ran into controversy.

In Britain in the 1930s, the Co-operative Women's Guild, which was established in 1883 and had joined the international peace movement in 1914, developed the initiative of the White Poppies. With these poppies, the Guild hoped to introduce a pacifist alternative to the annual Red Poppy Appeal of the Royal British Legion, the largest organisation of British veterans. In 1926 the Guild had suggested that the British Legion should place the inscription "No More War" on the red poppies in place of the imprint "Haig Fund". This proposal was rejected. A few years later, the Co-operative Women's Guild therefore decided to design their own – white – poppy with the inscription "No More War". The white poppies first appeared on Armistice Day in 1933. The Guild emphasised that its initiative was in no way meant as an insult to the fallen. The campaign quickly received the support of other peace organisations. The following year, the newly established Peace Pledge Union committed itself to the distribution and promotion of the white poppies.<sup>12</sup> The white poppies still exist, but have been involved in their share of controversy. The mainstream of traditional British commemoration is rather reluctant to link war remembrance explicitly to contemporary political statements such as a message of peace. In 1988, when the Peace Pledge Union again asked the British Legion to take over the production and distribution of the white poppies, the Legion once again refused.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the connection between war remembrance and the cause of peace received broader support during the inter-war period in Britain than from the peace movement alone. This can be seen, for example, in a statement by George V during his tour of the battlefields: "In the course of my pilgrimage, I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war."<sup>14</sup>

During the interwar period in France various pacifist-inspired commemoration practices emerged, often created and supported by veterans. In 1919, for example, writer and veteran Henri Barbusse established the *Clarté* movement, a movement of leftist-pacifist intellectuals which included members such as Anatole France and Stefan Zweig. The movement could also for a while count on support from communist and pacifist circles in Flanders.<sup>15</sup> Most French veterans' groups, to which approximately half of the French veterans belonged in the early 1930s, explicitly turned their backs on militarism. According to Antoine Prost, the remembrance liturgy of the French veterans was characterised not only by funerary elements, but also by peace-minded elements:

Elle ne comprend ni *Marseillaise*, ni défilé militaire ou prise d'armes, ni discours des autorités : chacun doit s'effacer, se taire et méditer. Devant l'immensité du sacrifice commémoré, la paix s'impose comme valeur suprême, par-delà les égoïsmes et les orgueils nationaux."<sup>16</sup> ("It includes no *Marseillaise*, no military procession or parade, no official speeches: everyone should step back, fall silent and meditate. Before the immensity of the commemorated sacrifice, peace imposes itself as the supreme value, beyond selfishness and national pride").

In Verdun, the most important national symbol of French commemoration of the First World War, veterans organised gatherings with a markedly pacifist colouring. Thus on 12 July 1936 – at a

time when a new war was casting its dark shadow – twenty thousand veterans, including Germans and Italians, came together in Verdun. There at the immense Douamont cemetery, each veteran took his place at a grave, and together they took a vow of peace. After that, flowers were placed at the large ossuary in front of the cemetery.<sup>17</sup> In Germany, the pacifist style of war remembrance was embodied inter alia in the efforts of Ernst Friedrich, founder of an anti-war museum in Berlin. Friedrich gained notoriety with his book *Krieg dem Krieg!* (War Against War!) in which he printed photographs of mutilated soldiers with the idea of avoiding another war by showing the essence of war in all its horror.<sup>18</sup>

In Belgium as well, soon after the war's end pacifist tendencies emerged in the remembrance of the First World War. This was not just a bottom-up trend involving civil society or veterans' associations, but a pacifist interpretation of war remembrance which had support from various movements in the Belgian political landscape. The link between the message of peace and the remembrance of war thus found its place in a broader revival of internationalist and pacifist ideas which had started to develop before the war, throughout Europe and across all parties – from Catholic anti-militarism and socialist international pacifism to liberal notions of the importance of international law. On the outbreak of hostilities this way of thinking was abruptly pushed aside. However, following four years of the atrocities of war, the pacifist, anti-militarist and internationalist ideas once again gained ground. This occurred within all political movements.<sup>19</sup> The pro-Flemish veterans, for instance, played a crucial role in reviving the anti-militaristic way of thinking within the Catholic group.<sup>20</sup> It found expression inter alia in the commemorative practices of the Flemish movement, which alongside its Pro-Flemish and Christian elements was also characterised by an explicitly pacifist message. On the Yser Tower in Diksmuide, consecrated in 1928, the words "No More War" were inscribed in four languages. Between 1929 and 1934, the Yser Pilgrimage Committee attempted to promote the Yser Tower as an international pacifist war memorial.<sup>21</sup> The socialists committed themselves to the international peace movement 'War Resisters' International', which was established after the war and adopted a broken gun as its symbol.<sup>22</sup> Socialists were also active in the actual field of war remembrance. In the 1920s, Belgian history textbooks were characterised by a heavily patriotic and explicitly anti-German tone. As Minister of Education, socialist Minister of Education Camille Huysmans issued a directive in which he not only asked educational institutions to devote attention to the peaceable ideals of the League of Nations during history lessons, but also to ban those history textbooks that preached hatred against other peoples. On Armistice Day, 11 November 1930, the Belgian Union for the League of Nations also intervened in the area of remembrance by making peace the central theme of the commemoration ceremony, thereby introducing a pro-peace message into the commemoration of the war. This initiative was supported by the liberal Minister of Education, Robert Petitjean, who in the following year encouraged all Belgian educational institutions to participate in the promotional week of the League of Nations which was organised from 8 to 15 November 1931.<sup>23</sup>

The pacifism of the 1930s was eventually overshadowed by the rise of fascist regimes in Europe and by the outbreak of the Second World War. Furthermore, the war of 1939-1945 strongly influenced the remembrance of the First World War, which faded into the background in the decades following 1945. This happened not only because there was a more recent conflict to remember (which furthermore numbered more civilian than military casualties), but also because



the sacrifice of 1914-18 seemed to have failed as a warning against war. Moreover, the First World War could not be as easily interpreted in such clear political terms as the second. The commemorations of the Second World War would not only focus on the many dead but also on polarising political categories.

Starting in the 1970s, and certainly in the 1980s and 1990s, in many countries interest in the First World War increased. In Flanders it was a peace-inspired remembrance that came strongly to the foreground. The Flemish peace movements played a prominent role in this development. These movements have always promoted the message “No More War” as the central lesson and legacy of the history of the First World War, and took it as the guiding principle in their educational projects.<sup>24</sup> This is part of the broader motivation of their peace action, which invokes the history of Belgium as one of the most important battlefields of Europe and the country’s direct experiences with the horror and suffering of war to argue for the need and value of peace. In the 1970s, this peace-minded approach to the remembrance of the First World War also received a significant impulse from a very local culture of remembrance in the Westhoek region. While in 2014-2018 the First World War will be commemorated throughout the country and indeed the world, in the context of this paper it is interesting to take a closer look at the local culture of remembrance in the southern part of the Westhoek region.

### 2.3 The local remembrance culture in the Westhoek

At the end of the 1970s, after decades of relative silence, the local remembrance of the war in the region south of Ypres was once again stimulated by two notable projects: the publication of a book entitled *Van den Grooten Oorlog* (On the Great War) and the performance of a play *Nooit brengt een oorlog vrede* (War never brings Peace).<sup>25</sup> The book and the play were the work of the Eleven November Group, which was established in 1977 in the context of a regional development project seeking to promote not only economic development but also local cultural initiatives. The young people from the region engaged in starting up the group were looking for alternative ways to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First World War, which a year later was to be celebrated in Ypres with the usual military splendour. They came up with the idea of talking to elderly people in their families and villages about their experiences during the war. These testimonials were compiled in a book, which was published on 11 November 1978 under the title *Van den Grooten Oorlog*.<sup>26</sup> The book told the stories of some fifty people who had lived at or behind the front, either as a soldier or a civilian. The stories were concerned with the outbreak of the war, being a refugee, the many nationalities that stayed in the region during the war, the violence of war and post-war reconstruction. The significance of the stories, which are almost literally presented in the vernacular of the storytellers, lies in their local and familial character. The book took stories that were normally told within the context of families and the villages and introduced them in the public sphere, giving them a place alongside the official history written by the state and formal historiography. Thus the book was indeed a people’s history. It showed how war was the everyday lived reality of ordinary people.

The Eleven November Group transformed the stories from the book into a play entitled *War never brings Peace*, which was performed by local people. The performances took place from 11

to 15 November 1978 in a forge in Kemmel that had been converted into a theatre. The play was again performed several times in 1979, in Ghent and in Brussels. The play consists of a series of scenes that shed light on various aspects of the experience of war, such as life behind the front, the relationships between soldiers and civilians, and the conversations among soldiers about the meaning of war. The play is anecdotal insofar as it presents various local, 'ordinary' stories about the war. At the same time, however, the purely anecdotal is transcended precisely because in the telling of local stories, the general human dimension of the experience of war surfaces. Although this was not an explicitly stated intention, the play additionally has a peace-minded undertone. Moving in reverse chronological order from 1918 to 1914, the play begins with an exposition by a representative of the Krupp company which sold weapons to both sides during the war and then, after the armistice, offers its services as producer of artificial arms and legs and of machines to remove scrap metal left behind by the war. During the play, the company representative appears on stage on several occasions, at the end confronting Jean Jaurès, who continued to plead for peace even in the summer of 1914. Furthermore, the prologue of the play claims that the subject of the play – the First World War – stands for all wars, while the epilogue, immediately after the murder of Jaurès, suggests that war and arms races are not inevitable but result from human decisions for which there are always alternatives. In the context of the late 1970s, at a time when the stationing of new nuclear weapons in Western Europe was imminent, this ending conveyed a broader message. For this reason many interpreted the play as political and pacifist consciousness-raising theatre. According to Marieke Demeester, one of the initiators of the Eleven November Group who was heavily involved in writing the play, this had not been their original intention:

I would not describe our play as political consciousness-raising theatre. That was not the intention. We started out from the observation that it is unfortunate that we have forgotten what happened to local people here during the Great War, and that we now have to do something about it. But of course, when you hear all those stories, you begin to reflect and wonder: yes, but why? It is terrible what happened to those people in the war, and what has it got us? And I think that, as human beings, we have to continue to ask that question. But that is something very different from saying that it was 'theatre with a message'. Our intention was to bring it to the 'here and now' so that people would finally think about it.<sup>27</sup>

The work of the Eleven November Group signified an important turning point in the way the history of the war was approached in the area around Ypres. The history and commemoration of the Great War had until then given little attention to the perspective of ordinary people. The book *On the Great War* and the play *War never brings Peace* introduced a new approach. By telling the stories of the people who actually had lived through the First World War, this perspective both raised the local roots of the memory of war as well as the universal-human dimensions of this memory. This approach would profoundly influence how, in the following decades, the war was to be remembered in the Westhoek region. The *In Flanders Fields Museum* (IFFM), which opened in 1998, chose a similar perspective.<sup>28</sup> The central idea of the museum is that war is primarily a reality experienced by people – soldiers and civilians alike. As Piet Chielens, one of the inspirers behind the museum, expresses it, war is a people's history.<sup>29</sup> By taking this idea as its premise, the museum moreover is able to be both universal and relevant in a contemporary context. The museum features a collection of diverse, local, and individual stories rather than a collection of

objects or a specific message. Thus the museum transcends outdated national narratives of allies and enemies. Because the emphasis is squarely on human experience, the museum only indirectly touches upon the overarching historical story of the war. Throughout the museum tour, the visitor is not provided with an explicit moral lesson (with the exception of the end where mention is made of how many wars the Red Cross has been active in since the end of the First World War). This does not mean that the museum avoids morality. On the contrary: the problematic morality of war is brought to the foreground precisely by presenting war as a human reality. The museum is arranged in such a way that it encourages many visitors to pose moral questions about war. Thus they can also be incited to reflect upon peace. This is why many people leave the museum with the feeling that they have visited a peace museum, while the museum nowhere mentions peace as such or advances an explicit message of peace. The IFFM also makes a conscious effort not to profile itself as a peace museum. According to Piet Chielens, the museum would be likely to lose some of its effects were it to do so:

In order to talk about peace we have to talk about war, and then the idea of peace will come spontaneously. [...] If people think about peace when they leave, then you can be pleased. Without mentioning the word even once.<sup>30</sup>

The focus on locally-rooted memory by the Eleven November Group did not stand alone. At the same time, in the course of the 1970s, there were similar efforts emerging within the local government of Ypres. These efforts aimed at placing the peace message centre stage as the most important legacy of the First World War. This movement, which was supported by the call for peace pronounced by Pope John Paul in 1985 in Ypres, became stronger in the 1980s and certainly in the early 1990s.<sup>31</sup> The city of Ypres began profiling itself as a 'City of Peace', appointed a 'peace official' responsible for coordinating peace initiatives, and started organising an annual Peace Prize.<sup>32</sup> The province of West-Flanders also joined these efforts. In 2002, the provincial administration decided to have actions and efforts concerning the First World War coordinated by a provincial network under the name 'War and peace in the Westhoek'. The network started from the idea that the history of the Westhoek region is "both local as well as universal, both past as well as present and future," and that "what actually remains of the 'Great War' in this region is the idea of peace" and "the unrelenting search for peace".<sup>33</sup> The effort to give salience to the idea of peace as the principal legacy of the First World War is supported by many partners in the region. Over the last few years, for example, the Yser pilgrimage committee in Diksmuide has also decided to emphasise even more strongly the message of peace, inter alia by organising the annual music festival *Ten Vrede* (For Peace).<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, in 2011 the Flemish Parliament recognised the Yser Tower not only as a memorial of Flemish emancipation, but also of Peace.<sup>35</sup>

The renewed interest in the remembrance of the First World War – initiated in the 1970s by local groups such as the Eleven November Group – only gained momentum and scope in the following decades. Especially in the 1990s and the first decade of this century the trend has become more salient. The great interest in the remembrance of the First World War stands not alone but is part of an increasing interest in remembrance and memory in general, which can be observed all over the world in a remarkable, if not spectacular manner. In what follows we will delve deeper into a

few characteristics of this 'memory boom' in order better to understand the socio-cultural framework in which the centenary commemoration of the First World War will take place.

## 2.4 The contemporary 'memory boom' and the Centenary of the Great War

The increasing interest in remembrance and commemoration is known in the literature as the 'memory boom'. In recent years, scholars in various disciplines including historians, anthropologists and political scientists have studied this boom. Duncan Bell, for example, has remarked that:

Memory seems impossible to escape. During the closing decades of the twentieth century it emerged as a cultural obsession of monumental proportions across the globe, a trend that looks set to continue for the foreseeable future.<sup>36</sup>

Exploring this memory boom in great detail would be moving too far beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it seems relevant to point out some of its defining characteristics. Four trends can be distinguished as typical of the way in which remembrance and commemorative practices are currently played out. *First*, a striking characteristic of contemporary remembrance are its individualised and personalised dimensions. This goes both for the 'supply' and the 'demand-side'. On the one hand, many recently established war museums and commemoration projects about the First World War work with individual soldiers' and civilians' testimonies and stories. By telling their personal experiences of war, an attempt is made to make the history of the war more tangible. On the other hand, contemporary remembrance tourists and visitors of war museums seem less moved by an attempt to contribute to the construction of national identities than by a desire to locate their own complex individual identities within broader narratives of family, generation, community, and nation.<sup>37</sup> *Secondly*, it must be pointed out that the economic dimension of remembrance and heritage practices is becoming increasingly important. French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky notes that in the field of remembrance, which used primarily to be mobilised for the cult of the nation and the public cause, the emphasis is put increasingly on the economic impact and direct or indirect profitability of heritage preservation. In his view, the field of heritage and remembrance is becoming ever more subject to a market logic and commercialism.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, there are large amounts of money involved in remembrance and heritage. Not only do governments provide sizeable budgets for commemorative and heritage projects, the economic importance of remembrance tourism is significant, certainly in former battlefields regions. The popularity of First World War tourism has grown spectacularly over the last decades.<sup>39</sup> Whereas in the 1970s, the Last Post under the Menin Gate in Ypres was sometimes sounded without a single spectator present, in recent years it has become a popularly attended ritual. *Thirdly*, remembrance and commemoration are still instrumentalised by politics and society. This currently occurs in a specific context. Identity politics is still part of the order of the day, mainly as a way to try to strengthen social cohesion, a sense of community and national identities in times of fragmentation and globalisation. Additionally, war remembrance also plays a role in education, for instance in remembrance- and peace-education projects. *Fourthly*, and important for the purposes of this paper, during recent decades the memory of both world wars increasingly has been framed in terms of peace, reconciliation in the context of European

integration, and global discourses on human rights.<sup>40</sup> With regards to Flanders Fields, we have already mentioned how the message of peace came to the forefront of war commemorations. Another example in the Westhoek region is the Irish Peace Tower in Messines, inaugurated on 11 November 1998. The tower commemorates Protestant and Catholic Irish soldiers who fought and died together at the Battle of Messines in 1917. The remembrance promoted in Messines thus resists the way the memory of the war has been used for decades in (Northern) Ireland to intensify opposition between Catholics and Protestants.<sup>41</sup> In recent years, the commemoration of Irish efforts during the First World War has been increasingly placed in the context of the reconciliation process. Similarly, people in New Zealand have also started to frame the commemoration of the First World War – specifically on ANZAC<sup>42</sup> Day – as a moment to reflect upon questions of war and peace. This evolution began in the 1970s in the context of the war in Vietnam.<sup>43</sup>

Thus the commemoration of the First World War has been part of the wider evolution marking remembrance and heritage culture over recent decades. This also goes for the large-scale commemorative project “2014-2018: *The Great War Centenary*” that is currently being worked out by the Flemish Government. This is also apparent in the project’s aims formulated by the government:

The objective of the project ‘The Great War Centenary (2014-2018)’ is to give Flanders international visibility in the period 2014-2018 and thereafter, by playing out this commemoration, in all serenity, as a top-event in Flanders and throughout the world. The activities’ programme for the commemoration of the centenary anniversary of the First World War should ensure that the name Flanders acquires international visibility and is permanently linked with the peace theme. Another objective is to sensitise current and future generations in Flanders concerning themes such as tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and international understanding in light of an open and tolerant society and an active international orientation. Finally, a considerable increase in peace tourism in (West) Flanders will be pursued.<sup>44</sup>

International visibility, community development and promotion of economic impact thus seem to be important motives behind the Flemish project. Furthermore, the government explicitly wants the project to convey a present-day message of peace, which fits into the broader international trend to frame war remembrance in terms of peace and human rights. Thus a complex multitude of motives come together in the commemoration project’s lay-out, which is reminiscent of the complexity of remembrance as a historical and sociological phenomenon. This complexity, in its turn, is not without its effects on the ambition to frame the remembrance of the war in terms of a peace message. The complex diversity of remembrance practices make peace-oriented forms of commemoration less self-evident than they may seem at first glance. Indeed, commemorations which formulate a call for peace have to position themselves in a field that is also occupied by other commemoration practices which are based on other motivations and send out other messages, in which for example militaristic or imperial elements predominate. This plurality can lead to a certain ambiguity entering commemorations. For visitors of memorial sites and commemoration ceremonies it can sometimes be unclear which messages exactly are being sent out.<sup>45</sup> The Menin Gate in Ypres is a good example of how memorials can represent different

kinds of messages. On the one hand, the gate speaks a military and patriotic form of language. For instance, on the arch not only the words '*pro patria*' and '*pro rege*' can be read, but there are also meetings at which veterans of current wars are honoured. On the other hand, the gate is also the stage for the daily Last Post, which, together with the lists of names of the many missing, conveys an intimate message of mourning. In recent years it has also been the site where a number of spontaneous peace demonstrations have taken place. This plurality of messages, which also characterises many other memorials and commemorative sites, is inevitable when different groups in society participate in the remembrance landscape.

For initiatives which want to centre the commemoration on the idea of peace, the question arises how to deal with this complex plurality. For instance, what position should peace-oriented commemorations take on rituals and memorials that are characterised by military symbolism? Should these other forms be criticised and – where possible – reshaped? Or should there be room for all kinds of commemoration practices? Organizations intent on linking contemporary war commemorations to a message of peace, will have to address this kind of questions. In the second part of this paper, I try to open up avenues for thinking about these questions. Inevitably, the paper will move on a more normative plane. In particular, I shall propose that commemorations which want to focus on the idea of peace should not only formulate a *message of peace* based on the memory of the war, but should also recognise the plurality of war commemoration. This way, they contribute to a *peaceful culture of remembrance*, in which there is room for diverse traditions of remembrance.

### 3 Talking peace in a context of commemorative polyphony

As has become clear above, war remembrance and commemorative landscapes are characterised by diversity, sometimes even by ambiguity. Before I address the question of how peace-oriented commemorations can relate to this complex plurality, it is useful to briefly show the complex multitude of commemorative practices still present in Flanders Fields' commemorative landscape. The tradition of the British Commonwealth, which not only includes the commemorative traditions of the United Kingdom but also of its former dominions and colonies, is the most visible tradition in the region – certainly in the southern part of Flanders Fields (with Ypres as its centre). The British remembrance tradition is centred on commemorating the (individual) dead.<sup>46</sup> This is illustrated by the numerous British cemeteries in the region with their uniform white headstones and Stone of Remembrance, as well as the apparently endless list of names on the Menin Gate in Ypres and at Tyne Cot Cemetery. The British are traditionally rather reluctant to link remembrance of the war dead explicitly with a message of peace. The Commonwealth tradition still invokes elements of a national, imperial and military idiom, linking the death of soldiers to themes of patriotic sacrifice. Research into the way in which British visitors experience their visits to former battlefields shows that these elements are still 'active'. Jennifer Iles, for instance, has pointed out that some British visitors experience Flanders Fields as a sort of 'home away from home' and that their visits to the region enable them to experience a feeling of historical association with an imagined collective past. As Iles observes, they indeed

come to a landscape that is not only permeated with physical traces of their society, such as the remains of British soldiers, but also perceived British values.<sup>47</sup>

A national and patriotic idiom can also be found in the 'Belgian-patriotic' tradition of commemoration in the Westhoek region. For example, the inscription '*Mort pour la Belgique*' or 'Died for Belgium' is still found on graves in Belgian military cemeteries, while a little shield with the Belgian tricolour figures prominently on the headstones. War memorials such as that of Albert I in Nieuwpoort are also characterised by patriotic symbolism. Belgian historian Sophie De Schaepdrijver has noted that the Belgian tradition of commemoration, which she typifies as "at its last gasp, crumbling and ambiguous", has been reduced to silence for generations, particularly in comparison to the British tradition.<sup>48</sup> The Flemish-national tradition of commemoration is strongly present in the Northern Westhoek region, with Diksmuide as its centre. This tradition weaves Flemish-nationalist symbolism with a pro-peace message. The interweaving of these various elements emerged almost immediately after the war when, during the first 'Yser Pilgrimage' to Diksmuide in 1920, the threefold message of the pilgrimage was announced as: "No More War, self-rule, and the truce of God". The Yser Tower and the Peace Gate, built by the Yser Pilgrimage Committee, also display the interweaving of these different messages. During the Second World War the Yser Tower and the Committee engaged in the collaboration with the German occupier. As a result, to this day the Yser Tower and the Flemish-national commemoration tradition remain tarnished for some groups in Belgium. In the words of historian Bruno De Wever: "The association of the Yser Tower with fascism has cast a long shadow after 1945. To some extent, in the opinion of the French-speakers and the Flemish left, the fascist connotation will never disappear [...]."<sup>49</sup> During the last decade, the Yser Pilgrimage Committee has initiated a move once again to focus on the roots of the remembrance of frontline soldiers, inter alia by translating its old threefold message in the new slogan "peace, freedom and tolerance" and by organising pluralistic peace-education projects and initiatives such as the music festival For Peace.

Of course, the German and French traditions of commemoration must also be mentioned. These traditions are less prominent in the Westhoek region than the British. With regards to France, this can be explained by the fact that the French army was less involved in military operations in Flanders than the British. German remembrance of the First World War on the other hand is still not self-evident, not only because Germany lost the war, but also because the memory of the Second World War still overshadows that of the First. Furthermore, German cemeteries are not as visible as the many British graveyards because after the war, the many small cemeteries of the German Army were concentrated into four larger cemeteries: Langemark, Hooglede, Menin and Vladslo, where the statues of the mourning parents by Käthe Kollwitz are located.

In mapping the plurality Flanders Fields' commemorative landscape, reference has to be made to the local culture of remembrance, with initiatives such as the Eleven November Group, the In Flanders Fields Museum, and Ypres as a City of Peace (see above).

With regards to the diversity of commemorative practices in Ypres and the position of peace-minded war commemorations, anthropologist Johan Meire has remarked:

The idea that the legacy of war is a universal message of peace nourished by the local experience of war as a devastating slaughter may well be promoted by local groups and official institutions, yet it cannot simply be enforced upon everyone. Ypres is in fact not just a local entity: it is also a zone of contact for all sorts of people who find the war to be an important past, but who have very diverse relationships to that past.<sup>50</sup>

How should peace-oriented projects such as that of the Flemish government position themselves in a sphere where various other forms and messages of commemoration are present? I would suggest that a possible answer to this question can be found in how peace is conceptualized. Of course, the concept of peace has a long history, from the *pax Romana* to the ideas of Johan Galtung concerning negative and positive peace.<sup>51</sup> Elaborating in great detail on the debate about how peace can be defined, would lead us far beyond the purposes of this paper. It suffices here to distinguish between a substantive and a procedural approach to peace. Substantively, in the context of promoting peace through remembrance of the war, the concept of peace refers to various elements that need to be addressed in every critical reflection upon war and peace, such as the importance of a just world order, disarmament, an attitude of active respect, and open dialogue. A procedural approach to peace emphasizes the recognition of difference and diversity, an active attitude of respect and preparedness for open dialogue. This latter approach is insightful in indicating how the complexity, plurality, and potentially contestable nature of remembrance and commemoration can be addressed, because it implies recognising that people and groups often tell very different stories about the past and hold different interpretations of how to commemorate historical events. It implies, in other words, recognizing the *polyphony* of war remembrance. These insights imply further that the idea that a universal message of peace is the most important legacy of the First World War cannot just be imposed on all forms of commemoration. At remembrance sites various people and groups come together, each bringing with them their own (sometimes very personal) motives and interpretations. In order to be peace-minded, I would argue, pro-peace commemorations must not simply aim to convey its own message, but also recognise this plurality and complexity. It makes little sense to seek to imprint a message of peace on all remembrance sites, monuments, and commemorative rituals. As argued above, polyphony is an inevitable part of war commemoration and remembrance. The recognition of this difference is crucial. Monuments, memorials and rituals convey diverse (sometimes hidden, sometimes contradictory) and multi-layered messages.

## 4 Conclusion: war commemoration with a focus on peace

The peace-oriented tradition in the commemoration of the First World War has a long and complex history. During the inter-war period in Belgium, as in France, it was both veteran organisations and political movements which gave an important impetus to the origin of peace-oriented remembrance rituals and memorials. In Flanders the peace oriented remembrance culture of soldiers at the front had a specific interpretation and impact as it was largely institutionalised by the broader Flemish movement, as a result of which the pacifist remembrance narrative within this movement became intertwined with radical Flemish and Christian discourse. However, it was not only the Flemish movement which interpreted war commemoration in a



pacifist way. Within the socialist, communist and liberal movements as well, there were groups who saw the horrors of the past war as a reason to associate themselves with the internationalist and pacifist ideas that had developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but which had come under pressure from patriotism at the start of the war. In the 1970s and the 1980s, after several decades of relative silence, peace-oriented remembrance of the First World War regained prominence. In the Westhoek a local remembrance culture developed, the approach of which (based on war stories and testimonies of common citizens and soldiers at the front) greatly influenced the memory of the First World War in Flanders. Other important actors in the revival of pacifist war remembrance were the different peace movements in Flanders, which have always spread the message ‘no more war’ as the main legacy of the First World War. A peace-minded interpretation of the legacy of the war was also promoted by local and provincial authorities, such as the city of Ypres, which started calling itself ‘city of peace’ and the province of West Flanders, which set up the network ‘War and Peace in the Westhoek’. The fact that the Flemish Parliament<sup>52</sup> and the Government of Flanders have made the spreading of the idea of peace one of the most important aims of the remembrance project for 2014-2018 fits in with this peace-oriented remembrance tradition of the First World War. This peace-oriented commemoration of the First World War, moreover, cannot only pride itself on a long tradition, but also seems to be widely supported in Flanders. A large majority of the Flemish people (84%) considers it the duty of the Government to ensure that ‘current and future generations remain informed about the madness and the horror of the war’<sup>53</sup> – a task the Government can carry out, for example, by setting up educational projects in the framework of the war commemorations.

War remembrance and commemoration are complex phenomena, which are not only characterised by a great plurality of forms and traditions, but inevitably always have normative and political undertones. Obviously this is also true for peace-oriented commemorations. This observation implies that war commemorations – and, by extension, all remembrance initiatives that are organised, promoted or supported by the authorities – are in fact much more complex than they may seem at first glance. Given the diversity and complexity of commemorations, there are a number of problem areas that require thorough reflection. Those who enter the field of commemoration without giving it much thought run the risk of encountering all kinds of problems and criticism to which immediate answers may not be readily available. The great plurality and even ambiguity which characterises war commemorations for instance raises the question of how war commemorations that want to spread a message of peace should relate to commemoration practices that give history an entirely different meaning. It is the suggestion of this paper that peace-oriented commemorations should not only convey their substantive message of peace, but also recognise the polyphony in remembrance traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Project office ‘Centenary of the Great War in Flanders’ (s.d.), *The Great War Centenary* (brochure), p. 7. See also <http://iv.vlaanderen.be/nlapps/docs/default.asp?fid=500>.

<sup>2</sup> We shall take a detailed look at this complexity and its impact in Chapter 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ashplant, T.G., Dawson, G. and Roper, M. (2000), “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics”, in T.G. Ashplant, G. Dawson and M. Roper (eds.), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, London & New York: Routledge, p. 7 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, B. (1999), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York: Verso.

- <sup>5</sup> Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 172.
- <sup>6</sup> See Winter, J. and Sivan, E. (Eds.) (1999), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 10, 17 and 29 and Jay Winter's chapter in the same book: "Forms of kinship and remembrance in the aftermath of the Great War", p. 40-60. ([Is this an edited book? It should say so](#))
- <sup>7</sup> Ashplant, T.G., Dawson, G. and Roper, M. (2000), "The politics of war memory and commemoration: Contexts, structures and dynamics", p. 9-11.
- <sup>8</sup> Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 163.
- <sup>9</sup> Edkins, J. (2003), *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 57-110 and 216-224.
- <sup>10</sup> For the standard work about Belgium during the First World War, see De Schaepdrijver, S. (1999), *De Grootte Oorlog. Het Koninkrijk België tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, Amsterdam: Olympus.
- <sup>11</sup> See for ex. Deneckere, G. (2008), 'Plaatsen van tweedracht. Inleiding', and De Wever, B. (2008), 'Diksmuide: de IJzertoren. Strijd om de helden van de Oorlog', in: Tollebeek, J. et. al. (eds.) (2008), *België, een parcours van herinnering*, Part 2, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, p. 15-19 and p. 61-71.
- <sup>12</sup> See [www.ppu.org.uk](http://www.ppu.org.uk) and [www.whitepoppy.org.uk](http://www.whitepoppy.org.uk).
- <sup>13</sup> Van der Auwera, S. (2008), *De herdenking van de Grote Oorlog en Flanders Fields. Een beknopt overzicht in 25 staten. Vervolgonderzoek*, Antwerp: Steunpunt Buitenlands Beleid, p. 31.
- <sup>14</sup> Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 202 (see also the visitor's centre of Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke).
- <sup>15</sup> Sertyn, M. (1974), 'Avondlandstemming bij de jonge Avant-garde in Vlaanderen na 1918: inspiratiebron voor purito-flaminganten en marginale wereldverbeteraars', *BTNG*, no. 6, p. 562-579.
- <sup>16</sup> Prost, A. (1986), 'Verdun', in: Nora, P. (ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, vol. 2, La Nation, Paris: Gallimard, p. 1770.
- <sup>17</sup> Idem.
- <sup>18</sup> See [www.anti-kriegs-museum.de](http://www.anti-kriegs-museum.de).
- <sup>19</sup> Cortwright, D. (2008), *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 68 and 71-75.
- <sup>20</sup> Vandeweyer, L. (1993), 'Katholieke vredesactie in een bedreigd België 1914-1963', in: Burggraeve, R. De Tavernier, J. and Vandeweyer, L. (eds.), *Van rechtvaardige oorlog naar rechtvaardige vrede. Katholieken tussen militarisme en pacifisme in historisch-theologisch perspectief*, Leuven: University Press, p. 120 ff.
- <sup>21</sup> De Wever, B. (2008), 'Diksmuide: de IJzertoren. Strijd om de helden van de Oorlog', in: Tollebeek, J. et.al. (eds.) (2008), *België, een parcours van herinnering*, Part 2, p. 63 and 67-68.
- <sup>22</sup> In 1921, this commitment even led to the fall of the government. After the Minister of Public Works, Edward Anseele, had participated in a demonstration by the Socialist Young Guard in which a banner bearing the broken gun was carried around, his resignation was demanded and subsequently all socialist ministers resigned from office (Vermandere, M. (2001), 'Door gelijke drang bewogen? De socialistische partij en haar jeugdbeweging, 1886-1944', *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, no. 8, p. 231).
- <sup>23</sup> Bechet, C. (2008), 'La révision pacifists des manuels scolaires. Les enjeux de la mémoire de la guerre 14-18 dans l'enseignement belge de l'Entre-deux-guerres', *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse geschiedenis*, no. 20, p. 57 and 61.
- <sup>24</sup> See Castryck, G. and Duquet, N. (2010), *On positive and negative peace. Peace education for primary and secondary schools in Flanders: concept definition and analysis of the offer of projects*, Brussels: Flemish Peace Institute.
- <sup>25</sup> This paragraph relies heavily on Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 239-247.
- <sup>26</sup> Eleven November Group (1978), *Van den Grooten Oorlog. Volksboek*, Kemmel: Malegijs.
- <sup>27</sup> Cited in J. Meire (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 277 (author's translation).
- <sup>28</sup> See Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 260-273 and 283-284, and Whitmarsh, A. (2001), 'We Will Remember Them': Memory and Commemoration in War Museum, *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies*, 7 (November), p. 1-15.
- <sup>29</sup> Cited in J. Meire (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 262 (author's translation).
- <sup>30</sup> Cited in J. Meire (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 284 (author's translation).
- <sup>31</sup> Verbal communication with Jan Breyne, Brussels, 20 May 2011.
- <sup>32</sup> See [www.vredesprijs-ieper.be](http://www.vredesprijs-ieper.be).
- <sup>33</sup> War and Peace in Flanders Fields, *Policy memorandum 2008-2013* (Westhoek and province of West-Flanders), p. 4-5.
- <sup>34</sup> F. Migneault, I. la O' and M. Van Alstein (2010), *War commemoration reconsidered*, Brussels: Flemish Peace Institute, p. 29.
- <sup>35</sup> Decree of 6 July 2011 concerning the recognition of and the grant scheme for the Memorial of Flemish Liberation and Peace.
- <sup>36</sup> Bell, D. (2006), "Introduction: Memory, Trauma and World Politics", in: D. Bell (ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics. Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 1.
- <sup>37</sup> See, for example, Todman, D. (2009), "The Nineteenth Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme", p. 37.

- <sup>38</sup> G. Lipovetsky (2004), *Les temps hypermodernes*, Grasset & Fasquelle: Paris, p. 84 and 87.
- <sup>39</sup> See for example Westtoer (2008), *Toeristische valorisatie van erfgoed uit de Eerste Wereldoorlog in de Westhoek met het oog op 100 jaar Grote Oorlog (2014-18)*; Iles, J. (2008), "Encounters in the Fields – Tourism to the Battlefields on the Western Front", *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 6(2), p. 138 and 149; and Winter, C. (2009), "Tourism, Social Memory and the Great War", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(4), p. 607.
- <sup>40</sup> Ashplant, T.G., Dawson, G. and Roper, M. (2000), "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics", p. 60 ff.
- <sup>41</sup> In continuation of the initiative of the Irish Peace Tower, in September 2001 a peace school was opened in Messines; it brings together youth from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to build bridges between the two communities. (Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 286-287). See also [www.peacevillage.be](http://www.peacevillage.be).
- <sup>42</sup> Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.
- <sup>43</sup> Van der Auwera, S. (2008), *De herdenking van de Grote Oorlog en Flanders Fields. Een beknopt overzicht in 25 staten. Vervolgonderzoek*, Antwerpen: Steunpunt Buitenlands Beleid, p. 36 and 75.
- <sup>44</sup> Project office 'Centenary of the Great War in Flanders' (s.d.), *The Great War Centenary* (brochure), p. 7 (author's translation). See also <http://iv.vlaanderen.be/nlapps/docs/default.asp?id=1346&order>.
- <sup>45</sup> F. Migneault, I. la O' en M. Van Alstein (2010), *War Commemoration Reconsidered*, Brussel: Vlaams Vredesinstituut.
- <sup>46</sup> Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*.
- <sup>47</sup> Iles, J. (2008), "Encounters in the Fields – Tourism to the Battlefields on the Western Front", *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 6(2), p. 150. See also Piet Chielens: "a significant amount of British tourists come here [the Ypres Salient] with very national and imperial feelings. And that is why they keep coming." (cited in Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 225. Author's translation).
- <sup>48</sup> De Schaepdrijver, S. (2008), 'Gemartelde steden en verwoeste gewesten. Twee legaten van 1914-1918', in: Tollebeek, J. et. al. (eds.) (2008), *België, een parcours van herinnering*, Part 2, p. 206.
- <sup>49</sup> De Wever, B. (2008), 'Diksmuide: de IJzertoren. Strijd om de helden van de Oorlog', in: Tollebeek, J. et. al. (ed.) (2008), *België, een parcours van herinnering*, p. 68.
- <sup>50</sup> Meire mentions that this plurality is demonstrated for example in visitors' books at cemeteries. Australian and Canadian visitors sometimes display their pride concerning the way the war gave birth to their nation, while the English may regret that the British Empire, which presented a united front in the war, is a thing of the past. Some people write about the guilt that Germany feels about both world wars, while for others, political or national differences are irrelevant precisely because they view the war as a general human tragedy. See Meire, J. (2003), *De stilte van de Salient*, p. 284.
- <sup>51</sup> Waever, O. (2004), "Peace and Security: Two Concepts and Their Relationship", in: Guzzini, S. and Jung, D. (eds.), *Contemporary Security Analysis and Copenhagen Peace Research*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 53-65.
- <sup>52</sup> See J. Verstreken, P. de Coene and P. De Klerck, Resolutie betreffende het Vlaamse beleid voor een levende herinnering aan de Eerste Wereldoorlog (Resolution concerning the Flemish policy for a living remembrance of the First World War), session 2008-2009, document 2205 no. 4, Flemish Parliament, 7 April 2009.
- <sup>53</sup> Verhulst, J., Van Laer, J., Van Aelst, P. & Walgrave, S. (2007), *Vrede in Vlaanderen. Opinies en engagementen van Vlamingen inzake vrede en geweld*, Brussels: Flemish Peace Institute, p. 55.