

# TRANSMISSION

## A 'TRANSMEMO' podcast about the social impact of War and Occupation on family

DURATION 15/03/2019 – 15/03/2021	BUDGET 20 000 €
Valorisation of the BRAIN-be project <a href="#">TRANSMEMO</a>	

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will use the BRAIN-be TRANSMEMO project as a stepping stone to create **three podcast sound-documentaries** on the transmission of family-memories about the resistance and collaboration during the Second World War in Belgium: based first on the unique new heritage collection of 240 oral testimonies created by the TRANSMEMO research and second on the (more than 4000) oral history interviews held by the Study Centre for War and Society (CegeSoma, State Archives).

Within the framework of the TRANSMEMO project, 40 Dutch-speaking and 40 French-speaking families have been interviewed regarding the intergenerational transmission of Second World War memories, more specifically on the sensitive topics of collaboration and resistance. As such the research has created a unique heritage collection: dozens of testimonies of different age-, social-, gender- and language groups that openly talk about the way painful memories were transferred and traumas were reinforced, or memories were denied and kept quiet, within their families and social environments. The research is also able to partly integrate the historic interviews held by CegeSoma (interviewing the families of resistance fighters who themselves were interviewed by historians in the 1970s and 1980s).

The three podcast documentaries will be mainly focused on French-speaking families, because this is where an additional action can significantly benefit the overall aims of the project.

Although CegeSoma has decades of experience translating research to a more general audience, the use of this particular instrument would be a first. As such, it would test whether or not we can reach a larger – younger and more diverse – public. Furthermore, in order to benefit from concrete experience, artistic and logistical support, CegeSoma will partner with the non-profit organization Gsara, an audio and video creation platform active since 1976 (see [www.gsara.be](http://www.gsara.be)).

Our objective is to create **three sound-documentaries of approximately 20 minutes each**, made available as a podcast.

- **The first episode** is called "*Le jour où Mamy a caché des armes dans son four*", and focuses on the **communist resistance**. We were able to identify several families within the 368 interviews conducted by historian José Gotovitch, that currently form part of the CegeSoma-collection. This episode presents the testimonies of three generations of several families, through the interviews collected in 2018, and those harvested in the 1970s and 1980s by José Gotovitch. It recounts the consequences of the war for these families (the impact of living in clandestinity, of deportation, of the political choice and commitment) through the voices of the children and grandchildren, while illustrating these narratives with the testimony of the resistance fighter himself. For this episode, CegeSoma wishes to restore two pieces of historic interviews whose sound is not compatible with current radio broadcasting.
- The second episode is called "*Ma famille, cette histoire belge*". It first discusses the divergences between public memories about **resistance and collaboration** in the north and the south of Belgium, and then focuses on the **large diversity of families from a linguistic and historical point of view**. It is noteworthy that the majority of the French-speaking families that we were able to identify and integrate in the research for TRANSMEMO had in fact a Flemish, Dutch-speaking ancestor during the war. This says something about Belgium, but also about continuing cultural differences and sensibilities we encountered in 2018 while searching for interviewees. This episode uses this outcome to reflect on the how and why of this finding and what it means for our current society and how the process of post-war Belgian 'federalization' (regionalization) has shaped our own familial memory.



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- The third episode is called "*Ma famille, la guerre et ses secrets*" and focuses on the **children of the collaboration**. Although a recent book in Dutch by one of the TRANSMEMO researchers (Koen Aerts, 2018) has provided the first history of these children in Flanders, the subject remains uncharted territory – and still a taboo subject – in French-speaking Belgium. It will in fact be the **very first time that French-speaking children of Belgian collaborators will comment on their family history in such an open, outspoken and broadly accessible way**. The episode will reflect on the particular construction of public memories in Francophone Belgium as compared to those in Flanders, and the social and cultural impact for the position of families in this context.

These three episodes will be made successively available as a podcast. CegeSoma will also organize a **collective listening event, followed by a debate** among historians, the witnesses and other social actors, in the presence of the quality press in Belgium.

## Impact

The project targets various audiences depending on the distribution methods:

- The project will be broadcasted on the French-speaking radio *La Première* to reach a general public. Contacts have already been established with the culture department of RTBF (the Francophone Radio and Television Broadcasting Company). RTBF, with whom CegeSoma has been working for a long time, agreed in principle to broadcast the series.
- The documentary series will also be made available as a podcast on the CegeSoma website (a new updated institutional website will be launched in May 2019).
- Our project-partner Gsara will organize collective listening events and debates around the series, using it as a permanent education tool. CegeSoma itself will also organize one collective listening event, with a debate. Gsara will also edit them as CD's.
- Indirectly, these 'public history' initiatives will allow us to take part in academic debates about public dissemination and the social role of academic scholars as well. To this end, the TRANSMISSION project will be presented at a workshop organized by the MMC Research Center (*Centre de recherche Mondes modernes et contemporains*) at the ULB on radio creation. During this workshop, four other radio projects led by historians will be presented, including "The Stolen Brain" by Julie Deganck and Laura Dispurio. We are confident that other, similar academic opportunities to present our documentaries and podcast will offer itself.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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