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**Pillarised once, pillarised forever?  
Multidisciplinary approach of socio-political cleavages in Belgium  
(XIX – XXIth century)**

**Université libre de Bruxelles, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2017  
Brussels**

**Problematisation**

The concept of “pillarisation” borrowed from the Dutch “verzuiling” composes one of the fundamental characteristics of the Belgian society. Historically created at the beginning of the XIXth century on confessional (and philosophical) and socio-economical cleavages, this social and political system lead to the construction of separated social environments. People lived in “pillars” -founded on a single ideology (Catholicism, laicity and socialism)- which framed the life of individuals from cradle to grave through an array of organisations: schools, hospitals, mutual insurances, trade unions, youth organisations and sometimes revolving a political party. The question of depillarisation appeared in the 1990’s. Social changes, concomitant to an opening and a reconfiguration of the pillars, lead to a restructuration of society through a proliferation of new organisations. Scholars have pointed out that this phenomenon began in the 1960’s, analysing it through the idea of individualisation of society. How should the phenomenon of (de)pillarisation be studied in Belgium today? Is pillarisation still apparent in Belgium?

**Approaches**

The concepts of (de)pillarisation have foremost been studied from a theoretical perspective with a political science approach. The sociological effects of such a phenomenon, such as everyday life and individual life trajectory, the organisation of civil society, etc. are yet to be explored. The aim of our symposium is to bring a new and empirical perspective on (de)pillarisation with an emphasis on sociohistorical and field studies.

Papers may cover the following themes:

- Political decision and its consequences on organisations. What are the effects of (de)pillarisation on public policy and organisational practices?
- Institutional analysis (Trade unions, associations, schools etc.). How did the organisations react to (de)pillarisation? How did / do new institutions integrate to the Belgian institutional landscape?
- Conflicts in a (de)pillarised society. How did pillarisation handle conflicts? Is there a continuity in this conflict management despite depillarisation?

- Reconstructions of identity of and within organisations. What shape did this reconstruction take? To what extent have organisations been actors of such a change?
- Individual life trajectories and everyday experiences of (de)pillarisation. How did / does (de)pillarisation impact individuals?
- Methodological difficulties. How should researchers deal with (de)pillarisation in empirical research (archives, oral resources, interviews...)?

### Information

This symposium is organised by the collective and interdisciplinary research group entitled: “Sexual revolution and (de)pillarisation from 1960 to 2000: A Belgian specificity? Contribution to a history of gender norms and sexuality”, which was founded at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB).

This call for proposals is addressed at researchers who are working in the field of social sciences (history, sociology, criminology) on contemporary Belgium.

Your project must be written in French or English and will have the following information: first name and second name, status, home University and a project of maximum 500 words. These propositions must be addressed by mail in PDF format to both [lynn.bruyere@ulb.ac.be](mailto:lynn.bruyere@ulb.ac.be) and [as.crosetti@gmail.com](mailto:as.crosetti@gmail.com) by June 1<sup>st</sup> at the latest.

The propositions will be examined by the members of the research group. You shall receive an answer around mid-June.

The symposium will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 at the Centre d’Etude des Religions et de la Laïcité (CIERL) at the ULB. It will be followed by a publication.

Steering committee: Lynn Bruyère and Anne-Sophie Crosetti