Decolonisation of history education in Flanders in the 21st century. Thinking historically on intercultural contacts as a means to deconstruct an Occidentocentric regime of truth

Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse

Decolonisation within or of history education ?

Decolonisation is nowadays mainly addressed ***in*** history education in Flanders. It contains the analysis, addressed in the 12th grade, of the second decolonisation wave, mainly in Asia and Africa after World War II. Th first wave, except for the independence of the United States of America, is to a large extent ignored. The focus of the analysis is particularly on unequal power relations in the (geo)political and economic fields, which continued even after formal political independence (neo-colonialism).

Much less is there a decolonisation ***of*** history education, by which is meant a decolonisation of the mind : a critical reflection on the impact of colonialism on our understanding of past and present. Decolonisation then means deconstructing how colonialism shaped world views as well as assumptions about how the world, people and communities (also in relation to each other) exist, and how it helped shape a dominant narrative about and vision of the past and our prevailing historical consciousness. In concreto, decolonisation pursues abandoning a colonial mindset and an exclusively white perspective on the past, a recognition of the very existence of non-Western others (plural) and their perspectives, agency, sources, and historical narratives, and an in-depth reflection on the relationship between knowledge and power, and on the complex ways in which the past affects the present.

All of this concerns a long-term work, focused on three issues. Decolonisation requires a broad knowledge of the past ('knowing history'). Second, it requires knowledge of history ('doing history') : reflection on what sources are used to establish historical representations, on whom is attributed agency, on how narratives are constructed. Third, decolonisation is connected to the unravelling of the complex relationship between past and present as manifested for instance in processes of personal and social identity formation.

These three issues tie directly to the core of historical thinking, which since 2019 has been the new central goal of history education in Flanders. Historical thinking is primarily about understanding the past ('knowing history'), with students recognising that past and present are fundamentally different. Historical thinking hence equally focuses immediately on understanding and reflecting on the complex relationship between past, present and future. This requires also an understanding of historical practice, i.e. of how knowledge of the past is always produced in a present ('doing history').[1]

In what follows, first the need for decolonisation ***of*** history education in Flanders is addressed.[2] It is then considered how such a process can take place in history education aiming to foster historical thinking, and the challenges that arise in that respect.

1. Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse, "From Knowing the National Past to Doing History : History (Teacher) Education in Flanders Since 1918", in C. Berg & T. Christou (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of History and Social Studies Education,* New York, 2020, p. 355-386.
2. In 1989, education was formally and completely transferred from the Belgian to the regional level. This is why this contribution focuses on 'Flemish' instead of 'Belgian' history education : each of the communities in Belgium is able to make completely autonomous choices with regard to history education.

Is decolonisation of history education necessary ? The tension between scientific aspirations and a regime of truth

Since the 1990s, history education in Flanders has sought to provide an introduction to the academic discipline of history. Is decolonisation then necessary, one might ask, if the Flemish history standards already pursue a neutral-distant scholarly approach ? Research on recent practices, mainly leaning on history textbook research, shows that the answer to this question is unequivocally 'yes'. Indeed, the Occidentocentric nature of history education in Flanders hinders genuine historical thinking.[3]

A first problem is situated in terms of 'knowing history'. Flemish history education pays predominant and one-sided attention to Western history : the non-Western world is systematically ignored. This leads to a limited and narrow understanding of the past. Examples of this are countless. Africa and its history, for instance, often only appear in the context of colonialism. In so doing, African territory is actually considered *terra nullius*. In the period of colonialism, this referred to uncultivated land to which 'therefore' a property claim could be made. Here, and also in line with the old colonial master narrative, it refers to the observation that the history of Africa and its peoples prior to the arrival of Westerners is apparently not considered worth mentioning – as if those peoples had no history before Westerners arrived. This manifests itself literally in world maps included in Flemish history textbooks. On those maps, all African areas where white Europeans had not (yet) settled throughout the 19th century are intentionally left completely blank, as if they were 'empty land'. In addition, Western history is presented as simultaneously universal and unique. Values such as freedom and equality, for example, are wrongly appropriated by textbook authors as exclusively Western Enlightenment values, that have been disseminated by European powers all over the world. The textbook *Historia 5* states : "European powers introduced Asian and African societies to ideas such as freedom, equality, self-determination."[4] Examples that prove otherwise, such as the Haitian Revolution and its influence on the thinking about those values and about slavery are then largely ignored in Flemish history textbooks, as is the historical societal context in which Enlightenment philosophers operated.[5] John Locke's idea of equality, for example, is presented by almost all history textbooks as seemingly universal, when in fact it applied mainly to white males belonging to the bourgeoisie, and ironically justified social inequality. Likewise, the prejudices of Hume, Voltaire and Kant, which can be labeled racist, and their denigrating descriptions of non-white and non-Western peoples are not mentioned by history textbook authors in the description and contextualisation of those philosophers' ethics, proposed as 'universal'.

An Occidentocentric approach also poses problems with regard to 'doing history' (how is a historical representation constructed ?). In Flemish history education, for example, a one-sided focus exists on the influence of the West on the world, without reciprocity, and consequently also a one-sided attribution of agency to Western agents, resulting in a neglect of non-Western agents. A lesson in the textbook *Historia* entitled 'Europe dominates the world (ca. 1870-1914), for instance, only contains Western agents, such as Britain, France, Germany, the Royal Navy, and London.[6] Again, this is in line with the old colonial master narrative. In the same vein, textbooks easily (and sometimes even literally, as is the case in *Storia*) state the Enlightened West abolished slavery, based on

3. The term Occidentocentrism was preferred to Eurocentrism as it more accurately connects to the idea of 'the West' with alleged particular characteristics, which includes, in addition to North America, mainly Western Europe rather than e.g. Eastern Europe.
4. Hugo Van de Voorde (red.), *Historia 5,* Kapellen, 2008, p. 113.
5. Siep Stuurman, *The Invention of Humanity. Equality and Cultural Difference in World History,* Cambridge, MA-London, 2017 ; Nick Nesbitt, *Universal emancipation. The Haitian revolution and the Radical Enlightenment,* Charlottesville, 2008.
6. Hugo Van de Voorde (red.), *Historia 5,* Kapellen, 2008, p. 90-91.

a growing understanding that slavery was morally reprehensible.[7] In this continuation of the colonial civilisation myth, there is no place for the resistance and impact of the enslaved. The non-Western other is either ignored or assigned a passive role, something that is also the case throughout the entire Flemish history textbooks' account of colonialism and decolonisation, of which is stated that the West 'granted' it.[8] Spivak's 1988 question 'Can the Subaltern speak?' should therefore still be answered negatively for history education. The subaltern can also not speak through their sources either. For the focus in history education is predominantly on Western sources. A striking example can be found in the digital lesson of *Pionier 6* entitled 'Belgian Congo becomes independent'.[9] Via an inquiry of historical source excerpts, students have to answer the following central research question: how did the Congo become independent on June 30, 1960? In this respect, students are offered 32 short excerpts from historical sources. Only two of those have Congolese authors, all the others are Western sources. The perspective (and the role) of the Congolese is hence almost completely ignored. Furthermore, the focus is also on Western source types. Written sources and written cultures are valued higher than, for example, oral testimonies and cultures.

The latter is related to another essential characteristic of Occidentocentric history education: using the West as a standard by which to judge other societies, as was done in the colonial era itself. It then soon becomes apparent that non-Western societies were 'already' or 'not yet' able to do something. A lesson dedicated to 'Japan under the Meiji: a rule of conservative modernization (1867-1912)' in *Historia 5* starts with this sentence: "In 1850, Japan still was a feudal state."[10] The word 'still' is very significant here. Also, particularly for the recent past, many dubious and negative actions of the West in the world are simply omitted. The textbook *Memoria 5-6,* for example, states that the first Prime Minister of Congo, Patrice Lumumba, was "captured and murdered by his political rivals".[11] The role of the Belgian and American governments in the assassination is thus completely hidden, although it has been documented (and supported by evidence) extensively since the late 1990s.[12] In so doing a Western (moral, cultural, economic and technological) superiority is emphasized by textbook authors. Likewise, every past is then mediated through the history of the West, and the West thus appropriates a universal allure, as the model to follow. This is why Chakrabarty, among others, calls for 'provincialising' the West.[13] At the same time, Western history is presented in Flemish history textbooks as a unique march towards ever more democracy, freedom and development, to which the non-West is not yet ready. In the case of the account on the construction of railways in the colonies (as part of the *mission civilisatrice* myth) such a belief in progress can even be taken literally. Historia 5 for instance states that "the construction of transcontinental railroads has greatly promoted the development of the inland areas"[14], thereby simply ignoring that this construction only served Western interests, and brought much suffering to indigenous populations.

Out of this Occidentocentric discourse of 'the West and the Rest' stemming from the colonial era has grown, in Hall's words, a 'regime of truth' in his-

7. Gorik Goris (red.), *Storia 5,* Lier, 2001, p. 42-43.
8. Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Towards a postcolonial mind-set in a post-colonial world? Evolving representations of modern imperialism in Belgian history textbooks since 1945", in K. Van Nieuwenhuyse & J. Pires Valentim (eds.), *The Colonial Past in History Textbooks - Historical and Social Psychological Perspectives,* Charlotte, NC, 2018, p. 155-176.
9. https://www.bookwidgets.com/play/V9Q4F?
10. Hugo Van de Voorde (red.), *Historia 5,* Kapellen, 2008, p. 95.
11. Jan Bleyen et al. (red.), *Memoria 5-6,* Kapellen, 2016, p. 220.
12. See for instance Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba,* Leuven, 1999; Luc De Vos, Emmanuel Gerard & Jules Gérard-Libois, *Lumumba: de complotten? De moord,* Leuven, 2004; Emmanuel Gerard & Bruce Kuklick, *Death in the Congo. Murdering Patrice Lumumba,* Cambridge, MA, 2015.
13. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference,* Princeton, NJ, 2000.
14. Hugo Van de Voorde (red.), *Historia 5,* Kapellen, 2008, p. 93.

tory education in Flanders, widely accepted and systematically passed on, and by no means questioned or subjected to a critical look.[15] This regime of truth determines and moulds students' thinking, with far-reaching consequences. It leads to a limited, one-sided and narrow understanding of the past and of history, it keeps (the perspective of) 'the other' out of the picture, and it hinders the fostering of historical thinking among students.

Is decolonisation of history education necessary ? History and identity construction

The regime of truth, however, reaches further : it also impacts students' personal and social development. After all, starting from their own positionality, they engage with the past, connect past and present, attribute significance to it, and draw on it to construct personal and social identities and establish a sense of belonging. The Occidentocentric regime of truth in Flemish history education, however, guides such a process in a very one-sided way. It risks giving rise to feelings of Western superiority among students who consider themselves part of the Western majority group in society. An Occidentocentric approach to the past, indeed, risks provoking an understanding of the past in identitarian terms of a homogeneous Western in-group, to which positive characteristics are ascribed (developed, modern civilized, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular), and an equally homogeneous non-Western out-group to which rather negative characteristics (underdeveloped, backward, uncivilized) are ascribed. Illustrative is this statement from an interview on their views on the past with students in Flanders in 2014, at the end of their secondary school education.[16] Among other things, a white, 'autochthonous' student compared the long path to freedom, equality, and democracy he perceived in Belgium and Europe with the present-day Arab world : "They still consider religion there to be very important ; we here have gained much more freedom." In so doing, this student drew clear boundaries between what he considered the progressive' and 'free' West and the 'regressive' Arabic world, thus echoing the truth regime of 'the West versus the Rest'. At the same time, the Occidentocentric approach risks to cause feelings of alienation among students from minoritised groups, students who are labeled minorities by the majority. A student from Polish origin, yet having received her secondary education in Flanders, indicated in her interview not to attribute any significance to history education in Flanders, as it completely ignored non-Western history and failed to provide any connections with her personal, family and (non-Western) social groups' histories. An Occidentocentric approach hence accentuates pure difference (and excludes any possible commonality), and instigates a process of homogenisation instead of recognition of diversity. Saïd illustrates this mechanism crystal clear in his *Orientalism*.[17] Moreover, Occidentocentrism also fuels a nativism in which the question of who belongs here and who does not is answered on the basis of far-reaching historical roots, and with justification from colonialism, as Sharma argues.[18] In the same way that indigenous peoples were able to reclaim their own territories shortly after decolonisation, Westerners can do the same, is the short-sighted reasoning, which immediately generates a new form of (neo)colonial exclusion toward people with their roots in former colonies.

The past does not pass ; by contrast, it imposes itself in and onto the present. The identitarian dimension at play here makes the study of the past, and certainly that of the colonial past, sensitive in the Flemish history classroom. This is precisely a rea-

15. Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest : Discourse and Power", in S. Hall & B. Gieben (eds.), *Formations of modernity* (Understanding modern societies : an introduction - Book 1), Cambridge, 1992, p. 185-227.
16. Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse & Kaat Wils, "Historical narratives and national identities. A Qualitative Study of Young Adults in Flanders", in *Journal of Belgian History,* no. 45, 2015 (4), p. 40-73.
17. Edward Saïd, *Orientalism : Western Concepts of the Orient,* Harmondsworth, 1985.
18. Nandita Sharma, *Home Rule. National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants,* Durham, NC, 2020.

son, not to ignore it, yet to engage with it, and to help students make sense of that past, in cognitive and in affective terms. There are certainly plenty of sensitive issues which manifest themselves, not only in society at large, but also in the (certainly in Flemish cities increasingly multiculturally composed) history classroom, to (urgently) think historically about. An example is migration, where an often-heard slogan 'We are here because you were there' directly refers to Western colonial policies in Africa and Asia. Current debates in society at large in Flanders about stereotyping, racism and discrimination, about looted art and restitution, about apologies and reparations also touch upon the colonial past.

Thinking historically on intercultural contacts in order to realise decolonisation of history education

Thinking historically about colonialism and its impact starts with a good understanding of it. In line with what Spinoza already stated in his *Tractatus Politicus* (I, 4) in the 17th century: "Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere" [Do not mock, do not lament, do not execrate, but understand], it is important to understand, before immediately judging.[19] In terms of 'knowing history' for example, it is important to understand what colonialism essentially was not (a pure civilisation mission) and was: primarily a combination of violence, racism, profit and the ambition to transform indigenous societies.[20] In addition, a historical frame of reference needs to be built that goes beyond an Occidentocentric perspective. Establishing a cancel culture that erases parts of Western history is not appropriate. Rather, it is important to pursue a broadening of the current historical frame of reference in Flemish history education, in which new names and stories such as those of the mathematician Aryabhata, Akba the Great, the Bunyoro kingdom, and the Bantu are integrated alongside 'classics' such as the Romans, Simon Stevin, the Habsburg Empire, and Napoleon. Immediately, this involves a recognition of the history of non-Western peoples.[21]

Of course, such a broadening must be feasible. Replacing Occidentocentrism with pure world history, covering the past of every region of the world throughout human history, as is sometimes suggested in debates in Flanders[22], seems to make little sense. This would lead to very superficial, descriptive, and too often insignificant history lessons in the limited time frame available (of two hours a week for general secondary school history education in Flanders, one hour a week in technical education). Studying intercultural contacts from multiple perspectives, which is what the new history standards in Flanders since 2019 put to the fore, seems to be a more meaningful alternative. Intercultural contacts are considered by many historians to be an important engine of dynamism and change in the past.[23] Understanding its dynamics is therefore necessary in order to understand the past itself. Studying intercultural contacts from different perspectives requires at once a combined attention to Western and non-Western history and perspectives, to the interaction between both, and to reciprocal representations. It contributes to 'provincialising' the West. Also, it

19. In this position, the author's specific perspective, as a white middle-class male historian and history teacher in his forties, of course plays a role. From other experiences, perspectives and a differently experienced sense of urgency, other strategies and approaches can of course be put to the fore.

20. See Idesbald Goddeeris, Amandine Lauro & Guy Vanthemsche, *Koloniaal Congo. Een geschiedenis in vragen,* Antwerpen, 2020.

21. The inclusion of 'alien' words and (place) names also aligns, albeit to a very modest degree, with the influential plea of Ngũgĩ for decolonisation. James Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind. The Politics of Language in African Literature,* London, 1986.

22. See for instance some voices in this report: Patrick De Rynck, *Aandacht in het Vlaamse secundair onderwijs voor de bijdrage van de moslimcultuur aan de Europese beschaving. Verkennend rapport i.o.v. de Koning Boudewijnstichting,* Brussels, 2007.

23. See Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Going beyond Eurocentric us-them thinking in history education: Multiperspectivity as a tool against radicalization and for a better intercultural understanding", in N. Clycq, C. Timmerman, D. Vanheule, R. Van Caudenberg & S. Ravn (eds.), *Radicalisation. A Marginal Phenomenon or a Mirror to Society ?* (CeMis Migration and Intercultural Studies, 4), Leuven, 2019, p. 215-241.

allows for significant history. In concrete terms, it is not very significant, and unrealistic to discuss in history education all the empires on the African continent during the Early Modern Period. However, it is very interesting to focus on a specific intercultural contact such as that between the Portuguese and Congo kingdoms in the 16th century. For this provides an excellent insight into the ins and outs of these (diverse) societies, into their mutual contacts, and into the reciprocal perception of 'the other'. It also facilitates a diachronic comparison of the nature of that contact with later, e.g. 19th century African-Western, contacts that proceeded far less on equal terms. Another way of engaging with intercultural contacts is by studying, for instance, the connected histories of important cities in Flanders, such as Ostend, Antwerp and Brussels, and Central-African communities.[24]

The study of intercultural contacts also contributes to a more in-depth 'doing history'. After all, it requires polyphony: the analysis of multiple, Western and non-Western, perspectives, historical sources and source types, becoming aware of one's own perspective and positionality (as Mignolo states: "I am where I think."[25]), sensitivity for language (for instance understanding that the 'discovery' of 'America', which is how Flemish history textbook often describe the conquest of the continent, named 'Abya Yala' in indigenous Guna language, reveals a pure Occidentocentric view of the past), attributing agency to a wide range of agents, recognising diversity in the societies studied, deconstructing mechanisms of reciprocal representations, and recognising underlying narrative templates in the representation of intercultural contacts. Intercultural contacts also necessitate a broad historical context sketch, which again cuts through an Occidentocentric view. After all, they compel students to have an eye for the seemingly contradictory and therefore surprising simultaneity of e.g. (pre)modern imperialism and the Enlightenment. Such an approach avoids the pitfall of allochronism to which Flemish history textbooks often testify (a denial of the simultaneity of the existence of the 'developed' West and the 'underdeveloped' rest).[26] It also forces students to be nuanced (e.g. in the approach of the non-Western other, averse to a naive pre-modern nostalgia), and to have an eye for contradictions, to this day. Think, for example, of the EU, which profiles itself internally on values such as solidarity, freedom, equality and democracy, yet at the same time conducts a foreign policy that is at least in part neo-colonial in inspiration.[27]

In so doing, the study of intercultural contacts contributes to shatter the Occidentocentric regime of truth itself. It invites students to rethink the complex relationship between past and present, and to acquire a nuanced understanding of the effects of colonial thinking up to the present. At the same time it impacts on processes of students' identity construction. The study of intercultural contacts from multiple perspectives, including the analysis of reciprocal representations, provides an understanding of mechanisms of us-versus-them thinking and of homogenisation, and thus allows students in Flanders to critically deconstruct processes of identity construction. It offers members of the majority group opportunities to shatter an Occidentocentrically inspired triumphalism and moral superiority thinking, and members of minorised groups to experience a sense of belonging. Indeed, the study of intercultural contacts exposes difference as well as commonality, and rejects one-sidedly inspired, artificial and strict boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. At the same time, it triggers intercultural dialogue and makes processes of identity construction, including their affective dimensions, the subject of conversation.

24. For the idea of connected histories in general, see: Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected histories: Notes towards a reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia", *Modern Asian Studies,* 31, 1997, p. 735– 762.
25. Walter Mignolo, "I am where I think: Epistemology and the colonial difference", *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies,* 8 (2), 1999, p. 235-245.
26. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes Its Object,* New York, 1983.
27. Gurminder Bhambra, "Postcolonial Europe: Or, Understanding Europe in Times of the Postcolonial", in C. Rumford (ed.), *Handbook of European Studies,* Los Angeles-London, 2009, p. 69-86.

That this is necessary was recently experienced by a history teacher in Flanders who, in a literal translation of an English historical source excerpt from the end of the 18th century about the slave trade, used the word 'nigger' in a class in which one student had a black skin.[28] His classmates confronted the teacher and asked if he realised how 'unimaginably offensive he was being'. The teacher defended himself to his students by stating that he did not consider their classmate to be a black student at all but rather just a student, and that he considered skin color as a characteristic of a human being ('simply pigments') to be completely irrelevant. This response not only demonstrates a 'color-blind approach' that actually simply ignores ethno-cultural characteristics, as if ethnicity does not matter at all.[29] However, research shows that a colorblind approach precisely encourages prejudice, and makes racism less likely to be recognised.[30] It also shows that the teacher immediately made use of a cognitive register by indicating that his task was to use historical language in order to make the past understandable. In so doing, he did not thematise the emotional reaction of the students. However, students are not merely cognitive, but also affective beings. In that sense, it is also appropriate to allow affective reactions to the (colonial) past in the Flemish history classroom, to subsequently complement them with the analytical, critical and reflective perspective that historical thinking requires.

Between dream and reality: obstacles on the path to decolonising history education

Thinking historically about intercultural contacts in the pursuit of the decolonisation of history education in Flanders, however, poses an enormous challenge. For it requires, first of all, the willingness and ability of teachers and students to distance oneself from the Occidentocentric regime of truth. The fierce and emotionally charged societal debates surrounding the colonial past and/in Flemish history education clearly show that this is no sinecure. It appears not to be easy to recognise the existence of unequal power relations and to adopt multiple perspectives in order to meet 'the other'. A solid knowledge base, of both 'knowing' and 'doing history', is both a precondition and a lever for the decolonisation of history education in Flanders. However, this too is not that obvious, since building an understanding of intercultural contacts and the agency of non-Western agents in them is often not there for the taking (through easily accessible works), something that equally applies to non-Western sources. A similar observation applies to concepts that allow for the analysis of the complex ways in which the past affects the present. Consider, for example, a workable conceptual framework with regard to the construction of identities, that allows the genesis and evolution of identities through intercultural contacts to be discussed in all their complexity and sensitivity. This too is still not sufficiently available in history education in Flanders.[31]

The study of intercultural contacts also raises new challenges. Intercultural contacts as a means of decolonisation, for example, were mentioned above within the framework of 'historical thinking'. That in itself, however, is a Western concept. Does decolonisation then also require a deconstruction of this concept, and the introduction of alternative knowledge systems and epistemology? Is that possible at all, given, for example, the different Western and non-Western experience of time, space, living environment, relationship with nature, language and culture, and of dealing with the relationship between past-present-future itself? And is this desirable? Does this then still

28. Frank Saenen, "Woke of wakker in de geschiedenisles, in tijden van George Floyd?", *Streven vrijplaats,* 4 augustus 2021.
29. James Banks, "Multicultural education: Historical Development, dimensions, and practice", in *Review of Educational Research,* 19, 1993, p. 3-49.
30. Orhan Agirdag, *Onderwijs in een gekleurde samenleving,* Berchem, 2020.
31. Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse & Marjolein Wilke, "History education in Belgium/Flanders since 1945. Between a national and a global scope: Whose past, what for and for whom?", *Bulletin du CREAS,* 7, 2020, p. 65-76.

leave (sufficient) common ground for dialogue and for mutual understanding? This is a question on which scholars, in Flanders and abroad, have not yet reached an answer, let alone a consensus.[32]

In any case, it should be clear that decolonisation through historical thinking about intercultural contacts demands a great deal from Flemish history teachers. In order to equip them for these challenges, it is crucial to provide a thorough (intercultural) historical and teacher training, professional development initiatives, and exemplary powerful learning environments. This immediately points to the importance of good connections between secondary school history education and academic historiography, and to the need to vulgarise academic knowledge through publications and source editions. What can also give solace is the development of cooperative ventures with scholars and teachers in the South of the world, on equal terms. It is from such intercultural dialogue, precisely, that more in-depth understanding of the history of intercultural contacts can also emerge.

Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse has a PhD in history, and is currently associate professor in History Didactics at Leuven University (Belgium). His main research interests related to history education are the position of the present, the use of historical sources, the attribution of agency, the link between historical narratives and identification and between historical thinking and civic attitudes, and historical representations of colonial pasts in formal and non-formal educational settings.

32. See e.g. Peter Seixas, "Indigenous Historical Consciousness. An Oxymoron or a Dialogue?", in M. Carretero, M. Asensio & M. Rodriguez-Moneo (eds.), *History education and the construction of national identities*, Charlotte, NC, 2012, p. 125-138.