

Great War from Below (BRAIN-Belspo)

2017-2018 Report Follow-Up Committee

Meeting Brussels, 13 December 2017

Present: GWP-partners and researchers and as members of the committee :
Sophie De Schaepdrijver; Geneviève Warland and Michel Oris.

Brief Meeting Report by Nico Wouters

Over the past year, good progress has been made by all individual researchers. At the same time, it is clear that the PhD projects face some delay. Instead of June 2018, the PhD final drafts are now expected for September/October 2018.

A point deserving attention is that one of the three PhD students, Fabian Van Wesemael (UGent-UNamur), has left the project (and academia in general) in 2017 for personal reasons. Since replacing him with another PhD student was not feasible given the timing of the project, the project recruited a postdoc to replace him. Martin Schoups (UGent) worked together with project-partner Antoon Vrints (UGent) on the thematic of the impact of WWI on ex-soldiers, and are now finalizing a joint book on the theme. The implication therefore is that the project will result in one less doctorate thesis (but on the positive side, that a book publication on the same topic of Belgian veterans will be ready sooner than anticipated).

Saskia Hin (KULeuven) is working together with Sandra Bree (external to the project) on an edited volume on marriage and divorce across Europe, materializing the results of the conference held on this theme in October 2017 (<https://soc.kuleuven.be/ceso/fapos/calendar/impact-wwi-conference>).

Following the delay of the two remaining PhD projects (collaborators/resistance fighters ; forced labourers), it has been decided that it makes more sense to postpone the final conference (perhaps even to the (early) spring of 2019), once the PhD theses have been defended and more research results have been published.

The GWB members are in favour of **embedding this final presentation of results into a broader context of the results of other academic and non-academic projects on WWI held during the centennial period**. Apart from the state of the individual research, this was an issue of discussion during the meeting of the committee

While Sophie de Schaepdrijver was more in favour of a Belgium-only perspective, others including Genevieve Warland and Michel Oris preferred to

include a comparative perspective. The GWB team in general favours this option, so we will probably opt for a comparative perspective.

Several names were suggested as possible speakers at this event: Tammy Proctor, Utah State (who might well be in Europe in 2018-2019, author of "Civilians in a World At War"); Martha Hanna (University of Colorado, author of "Your Death Would Be Mine"); Jens Thiel (who follows the work of Arnaud and is one of the best informed scholars on the deportations to Germany and forced labor); and Ioan Bolovan, who recently organized an international workshop in Cluj, Romania.

Regarding online platforms that would allow for the preservation of the continued storage of research results and materials, committee member Sophie de Schaepdrijver asked if Ghent University Library would be able to provide such an online platform, with library access accorded to the participants in GWB. This along the lines of libraries in the US, which engage in such "digital humanities" projects. Genevieve Warland asked if the CegeSoma might also be able to play this role. Nico Wouters and Anton Vrints will look into possibilities for this.

Finally, the best way to create visibility for the results of the project was discussed, and committee members were asked for their input on events, publicity channels, etc. that the GWB might know now of and that would be suitable for these aims. Sophie de Schaepdrijver emphasized that the best way to create visibility (both towards scholars and towards the educated public) is, quite simply, a book: a good edited volume, possibly illustrated, published by an active university press which will actively seek reviews, and makes sure the book is well distributed. Nico Wouters remarked that such a volume is already foreseen, edited by Chantal Kesteloot (CegeSoma) and Laurence Van Ypersele (UCL) and that several GWB-researchers participate to this volume with a thematic chapter. Publication of this book is foreseen in the Summer of 2018.

At the same time, it was emphasized by committee members that the project should not be too worried, since in Belgium the press and other media are generally very interested in the topic (e.g. Christian Laporte at Le Soir, the broadcast with an emission like "3un jour dans l'histoire" by Laurent Dehossay).