

TIC-BELGIUM

Transnational Belgium. International social and legal reform organizations and congresses, 1815-1914

DURATION
1/10/2013 - 31/12/2017

BUDGET
910.891 €

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Building on the latest innovations in digital humanities, this project opens new perspectives on the history of social and legal reform in the period 1815-1914, with a special emphasis on Belgium. At a European level, the project shows the ways in which local and national social welfare regimes emerged in this period and demonstrates that such arrangements were deeply embedded in transnational contacts facilitated by temporary intellectual migration. Temporary intellectual migration includes mobility of persons (administrators and politicians, academic researchers, lecturers, students, conference-tourists, etc.), knowledge and resources. Within this broader context, the project focuses in particular on the involvement of Belgian social and legal reformers, and highlights their activities at home and abroad.



The overall aim of the project is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of local activism, national reform agendas and the transnational circulation of ideas and practices related to social welfare. It is only through collaborative research that we are able to assess the special position of Belgium as a hub of contacts and transfers across borders. The recently founded Virtual Research Environment (VRE) for the study of 19th and early 20th century international organizations and congresses, TIC Collaborative provides a shared database and online access to dispersed sources from archives and libraries across Europe and the rest of the world. From the onset the multidisciplinary collaboration between legal and social historians, sociologists, digital research infrastructure specialists and archivists is user driven. Researchers are invited to get involved in selecting the sources, in choosing the appropriate data and data structures, and in amending metadata with research oriented information. TIC-Collaborative will be adjusted in a tailor-made way taking into account the particular needs of all the partners of the project, so that it encourages and facilitates collaborative research.

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Beyond the history of social reform and the attempt to bring particular collections and databases together, the use of a VRE allows the development and assessment of methodologies in the field of digital humanities. Therefore the TIC-Collaborative VRE will serve as a pilot case within the recently founded Flemish/Belgian branch of DARIAH (Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities) (DARIAH-VL/BE). Researchers in the humanities who want to make use of digital analytical tools often face two problems: the tools are developed in an ad hoc manner within the scope of a particular research project and are not evaluated or communicated outside the project context. Secondly, research projects require specific types of scholarly data resources in combination with specific tools. To match tools and research questions is therefore a complex activity. In order to valorize analytical tools better and exchange expertise, DARIAH-VL/BE aims to set up a common standards-based infrastructure offering these tools as a service for all research projects, together with a documentation knowledge base of tools, standards and best practices. Being a pilot project within DARIAH-VL, TIC-Collaborative will contribute to this.

The focus on Belgium is particularly relevant for both the methodological and thematic objectives:

- Thematic objective 1. Make an empirical contribution to the understanding of the transnational field of social and legal reform, and of long term dynamics of contention, by highlighting the special role of Belgium and Belgian social and legal reformers in the transfers and exchanges of 'policy-relevant' knowledge.
- Thematic objective 2. The re-evaluation of successes and failures of the international intellectual dynamics in socio-legal reforms.
- Methodological objective 1. Apply and develop blueprints for the construction of virtual research environments in a Belgian research environment and state of the art scanning and OCR processing of documents.
- Methodological objective 2. Adopting advanced mining and network-analytical tools for historical analysis of both structured (databases) and non-structured data (documents).

These interrelated objectives will be achieved respectively in each Work Package:

- WP 1 Thematic work package 1. A diachronic inter-organizational network approach towards coherent subgroups/cohorts of rooted cosmopolitans (1815-1914) – UGent/UMaastricht
- WP 2 Thematic work package 2. Establishing a legal paradise in a new country? Belgian reformers in 19th c. international social debate and national reforms – UCL/UGent
- WP 3. Trace, select, digitize and present Belgian sources for the study of transnational legal and social reform (1815-1914) – State Archives
- WP 4 Applying Linked Data principles upon the research corpus – ULB
- WP 5. Development of tools and maintenance TIC Collaborative - UGent and UMaasticht



CONTACT INFORMATION

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LINKS

Project website
<http://www.tic.ugent.be/>

UGent
Ghent Centre for Digital Humanities
<http://www.gcdh.ugent.be/>
Research Unit Social History Since 1750
<http://www.socialhistory.ugent.be>

UCL – Centre d’Histoire du droit de de la justice
<https://www.uclouvain.be/chdj.html>

ULB – Information and communication science dept.
<http://sic.ulb.ac.be/>

UMaastricht
<http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/Faculties/FASoS/Theme/AboutTheFaculty/OrganisationalStructure/Departments/History.htm>