

## **Abstracts 5th Contact Day Jewish Studies on the Low Countries, 22 May 2012**

### ***Session I: (Colonial) State Control, Nationality and Jewish Identity***

#### **Jessica Roitman, *Creating Confusion in the Colonies: Negotiating Nationality across Imperial Boundaries***

Throughout early modern Europe, Jews were routinely presumed to be aliens unless proven otherwise, and, thus devoid of many legal rights relative to property that were inherent to “legitimate” subjects. This struggle for the recognition of legitimacy, when transferred to the overseas possessions of England and the Dutch Republic in the Atlantic in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-centuries became, largely, a struggle over economic privilege— specifically, over the right to participate in developing markets that focused on transatlantic exchange. In this scenario, the rules for determining the subject’s true allegiance and his claim to belong – indeed, the very nature of his subjecthood – became the means of demarcating economic turf: those who found themselves unable to prove their allegiance to the satisfaction of local authorities were economically disenfranchised. This paper will examine what distinctions of allegiance and subjecthood meant for the peoples that settled in the colonies or overseas trading stations of the Dutch and English in the Atlantic in the 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-centuries. Most particularly, the paper will examine how transnational diasporic populations such as the Sephardim, who scrambled ideas of “national” allegiances, negotiated nationality across the imperial boundaries.

For instance, Royal Customs agent Samuel Hayne from Falmouth examined the cargo of the ship *Experiment* in 1680 only to find that goods entered under the name of the captain were in fact consigned to 35 different traders – all, according to Hayne’s account, allegedly Jews. It was Hayne’s accusation that, by falsely registering the goods, the merchants and the captain had attempted to cheat the Crown out of the £154 in customs duty that would ordinarily have been assessed as Aliens duty under the Navigation Acts, had the true state of ownership been declared upon the ship’s arrival. Hayne’s case hinged on the claim that the Jewish merchants were not entitled to conduct trade, either in England or its possessions, as English subjects. Likewise, in the Dutch colony of New Netherland, Jewish settler Asser Levy claimed in 1657 that “*burgherschap*” ought not be refused him as he “kept watch and ward like other Burghers . . . and he showed a *burgher* certificate from the City of Amsterdam that . . . he is *Burgher* here. “

This paper will compare and contrast the entangled histories of the Dutch and English Atlantic empires through the lens of the (largely Sephardic) settlers and how they negotiated ideas of nationality across imperial boundaries.

#### **Tsila Rådecker, *Moral Hygiene and Jewish Religious Practice in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands***

This paper investigates the medicalization of society in the nineteenth century and the extension of medical discourse into the political, social and religious fields. Interesting especially, was the government’s legitimization of control of Jewish religious practices through fear for disease and contamination. In defence of public health, the government redefined religious symbols, like circumcision, as medical practice and thus claimed authority over it.

The reconstruction of the religious sphere went hand in hand with a moral elevation of the masses. Cholera, for instance, was a poor men’s disease and it functioned as a metaphor for the lower classes incivility and dirtiness; their ill behavior attracted the disease. This

symbiosis of ethics and medicine, which I would like to call moral hygiene, functioned as a powerful concept in politics. Outbreaks of cholera in 1832 and 1855 compelled the government to convoke the rabbinate to discuss religious precautions for the disease. Their advice reflects a shift in beliefs about its origins and therefore also in its remedy. In the first advice, physical causes, such as living conditions, were emphasized. By the time the second epidemic erupted, medical discourse had changed and, the rabbis now focused on the morals of their community. To halt the disease, Jews had to reform their rituals and adopt Christian manners during service. So, noise in the synagogue became unhygienic and the savageness of Jewish ritual a concern of public health.

The imagery of the poor living conditions in the Jewish neighborhood blended with religious polemics to create a powerful idea of a Jew who was both internally as well as externally unhygienic. The medical concept of hygiene therefore legitimized state control and criminalized certain aspects of religious practice.

## ***Session II: Jewish Women's Identity***

### ***Judith van der Wel, Three Generations Dutch Women and their (Religious) Jewish Identities***

In this case study the narrative identities of three generations Jewish women from the Netherlands are being explored. The women, a grandmother J. (1927), her daughter F. (1960) and granddaughter R. (1987), emphasize different aspects of their Jewish identity in their life stories compared to each other and to different stages and social contexts of their own lives.

In order to study the nuances and developments in their identities, J., F. and R. were interviewed according to the 'biographical narrative interviewing method' of Fritz Schütze and others. The collected life stories were placed in their historical context and analyzed psychologically. Seven aspects of Jewish identity were studied in more detail: 1) religion, 2) cultural traditions, 3) Jewish family, 4) sense of belongingness to the Jewish people, 5) relationship with Israel, 6) the Shoah and 7) anti-Semitism. The concept 'religion' was also studied in aspects such as eating kosher, keeping Shabbat and celebrating Jewish holidays.

In this case study, the Shoah makes up an important part of the identities of the interviewees. J. has suffered from the atrocities of the Shoah directly and still deals with symptoms of a post traumatic stress disorder. Hence, F. used to take care of her mother since she was four years old (parentification), until she became aware of this in psychological therapy. F.'s daughter R. also recognizes the impact of the Shoah on her family, including herself.

Next to the Shoah, the social democratic family in which J. was raised seems to have influenced the values of J., her daughter and granddaughter. J., F. and R. share a worldview in which it is more important to be a good person than to follow precisely the commitments of the Torah. J. and her granddaughter R. keep certain religious traditions, yet, more out of solidarity with the Jewish community and the cultural tradition than because of their beliefs. F. is the least religious.

Last, it was found that an eighth aspect should be added as part of Jewish identity, that is, Jewish social environment. R. has been brought up in a much more Jewish environment than her mother and grandmother, visiting Jewish schools and youth clubs. This can account for the fact that she holds more religious traditions than her mother and grandmother and has a stronger commitment to Israel.

### **Efrat Tzadik, *Jewish Women in the Belgian Working Place – An Anthropological View***

This proposed presentation discusses Jewish identity in the Belgium workplace. This research aims to understand accommodation of the Jewish community in Belgium. This research proposes to look into daily experiences of women in the workplace rather than articles of law. It debates the relationship between Jewish identity and the work place with a focus on gender. An interesting question that has resulted from this process is how Judaism, as identity, evolves to meet the new demands in today's workplace. In fact, in some cases, some religious practices have been modified due to today's lifestyles.

This research also questions how experiencing new cultures creates a number of coping mechanisms for the Jewish community as a whole. What are these mechanisms?

Judaism is often perceived as related to Israel and cannot be separated from it. This puts a lot of pressure on Jews when they work in a non- Jewish society. How do women handle this situation in the work place is another question posted.

One lesser known Jewish community is the Jewish Orthodoxy in Brussels. Issues arising in the Belgian capital include coping with the obstacles associated with working with non-religious and non-Jewish people from across the European Union. This research will thus detail what Jewish law demands in certain situations and how it is interpreted in daily life.

The content of this research is based on interviews and field work using participatory observation.

#### Research questions:

This research questions the relationship Jewish women have with their workplace.

The first question looks at the relationship between the Jewish identities of the women and the choice of work they do. In other words, is there a link between the choice of workplace and the way a woman sees her Jewish identity?

The second question examines the experience women have in their workplace in relation to their Judaism. How do women experience their Judaism in the workplace? Do they make any compromises? If yes, what are they?

The third question asks to what extent women take their Jewish identity and how this influences their daily interaction with their colleagues.

### ***Session III: Jewish Diamond Workers and Migration***

#### ***Youssef de Conink, Migration of Amsterdam Jewish Diamond Workers and Traders to Antwerp 1865-1880***

The Cape Era, a mythical time in the history of diamonds, implicates an increase in scale of trade, production and consumption of diamonds. The blooming period of the Cape Era is caused by a sudden and enormous growth in the offer of rough South-African diamonds and took place around the early seventies of the nineteenth century. The rising scale of trade goes hand in hand with a rising level of migration between the diamond centers of Amsterdam and the upcoming one of Antwerp. My research studies the nature and evolution of the migratory movement of diamond traders and workers to Antwerp before, during and after the Cape Era. The primary sources are the 'vreemdelingendossiers' (administrative files that have been made of every newcomer to Antwerp). With the use of eclectic archival sources I describe briefly the situation of the upcoming Antwerp diamond industry, in which the migratory movement has to be clarified. The emphasis of the research lies however on the collective biography which has been made of the Amsterdam Jewish migrants who leave for Antwerp.

**Huibert Schijf & Peter Tammes, *Trade Union Membership of Jewish Diamond Workers, 1898-1914: Integration, Discipline, and Migration***

In 1894, Jewish and non-Jewish workers in the diamond industry in Amsterdam were united in one trade union, the Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerdersbond (ANDB) [General Dutch Diamond Workers' Union]. Trading and processing of diamonds had a long tradition among the Jewish working population of the city of Amsterdam. This resulted in an overrepresentation of Jews in the ANDB, whereas the Jewish community in Amsterdam constituted a religious minority of about ten per cent. In a pre-WWII study, Heertje (1936) described the rise of the ANDB, the (economic) ups and downs in the diamond industry, and stressed the socialist orientation among many diamond workers. According to Bloemgarten (1996), the chairman and co-founder of the ANDB, Henri Polak, contributed to this socialist orientation within this union and accordingly to the emancipation and integration of its Jewish members. This process of integration and emancipation of Jewish members of the ANDB was not unique, however, as similar processes occurred among union workers in Paris and London, though the pace of integration varied greatly (Hofmeester 2004).

In this paper, we expand on what we know about the integration process of diamond workers by presenting data of individual members of the ANDB. One of the key transitions in integration research is residential segregation. Jews resided for centuries in an eastern part of Amsterdam, also known as the Jewish district. When and whom among the Jewish diamond workers started to leave the Jewish district, and did they leave this district in a higher pace than Jews occupied in other industries? In relation to leaving the Jewish district, we study the migration of diamond workers, most often to Antwerp that had also an important diamond industry and a fast growing Jewish community. Who migrated when to Antwerp? We can think of unemployed diamond workers who tried to seek new opportunities, or Jews who tried to strengthen the ties with their abroad family or co-religionist. Moreover, while this migration opportunity might have been more favourable for Jewish than non-Jewish diamond workers, did this prevent Jewish diamond workers to switch to other occupations? Besides social or structural integration, we can think of identificational or cultural integration. This is related to customs, norms and values. In this paper we focus on financial discipline, or norms on payments and having debts: did Jewish union members had lower debts, and did they receive less often disciplinary actions than their non-Jewish co-workers?

To answer these questions we collected data from the ANDB membership cards, archived at the International Institute for Social History (IISH). From January 1898 onwards, the ANDB introduced such a card for each member that gives information on their career development, living address, migration, contribution payment, and unemployment. These cards provide an excellent opportunity to study integration and migration processes of individual members systematically. We drew a random sample of 850 trade unionist, both men and women, Jewish and non-Jewish. All of them became a member of the ANDB before the year 1914. We collected the information on their cards until 1914, as the beginning of the First World War marks a watershed in the diamond industry in Amsterdam, and we put these data in a computer database.

**Peter Tammes & Karin Hofmeester, *Eastern European Jewish Immigrants in Amsterdam 1880-1914: Immigrant Aid, Responses in the Jewish Press and Settlement Patterns***

The migration of Eastern European Jews during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was immense. In the Netherlands, Rotterdam and Amsterdam served as main points of arrival and departure. Although the relative number of Jews arriving in the Netherlands was rather small compared to world

wide Jewish migration, a considerable number of Jews transmigrated while some stayed and settled in these cities. In this paper we focus on the arrival of Eastern European Jews in Amsterdam and the relief they received. First, this paper examines the news coverage of pogroms in Russia and the arrival of Eastern European Jewish migrants in Jewish newspapers, and the set-up of local philanthropic organizations and their objectives as activities. This does not only inform us about how many migrants received support and what kind of help they received, it also learns us about the perception of Dutch Jews and expands on what we know of the perception of native Jews towards Eastern European Jewish immigrants: strangers or co-religionist. Whereas a majority transmigrated, some Eastern European Jews stayed. Second, this paper will examine how many and who stayed (temporarily) in Amsterdam according to country of origin, occupation, age, and gender. Furthermore, this paper examines the (first) address of these migrants to indicate whether they settled in the Jewish neighborhood or in another district, and whether these migrants lived close together, expanding on what we know about the relations between native Dutch Jews and Jewish immigrants. Moreover, this paper will finally examine the set-up of organization by these immigrants. To study the arrival, relief, migration and settlement, we study the news coverage in the New Israelite Weekly (NIW) and make use of alien registers [vreemdelingenregisters].

### ***Session IV: Transnational Migration: Antwerp as a Transit City in Jewish Migration***

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on, Antwerp was one of the most important ports for Jewish emigration from Eastern and Central Europe. Every year, thousands of them passed through the port, with the highest numbers between 1900 and 1913. The Red Star Line shipping company played a major role in this transit migration. Founded in 1873, the company remained active until 1934 and transported millions of emigrants from all over Europe to the United States and Canada. Many of them were Jews. In 1935 the German Jewish shipbroker Arnold Bernstein acquired the remaining ships of the liquidated company. He continued a 'Red Star Line'-service from various ports, amongst which Antwerp remained important. He played a significant role in the transportation of Jewish refugees abroad during the Nazi-era.

In this session, we will look at Antwerp as a place of transit, moreover of Jewish transit. Firstly, we will focus on the story of the passengers of the Red Star Line, and secondly on Ezra, an Antwerp Jewish aid organization that assisted the Jewish transit migrants.

#### ***Bram Beelaert & Mandy Nauwelaerts, The Jewish Emigrant Experience: Voices and Stories from the Red Star Line Museum***

Red Star Line passengers hailed from all countries and regions of Europe. The first big wave of migration was primarily Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Scandinavian. Antwerp was a port of departure mainly for German nationals, and to a lesser extent Swiss, Belgian and Dutch nationals. In the 1880s migration fever began to spread to Eastern and Southern Europe. By the turn of the century the migrants from these regions outnumbered all others. After 1890, travelers to the new world were mainly from the Austrian-Hungarian dual monarchy and Czarist Russia. Russian transmigration began to increase after 1895.

Not until the 1890s was the Jewish minority in Russia officially encouraged to emigrate to the West. The expulsion of Jews from Moscow in 1891 was a significant turning point in this regard. In 1902, 15,726 passengers from Russia embarked, twice the number of the year before. 1906 was a high point with 35,724 people, and after a short dip the upward trend

remained through 1913, when almost 50,000 Russians, most of them Jews, departed for the new world from Antwerp.

After the First World War, a new emigration movement started in Eastern Europe. The Russian Civil War, the disputes regarding the borders following the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy and, above all, the war between the Soviet Union and Poland drove thousands of people to flee. A rush of Jewish migrants arrived in Antwerp.

The Jewish community mobilized en masse to offer fellow Jews in the main transfer cities logistic and financial support. Jews who settled in Antwerp found themselves in a close-knit social and religious Jewish network with numerous thriving organizations. In Antwerp, migrants were assisted by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Comité de Secours aux Israélites expulsés de Russie and Ezra. Many migrants, especially Russian and Polish Jews, got stranded in Antwerp because they didn't pass the Red Star Line medical inspection or because they didn't have enough money. They often found jobs in the emerging diamond sector.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that traces of Antwerp can be found in Yiddish literature. In her autobiographical novel, *Der sheydim tants* (The Devil's Dance), Ester Kreitman, née Hinde Ester Singer, the older sister of Bashevis Singer, relates the autobiographical story of a Jewish Polish girl on the eve of World War II who marries a diamond cutter working in Antwerp named Avrom Kreitman. Kreitman himself had fled Poland to avoid military conscription. Sholem Aleichem wrote in his novel *Motl, Peysi the Cantor's Son*: "Whoever you meet is either a cutter, a grinder or a polisher. Many youngsters from our gang have stayed behind to become cutters."

By the late nineteenth century, Antwerp had a thriving Jewish community of Russian-Jewish immigrants who observed the rules of Orthodox Judaism. A shtetl with shops and prayer houses had developed in the streets around Central Station. According to Aleichem: "... in other cities all the people were Germans, and here in Antwerp we are among our own people. You can even hear a Yiddish word." Every possible political affiliation was represented. Organized religious life was Orthodox. Schools offered both secular and religious education. Numerous magazines and papers were published in Yiddish, French and Dutch.

Still, for the vast majority of Russian and Polish Jews, Antwerp was only a place to pass through, the port of departure from the old continent.

Since migration was stimulated primarily by the success of pioneers, a pattern emerged where new adventurers followed in the footsteps of family and friends. Many successful migrants paid for trips by sending money or pre-paid tickets from the USA to European recipients. At least 30 percent of all tickets were sold in America. Depending on the origin of the migrants, this number could exceed 50%. This was the case for Jewish passengers who were fleeing from economic and political oppression. Migrant agents and philanthropic organizations played a crucial role in this respect.

Some of the passengers who left for the New World via Antwerp went on to become world famous in the areas of politics, music, and even ... nuclear submarines. In 1906, for example, eight-year old Golda Mabovitz (the future Israeli premier Golda Meir) traveled with her mother and little sister from Kiev in the Ukraine via Antwerp to Milwaukee in the US, where her father had settled.

In this presentation, we will go deeper into some personal stories of famous and less famous Jewish passengers of the Red Star Line, to illustrate the Jewish emigrant experience. They will feature prominently in the new Red Star Line Museum. It will open its doors in Antwerp in 2013 and will be dedicated to the history of the shipping company and its passengers. That story will be presented against a broader background of global human mobility.

**Lien Vloeberghs, *Ezra, an Antwerp Jewish Aid Organization for Jewish Transit Migrants, 1918-1940***

During these years of Jewish transit, also a growing and flourishing Jewish community existed in Antwerp. So an interesting question to ask, is how this community reacted to the passing-by of Jews from Eastern and Central Europe through 'their' city. To answer this question, we will look at the 'Ezra', this is an organization that was established in 1903 by Jews from the Antwerp community, to help the Jewish transit migrants. Ezra gave the emigrants financial support, helped them getting medical care, assisted with legal documents and organised their stay in the city.

The presentation focuses on the period between the two World Wars, when trans-Atlantic migration was becoming ever more difficult for Jews, because migration restrictions were issued towards them in almost all countries. This meant they had to wait for a long time in the Antwerp port in order to travel along, which was a big difference with the situation before the First World War. From 1918 until 1929, most of these migrants were Poles or other Eastern European Jews. Because of the migration restrictions and the economic depression, their numbers started to diminish from 1930 on. In 1933, Jewish refugees from the Third Reich started to arrive in Belgium. Especially in 1938/9 the influx was enormous and it was difficult for the Antwerp Jewish community to handle. This influx combined with a situation in which most of the world's countries had closed their doors for Jews, meant an immediate relief crisis.

In this context of (changing) Jewish transit migration, we will look at what Ezra meant for the migrants and refugees. Ezra had for sure an impact on the migration flow because they could solve problems and opened up migration possibilities for the individual migrants. The board members of Ezra worked as volunteers, and they spent their own time and money on aiding the passers-by. So how can we interpret this generous work? To do this, a comparison with a German Jewish organization that assisted the transit migrants (the Hilfsverein) will be considered.

Furthermore, where did Ezra get its finances from? How did they manage to supply the migrants in their daily needs, like food, residence and clothes? How did Ezra get all the legal documents and visas that the migrants needed? How did they know when migration quota filled up and when they could send some of their migrants? To completely understand Ezra's work, we have to look at the institutions Ezra cooperated with in its daily work. It is only through looking at this network, that we can understand how Ezra was able to send waiting migrants to overseas destinations. We will look specifically at the relationship with other organizations in the Antwerp Jewish community, with the Belgian Emigration Officer (who worked for the Foreign Affairs minister), with embassies and consulates and with international Jewish migration organizations.

***Session V: The persecution of Jews during the Second World War and its Consequences***

**Antoine Burgard, *For a Comparative History of Holocaust Orphans Rescue Projects: the Work of the AIVG (Aide aux Israélites Victimes de la Guerre) in Belgium and of the OSE (Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants) in France***

In the immediate postwar, facing tremendous difficulties, French and Belgian Jewish communities were building ambitious projects to rescue Holocaust orphans.

While keeping in mind a first year in UQAM (Canada) working on a quite similar case in Montreal, we now want to focus on the work of the Aide aux Israélites Victimes de la Guerre (AIVG) in Belgium and of the Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE) in France. Their work is a

fascinating object of study which brings forward multiple questions, especially through a comparative approach.

By this complex but really stimulating and promising methodological choice, we want to identify both common and divergent elements in the functioning of the organization itself and its interactions with other actors (local Jewish communities, states, Jewish and non-Jewish refugee organizations).

These quite different organizations (AIVG was created in 1945 and OSE in 1912) were demonstrating various but always innovative educational methods (self-government, co-administration...) and different attitudes toward religion or Zionism which reflect specific interactions with governmental institutions or with local Jewish leaders.

They also had different ways to deal with the “American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee” and its major influence, particularly on the reception of new social work practices imported from the United States.

Thus we want to highlight how these two projects symbolize the huge changes of the postwar Jewish social work, through its professionalization and institutionalization, in other words, through the development of a totally new approach of working.

By accompanying those children throughout their harsh (re)learning of life, most of the social workers were pioneers; they were the first to listen to the children experiences, the first to face the unthinkable. Their determination, their courage but also their mistakes and their misunderstandings greatly contributed to build new definitions, new visions of Judaism in postwar Europe.

#### **Casper van der Veen, *Sally Dormits (1909 - 1942) and the 'Nederlandse Volksmilitie' (NVM): A Jewish Communist Resistance Group in Rotterdam***

I am currently working on an article on the Dutch Jewish resistance group called the “Nederlandse Volksmilitie” (NVM), which operated in and around Rotterdam during 1942 and 1943. It consisted mainly of Jewish opponents of the German Occupation which had communist sympathies. Its leader and most active member, Sally Dormits, was of Jewish descent. Some members were linked to the underground Dutch Communist Party (CPN). Their first serious action of resistance was a failed sabotage attack on a German train on the railway tracks between the stations “Rotterdam Delftsche Poort” and “Rotterdam Beurs”. The explosive, meant to damage and derail the train, accidentally blew up prematurely because a German inspector activated the explosive device by hitting a thread with his bicycle, leaving him seriously wounded. This action, together with the arson of a German storage building, would lead to the hunting down and arresting of several member of the responsible resistance group, the NVM, between October 1942 and January 1943.

Very little has been written on the “Nederlandse Volksmilitie”. In my article, I want to research and write the history of this little known resistance group. This will fill a gap in the historiography of the Dutch and Jewish resistance during World War II. Also, it could possibly provide new insights on Jewish resistance, Communist resistance, resistance in Rotterdam, and German intelligence and counter-intelligence.

I have recently begun collecting research data on the NVM. I wish to write an article on the history, actions, and fate of the NVM. I wish to place this narrative in a historical context of Dutch resistance groups in general, with special attention for the Jewish character of the NVM. This will result in a history of the NVM, interacting with the larger, general history of the German Occupation and the Dutch Resistance.

I think this article will be valuable for Dutch Jewish historiography for the reasons I have given above. I have professionally dealt with the history and historiography of Dutch resistance and the German Occupation before. In September 2011, my MA Thesis on the historiography of the *Englandspiel* was added to the library of the “Dutch Institute for War



Documentation" (NIOD). An academic article dealing with the same subject is currently being reviewed by the "Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis" (TvG). I am still looking for a place to publish and present my planned article and I hope that the "5th Contact Day Jewish Studies on the Low Countries" will be a suitable occasion to do this.

## ***Session VI: Jewish Archives on the Low Countries***

### ***Gertjan Desmet & Pascale Falek-Alhadeff, Archival Source Guide on Judaism and the Jewish Community in Belgium, 19th-20th Century. Preliminary findings***

Sources with regard to Judaism and the Jewish populations in Belgium are numerous. Unfortunately, they are often overlooked or even unknown, and scattered over a large number of private and public institutions. Belgian and foreign researchers have been deploring the absence of a scientific instrument providing them with a survey of the available source material. Therefore, the State Archives decided to take the lead and publish an archival source guide. This guide will correspond to three main objectives: (1) the duty to maintain our collective memory; (2) a fundamental support of scientific research; (3) a substantial support of genealogical research. In addition to the classic publication, we plan to also launch the guide in an online-database.

This two-year research project started in September 2011. First, the archival material kept by the State archives and after that the sources of Belgian public institutions were examined. The final phase encompasses research of the archives kept by private institutions. The methodology used for this project is twofold. Firstly, the project relies on a thorough understanding of the organisation of the Jewish community in Belgium (in the broadest sense), as well as the many different ways in which the State touches upon the lives of the people in that community. Secondly, the guide is structured according to the widely accepted ISAD(G), ISAAR(CPF) and ISDIAH standards. Each creator and its relevant fonds are described in detailed notes.

If one of the main goals of this project is to discover new source material, another objective aims to point out well-known fonds that were not used yet in order to study the Jewish population in Belgium. The individual records, filled in by each enterprise, of the economic census of 1930 constitute an excellent example. They provide us with many details on independents and firms active in Belgium (such as the name of the owner, his nationality, the number of employees, what kind of products were sold or made, etc) and are prime sources for socio-economic historical research. Other fonds are vital for studying the Holocaust and post-war reconstruction in Belgium, such as the archives of the *Brüsseler Treuhandgesellschaft*, archives of sequestered properties and the different fonds concerning war damage. The archives of the Alien Registration Office are well known, but one should also look at other fonds providing us with information on individuals, such as domiciliation requests, requests for name change and for changing nationality. Aforementioned records are also veritable genealogical goldmines.

We strongly believe that by underlining the existence and significance of new or lost fonds, and by focusing on a broad timeframe (1795 – 1983), high quality, innovative research on the history of the Jewish community in Belgium will be made possible.

### ***Veerle Vanden Daelen, European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI): Connecting Collections, Collection-holding Institutions and Researchers***

On 16 November 2010 the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure was launched in Brussels. This project is financed by the European Union and will take four years to

complete. EHRI's main objective is to support the Holocaust research community with a portal that will give online access to dispersed sources relating to the Holocaust, and by encouraging collaborative research through the development of tools. To achieve this by 2014 twenty organizations (research institutions, libraries, archives, museums and memorial sites) from thirteen countries work together in a consortium.

In this contribution, I would like to shed light on the different possibilities and challenges this project brings to the fore as it is dealing with a large variety of sources, languages, cultures, and degree of digitization. Holocaust studies rely more than most other fields of research on a huge variety of archives. They are fragmented and scattered all over the world, making access complicated, if not impossible, and very time-consuming. This is a result not only from the fact that the Holocaust was not restricted to one place or country, but also from the Nazi attempts to destroy the evidence and the migration after the Second World War of Holocaust survivors.

After the war many different projects have been set up to document what happened. In recent decades even more specific collections have been established, especially in regional centres, and Eastern European archives have opened up. Unfortunately there is no uniformity in cataloguing and describing. Many different languages are used in the original documents as well as in the cataloguing systems. Finally, one of the major challenges for every scholar of the Holocaust is to avoid the domination of the perpetrators' sources over the voices of persecuted Jews. The documents of Jews and their organizations often followed the fate of their owners: they were in many cases destroyed or dispersed.

Although many organizations throughout Europe and Israel have already done excellent work in collecting and saving documents, objects, photo's, film and art related to the Holocaust, it is now possible to bring all these sources together and take the research into this area several steps further. To this end, EHRI will design and implement a Virtual Research Environment (VRE) offering online access to a wide variety of dispersed Holocaust archives and to a number of tools to work with them. Building on integration programmes undertaken over the past decades by the twenty partners in the consortium and a large network of associate partners, EHRI sets out to transform the data available for Holocaust research around Europe and elsewhere into a cohesive body of resources.