

Project WARLUX - Soldiers and their communities in WWII:
The impact and legacy of war experiences in Luxembourg

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***"Mapping" biographies in relational
databases - The case of Luxembourg
soldiers in the Second World War***

Biographical Data in a Digital World 2022
(BD 2022) Workshop

Introduction - Project WARLUX - Soldiers and their communities in WWII: The impact and legacy of war experiences in Luxembourg

- During Nazi occupation in Luxembourg, women and men (born 1920-1927) were conscripted to serve in Reichsarbeitsdienst and Wehrmacht
- aim of the project is: collecting their biographies and individual life paths throughout the war and the post-war period



funded by FNR
(March
2020-February
2023)

CASE STUDY

- around 300 individuals plus their families -
= 2000 profiles
- different life paths: collaborateurs,
deserters, resistance fighters etc.
- Every choice had consequences: for
example, the families of deserters were
resettled to the East of the German Reich,
deserters were arrested and executed

Background info

- draft for men and women into the
Labour Service
(Reichsarbeitsdienst, RAD) -
23/05/1941
- draft was introduced for the men -
30/08/1942

Biographical approach

- researching of their biographies and individual stories during the war
- Avoiding stringent categories such as "victims" or "heroes" in national historiography for this group.
- Pursuing the biographical approach by analysing the actor-centred lives and perspectives - using personal data and first-person documents (letters, diaries)
- Actor-centred perspective and their active choice of a particular life path - following Fickers and Brüll (2019)*, the situation, the context of the actors must be taken into account
- each historical actor has several options in a complex decision-making process; these decisions are not necessarily selfish, nor the result of external constraints but are based on a situational logic of doing what seems most appropriate at that moment (Schimank, 2015)

*Brüll, Christoph/Fickers, Andreas: Ein Experiment kollektiver Gewissensprüfung. Situativer Opportunismus und kumulative Heroisierung, in: Grenzerfahrungen. Eine Geschichte der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens. Bd. 4: Staatenwechsel, Identitätskonflikte, Kriegserfahrungen (1919-1945), hrsg. von Carlo Lejeune, Christoph Brüll und Peter Quadflieg. Grenz-Echo Verlag, Eupen 2019., 2019.

** Schimank, U.: Die Entscheidungsgesellschaft. Komplexität und Rationalität der Moderne. Wiesbaden 2005.

Biographical data

Name

Date of birth/death

Place of birth/death

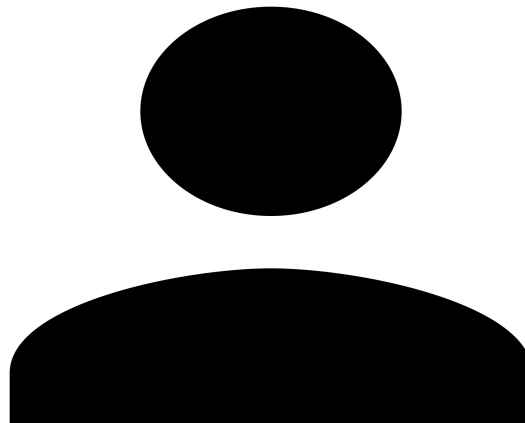
Address

Gender

Marital status

Profession

.....



Aim / Challenge for WARLUX ?

Aim

- The aim is to represent the personal life experiences of the generation, who were directly affected by the war.
 - life events, life sequences
 - not to follow a fact sheet, but to display the twists and ambiguities

Challenge

1. analogue not yet digitised
2. unstructured data (not linked / no norm data)
3. copyright / data protection - no access to all data

Why *Mapping*? Why use a “map” for biographical data?

map **noun**

1a: a representation usually on a flat surface of the whole or a part of an area

1b: a representation of the celestial sphere or a part of it

1c: a diagram or other visual representation that shows the relative position of the parts of something

2: something that represents with a clarity suggestive of a map

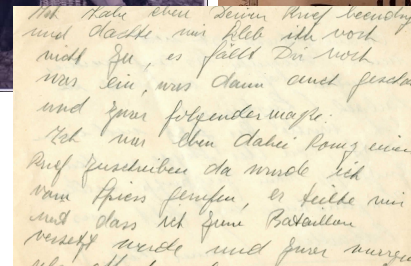
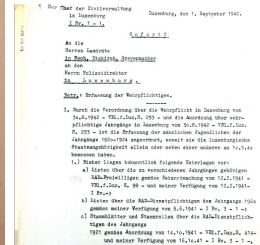
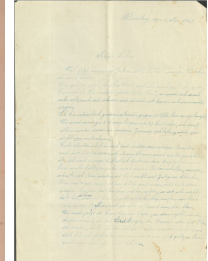
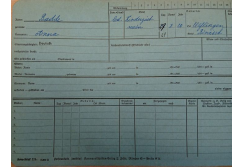


(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/map>)

Data and Sources for WARLUX

→ very heterogeneous collection

- Analogue Data
 - National Archives and communal archives in Luxembourg
 - war period lists, police registrations, civil records
 - compensations, statistics
 - Military Archives
 - personnel dossiers, court cases
 - dossiers of units and battle diaries etc. etc.
 - Private Collections
 - letters, diaries, pictures



Data for WARLUX biographies

→ biographical data -
single/personnel dossiers -
to be queried individually

→ topic related
dossiers -
concerned person
could be mentioned

→ data from
ego-documents
(letters, diaries)

March: mot. 2. Hp. P3-Jäg. Erf. u.
Zusch. 2161. 20
Hamburg-Harburg
Auszug aus der Truppenstammrolle der **4./Panz.-Jäg.-Erf.-Abt. 20.**

Einführungsjahr 1943
E. Et. R. Nr. 1/44

Wehrnummer **Luxemburg**

1. Dienstgrad:	Schütze
2. Familienname:	Wolsfeld
3. Vorname:	Johann
4. Geburtsort und -Ort:	4.7.23 Schifflingen
5. Religiöses Bekenntnis:	kath.
6. Familienstand:	ledig
7. Anschrift der nächsten Angehörigen:	Vater: Johann Peter W., Schifflingen Siedlung Emil Mayrich Nr. 50 Maschinenschlosser
8. Beruf:	
9. Zugang am:	16.11.43
von:	4. Kompanie Pz. Jg. Erf. u. Ausb. Abt. 20
10. Dienst Eintritt:	15.4.43
(Einführungstag)	
11. Verpflichtungsdauer:	auf Jahre bis

BArch Pers 15/128200

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99	Schmitz Josef	31.1.25	Schiffingen	Lehrmann
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35 Mann
0 ab am 10.9.43 WBK.
0 ab am 8.11.43 WBK.
0 ab am 11.11.43 WBK.

ANLUX CdZ-E-0148

11.11.43
X
Lift Mathil!
Ich huer Dein Brief nu Walfer mat grousser Freud
empfang. Wie ech gesinn das de mid an der Schuel a
rutscho op der Bank. Ruhe besser dat z we am Rad och
ops ans moosch. Gott weis woi. Mir get et och nach em-
mer gut, wat et he wellt gut menten. Hoffen anver dat
et Dir an Dinge Leid besser get. Du weis jo woi ech sen
an. So op et mit ganz schen an diem Land. Hed mat On-
recht nennen s'et Paradies. Ich huer d'Fremm hee bis
inuer d'Cuere an et get errecht uer. Meer get et z Merd
dat mer hee sen. Ich mengen et mir schon eng bereit.
11.11.43

Relational Database

Relational database

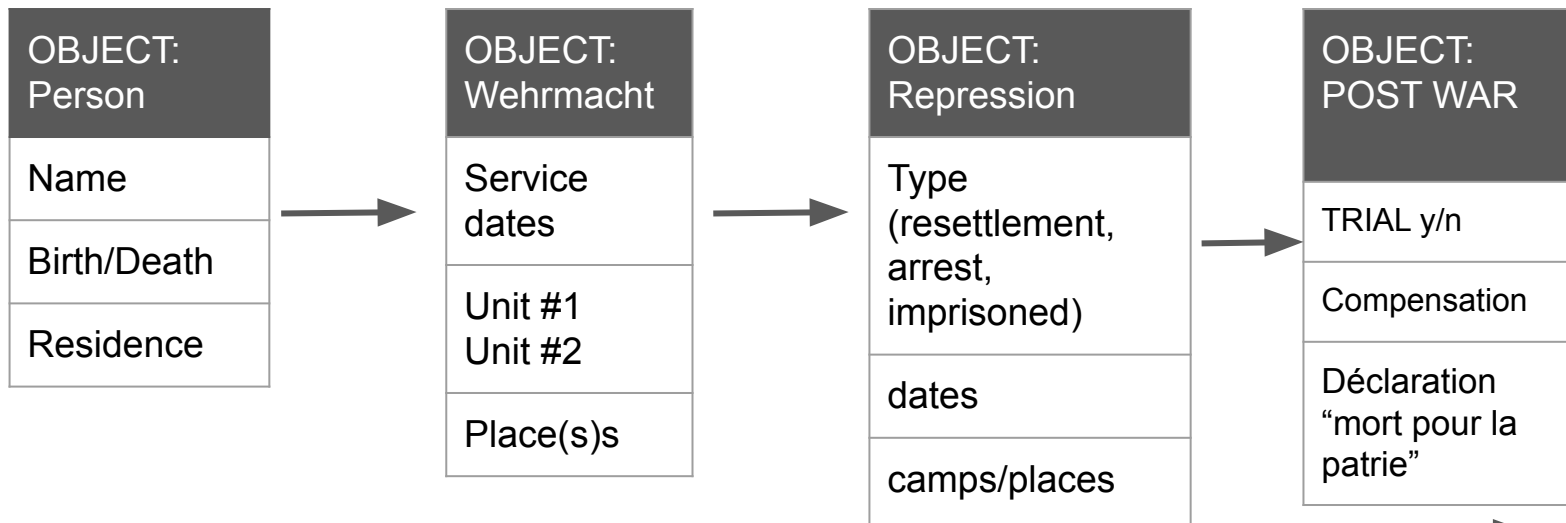
- nodegoat is a web-based research environment for the humanities (by lab 1100)
- Explore data by means of spatial and temporal visualisations
- nodegoat allows us to build datasets based on their own data model and offers relational modes of analysis with spatial and chronological forms of contextualisation.
- By combining these elements within one environment, we are able to instantly process, analyse and visualise complex data sets relationally, diachronically and spatially;
- nodegoat follows an object-oriented approach throughout its core functionalities.
- Borrowing from actor-network theory this means that people, events, artefacts, and sources are treated as equal: objects, and hierarchy depends solely on the composition of the network: relations.
- This object-oriented approach advocates the self-identification of individual objects and maps the correlation of objects within the collective

<https://nodegoat.net>



DATA MODEL in nodegoat

Life sequences and biographical data to be represented in “objects”







DATA MODEL

Object Person

Ambroise Alfred [edit](#)

(ngIu4Z772IYxuJYUaH9r2y0TqJL)

Name Ambroise
First Name Alfred
Sample Community Schiffflange (LU) 
Gender male 
Nationality LUX 
Recruit yes
► Nuclear Family - Name of recruit Ambroise 

Sub-Objects: Overview

[Standard Info]

[Place of Residence]

[Birth]



25



1 - 3 of 3



1



Date Start



Date End



Location

[Standard Info]

[Birth]

24-04-1921

-

City [Located]

Schiffflange (LU)

[Place of Residen...]

10-05-1940

-

City [Located]

Schiffflange (LU)

DATA MODEL

Object “Person” - lists with short bios, general infos (whereabouts, roles (recruit y/n, gender)

Name	▲ First Name	◆ Sample Community	◆ Whereabouts	◆ Gender	◆ Research Status	◆ Recruit	◆ V
Ackermann	Jos	Schifflange (LU)	returned	male		yes	
Adam	Norbert	Merl (LU)	Executed	male		yes	
Adam	Ferdinand	Schifflange (LU)	KIA	male		yes	
Adam	Henri, Heinrich	Schifflange (LU)	returned	male		yes	

DATA MODEL

Different “situations” or stations as objects

The screenshot displays a user interface for a data model. At the top, there are three tabs: "Objects", "Categories", and "Processes". The "Objects" tab is currently selected. Below the tabs, there is a horizontal list of buttons representing different categories or processes. The buttons are arranged in two rows. The first row contains: "WARLUX PERSON (new)", "Wehrmacht", "Nuclear Family", "POW", "Repression", "MIA/KIA Circumstances", "Desertion/Réfractaire", "Imprisonment", and "Post-War". The second row contains: "Allied Forces", "Political Affiliations", "Kriegshilfsdienst", "Reichsarbeitsdienst", and "Sources".

DATA MODEL

Object Wehrmacht

Object **Sources**

Wehrmacht

Name

ver

Draft before 08/1942?

Yes No None

ver

Sub-Objects: Editor

[Zurückstellung] + ++ [Military Rank] + ++ [Sickness] + ++ [Musterung] + ++ [Service] + ++ [Feldpostnummer] + ++
[Remarks] + ++

DATA MODEL

“Mapping consequences” - OBJECT Repression

Example

- Cettiga, R. - deserted
- Family Cettiga is “resettled” (Umsiedlung) to Eastern Europe and their assets withdrawn/seized
- Family (as Object “Nuclear Family) is displayed in the object for “Umsiedlung”
- the camp and the place is linked to other affected families and the conscripted men

Cettiga [edit](#)
(ngBQ1t37jBQH6AGIsZzj7qGV)

Family Name Cettiga [🔗](#)

Reason Totaler Vermögenszug
Absiedlung
Word Count: 3

Date 06-1944

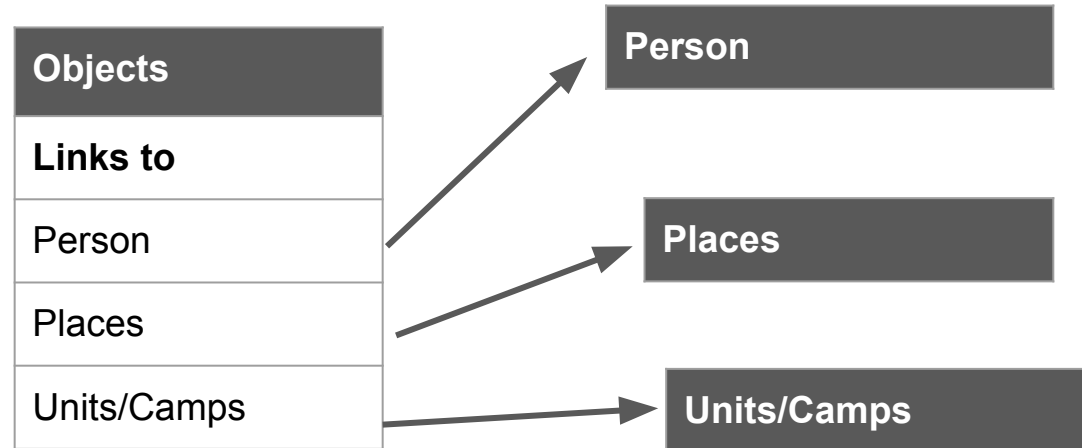
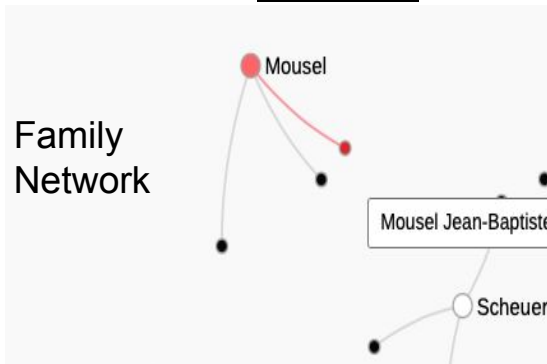
[Umsiedlung]

▼ ▾ 25 1 - 1 of 1 < 1 >

Date Start ▲	Date End ▾	Location	Umsiedlungslager ▾
1944	- 1945	Zamek Bobrów (PL)	Boberstein

DATA MODEL - LINKING

- every object (name, “life station” like Wehrmacht, Reichsarbeitsdienst, units, camps, places and comrades and family members are linked)



DATA MODEL

each Object and Person are linked

Overview **Cross-Referenced**

Cross-Referenced: Overview Reichsarbeitsdienst Wehrmacht MIA/KIA Circumstances POW

Description

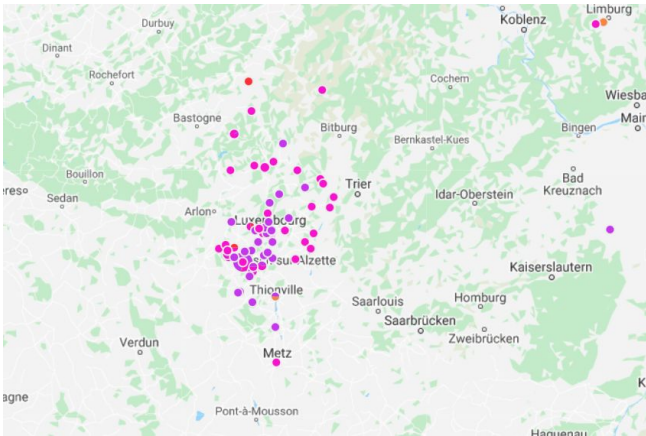
Name

25 1 - 1 of 1 from 174 1

Name	Start Date	End Date	Camp	Sources	Location	Comrades
Irthum Nicolas	01-04-1943					

DATA MODEL

Visualizations



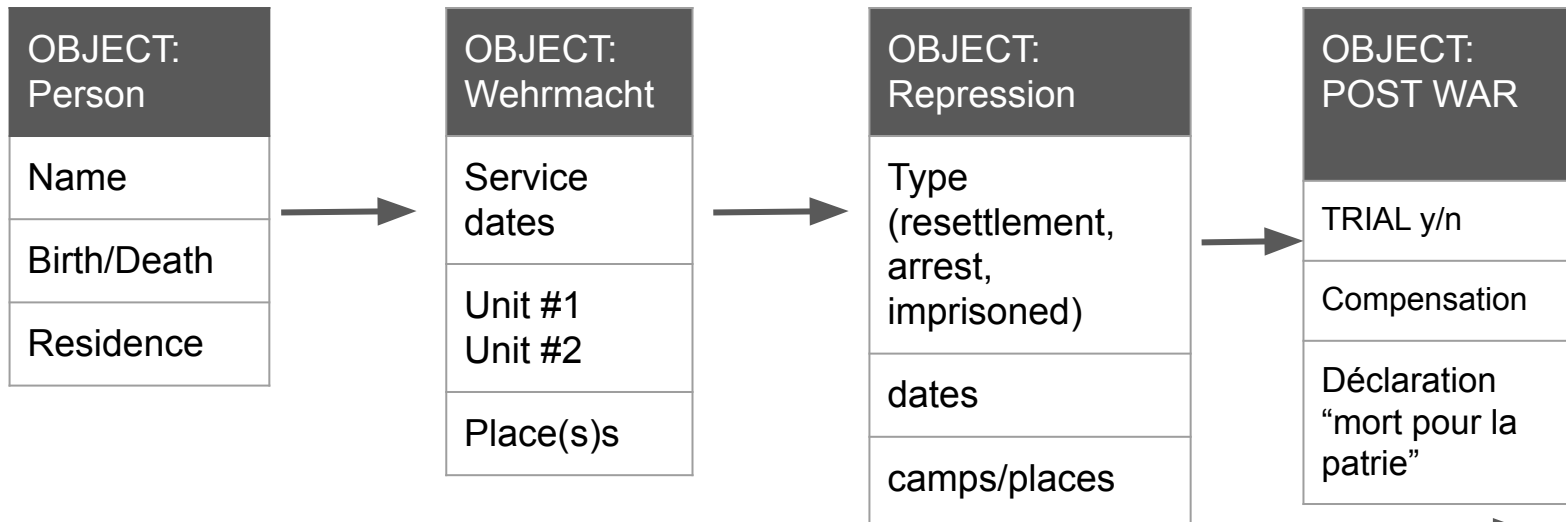
Birth places (sample Schiffflange)



Death places (sample Schiffflange)

DATA MODEL in nodegoat

Life sequences and biographical data to be represented in “objects”



CONCLUSION

WARLUX faces to represent or to “translate” the individual and unstructured biographical data into single statements and dates

to avoid a linear structure of individual life stories, the data model has to adapt to unstructured and life models of individuals

in treating different life “stations” or “situations” as equal objects on the same level as the person itself, it gives access to the individual adaptation of the life to an independent and for each individually designed life model rather than a stringent and inflexible schema

But difficulties remain, such as (next to acquiring the data)

- 1.ambiguities of the data
- 2.unstructured data

By using the objects equally and different life chapters/situations and events as a place/mark on a map, we can create a map of life and visualize individual stories.

Stay connected with us!



@C2DH_LU

@warlux_c2dh

<https://www.c2dh.uni.lu/projects/warlux>

Blog: “Digital War History” and WARLUX

<https://digiwarhist.hypotheses.org>