

Linking Data on the Termination of Enemy Status

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At the end of the Second World War, the Netherlands reacted to the Nazi occupation by declaring all German nationals ‘Enemy of the State’. The anti-German measures, so far “[...] have received little attention from historians and have long been separated from historiography about the Second World War.” (Oprel, 2017). As of 1-1-2018, the archives containing over 24,000 records on German nationals administrated by the Nederlands Beheersinstituut (Dutch Custody Institute) are open for public viewing. Marieke Oprel has been collecting and analyzing the index-cards that carry the data on personal decisions (Figure 1). To facilitate further analysis and contextualisation, a multi-disciplinary effort¹, started to harmonize and structure the manually collected data using Linked Data principles (Heath & Bizer, 2011). While this collection of data is valuable on its own, connecting it to existing, more general open data collections would provide it with a broader background and increased visibility. Our specific research therefore concerns opening up new avenues of research for this data through digital means (de Boer et al., 2016).

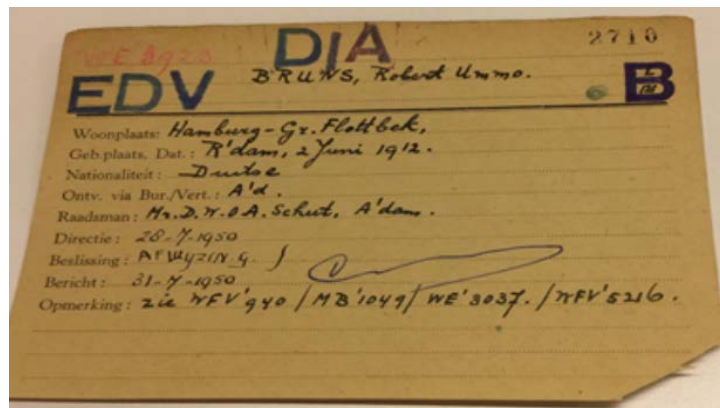


Figure 1: Example of an index card

To guide the process, we use two competency questions: Q1. *What administrative comments are on the cards of people who got the ‘denied’ decision?* And Q2: *Is there a relation between a person’s lawyer and final decision?* We developed a conceptual model based on the spreadsheet schemas, used the OpenRefine tool² to map data to this RDF model³.

The resulting RDF dataset consists of 691,148 triples and is available at https://semanticweb.cs.vu.nl/test/browse/list_graph?graph=EotS_1_0 as well as through a public

¹ This was done in in the context of the course “Digital Humanities in Practice” at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam <https://minor.vu.nl/nl/minoren/digital-humanities-and-social-analytics/index.aspx>

² <http://openrefine.org/>

³ The conceptual model, conversion notes and resulting graph descriptions are found in <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.5878132.v1>.

SPARQL endpoint at <https://semanticweb.cs.vu.nl/test/sparql/>. We translated the validation questions Q1 and Q2 to SPARQL queries and successfully retrieved relevant results (See Figure 2 and Figure 3 respectively).

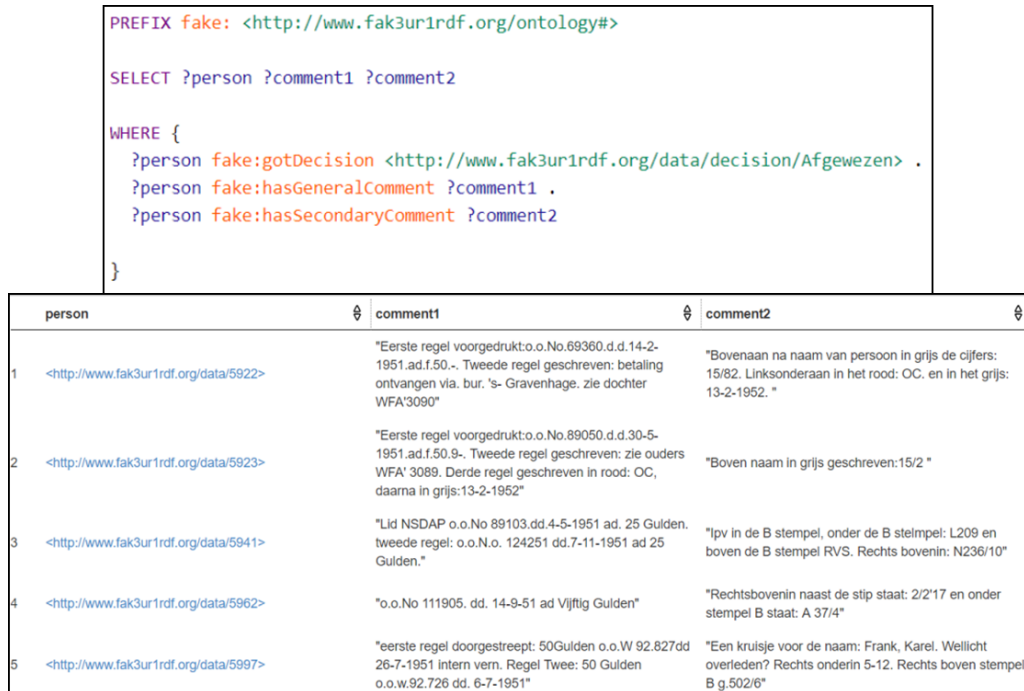


Figure 2: SPARQL query (top) and results (bottom) for exploratory query Q1 to return a card and its two comment fields, where this card has the decision 'Afgewezen' (denied).

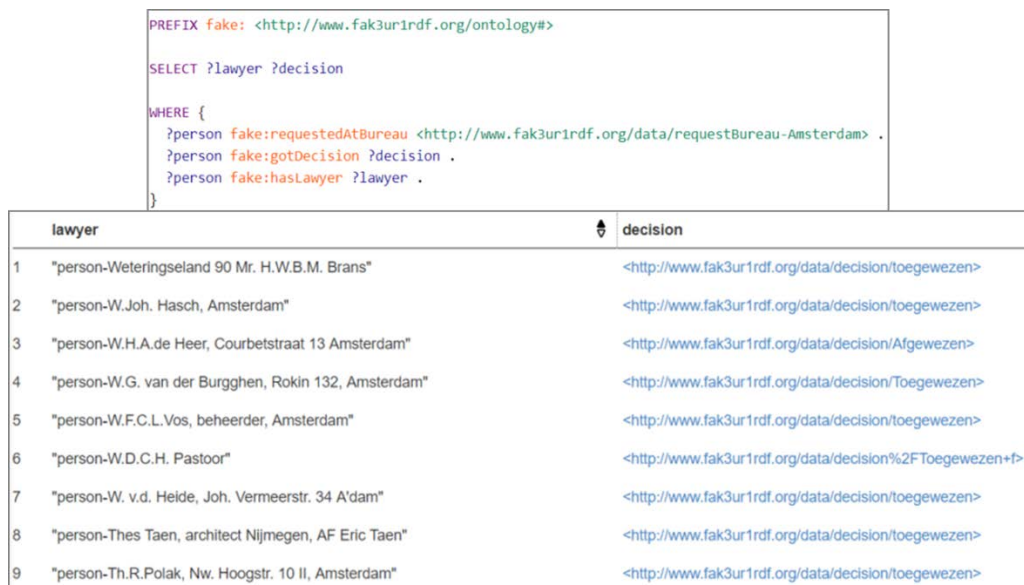


Figure 3: SPARQL query (top) and results (bottom) for analytical query Q2 about the relations between a requester's lawyer and the final decision. The results are in their current for primarily exploratory. Subsequent statistics can provide analytical insight into this relation.

The harmonization of the dataset provides opportunities for further historical analysis. We here look at two further specific analyses: that of the request-denial-rate per gender and to what extent we can use data statistics to determine the meaning of a specific, unknown code.

Request-denial-rate per sex

In a subset of 3,302 cards the percentage of denied requests filed by men was 66.2% compared to 84.5% for women. One possible reason for this disparity is the fact that the guidelines for deportation mention the option to grant residence permits to Germans whose continued presence was in the interest of the Netherlands, favouring German working men.

Decision Codes

Many cards feature a decision code whose values include “ABB”, Art. 2 Lid 1”, “Art. 6 Lid 1, “D”, “DUV”, “V”. “A.B.B” was initially thought to mean “Als Betaald Beschouwd”, (Considered Paid), but in one of the cells it is written out in full as “Afgedaan Bij Brief”. Whether this is the de-facto meaning of the abbreviation or a unique occurrence remains future research. The letter V could be “Vreemdeling”, (foreigner) or “Verblijfsvergunning” (residence permit). However, in many cases, the letter V was used twice. We hypothesize that “DU, VV” indicates a German with residence permit, whereas DUV might mean “Duitser, Uitgewezen, Vreemdeling”, (German, Deported, Foreigner).

Manual archival research remains the basis of many historical research endeavours. Through this paper, we show how data harmonization and conversion to a Linked Data can open up possibilities for further analysis and re-use. This is a specific example of how digital methods (in this case methods based on Semantic Technologies and data linking) affords new knowledge production and dissemination on the humanities and heritage sector. We here present some examples showing the potential of combining pattern-based analysis of the structured data with historical background knowledge to further increase understanding of the material. By creating an online Linked Data set, a big piece of history could be added to the internet. This dataset can be linked to other WW2 related datasets including for example, Joods Monument⁴, as well as migration data, to view the movement of the German refugees on a worldwide scale.

References

Oprel, M. O. (2017). Identifying Enemy Citizens: Dutch (De-)Enemisation Policies towards German Nationals (1944-1967). *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte.*, 44, 403-414.

⁴ <https://www.joodsmonument.nl/>

Tom Heath and Christian Bizer (2011) *Linked Data: Evolving the Web into a Global. Data Space* (1st edition). *Synthesis Lectures on the Semantic Web: Theory and Technology*, 1:1, 1-136. Morgan & Claypool.

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