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In April 1913, the French general Jourdy submitted a proposal to the Board of the Parisian military engineering school École polytechnique to introduce two new courses, one in biology and one in sociology. The project was instigated by the French Minister of War who had recently become impressed by Ernest Solvay's École de Commerce in Brussels, where both courses were part of the curriculum. The success of the teaching programme of the École de Commerce, Jourdy argued, could be read from the success of Belgian commerce, industry and banking; large Belgian companies simply beat their French homologues, in France as well as abroad. Jourdy praised Solvay's scientific accomplishments extensively: "Ce riche et intelligent manufacturier a créé au parc Léopold un centre scientifique remarquable, qui peut rivaliser avec les grandioses fondations des Américains. (Combien nous sommes loin en France de cette splendide floraison intellectuelle !)"(1). Jourdy then went on to describe Solvay's Institute of Sociology as enjoying a "world-wide reputation", incomparable to any French institute or association in the field. This was all the more to be deplored as France was the fatherland of "the founder of Sociology", Auguste Comte. According to Jourdy, the memory of Comte (an expelled student of the École polytechnique) unfortunately had been subject to a conspiracy of silence in France, and it was only recently, through the work of the German scientist Wilhelm Ostwald – "cependant si injustement partial à l'égard des savants français" – that his work was rehabilitated.

For the historian trying to approach the history of sociology in Belgium from a transnational perspective, it is tempting to consider a document like this as exemplifying the role of informal international networks in the early twentieth-century institutionalization of sociology. It is even more tempting to read in it a reassuring confirmation of the international fame of the Brussels Institute of Sociology. The same document, however, moves us to carefully analyse the specific contexts of contacts and references. In this particular case, the strategic and hence probably somewhat hyperbolic character of the laudatory references to Brussels is quite obvious. It remains nonetheless striking to what extent they are embedded in a nationalistic

(1) Général Émile JOURDY, "Mémoire sur un projet de création d'un cours de Biologie et d'un cours de Sociologie à l'École polytechnique", 30 April 1913. Paris, Archives nationales, 313 AP 45. Eugène Étienne was in 1913 Minister of War.

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logic of competition between nations – a logic with its own intellectual hierarchies, "small" Belgium probably being less threatening and hence a better fit as a motivating model for France than Germany, with its odium of hostility towards French intellectual life. Jourdy's document, finally, testifies to the possibly strategic and hence rather superficial character of transnational intellectual references. In his text he repeatedly referred to "le cours de Sociologie brillamment professé par Mr. Wax Weiler". His mistaken rendering of the name of Emile Waxweiler, who directed the Solvay Institute of Sociology since its foundation in 1902 and who was intellectually very dominant within the Institute, suggests that he probably never read a single one of Waxweiler's publications.

The quoted document is therefore a witness to the rich heuristic value of transnational references. Fueling a controversy, claiming a countercurrent view or building a canon of pioneers are all measures that can capitalize on foreign legitimization. That the foreigner in this specific case was one of the European "popes" of the internationalization of science underscores one of the issues that will be taken up in this article: the intellectual use – scientific, strategic, symbolic – of the transnational in the early twentieth century. It is worth noting that General Jourdy, a military general preoccupied with training the state engineering corps and bolstering the commercial renown of the nation, was not part of social science academic circles himself. His interest from outside the discipline corresponds with another issue that we will address: the position of international scientific projects that were often on the margins of dominant university institutions at the turn of the century. Jourdy's remarks also remind us of the complicated historical relationship between transnational contacts, internationalism and nationalism within the history of the human sciences. International contacts are, first of all, not always easy to trace, and their absence is, strictly speaking, impossible to prove – the mutual "unawareness" of the two giants of early European sociology, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, and with them "French" and "German" sociology being the most discussed example(2). It therefore remains difficult to assess the precise role of international contacts and to assess the impact of the development of professionalized forms of international scientific sociability on the evolution of local scientific cultures and concrete research practices. These are questions that have hardly been brought up so far in the few publications that explore the transnational history of the early human sciences in the broad sense of *sciences humaines*, covering the humanities and the behavioural and social sciences. Rather than using a framework of "impact" and "influence" of the importation and cultural appropriation of external models, recent historiographical perspectives highlighting a

(2) Edward E. TIRYAKIAN, "A Problem for the Sociology of Knowledge. The Mutual Unawareness of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber", in *Archives européennes de Sociologie*, vol. 7, 1996, p. 330-336; Jean-Christophe MARCEL, *Le durkheimisme dans l'Entre-deux-guerres*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2001, p. 148; Laurent MUCCHIELLI, "La guerre n'a pas eu lieu: les sociologues français et l'Allemagne (1870-1940)", in ID., *Mythes et histoire des sciences humaines*, Paris, La Découverte, 2004, p. 73-92; Philippe STEINER, "*L'Année sociologique* et la réception de l'œuvre de Max Weber", in *Archives européennes de Sociologie*, vol. 33, 1992, p. 329-349.

transnational approach(3) or extolling "connected" history have, nevertheless, demonstrated the value of focusing on the study of multiple interactions(4).

In their programmatic outline for a transnational history of the social sciences, Johan Heilbron, Nicolas Guilhot and Laurent Jeanpierre situate the "take-off" of the internationalization of the social sciences after the Second World War. However, they point to the earlier emergence of international scholarly institutions and networks and to transnational mobility in these disciplines in the making, which remained often in subordinate positions vis-à-vis older, established disciplines(5). Within the field of statistics, international conferences were held throughout the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the first being organized in Brussels in 1853 by Adolphe Quetelet. Even if they did not fully succeed in their goal to establish uniformity in the themes and methods of national statistics, they nevertheless played an important role in the establishment of the transnational authority of statistics as a guiding instrument of national policies(6). The development of sociology was of a later date, but its international infrastructure was created almost simultaneously with the first national and local sociological institutions. Its first international association, the France-based 1893 Institut international de Sociologie, was founded by René Worms as part of a broader set of international initiatives. A few months before founding the institute, Worms had launched the explicitly internationalist *Revue internationale de Sociologie*(7). Subsequently, for the institute, Worms founded the *Annales de l'Institut international* and then a series of disciplinary international congresses, the first five of which were held in Paris between 1894 and 1903 and which were devoted to laying the groundwork of sociology's scientific community. Lastly, in 1896, he launched a book series, the *Bibliothèque internationale de Sociologie*. Worms's enterprise was focused on intellectual exchange and cross-border socialization rather than on close research collaboration or methodological or conceptual standardization.

In the 1890s, numerous well-established university disciplines had progressively widened their geographical breadth from national to international. The forms structuring their institutional organization – publications, societies, conferences – were diffused into new territories, and network relationships

(3) Pierre Y. SAUNIER, "Going Transnational? News from Down Under", in *History.transnational*, http://geschichte-transnational.clio-online.net/forum/id=877&type=diskussionen, 13.01.2006; Akira IRIYE & Pierre-Y. SAUNIER, eds., *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

(4) Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", in Victor LIEBERMAN, ed., *Beyond Binary Histories. Re-Imagining Eurasia to c. 1830*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1999, p. 289-316; "Histoire globale, histoires connectées", theme issue of the *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol. 54, 2007, 5.

(5) Johan HEILBRON, Nicolas GUILHOT & Laurent JEANPIERRE, "Toward a Transnational History of the Social Sciences", in *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 44, 2008, 2, p. 146-160.

(6) Nico RANDERAAD, "The International Statistical Congress (1853-1876). Knowledge Transfers and their Limits", in *European History Quarterly*, vol. 41, 2011, 1, p. 50-65.

(7) René WORMS, "Après dix ans", in *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, January 1903, p. 2.

were made among national disciplinary centres. International conferences became the privileged vectors of internationalization as a mode of scientific communication and circulation of knowledge on an extended scale. In sociology, which was not an established university discipline, it worked the other way round, internationalization preceding academic recognition. The originality of Worms's organizational plan for the new discipline, sociology, as yet devoid of all university reference, was to be found in its inherently international institutional configuration that involved publications, institutes, conferences and editorial politics. From this point of view, sociology was emblematic of international aspirations at the turn of the century concerning the integration of knowledge, as much as the construction of scientific communities. Pre-1914 sociology was doubly taken with internationalism: in its scientific practices as well as in its theorization of the new scientific relations that it initiated(8). This did not imply, however, that an international outlook was a sufficient condition for academic success. Worms's initiative received hardly any academic recognition in France. Science was in many ways – both institutionally and symbolically – organized along national lines. As the success of the Durkheimian school of sociology in France made clear, a strategy of embedding one's project in a national frame was an important element of national visibility and long-term viability(9).

As symbolically important as Worms's initiatives were for the constitution of sociology as an international field, they were not unique. In a brief survey of transnational initiatives that shaped the constitution of sociology in Europe before the First World War, Christian Gülich pointed to six institutions(10). Three of them were based in Brussels: the Office international de Bibliographie, the Social Sciences faculty of the Université Nouvelle and the "Intermédiaire sociologique" of the Solvay Institute of Sociology. Even though the scope of these initiatives was quite different, they certainly represent important moments in the early development of Brussels sociology. In what follows, these and subsequent Brussels initiatives will be presented from the perspective of their involvement in sociology as a transnational field.

Internationalist experiments

The genealogy of sociology in Belgium is usually written with Quetelet's monumental intellectual project of a "physique sociale" in the late 1830s as a starting point. The Belgium-based, liberal Association internationale pour le Progrès des Sciences sociales and its conferences in Brussels, Ghent, Amsterdam and Bern (1863-1866) – the first public and quite visible initiative which sailed under the flag of "the social sciences" – constituted a

(8) Anne RASMUSSEN, *L'Internationale scientifique 1890-1914*, Paris, École des Hautes Études en Sciences sociales, 1995 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation).

(9) Sébastien MOSBAH-NATANSON, "Internationalisme et tradition nationale: le cas de la constitution de la sociologie française autour de 1900", in *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences humaines*, vol. 18, 2008, p. 35-62.

(10) Christian GÜLICH, "Le rôle de la coopération scientifique internationale dans la constitution de la sociologie en Europe", in *Communications*, vol. 54, 1992, p. 105-117.

second, more policy-oriented type of initiative. Its main inspiration was to be found in the internationalist movement in favor of free trade reforms, but the conferences equally dealt with questions of (the extension and enhancement of) education and art and literature(11). The first efforts to define sociology as a specific intellectual project, distinct from other social sciences and hence deserving academic recognition, were yet another endeavour. They can be traced back to the early writings of socialist intellectuals such as Hector Denis and Guillaume De Greef. Having launched their intellectual work in the French-Belgian socialist press, from the 1870s onwards they both started to develop and reflect upon a sociological approach to social and economic phenomena, inspired by Comtean positivism and Proudhonianism. In their empirical work they relied upon Quetelet's methods but equally explored connections with biology and psychology(12).

As divergent as the methodological approaches, political affinities and theoretical conceptions within these three "moments of proto-sociology" may have been, their protagonists shared some characteristics. They all developed their intellectual activities in a context of transnational collaboration or at least intense international contacts. They shared a profound belief that their studies could contribute to a better future for humanity, which they considered to be a universal category. The object of their research and reflections, however, was often defined by or confined to a national framework – either in terms of the data they gathered or used in their empirical studies or in terms of their policy-oriented advice or criticism. The field of the early social sciences was, from the onset, interconnected with nation-building and national policy. This tendency was also apparent from the ease with which academic and (national) political careers were combined, both domains being considered closely related. As early sociology was theoretical in character, it would incite a departure from this national perspective. This internationalizing tendency would become apparent in the work of, for instance, De Greef. From the 1880s on, he developed a theoretical approach toward sociology that combined Comtean positivism, evolutionary theory and Proudhonian internationalism, enabling him to predict (in 1905) the advent of the era of globality(13).

With its interfaculty program in political and social sciences, set up in 1889, the University of Brussels was the first in Belgium to offer a social science curriculum. The programme translated liberal views on the need to develop moderate answers to the social and political problems of industrialized and democratic societies. A course on sociology was deliberately barred, as the new discipline was associated with socialism and with an exaggerated

(11) See, for instance, *Annales de l'Association internationale pour le Progrès des Sciences sociales. Première session. Congrès de Bruxelles*, Brussels/Leipzig/Paris, 1863, as well as the three subsequent reports of 1864, 1865 and 1866; Jean-François CROMBOIS, *L'univers de la sociologie en Belgique de 1900 à 1940*, Brussels, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1994, p. 11-21.

(12) Kaat WILS, "La sociologie", in Robert HALLEUX, Jan VANDERSMISSEN, Andrée DESPY-MEYER & Geert VANPAEMEL, eds., *Histoire des sciences en Belgique 1815-2000*, Tournai, La Renaissance du Livre, 2001, p. 305-322.

(13) Guillaume DE GREEF, *L'ère de la mondialité. Éloge d'Élie Reclus*, Brussels, Rousche et Féron, 1905.

interest in the natural sciences and materialist and determinist epistemologies. In reality, however, the legitimacy of sociology as an autonomous and theory-driven approach to social phenomena was acknowledged. Both Denis, who in 1878 had been hired to teach political economy and philosophy, and De Greef were assigned a course in the curriculum(14). The main architects of the Brussels programme in political and social sciences were close to the liberal tradition of the Association internationale pour le Progrès des Sciences sociales, which had recently been revived. Even though the new association, the Société d'Études sociales et politiques, had less explicit internationalist ambitions than its predecessor, its journal *Revue sociale et politique* (1891-1895) hosted contributions of German, French and British economists and political theorists. The association's outlook was mainly liberal, but it revealed a marked openness towards socialism by publishing contributions of Sidney Webb and Émile Vandervelde, among others(15).

The new society for social and political studies also hosted a bibliographical project, the *Catalogue sur fiches des ouvrages de sociologie* (1890). After having merged with a similar initiative in the field of law, the project was renamed in 1894 by its founders, the Brussels lawyers Henri La Fontaine and Paul Otlet, as the Office international de Bibliographie et d'Informations sociologiques. With its offices at the Hôtel Ravenstein in Brussels, it was supported financially by the Belgian government and by the liberal industrialist and patron of the sciences Solvay; and it was connected to both the Société d'Études sociales et politiques and the Brussels programme in political and social sciences. La Fontaine and Otlet were part of, and brought together, numerous Brussels networks. They matched professional interests and intellectual affinities in spaces where internationalism anticipated powerful outcomes: jurist networks of the Brussels Cour d'Appel, socialist networks involving jurists such as Edmond Picard and Émile Vandervelde, pacifist networks based on La Fontaine's founding of the Société belge pour l'Arbitrage et la Paix in 1889, university networks including the newly established Université nouvelle de Bruxelles, intellectual and artistic networks united around Picard and scientific networks around Solvay and the Brussels physiologist Paul Héger, Otlet's uncle. For Otlet and La Fontaine, the project of establishing a bibliography in the field of the social sciences was equally a project of rationalizing social connections. The organization of scientific production was considered to complement international social organization. Unsurprisingly, the modest compilation objectives of the Office international de Bibliographie were quickly broadened (16). Bibliography came to be considered as a distinct science, even though its take-off stalled due to a lack of common language and agreed-upon units. The Office soon generated a *Bibliographica sociologica*, with 400,000 entries in 1895. This sparked the cooperation of a broad range of international correspondents from European

(14) Kaat WILS, *De omweg van de wetenschap. Het positivisme en de Belgische en Nederlandse intellectuele cultuur 1845-1914*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2005, p. 276-277.

(15) J.-Fr. CROMBOIS, *L'univers de la sociologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 18-20.

(16) Henri LA FONTAINE & Paul OTLET, eds., *Sommaire méthodique des traités, monographies et revues de sociologie*, Brussels, Institut international de Bibliographie, 1894.

universities and secured the participation of Worms's new Institut international de Sociologie and its pluridisciplinary networks. Enrico Ferri in Italy, Charles Gide and Gabriel Tarde in France, Albert Schaeffle and Lujo Brentano in Germany, Sydney Webb in England and Carl Menger and Jules Mandello in Austria collaborated with the Belgian initiative. The International Institute of Bibliography became a well-established institution publishing "universal" bibliographies, functioning as a laboratory for Otlet's work on the science of bibliographical classification and being part of a broader array of initiatives by La Fontaine and Otlet in favour of pacifism and international understanding. Created as the pooling of scientific workforces, it was set up as a testing lab of ideal international scientific communication(17). In retrospect, the project testifies more forcefully to universalist bibliographical ambitions and corresponding epistemologies than to a specific wish to establish sociology as a transnational field. For La Fontaine, however, this second ambition seems to have been real as well, as he would later on advocate the creation of international schools of social science as the best recipe to create knowledge-based international understanding(18).

La Fontaine's early initiatives confirm the observation that the institutionalization of the social sciences took place in an intellectual atmosphere of international orientation. As in many other scientific fields, Belgian students of the social sciences were oriented first towards France and Germany(19). For the main architect of the first Brussels curriculum, the law and economics professor Eugène Van der Rest, German universities functioned as the main model for a curriculum in which social sciences rather than sociology would prevail(20). For the main defenders of sociology in Brussels, De Greef and Denis, France remained their most natural "ally", even though Denis strongly sympathized with the German school of historical economics and De Greef was an avid reader of Herbert Spencer. De Greef published his

(17) "Chronologie des principaux faits relatifs au développement de l'Institut international de Bibliographie", in *Bulletin de l'Institut international de Bibliographie, Brussel*, 12, 1907, p. 31-32; Jean-François CROMBOIS, "Bibliographie, sociologie et coopération internationale. De l'Institut international de Bibliographie à l'Institut de Sociologie Solvay", in Andrée DESPY-MEYER, ed., *Cent ans de l'Office international de Bibliographie. Les prémisses du Mundaneum*, Mons, Mudaneum, p. 221-226; Boyd RAYWARD, "The Origins of Information Science and the International Institute of Bibliography/International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID)", in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, vol. 48, 1997, 4, p. 557-573; Wouter VAN ACKER, *Universalism as Utopia. A Historical Study of the Schemes and Schemas of Paul Otlet (1868-1944)*, Ghent, Ghent University, 2011 (unpublished PhD thesis), p. 93-138.

(18) Henri LA FONTAINE, "Création d'un enseignement social international", in *Le Premier Congrès de l'enseignement des sciences sociales. Compte rendu des séances et texte des mémoires publiés par la Commission permanente internationale de l'enseignement social*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1901, p. 299-305.

(19) On Paris and, after 1870, Germany as the main destination for Belgian students studying abroad, see Pieter DHONDT, *Un double compromis. Enjeux et débats relatifs à l'enseignement universitaire en Belgique au 19e siècle*, Ghent, Academia Press, 2011, p. 255-256.

(20) See, for instance, the 1889 rectoral address of Eugène Van der Rest, who was also a member of the Société d'Économie sociale (Eugène VAN DER REST, *L'enseignement des sciences sociales*, Brussels, Mayolez, 1889).

first theoretical reflections on the methodology of sociology in journals such as Benoit Malon's *Revue socialiste* and the international, Belgium-based *La Société nouvelle*. Denis, who also contributed to both journals, wrote his first empirical sociological studies for Emile Littré's positivist journal *La Philosophie positive*(21). De Greef's main monographs on sociology were published, read and reviewed in France, but his work was also translated into English, Russian, Spanish and Italian(22). For the Brussels group as a whole, René Worms's Institut international de Sociologie constituted the main international point of reference. Even though Worms had not involved any Belgian scholars in his very international group of members and collaborators when he first launched the Institute and its journal, Denis, De Greef, Vandervelde, Otlet, La Fontaine, Van der Rest and others would soon be involved as (associated) members, and – in the case of the first three – as members of the board(23). From the start, Worms's *Revue internationale de Sociologie* reported quite systematically on publications stemming from Belgian authors and governmental institutions such as the *Office du Travail*. When Worms reviewed a book by De Greef in the first volume of the journal, he seized the opportunity to show his familiarity with the Brussels curriculum: "Le nom de M. de Greef est moins connu en France qu'il ne mériterait de l'être. Professeur à l'École des Sciences sociales de Bruxelles (institution excellente dont notre pays n'a pas encore l'équivalent), cet auteur a entrepris la publication d'une sociologie complète"(24). De Greef would join the editorial committee of the *Revue internationale de Sociologie* in 1902, two years after Denis. They would play, in other words, an increasingly important role in Worms's international network, which underlined the programmatic proximity of the two centres of international sociology, but also their implicit rivalry. However, before the Brussels sociological network could really take off, the Brussels university went through a crisis. Its immediate cause was the cancellation by the academic Board, on political grounds, of a projected series of conferences by the French geographer and anarchist Elisée Reclus at the invitation of the then rector (and intimate friend of Reclus), Denis. The tumultuous conflicts that followed this decision led to Denis's resignation as rector and to De Greef's departure from the university. Supported by socialist and progressive liberal groups and individuals, including Vandervelde, Louis de Brouckère, Charles Dejongh, Edmond Picard, soon joined by La Fontaine, Paul Janson,

(21) See, for instance, Guillaume DE GREEF, "De la Méthode en sociologie", in *Revue socialiste*, vol. 1, 1885, p. 289-300; ID., "Introduction à la sociologie", in *Revue socialiste*, vol. 3, 1886, p. 218-233; ID., "Introduction à la sociologie", in *La Société nouvelle*, vol. 1, 1884-1885, p. 73-82 and p. 152-162; Hector DENIS, "L'impôt sur le revenu et l'éthique sociale comparée", in *La Philosophie positive*, vol. 29, 1883, p. 218-236.

(22) See, for instance, Émile DURKHEIM, "Review of Guillaume de Greef, *Introduction à la sociologie* (Brussels-Paris, 1886)", in *Revue philosophique*, vol. 22, 1886, p. 658-663; Gabriel TARDE, "Le transformisme social", in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, vol. 40, 1895, p. 36-40.

(23) De Greef in 1896, Denis in 1898, Vandervelde in 1903.

(24) Émile WORMS, "Review of Guillaume De Greef, *Les lois sociologiques* (Paris, 1893)", in *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, vol. 1, 1893, p. 462-463. In reality, the Interfacultary Program in Political and Social Sciences would only become a School in 1897, as the result of a financial injection of Solvay.

Émile Vinck and Émile Verhaeren, a dissident Université nouvelle was founded in 1894 with De Greef as rector[25]. Even though the new university's position would be precarious and the main programme would not outlive the First World War, De Greef (functioning as rector throughout the whole period) managed to turn the new university – also called École libre et internationale d'Enseignement supérieur – into an attractive international meeting place for left-wing intellectuals from Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States. Consistent with De Greef's wish to establish a positivist, internationalist and truly "integral" form of higher education, biology was approached as the basis and sociology and the social sciences as the pinnacle of higher education. Both domains held a major position in the different curricula. They were also prominently represented at the Institut des Hautes Études, which opened as a central arm of the Université nouvelle in 1894 with an original teaching schedule of evening classes and public lectures. Internationalism was embedded in the lectures as well as in their audience. As the university's degrees were not recognized by the Belgian government, the student population counted a high share of foreigners, with a marked presence of Eastern European students (from Russia, Romania and Bulgaria). In 1894, 60% of the students were foreigners, and in 1895, 49%, compared to a maximum of 20% in the four established Belgian universities (even though this number would increase to an average of 30% on the eve of the First World War)[26]. In 1898 the Institut des Hautes Études even set up a scientific and literary translation service for the principal European languages, provided by students and validated by professors[27]. Between 1899 and 1911 a separate Faculty of Social Sciences was also organized; it temporarily replaced the Institut des Hautes Études. In addition to sociology, its main thematic clusters consisted of the "traditional ingredients" – politics, law and economics, mostly linked to national approaches – but also of art history, history of science, psychology and ethics. Even if one takes into account the fact that not all announced courses took actually place, one is struck by the breadth of the course offerings in sociology, with methodological as well as thematically specified courses (such as criminal sociology, by Enrico Ferri and Scipio Sighele), and by the international character of the faculty[28]. To De Greef, the presence of foreign professors was a constitutive aspect

(25) Cf. Eugène GOBLET D'ALVIELLA, ed., *1884-1909. L'Université de Bruxelles pendant son troisième quart de siècle*, Brussels, Weissenbruch, 1909; Wim VAN ROOY, "L'agitation étudiante et la fondation de l'Université nouvelle en 1894", in *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis/Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine*, vol. 7, 1976, p. 197-238; Andrée DESPY-MEYER & Pierre GOFFIN, eds., *Liber memorialis de l'Institut des Hautes Études de Belgique*, Brussels, Institut des Hautes Études, 1976.

(26) Of a total of 105 students in 1894 and 115 in 1895. Andrée DESPY-MEYER, *Inventaire des archives de l'Université nouvelle de Bruxelles*, Brussels, Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique, 1973, p. 8; Pieter DHONDT, "Foreign Students at Belgian Universities. A Statistical and Bibliographical Approach", in *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis/Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine*, vol. 38, 2008, p. 5-44.

(27) *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, July 1898, p. 574.

(28) In 1900 La Fontaine would proudly inform the public of a French conference on the teaching of the social sciences that the institute had so far attracted 27 foreign scholars to its program. Cf. *supra*, n. 18.

of his internationalist project: "ils représentent dans notre internationalité scientifique, les apports idéaux qui, fusionnés avec les nôtres, constituent l'un des aspects de la société plus grande, laquelle ne sera ni la plus grande Angleterre, ni la plus grande Allemagne, ni la plus grande France, ni la plus grande Belgique, mais une société de sociétés, une humanité agrandie"(29).

De Greef recruited many foreign collaborators within his own, mainly French, socialist and positivist networks – the former co-editor of *La Liberté* Paul Robin, for instance, both Élie and Élisée Reclus, and (dissident) positivists such as the Russian Eugène de Roberty and the Italian Raphaël Petrucci. For some of them, such as the French anarchist and collaborator of *La Société nouvelle* Augustin Hamon, a position at the Université nouvelle (albeit a precarious one) implied access to an otherwise inaccessible world(30). For others, such as the renowned French historian Charles Seignobos, an intimate friend of Vandervelde, the annual trip to Brussels was probably a way to maintain loyal friendships and intellectual contacts with active supporters of the university(31). De Greef's search for scholars was certainly facilitated by the international network that Worms had set up. Even though few of Worms's initial collaborators counted among the Université Nouvelle's visiting professors (except for Gabriel Tarde and Worms himself), the two groups of collaborators would increasingly overlap. This implied other similarities as well. In both institutions, interpretations of social phenomena from a biological, medical or "racial" perspective were quite prominent(32). This did not imply common theories or methodologies, however. Just as Worms's institute was characterized by theoretical eclecticism, the Université nouvelle's body of lecturers was quite heterogeneous and represented diverging theoretical approaches. Seignobos, for instance, was renowned for his hostility towards the intellectual imperialism of Durkheimian sociology vis-à-vis the discipline of history(33). And the Durkheimian school, which was represented in Brussels through Maurice Halbwachs and Marcel

(29) G. De Greef, *L'ère de la mondialité. Éloge d'Élie Reclus*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

(30) Kaat Wils, "Der Wettstreit der Utopiesoldaten: Augustin Hamon, Wissenschaft, Literatur und Anarchismus", in Jaap Grave, Peter Sprenger & Hans Vandevoorde, eds., *Anarchismus und Utopie in der Literatur um 1900: Deutschland, Flandern und die Niederlände*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Naumann, 2005, p. 120-138.

(31) Traces of these contacts can be found, for instance, in the archives of the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (Brussels, Archives Université libre de Bruxelles, Henri Pirenne Papers, 026PP/01/01/10, Letter of Mari Malie to Ms. Pirenne, 3 November 1902) and of the French social scientist Célestin Bouglé (Paris, Archives nationales, Archives de l'École normale supérieure, Célestin Bouglé Papers, 96, "Hommage à Émile Van Der Velde [*sic*]" (s.d.). On Seignobos's political internationalism, see Christophe Charle, *Paris fin de siècle. Culture et politique*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1998, p. 144-147.

(32) The predominance of a biologist approach has, however, probably been overstated in contemporary (critical) accounts of Worms's institute. See, for instance, Clark, who points to the relatively marginal position of evolutionary approaches. Terry Nichols Clark, "Marginality, Eclectism and Innovation: René Worms and the *Revue internationale de Sociologie* from 1893 to 1914", in *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, vol. 3, 1967, p. 12-27.

(33) See for instance Madeleine Rébérioux, "Le débat de 1903: historiens et sociologues", in Charles-Olivier Carbonell & Georges Livet, eds., *Au berceau des Annales. Le milieu strasbourgeois. L'histoire en France au début du 20e siècle*, Toulouse, Presses de l'Institut d'Études politiques de Toulouse, 1983, p. 219-230.

Mauss, openly looked down on Worms, who was judged to lack intellectual consistency or content altogether(34). These divergences did not prevent any of them from teaching at some point at the Université nouvelle. Lacking a stable journal and institutional security, the university functioned as an international meeting place and as a space for left-wing access to academia rather than as a unified political project or a school in the theoretical sense of the word. It did, however, have a certain renown. In 1900, at the first international congress of social science teaching, the Université nouvelle stood out as one of the spearheads of the internationalization of social science teaching(35). In 1913, at the worldwide congress of international associations, the institute was again praised as the best example of international teaching(36). The international character of the experiment resulted from the long-standing internationalist political and intellectual involvement of its protagonists. It was supported by the more recent internationalist credo of professionalized science that also guided René Worms's initiatives. This same credo would equally guide the new institute of sociology that was soon to arise in Brussels.

Solvay's mark: both international and closed

Like a number of international figures conceiving comprehensive explanatory systems at the turn of the century, the industrial chemist and patron Solvay, who had shifted his interests from industry to science, and then to the theory of science, attempted to elaborate a unifying scientist system encompassing the universe from the creation of matter to the organization of societies. In addition to writing his own theory of science, the benefactor's work was articulated with the building of an ensemble of international research institutes that he portrayed as a veritable blueprint for international science, like an "architect that designs the temple of his dreams"(37). From 1893 to 1913, Solvay conceived, funded and organized institute-laboratories in three major fields: physiology, sociology, and physics and chemistry, while also supporting complementary endeavours such as hygiene and anatomy. The creation of the different institutes, and their aggregation in one location, the Leopold Park in Brussels, underlined the synthetic character of Solvay's scientific ambitions to "fundamentally connect economic factors

(34) See, for instance, Émile Durkheim to Marcel Mauss, 8 June 1894, in ID., *Lettres à Marcel Mauss. Présentées par Philippe Besnard et Marcel Fournier*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1998, p. 34-36.

(35) It did so together with the École des Hautes Études sociales in Paris, which was founded in 1900 by Dick May (also the main organizer of the conference) after a scission from the Collège libre des Sciences sociales. At the conference, La Fontaine advocated international education that was inspired by the model of the Belgian Institut des Hautes Études See Dick MAY, "Le premier congrès international de l'enseignement des sciences sociales", in *Revue internationale de l'Enseignement*, vol. 40, 1900, p. 428; H. LA FONTAINE, "Création d'un enseignement social international", *op. cit*.

(36) L. WEIL, "Le deuxième congrès mondial des associations internationales", in *Revue internationale de l'Enseignement*, vol. 66, 1913, p. 195.

(37) Ernest SOLVAY, *Notes sur le productivisme et le comptabilisme*, Brussels, Lamertin, 1900, "Introduction".

predominant in the evolution of populations with physiological and physical factors that govern man and nature"[38]. The institutes formed an intellectual infrastructure framed by a social and scientific project where internationalism was integral to a global system, articulated, according to Solvay, to the "worldwide society"[39]. This systematic scientific programme, between social innovation and scientistic preoccupation, altogether original in Europe, found its fullest expression in sociology.

After having witnessed and deplored the crisis at the Brussels university as a member of the academic board, Solvay founded in 1894 an Institut des Sciences sociales in the Brussels Hôtel Ravenstein, which also hosted La Fontaine's and Otlet's bibliographical office. A member of Belgian parliament since 1892, Solvay belonged to the Brussels progressive wing of liberalism, which kept close contacts with intellectual socialists. Solvay shared their belief in the capacity of science to develop blueprints for a better and fairer organization of economic and social life. His own vision, however, was highly idiosyncratic and definitely liberal in outlook. Productivism was central to it: a theory intended to maximize the productive capacity of society by valuing all productive activities, material as well as immaterial. The creation of equal opportunities at the start – through, for instance, education for all and the creation of inheritance taxes – was seen as crucial to enhancing the productivity of society. On the basis of his productivism, Solvay hoped to devise an accounting system that would replace traditional transactions through money. The productivist vision of social science presupposed an evolutionist perspective and weaved an essential tie with internationalism by affirming the necessity of a historical evolution towards international association and organization[40]. The main mission of the new research institute was to elaborate these ideas scientifically. Solvay appointed Denis, De Greef and Vandervelde to carry out the necessary research. They were to be on an equal footing with Solvay as members of the executive committee of the institute, and each was handsomely paid. The three incarnated the intellectual tie between international socialist and international scientistic thought.

Even though political divergences between Solvay and his collaborators were clear from the start, there was much intellectual excitement about the project on both sides. De Greef, theorist of the trade unionist structure of social organization, shared Solvay's organicist vision of social relations. As Proudhonians, De Greef and especially Denis had a long-standing interest in monetary questions and alternative banking systems. Vandervelde had recently finished his first major study on "organic and social parasitism", a collaborative project with biologist Jean Massart. Their characterization of the figure of the "parasite propriétaire" – a person living exclusively off

(38) Lettre d'E. Solvay à MM. les bourgmestre et échevins de la ville de Bruxelles, 12 février 1901, *Note sur des formules d'introduction à l'énergétique physio- et psycho-sociologique*, Brussels, H. Lamertin, 1902, p. 45.

(39) Ernest SOLVAY, "La société mondiale", in *Annales de l'Institut des Sciences sociales*, vol. 6, 1900, p. 252-268.

(40) Ernest SOLVAY, "Le programme de l'Institut des Sciences sociales. Avant-propos", in *Annales de l'Institut des Sciences sociales*, vol. 1-2, 1894-1896, p. 1.

his property – as an impediment to society's progress, must have appealed to Solvay. Vandervelde's and Massart's research received considerable international attention, including an English and an Italian translation. It was later continued under the auspices of the new institute(41). The institute's journal, the *Annales de l'Institut des Sciences sociales*, reveals how, on the whole, the activities of the three appointed researchers focused on socio-economic and monetary questions, alternating theoretical, specifically "Belgian" empirical and comparative approaches(42). A portion of the studies was dedicated to "social accounting", an energetist approach involving the exact quantification of production. Due to its specific context, the *Annales* remained a closed universe. The majority of the contributions were written by Solvay, his collaborators and a few intellectuals close to him, among them La Fontaine and Otlet. The only external contribution appeared in the last of the six published volumes, in 1900. It was a text by Maxime Kovalewsky, a Russian-French scholar actively involved in Worms's international society who was also involved in the Université nouvelle(43). The institute did invest, however, in an internationally oriented library. The number of journals was relatively limited, but the collection did include several American journals, the *American Journal of Sociology* among them.

However, the experiment across political divides did not last. In addition to the political differences that separated Solvay's productivist ideas and the Belgian collectivist programme, conflict was nourished by the benefactor's scientific pretensions: he was ready to fund the institute as long as it loyally applied and communicated his own theories. The visible marginality of Solvay's position within the international field of sociology was another impediment for someone like De Greef, who participated in the foundation of the Université nouvelle in search of intellectual liberty. From 1900 on, Solvay started to reorganize the institute. He attracted collaborators closer to his own political project, put pressure on Denis, De Greef and Vandervelde to leave their positions and started the construction of a new and impressive building in the Leopold Park, neighbouring his Institut de Physiologie(44). The new Institut de Sociologie held internationalist ambitions, albeit in a specifically positivist and highly political fashion. In a 1901 text addressing the city council of Brussels, which co-financed the project, Solvay presented its mission as follows:

> « L'Institut cherchera notamment à constituer un Comité international d'autorités aptes à s'organiser entre elles en vue de la constitution d'un parti international de politique positive et de tenter ainsi, effectivement,

(41) Raf DE BONT, *Darwins kleinkinderen: de evolutietheorie in België, 1865-1945*, Nijmegen, Vantilt, 2008, p. 245.

(42) Each of them took the liberty to elaborate personal interests as well. Vandervelde, for instance, published extensively on Karl Marx.

(43) Maxime KOVALEWSKY, "La sociologie et l'histoire comparée du droit", in *Annales de l'Institut des Sciences sociales*, vol. 7, 1900; see also M. KOVALEWSKY, "Les origines du suffrage universel. Discours prononcé à la séance solennelle de rentrée de l'Université nouvelle", in *L'Étudiant socialiste*, 5 November 1900.

(44) J.-Fr. CROMBOIS, *L'univers de la sociologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 32; Liliane VIRÉ, "La cité scientifique du parc Léopold à Bruxelles, 1890-1920", in *Cahiers bruxellois*, vol. 19, 1974, p. 99-144.

> d'introduire la méthode scientifique dans l'art d'organiser et de faire évoluer les groupes humains et l'humanité. [...] Nous visons l'étude et l'effectivité; la première pour la seconde, mais non la science pour elle-même, sans objectif de réalisation »(45).

Solvay added a programme of "social energetism" to his earlier system of productivism. Economic and social phenomena would be approached in terms of energy consumed or needed, an approach which, so he hoped, would stimulate close collaboration with researchers from his Institute of Physiology and from the university's science faculty.

Solvay's political priorities were mirrored by his decision to appoint Émile Waxweiler as director of the new institute. An engineer in his thirties, involved in liberal politics since his student years, civil servant in the ministry of Labor and author of a prize-winning study on the benefits of a policy of high wages in the United States, Waxweiler had no affinity with sociology. He was a member, however, of the Société d'Études sociales et politiques and had been involved in the Brussels curriculum in political and social sciences since 1897. At the aforementioned international conference on the state of social sciences education in 1900, he had not concealed his opposition to sociology. Writing from a student perspective, he stated quite polemically: "Le pauvre jeune homme qui inflige cette torture à son esprit, est profondément digne de commisération. [...] La question reste ouverte de savoir si la sociologie, dans son état actuel, peut déjà avoir droit de cité dans les programmes universitaires".

If it was to be taught, such a course "ne pourrait guère avoir pour objet que de montrer comment, suivant les paroles de M. Tarde, la sociologie a été conçue tour à tour comme une physique sociale, comme une biologie sociale, et enfin comme une psychologie sociale"(46). Waxweiler's priorities were to be found elsewhere: it was time to create experts in "social hygiene", he argued, an elite able to inspire science-based socio-economic policy.

Waxweiler's insistence on the necessity to adapt curricula to so-called "real needs" did not imply a narrowly defined curricular conception, however. Knowledge of long-term developments was needed, alongside broad and comparative pictures of different cultures. He insisted on the need to introduce courses such as "la psychologie et la morale des peuples", anthropology, comparative ethnography and comparative history of philosophy, literature and art. The underlying conviction seems to have been the view that knowledge of different cultures would lead to a better insight into the mechanisms of one's own society. It was a position quite different from La Fontaine's, who, referring to the Université nouvelle, at the same conference defended the establishment of internationally organized programmes in the social sciences as a beneficial exercise in international understanding. Waxweiler quite

(45) Quoted in Daniel WARNOTTE, *Ernest Solvay et l'Institut de Sociologie. Contributions à l'histoire de l'énergétique sociale*, Brussels, Bruylant, 1946, p. 530.

(46) Émile WAXWEILER, "À quoi doit servir et comment faut-il organiser l'enseignement des sciences sociales particulièrement dans les universités belges?", in *Le Premier Congrès de l'enseignement des sciences sociales. Compte rendu des séances et texte des mémoires publiés par la Commission permanente internationale de l'enseignement social*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1901, p. 72.

pointedly did not refer to the Université nouvelle, but made reference to, amongst others, the flexible and broad curriculum of the London School of Economics and Political Science. His insistence on the importance of fashioning curricula to the actual needs of society was also inspired by his acquaintance with American industry. Waxweiler had visited the United States and was impressed by the work of Frederick Taylor on scientific industrial management(47). American "social engineers", he told his public in Paris, had proved able to enhance the productivity of all workers by drawing on the maximum of their capacities, which too often remained dormant. Social science education should hence no longer be exclusively oriented to students in law. Engineers had to be attracted as well(48).

At the Institute of Sociology that Waxweiler would direct from 1902 to 1914, the main goal was research, not education. Even though the institute claimed two identities, a laboratory and a university, it was the laboratory that presided as a place for the "scientific study of sociology and its applications". The aim was to ensure the international circulation of researchers and to provide them material and intellectual facilities, such as a library, statistical material, technical collections and means of communicating abroad(49). Most members of the institute were affiliated to one of the faculties of the university. For some of them the institute itself offered a more or less stable professional affiliation. That was the case for the Italian art historian Raphaël Petrucci, for instance, who had initially been attracted to Brussels because of the Université nouvelle(50). It was equally true for the Russian Nadine Ivanitzky, who, after having studied in Geneva and Paris, came to the Brussels School for Social Sciences where she wrote a thesis on "social elites" under Waxweiler's supervision(51). For still others, such as the Polish physiologist Josepha Joteyko, who had followed a similar trajectory (Geneva–Brussels–Paris–Brussels), the institute did not offer employment but provided access to an academic environment(52). All in all, the institute was much less international in outlook than the Université nouvelle, but it clearly provided

(47) Fernand VAN LANGENHOVE, "L'Institut de Sociologie Solvay au temps de Waxweiler", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 3, 1978, p. 229-261.

(48) E. WAXWEILER, "À quoi doit servir", *op. cit*, p. 74.

(49) "Organisation générale de l'Institut. Statuts révisés en février 1910", in *Institut de Sociologie Solvay. Bulletin mensuel*, 1, 1910, p. II.

(50) Henri LAVACHERY, "Petrucci, Raphaël", in *Biographie nationale*, Brussels, Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, vol. 33, 1966, p. 583-590.

(51) On Ivanitzky, see the preface by S.A. Deschamps and Georges Smets to her posthumously published article Nadine IVANITZKY, "Les institutions des primitifs australiens", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie,* vol. 2, 1921-1922, 2, p. 175-220, 385-416; vol. 3, 1922-1923, 1, p. 1-28.

(52) Kaat WILS, "Le génie s'abritant sous un crâne féminin? La carrière belge de Iosefa Ioteyko", in Jacqueline CARROY, Nicole EDELMAN, Annick OHAYON & Nathalie RICHARD, eds., *Les femmes dans les sciences de l'homme (19e–20e siècles). Inspiratrices, collaboratrices ou créatrices?*, Paris, Séli Arslan, 2005, p. 49-67; Ilana LÖWY, "Measures, Instruments, Methods, and Results. Jozefa Joteyko on Social Reforms and Physiological Measures", in Gérard JORLAND, George WEISZ & Annick OPINEL, eds., *Body Counts: Medical Quantification in Historical and Sociological Perspective*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's Press, 2005, p. 145-172.

more opportunities to foreigners as well as women than the main university, the Université libre de Bruxelles.

Waxweiler in search of multidisciplinarity and synthesis

Both the broad "transcultural" interest and the belief in the need to create a science-based management of industry and society that Waxweiler had expressed in 1900 would characterize the scientific activities of the institute. This perspective was, of course, compatible with Solvay's main preoccupations. It was, for instance, elaborated by Joteyko, who linked her physiological research into fatigue to questions of labour organization(53). The first, transcultural perspective would gain special significance within the institute after the publication of Waxweiler's *Esquisse d'une sociologie* in 1906. Waxweiler presented his own sociological theory as a form of "social ethology", a concept that he had borrowed from the French biologist Alfred Giard, under whom he had studied(54). Just as biologists study the adaptation of organisms to their environment, sociologists had to investigate how individuals adapt to their specific environment and to each other. To Waxweiler, who saw human beings as all equally rational in nature, the individual constituted the only possible access to the study of social phenomena. Sociology needed support not only from biology but also from psychology. This position implied a critical stance towards Durkheimian social-realism. His ethological approach made him equally sceptical about organicist sociological theory and anthropological social-evolutionism (both tendencies being well represented within Worms's international society)(55). The transformations of institutions and mental representations which resulted from processes of adaptation, were, according to Waxweiler, always limited in scope, geographically as well as temporarily. This implied that there did not exist one form of global evolution that dominated history. Differences in social behaviour between groups or races were to be approached as resulting from rationally inspired reactions towards different environments, rather than as representing a different stage within evolution.

In the years after the publication of his *Esquisse*, Waxweiler increasingly insisted among the members of the institute on applying his approach to all fields of research, hoping to unite disciplinary perspectives into one sociological approach. In 1910 the institute was reorganized to that end. Nine disciplinary or thematically defined study groups were established. Reports of their fortnightly meetings were published in the newly constituted monthly journal *Archives sociologiques*, which screened all recent sociological work

(53) Raf De Bont, "Energie op de weegschaal: vermoeidheidsstudie, psychotechniek en biometrie in België (1900-1940)", in *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis/ Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine*, vol. 32, 2002, 1-2, p. 23-71.

(54) Émile Waxweiler, Conférence à l'Institut psychologique, décembre 1906, in Pierre Clerget, "Les bases scientifiques de la sociologie: l'Institut Solvay", in *Revue générale des Sciences*, 30 April 1907, p. 306.

(55) R. De Bont, *Darwins kleinkinderen*, *op. cit.*, p. 373-383; organicist sociology became less dominant in Worms's society at the end of the 1890s.

according to a unified point of view. The institute was indeed perceived by contemporaries as a real school, comparable to the Durkheimian one, and different from Worms's more eclectic institute(56). Even if, differently from the Durkheimian school, it did not present itself as thoroughly embedded in a national tradition, it did have the advantage of being related to a well-established university, which certainly helped it become academically recognized.

Within the study group on sociology, the anthropological approach that had characterized Waxweiler's *Esquisse* was developed further. Its anti-hierarchical premise led to a revaluation of primitive cultures (even though the term in itself was not questioned). The work of the Durkheimian Lucien Lévy-Bruhl on the existence of a distinct "primitive mind" was fiercely criticized, and Frank Boas's work was welcomed for its insistence on the impact of culture and environment on the mentality and even the physical constitution of groups(57). In a more general way, the advantages and problems of comparative research – comparing cultures across time periods and/or places – were frequently debated. The institute's historians were most sensitive to its dangers, but even they did not fundamentally question the ambition to compare societies beyond temporal or spatial boundaries(58). The implications of the anti-hierarchical character of Waxweiler's view on the relationship among cultures should not be overstated. A fundamental hierarchy between "the West and the Rest" was presupposed and even reinforced in many of the discussions. Belgium's colonial project was actively, though not uncritically, supported. A study group on the Congo was set up in 1910. Émile Vandervelde, who had played a major role in exposing the injustices perpetrated by Belgian functionaries in Leopold's Congo Free State, became one of its most active members. Several research expeditions to the Congo were also organized. Precisely because human "organisms" were considered to be adaptable, it was believed that aspects of European civilization could be introduced to the Congo, provided that sufficient in-depth knowledge was gathered on the functions of local societies. These societies were seen as an "environment" which could progressively be changed through interventions of social engineering and to which people would subsequently adapt(59).

(56) Henri BERR, *La synthèse en histoire. Essai critique et théorique*, Paris, F. Alcan, 1911, p. 124.

(57) "Réunions des groupes d'études", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, p. 30-42; Émile WAXWEILER, "Review of L. Lévy Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les Sociétés inférieures* (Paris, 1910)", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, 3; Nadine IVANITZKY, "Sur la mentalité primitive et les influences qui la déterminent. À propos de F. Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 3, 1911, 18, p. 32-37. Lévy-Bruhl's thesis, however, was supported by A. de Calonne Beaufait (see Marc PONCELET, *L'invention des sciences coloniales belges*, Paris, Éditions Karthala, 2008, p. 157).

(58) Eugène DUPRÉEL, "Sur la méthode comparative", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, nr. 149; J.D.D. [J. DE DECKER], "Groupes d'études historiques. Réunion du 11 novembre", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 3, 1911, p. 988-992; ID., "Groupes d'études historiques. Réunion du 2 décembre", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 3, 1911, p. 992-996.

(59) See, for instance, "Réunion collective du 26 février. Les étapes du lobe frontal", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, 1, p. 92-99; "Groupe d'études coloniales", in *Archives sociologiques,* vol. 1, 1910, 4, p. 234-236. On the institute's colonial study group and Waxweiler's functional analysis of "primitive" societies, see M. PONCELET, *L'invention*, *op. cit.*, p. 152-166.

The anti-hierarchical aspects of Waxweiler's social ethology did not imply an internationalist stance either. Even though German *Völkerpsychologie* was regularly criticized because of its romantic tendency to approach nationality as a stable essence, nationality as a category was not dismissed by the Waxweiler circle(60). The theme of nationalism and internationalism was most often touched upon by Daniel Warnotte, the institute's tireless documentalist and book reviewer, an enthusiastic defender of the specificity and the value of Solvay's and Waxweiler's interpretation of social life. To Warnotte, internationalism was an unscientific idea. It was contradicted by the reality of people's lives, which were precisely determined by their specific environment. From a "functional" and "pragmatic" perspective, the concept and reality of modern nation-states and modern nationalism should, according to Warnotte, be considered as a salutary way to prevent the rise of even "smaller" entities based on region or language(61).

Warnotte's scepticism towards political internationalism did not prevent him from being a warm supporter of *scientific* internationalism. From 1910, the internationalist programme became integrated into the formal objectives of the *Institut* in its new statutes. In his monthly "chronique du mouvement scientifique" in the *Archives sociologiques*, Warnotte reported avidly on every possible international collaborative initiative. The institute's library, which occupied the most central and prestigious space in the building, was international in outlook. In 1910, its multidisciplinary collection of scientific journals consisted of 118 German, 113 French and 62 English titles (as well as 7 Dutch and 6 Italian). This distribution did not only reflect the more general European high esteem in the human as well as the natural sciences of "German" science. It equally, or maybe above all, showed that the Brussels institute was oriented in a marked way towards British and North American scientific production. From the reports of the working groups as well as from the review essays that the members published in the *Archives*, it becomes clear that German and English publications were really read and discussed. In his monthly section of book announcements, Warnotte also quoted extensively from German and English publications. In the course of 1912, for instance, he presented more English than German ones(62). Given the extensive and multilingual character of the bibliographical and documentary sections of the *Archives*, Waxweiler launched a German edition in 1914 and started at

(60) See, for instance, Eugène DUPRÉEL, "Note sur Juhl Adalbert DEWÉ, *Pychology of Politics and History*, London, 1910", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, 4, nr. 61.

(61) See also his interest in race relations in the United States and his conviction that one of the problems of Blacks was their being "*déraciné*" from their original environment. See, for instance, Daniel WARNOTTE, "Review of G. HERVÉ, *L'Internationalisme*, Paris, 1910", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, 2, nr. 29; IDEM, "Le nationalisme italien. International and interracial relations", in *Archives sociologiques,* vol. 1, 1910, 3, nr. 42; IDEM, "Le recours à la guerre et le sentiment de la supériorité nationale", in *Archives sociologiques,* vol. 3, 1911, nr. 276.

(62) There were 158 English quotes, 125 German and 175 French. See also the statutes of the institute, stating that "*mémoires*" could be presented in French or in foreign languages ("Organisation générale de l'Institut", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, 2, p. II-III).

the same moment negotiations with the American Sociological Association to launch an English edition(63).

The institute's most marked initiative in favour of scientific internationalism was the foundation of the so-called Intermédiaire sociologique or Office international d'Information pour les Sciences sociales, "ayant pour objet d'établir entre les personnalités, les sociétés, les institutions, des relations de documentation et d'aide scientifique mutuelle"(64). The initiative was presented as an answer to increasing scientific specialization and – in a typically "productivist" vein – as a way to prevent scholars from losing time by searching information which colleagues have at hand. The idea was to set up a free bibliographical service devoted to social sciences which would deliver extensive bibliographical lists upon request and to create an international network of affiliated scholars and institutions who were prepared to deliver information in response to requests that were directed to the Brussels office. Parallel to this, Warnotte, the driving force of this initiative, also established a bio-bibliographical repertoire of "living sociologists", which allowed him to accompany every review essay in the *Archives* with a bio-bibliographical introduction about the author whose work was reviewed. Four lists of affiliated scholars were published in the *Archives* between 1910 and 1914, and they certainly give some indication of the willingness (or absence thereof) of certain types of scholars to be associated with the institute. The Durkheimians were absent, for instance, but authors who were extensively read and commented in the institute – such as Franz Boas, Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Ostwald or Karl Lamprecht – participated(65). According to Warnotte, 400 bibliographies were composed during the four years before the war, which meant that every three days, a request was forwarded to the office. This rhythm would slow down afterwards, 1000 requests having been answered throughout the interwar period(66).

These discourses and practices of scientific internationalism could not hide the fact that, because of its very strong and quite peculiar intellectual focus, the institute was a relatively closed universe. It enjoyed some international renown, but it was always associated with either its founder or his particular conceptions – "le point de vue qui est celui des savants qui travaillent à l'Institut de Sociologie Solvay" – associations which inevitably created a form of distancing(67). The institute hosted relatively few foreign guests, Émile Worms being one of the rare foreign sociologists who attended a meeting of the study groups in 1910(68). The interdisciplinary character of the institute probably hampered rather than supported its visibility in a period

(63) D. WARNOTTE, *Ernest Solvay et l'Institut de Sociologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 540.

(64) Daniel WARNOTTE, "L'Intermédiaire sociologique. Office International de documentation et d'information pour les sciences sociales", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, 2, p. VI-VII.

(65) See, for instance, "Deuxième liste des adhérents à l'Intermédiaire sociologique", in *Annales sociologiques*, vol. 5, 1912, nr. 19.

(66) D. WARNOTTE, *Ernest Solvay et l'Institut de Sociologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 555-557.

(67) René MAUNIER, "Revue des périodiques. Institut de Sociologie Solvay – *Archives sociologiques*", in *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, vol. 21, 1913, p. 206.

(68) Meeting of 16 May 1910: "Réunions des groupes d'études. Groupe d'études sociologiques", in *Archives sociologiques*, vol. 1, 1910, 5, p. 274-280.

of discipline formation and consolidation. Because most members of the institute had other and sometimes more important affiliations as well, they each had their own international networks, mostly along disciplinary lines. In 1911, for instance, the educational researcher Ovide Decroly, who was an active member of the study group on child sociology, and Joteyko organized an international pedological conference in Brussels, where Joteyko launched the idea to found an international pedological university (an idea she would put into practice a year later, but without the support of the main university in Brussels)(69). It is difficult to assess the impact of such initiatives on the image or fame of the institute of sociology.

The impact of the war on the international orientation of the institute also remains an issue to be researched in depth. After having tried to hand the institute over to the League of Nations (which declined the offer), the Solvay family decided in 1920 to give it to Brussels University (the *Université Libre*). The intellectual atmosphere had changed quite drastically, as Waxweiler and some other "strongholders" of his interdisciplinary and ethological project such as Petrucci did not survive the war. The new directors of the institute, Georges Barnich and Georges Hostelet, who were appointed during the war, concentrated their efforts on questions of post-war reconstruction – a theme that would dominate the activities of the institute during the first half of the 1920s. As Waxweiler himself had published two monographs on the German violation of Belgium's neutrality during the war, his legacy could easily be "nationalized" and his earlier interdisciplinary ambitions buried. The role and the usefulness of the League of Nations soon became a much-discussed topic in the institute. In these discussions, the priority of national security above international cooperation seemed uncontested(70). Unlike other intellectual and scientific circles, hostility towards Germany or German colleagues was not made explicit among those associated with the institute and its new journal, the *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, even though Hostelet himself had spent a substantial part of the war as a prisoner in Germany(71). Recent German publications were extensively used by several members of the institute, who integrated data on German social and economic policy into their research. New German scientific initiatives in the field of sociology were reported in the usual neutral fashion(72). In the first volume of the post-war journal, the

(69) Marc DEPAEPE, "Le premier (et dernier) congrès international de pédologie à Bruxelles en 1911", in *Bulletin de la Société Alfred Binet et Théodore Simon*, vol. 87, 1987, p. 28-54.

(70) Georges SMETS, "Société des Nations et Société nationale", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 1, 1920-21, p. 81-104; G.S. [Georges SMETS], "Chronique de l'Institut. La Société des Nations", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 5, 1922-1923, p. 79-80.

(71) On strong anti-German positions among intellectuals during or shortly after the war, see, for instance, Karl Dietrich ERDMANN, "Internationale Schulbuchrevision zwischen Politik und Wissenschaft", in *Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, vol. 4, 1982, 249-259 (on Henri Pirenne's unwillingness to have German colleagues enter international scholarly associations) and Christophe PROCHASSON & Anne RASMUSSEN, *Au nom de la patrie. Les intellectuels et la première guerre mondiale (1910-1919)*, Paris, Éditions La Découverte, 1996, p. 258-260 (on Durkheim, among others).

(72) Ben Serge CHLEPNER, "Le nouveau régime fiscal de l'Allemagne", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 2, 1920-1921, p. 263-292, 399-434; Daniel WARNOTTE, "Une

bibliography contained, as usual, many German works, but Warnotte reviewed extremely few of them (10 German titles versus 94 French and 100 English). Unlike the *Archives sociologiques*, the new journal hosted contributions of foreign authors from outside the institute, among them French, Swiss, Italian and American, but no German. Does this indicate a certain, implicit boycott of German scholarship?

Waxweiler's and Solvay's ideas on the importance of a social and intellectual elite capable of establishing economic and financial leadership were eagerly reappropriated and reinforced after the war(73). Some older international contacts were kept alive, insofar as they fitted in this new intellectual and ideological atmosphere, which included also a growing interest in eugenics. A case in point was Hostelet's participation in an international sociology conference in Rome in 1923, patronized by the recently installed Prime Minister Benito Mussolini. Hostelet, now director of the institute, was an engineer and scientist by education and a philosopher by vocation. He had been an industrial collaborator of Solvay and kept elements of Solvay's productivism and scientism alive in the journal of the institute. The conference in Rome was organized by Francesco Cosentini, a non-academic philosopher and tireless advocate of sociology as an international field who had been a frequent guest at the Université nouvelle before the war. Hostelet's paper was entitled "Democratic Aspirations and the Social Need for Authority and Discipline". Even though interwar "managerial ideology" was prominent within the institute, the post-war journal of the institute was much less programmatic in character than Waxweiler's *Archives sociologiques* had been. This created a higher degree of openness to different intellectual traditions than was the case in the older journal. This openness is probably best symbolized by the appearance of publications by members of the Durkheimian school, Célestin Bouglé (with whom Vandervelde had contacts) and, later, Maurice Halbwachs(74). They clearly had not been on the intellectual horizon in the era of Waxweiler.

Conclusion

The social sciences were an integral part of a vast European internationalist culture developed at the end of the nineteenth century, which united a new awareness of national interdependence with an appreciation of the importance of science in society. If the pre-war transnational voluntarism of Brussels

nouvelle revue allemande de sociologie", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 3, 1921-1922, p. 169; Maurice ANSIAUX, "Les prix solidaires", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie,* vol. 4, 1921-1922, p. 221-242.

(73) LA DIRECTION, "L'oeuvre de É. Waxweiler et l'orientation de la *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 1, 1920-21, p. 5-12; Daniel WARNOTTE, "La Fondation Émile Waxweiler", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 2, 1920-1921, p. 170-171; Georges HOSTELET, "L'action et la conception productivistes de M. E. Solvay", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie,* vol. 4, 1921-1922, p. 37-64.

(74) Célestin BOUGLÉ, "Valeurs économiques et valeurs idéales", in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, vol. 2, 1920-1921, p. 179-198.

sociology found an echo in Europe, it was presumably because it was in phase with the pioneering role that Belgium intended to play in scientific internationalism more generally, not unlike other "small European nations" such as Switzerland and the Netherlands. It aimed to become an intellectual and scientific centre, if not *the* centre, of a developing worldwide entity. Centralizing international congresses, associations, offices or bibliography were amongst the means proposed to Belgium by numerous internationalists who made the universalist vocation a national specialization.

In order to be able to assess the transnational character of Brussels sociology between 1900 and 1925, it seemed appropriate to show how older and parallel networks, ideas and institutions throw a light on the transnational and at the same time closed character of the Institute of Sociology that was founded in 1902. Its openness towards foreign researchers has to be connected with the international and internationalist culture of the Université nouvelle, which in its turn went back to intellectual and political contacts that had been established as early as the 1860s. Its scientific internationalism was above all "bibliographical". It was based on a network mode of interaction that can be traced back to La Fontaine's initiatives during the 1890s. Scientific communication and the forming of networks were, according to this reasoning, necessary conditions to the shaping of the discipline, to the point of even becoming its intellectual foundation. The institute's scientific internationalism was also based on the belief in the need to systematically and critically assess a wide array of international publications in order to accumulate as much knowledge as possible. The universalist bibliography at Brussels, De Greef's positivist ideal of education at the Université nouvelle, the energetist inspiration of the Institut Solvay and its functionalist reinterpretation by Waxweiler: each of these made internationalism a mode of thought and a methodological framework for scientific reasoning, as well as a concrete objective for the practice of scholarly activities. The latter two gave the Brussels institute a clear intellectual profile but also caused a form of academic isolation. That would change once the institute became fully integrated in Brussels University after the war. The missionary kind of internationalism that had characterized pre-war sociology faded as well.

ABSTRACT

Kaat Wils & Anne Rasmussen, *Sociology in a Transnational Perspective: Brussels, 1890-1925*

In the late nineteenth century, numerous well-established university disciplines progressively widened their geographical breadth from national to international. In the case of sociology, an international infrastructure was founded from the start of the process of institutionalization of the discipline itself. Internationalist beliefs and projects did not diminish the importance of being locally and nationally embedded, however. This contribution explores one specific case: the role of transnational discourses and practices at the Brussels Institute of Sociology, which was founded in 1902. The transnational and at the same time intellectually closed character of the institute is traced back to older networks, ideas and institutions: the universalist bibliographical initiatives of Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine, the Université nouvelle

and its positivist ideal of science and education, the peculiar scientific worldview of the institute's principal Maecenas, Ernest Solvay, and the reinterpretation of this intellectual heritage by its first director Émile Waxweiler. The latter two gave the Brussels institute a clear intellectual profile but also caused a form of academic isolation. That would change once the institute became fully integrated in the Brussels' University after the war. The missionary kind of internationalism that had characterized pre-war sociology faded then as well.

History of sociology – internationalism – transnational networks – Brussels – Belgium

RÉSUMÉ

Kaat Wils & Anne Rasmussen, *Sociologie en perspective transnationale : Bruxelles, 1890-1925*

À la fin du XIX^e^ siècle, nombre de disciplines universitaires bien établies connurent une extension géographique de leur champ, du national à l'international. Dans le cas de la sociologie, une infrastructure internationale se déploya dès l'origine de l'institutionnalisation de la discipline, en même temps que se développaient ses premières institutions nationales et locales. Les convictions et les projets internationalistes ne diminuèrent cependant pas l'importance de l'enracinement local et national. Dans cette perspective, cette contribution explore le cas singulier de l'internationalisme des discours et des pratiques de l'Institut de Sociologie de Bruxelles, fondé en 1902. Le caractère transnational de l'Institut, qui coexista paradoxalement avec sa fermeture intellectuelle, trouve ses origines dans des réseaux, des idées et des institutions plus anciens, parmi lesquels les initiatives bibliographiques universalistes de Paul Otlet et Henri La Fontaine, l'Université nouvelle et ses visions positivistes, la vision du monde spécifique des mécènes de l'Institut, en particulier Ernest Solvay, et la réinterprétation de cet héritage intellectuel par le premier directeur de l'Institut, Émile Waxweiler. Solvay et Waxweiler conférèrent à l'Institut bruxellois un profil intellectuel nettement affirmé, mais furent aussi à l'origine d'un processus d'isolement académique. La situation évolua après la guerre, une fois que l'Institut fut pleinement intégré à l'Université libre de Bruxelles. Les formes prosélytes de l'internationalisme qui avaient caractérisé la sociologie d'avant-guerre y perdirent alors leur acuité et leur pertinence.

Histoire de la sociologie – internationalisme – réseaux transnationaux – Bruxelles – Belgique

SAMENVATTING

Kaat Wils & Anne Rasmussen, *Sociologie in een transnationaal perspectief: Brussel, 1890-1925*

Op het einde van de negentiende eeuw maakten tal van academische disciplines een proces van internationalisering door. In het geval van de sociologie verliep de oprichting van een internationale wetenschappelijke infrastructuur ongeveer gelijktijdig met het ontstaan van de discipline zelf. De belangrijke rol van internationalistische overtuigingen en projecten impliceerde echter niet dat een nationale en lokale

inbedding onbelangrijk waren. In deze bijdrage wordt de rol van transnationale vertogen en praktijken vanuit dit perspectief onderzocht in het Brusselse Institut de Sociologie, dat in 1902 werd opgericht. Het transnationale maar tegelijkertijd ook intellectueel gesloten karakter van het Instituut vond zijn oorsprong in oudere netwerken, ideeën en instellingen: de universalistische bibliografische initiatieven van Paul Otlet en Henri La Fontaine, de positivistisch geïnspireerde Université nouvelle, het idiosyncratische wetenschappelijke wereldbeeld van de belangrijkste mecenas van het instituut, Ernest Solvay, en de herinterpretatie van diens intellectuele erfenis door de eerste directeur van het instituut, Émile Waxweiler. Beide laatste factoren bezorgden het Brusselse Instituut een duidelijk intellectueel profiel, maar tevens een zeker academisch isolement. Dat zou veranderen na de Eerste Wereldoorlog, eens het instituut volledig geïntegreerd werd in de Université libre de Bruxelles. Het missionaire karakter van het internationalisme dat de vooroorlogse sociologie had gekenmerkt, verdween dan ook.

Geschiedenis van de sociologie – internationalisme – transnationale netwerken – Brussel – België