

11 May 2022, Faculty of Arts, KU Leuven



3rd Corvus Applied History Workshop

Practices of Applied History: Questions, Answers, Discussions

Situated at the axis of societal issues and academic research, the renewed popularity of applied history has raised several questions about its practice. The most direct questions come from non-academic partners. What can one expect of applied historians? How will those expectations be met? What if the methods and tools of applied history fall short of their goal? And is it even that important that organizations learn to think about the past, when they are oriented towards the present and future?

Other questions stem from academic concerns. Is applied history more than a reiteration of public history? Do societal questions and concerns have a place within academic history departments? And if so, what are the ethical boundaries of this type of research?

Some of these topics remain open questions. Some have been eloquently answered. Some remain subject of (fierce) discussion. Therefore, this third Corvus applied history workshop joins academic and non-academic expertise in order to assess and debate the value of applied history practices in different sectors.



Discussants:

Thomas Cauvin,

Associate Professor of Public History, Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH)

Gill Bennett OBE

Senior Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Historians

Pieter Huistra

Assistant Professor Theory of History, University of Utrecht

Jason Steinhauer

Global Fellow, The Wilson Center

Koen Vandenweyer

Delegation of Flanders to the European Union

Alexandra Van den Berghe

Corvus Research Project, KU Leuven

Programme:

9.15am : Welcome

9.30am : New name, old practices? *(what is already out there)*

11am : Coffee break

11.30am : Where, when, how? *(what should be out there)*

1pm : Lunch break

2pm : What (not) to do? *(what should not be out there)*

3.30pm : Conclusions

3.45pm : End

Attendance is free, but places are limited. Please contact bram.deridder@kuleuven.be for reservations and inquiries.

Starting questions:

9.30am : New name, old practices? *(what is already out there)*

In these last few years the notion of 'Applied History' has seen renewed popularity. Proponents thereby often promise to reinvigorate the 'long lost practice' of using history in the present. Yet teachers, journalists, archivists, politicians, marketeers and many others (including academics) have never stopped applying history in their professional activities. So do you think that there is already enough 'applied history' out there, particularly in your sector?

11.30am : Where, when, how? *(what should be out there)*

The 'next step' in Applied History is usually considered to be the development of new ways of applying historical insight to issues in the present. This of course begs the question what those methods should be designed to do – what issues deserve attention and which new methods and tools look promising? In other words, what can or should applied history try to achieve as its 'next step'?

2pm : What (not) to do? *(what should not be out there)*

Not everybody believes that applying past insights to present concerns is a good idea. Some see no value in historical information, nor in historical thinking. Others fear the application of history in the present, as uses of the past become abuses of the past far too quickly. Therefore, what do you think should be absolutely avoided when 'doing' applied history?