

Laidlaw Programme Research Finding Report

Scholar Report

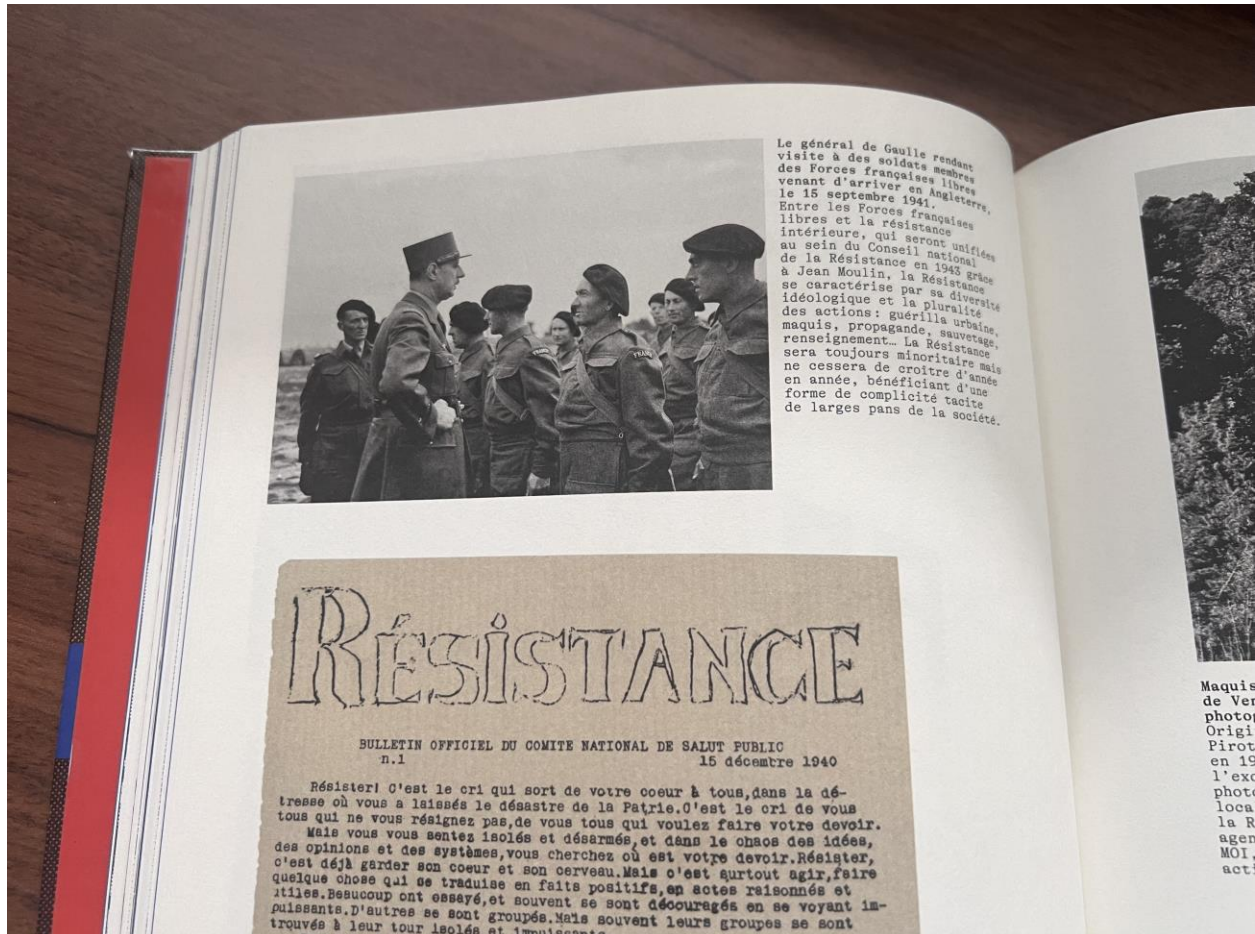
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Title of Scholarship Project:	"Mapping colonial subject in the French Resistance"

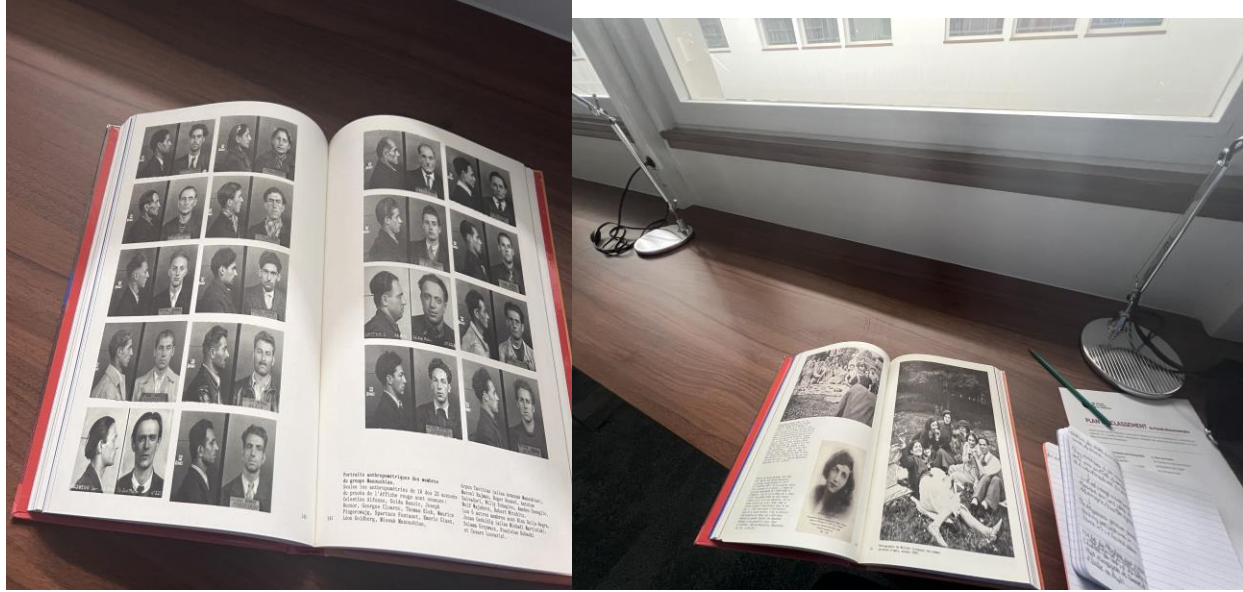
Contents

- *What did this research confront? - **Introduction.***
- *Description of the research.*
- *What activities have you been involved in to disseminate your research?*
- *What leadership skills you have gained from the research period?*

What did this research confront?

- Unveiling the cultural vibrancy within the French resistance
- Taking into consideration the migration flow that have influenced the neighbourhoods in Paris due to soldiers' presence in the area.
- The inefficiency to reward promptly colonial fighters that gave their life during the WW2.





(Pictures from book called: "Histoire de l'algerie a' le periode coloniale" taken in the private library of Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration')

Description of the research:

The research undertaken under the supervision of the academic leader, Nina Wardleworth is called: "mapping Colonial Subjects in the French Resistance". The goal of the research has been to investigate through the consultation of documents, the history and backgrounds of soldiers from WW2, specifically coming from countries colonized by the French empire: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Madagascar. To access those, I had to register my attendance in the military archive of Chateau de Vincennes in France in order to collect enough information and create interactive maps dedicated to locating the soldiers around Paris later. By team working with fellow scholar Phoebe Williams, I had to read and take notes from multiple dossiers explaining the soldier's life history as members of the resistance intérieure française (RIF) known as French Forces of the Interior (FFI) in English. The methodology used to accomplish this has been a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, in order to analyse information, quantitative methods were necessary to have a better comprehension, for instance while collecting numerical data within the charts, this resulted in an enhancement for the organization of the different soldiers based on their regiments. Qualitative methods such as observation, were necessary while looking into details in the multitude of dossiers, especially when reading calligraphies and translating pieces of information from French to English. In the end, part of the aim was accomplishing the creation of soldiers' facts files and indicate within them biographical informations and recognitions of any sort of military success such as obtaining a 'croix de guerre' , 'etoiles d'argent'. I found particularly fascinating noticing how multitude numbers of soldiers were coming from: Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Madagascar. This made me intrigued about the variety of cultures that have contributed to the history of the French resistance, and I could notice too how often these foreign soldiers were obtaining impressive progress and military grades throughout their military careers, often in short amount of time. For instance, fighter Benichou Albert started as a soldier, and took the role of lieutenant in 1945, to then being promoted as 'captaine' in a brief short amount of time, similarly other Algerians, Madagascans soldiers too. It was inevitable to develop greater emotional intelligence during the process of researching, especially when reading about the struggle that some soldiers had to go through in order to receive their pensions. The research enabled me to connect with the emotions felt by the soldiers and reflect on their trials when being denied a pension despite their historical and heroic war efforts.



(Pictures: in Chateau de Vincennes in Paris, while investigating 20 soldier's dossiers)

What activities have you been involved in to disseminate your research?

During the research I went to explore the addresses of different soldiers as an activity to disseminate the research. I have travelled a total of 12 different destinations around Paris, from 'Bobigny' to 'Paris 11th Arrondissement', capturing pictures of the addresses where the fighters used to live in and to showcase those as legacies. I had to physically endure few hours of travelling and walking around suburbs and neighbourhoods of Paris to do this, but I was left incredibly excited while doing it since I felt like an explorer. The great dynamicity during this process enabled me to share the project with people that I met along the way, such as during the bus trips in company of an elderly man and a lady I was able to share my enthusiasm about what I was going to do. At the visit of the memorial at Mont-Valérien too, during a guided tour I spread information about the intention of this research to the lady guiding the group tour. In the military archive, to a Moroccan lady that was researching too, to the point that she became interested to support me through the extra materials that she was consulting because she thought it would be useful for my research. Similarly, during the visit at the 'Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration' coming across to the head of the library at the museum, I explained to him the objectives and reasons behind being in Paris. And coming back to the UK and taking part at the UGRC (Undergraduate Research Conference), I was able to use the event as a platform to disseminate the research too. All these were valuable opportunities to share about the research and find people that would support it through providing extra materials and the connections that they had.



(Picture: One of the addresses captured during the process of disseminating the research)

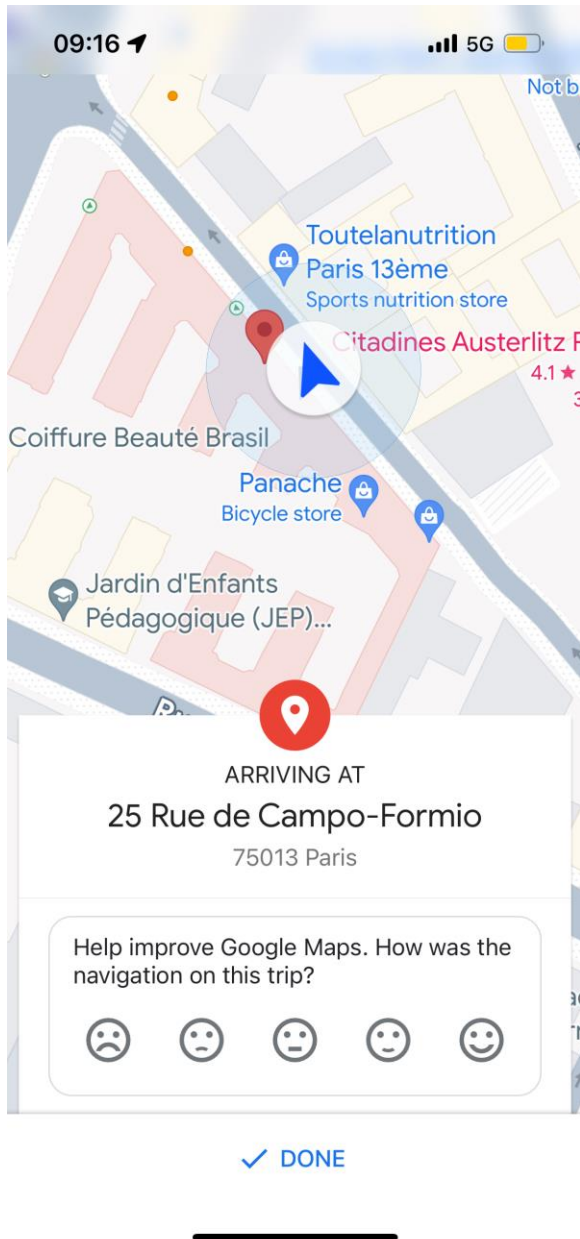


(Picture: image from a piece of a document illustrating a colonial soldier)

What leadership skills you have gained from the research period?

Collaboration and adaptability were the greatest takeaways from the research period. For instance, during this period I have observed that the creation of contingencies plans could be essential to avoid pressure and stress. Taking example from my academic supervisor that was able to bring instantaneously alternative dates and plans when things would not logistically work, I noticed that being adaptable to new arrangements was essential to guarantee a smooth operation within the research.

Additionally another leadership skill obtained has been, being visionary. I was capable to imagine the end goal from the start of the research, and as a result becoming ambitious to accomplish it through the right plans. As a perfectionist most of the time, I was challenged to avoid as much as I could to not present this side of me during the research, but instead to simply present the attitude of not settling for the good enough which it has become a new mode of working for me since doing the research. For instance when I was creating the individual soldiers' fact files, usually I would have been frustrated to find very limited information on F.F.I (Forces françaises de l'Intérieur) soldiers. But instead, I was prepared to accept it and just use the information that I was made available without panicking and to draw out concisely the best pieces of details that I had in front of me and remain calm if I would not find others.



(Pictures: {1} soldier's address reached, {2} Outside military archive, Chateau de Vincennes)