

Review of: "The soft power of neutrality Dutch humanitarianism in World War I, 1914-1918"

Dominiek Dendooven¹

¹ In Flanders Fields Museum

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Overall a very interesting article which indeed is a welcome addition to the existing literature on Dutch neutrality in the First World War. I had two remarks / questions which I'd love to see addressed:

- the use of the 'Dutch' suggests a rather monolithic approach which belies differences (though the other acknowledges more pro-German, and pro-Belgian attitudes among the Dutch populations). I wonder whether there was an important difference in attitudes between for instance the southern provinces bordering Belgium, and the eastern provinces, bordering Germany. Or between the different religious communities in the country.
- A very important activity was the official involvement of Dutch diplomat Maurits van Vollenhoven in the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and even more so after 1917 when the USA joined the Allies in 1917. It somewhat contradicts the claims made in the very last paragraph of the conclusion on the reluctance of the Netherlands to propagate its humanitarian role and the fact that humanitarian actions were private affairs as the Dutch' role in the CRB was on the contrary quite open, and not a private but a public affair. And this, moreover in an occupied belligerent country.