

Modeling the Budapest Ghetto across the twentieth century: Digital and Analog Approaches Towards an Integrated History

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This paper pushes ideas of “integrated history” beyond that of perpetrator and victim (and bystander) history (although this paradigm is explored) to a chronological integration that seeks to examine continuities and changes across the pre-war/wartime/post-war divides. In many ways, Hungarian ghettos were very short lived because of their late implementation in 1944. However, this paper argues that there is a need to move beyond that single year to think about the pre-and post-history of ghettos. It does this by examining one ghetto –Budapest –to ask how ghettoization in this city both drew on longer-term, pre-war patterns and persisted into the post-war period.

Drawing on a post-war survey of over 70,000 Jews living in Budapest in the summer of 1945, as well as pre-war census data and wartime ghetto orders, the paper explores the ways that ghettoization was shaped by the city, and continued to shape the city after the end of the war. Working at both a macro and micro scale, the paper shows the ways that new familial and social relations were created in place in the aftermath of the Holocaust, in a context where ghettoization continued to cast its shadow over the city. Like the other papers in this panel, this paper deploys spatial approaches that incorporate historical sources, iterative digital methods, and an attention to the ambiguity of evidence to model an approach to Holocaust Studies that extends existing paradigms in new ways. Specifically, the rich yet incomplete evidence about Jewish individuals and households in Budapest raises new questions about how ghettoization and family separation during the war was –and was not –overcome by the formation of new social networks and the partial reconstitution of households through return migration to Budapest.