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Engagement workshops/hackathons with Holocaust researchers

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Abstract (for dissemination)	In November 2017 and 2018, EHRI organized interdisciplinary workshops to bring together researchers, conservators, digital humanities experts, curators, archivists, and representatives from relevant initiatives and projects to examine methods and possibilities of digital historiography, and in a broader sense of digital methods, of capturing human mobility in history. There was a particularly strong emphasis on data visualisation and mapping, and the workshops also included several 'hands on' sessions to give participants the opportunity to experiment with new technologies.
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1 Introduction

In the framework of WP14, EHRI organised two interdisciplinary workshops to evaluate how innovative digital methods can be employed to innovate Holocaust research and archiving. Both workshops combined theoretical considerations and investigations with practical, hands-on sessions where participants were able to explore new tools and methods and interactively exchange experiences. Both workshops attracted a varied audience including Holocaust researchers, archivists, librarians and collection specialists as well digital humanists and computer scientists.

The first workshop was held on 15 November 2017 at the Wiener Library, London and focused on problems and opportunities relating to Holocaust spatial data; the second one was held in Prague on 12-13 November 2018 and explored novel approaches to refugee data. This deliverable reports on the goals, outcomes and programmes of both workshops.

2 Holocaust Spatial Data

This first workshop, entitled “Holocaust Spatial Data” was jointly organised by King’s College London and the Wiener Library, and took place on 15 November 2017 at the Wiener Library. It thematically focused on mapping Holocaust locations and related problems, beginning with a theoretical approach and ending with practical exercises and use of tools in the afternoon sessions.

The workshop was introduced by keynote by Professor Tim Cole from Bristol, which covered the collaboration between historians, art historians, geographers, cartographers and GIScientists that have made use of a range of digital humanities methods to uncover spatial patterns and experiences during the Holocaust. In particular, Tim Cole focussed on how a variety of digital humanities tools (from GIS to Corpus Linguistics) can be used as part of the research process around the ghetto of Budapest. Rather than thinking of them as final products, the digital tools can be used to enable new ways of seeing the archive, generate new questions, and then return us to the archive to read the sources differently.

The workshop then continued with a panel introducing the spatial digital work in EHRI. Christian Groh from the International Tracing Service presented the standardisation work on geographical names at the ITS, which aims to communicate through geographical names and enable integration of data through standardisation. By presenting what is being named and how, content managers can learn to appreciate the significance of standardization and the technical, economic, social and cultural benefits. Mike Leezenbaum from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum presented how named entity recognition can be integrated into the USHMM catalogue searches. Named Entity Recognition and Classification is a process of recognizing information units like names, including person, organization and location names, and numeric expressions including time, date, money and percent expressions from unstructured text. The goal of the work is to develop practical techniques in order to detect named entities with high accuracy and then use these techniques to enhance the search capabilities on Holocaust collections.

Ivelina Nikolova from Ontotext offered insights into the EHRI work on the extraction of place names from texts. The EHRI services include entity tagging - spotting which words or phrases in the text refer to a location, e.g., we recognise that the word Sofia refers to a location. Furthermore EHRI provides services for entity linking - once we know the entities in the text, we want to link them to a knowledge base (such as GeoNames) where each location features a unique ID. For example, Sofia will be linked to only one of the multiple candidates in GeoNames - the capital of Bulgaria; a city in Nigeria; a city in Mexico; an administrative region in Madagascar or some of the other available ones. We call this also entity disambiguation and in the case of Sofia being the capital of Bulgaria, we add a link from the tagged entity Sofia to the concept in GeoNames with ID 727011. The latter one is also called georeferencing, which can be used for geo-mapping of textual materials.

In the afternoon, participants of the workshop were invited to learn about how to use the QGIS tool to develop their own mapping of Holocaust data. QGIS (previously known as Quantum GIS) is a free and open-source cross-platform desktop geographic information system (GIS) application that supports viewing, editing, and analysis of geospatial data. Henning Borggräfe from International Tracing Service presented first his research on how to map the imprisonments of NS victims and the movements between these locations. What kind of geographies and historical shifts of places and spaces can be derived from the

archival records? What are the limitations of this approach considering that we are using archival collections and the uncertainty of exact locations in the context of the Second World War? Afterwards, all participants could get hands-on and learned how to use the QGIS software to map Holocaust data.

Workshop Programme

EHRI Workshop on Holocaust Spatial Data
Wednesday, 15 November 2017
Wiener Library
29 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DP

9:15 – 9:30	Registration
9:30 – 11:00	Professor Tim Cole (University of Bristol): Spatial history methodology and mapping of the Budapest ghetto
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 13:00	Panel presentation and discussion by EHRI Work package 14, affiliates from Work package 13 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mike Leezenbaum (US Holocaust Memorial Museum) Named entity recognition• Ivelina Nikolova (Ontotext) OCR for names and places related to Jewish Councils project• Christian Groh (International Tracing Service) Standardization of geographic names data
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 17:00	Henning Borggräfe (International Tracing Service) Demonstrations and hands-on session on QGIS software to map Holocaust data. Participants will need to provide their own laptops to take part in the activity, and they should try to install version 2.14 from http://www.qgis.org/en/site/forusers/download.html before the workshop.

3 Exploring Refugee Data

The second WP14 workshop: “Exploring Refugee Data” was organized by the Masaryk Institute and Czech Academy of Sciences (MAS) with King’s College London (KCL) and was held in Prague on 12-13 November 2018, in the framework of EHRI project.

Goals of the Workshop

The aim of the workshop was to examine methods and possibilities of digital historiography of forced displacement, and in a broader sense of digital methods, of capturing human mobility in history. Furthermore, the workshop aimed to help bridge the gap between disciplines and resources: whereas historians, archivists and social scientists collect and analyse data, they often are not able to apply the methods and tools of digital humanities. It invited multidisciplinary approaches – for instance – from history, migration studies, historical geography, oral history and digital humanities in order to explore methodologies, standards and models to trace the movement and interaction of individuals and groups in space and time, to extract information from large, diverse and multilingual archival sources, analysis of historical networks driving refugee migration, spatial studies, linguistic analysis of documents and testimonies and other approaches. The workshop wanted to particularly focus on testing how building visualisations of refugee experience can advance the research process.

Participants

The workshop brought together 35 scholars and researchers from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, UK, and USA, 4 of whom attended virtually. (For further information and a list of all speakers/presenters, see the detailed workshop program below.)

Program

Michal Frankl opened the first day of the workshop with thoughts on tracking a refugee story and the challenges this entails, such as records existing across several countries, how our knowledge of events affects stories, and asking how it is possible to tell the stories of refugees en masse or individually. Rudolf Kučera, the Deputy Director of the Masaryk Institute, welcomed everyone to the Technology Center at the Czech Academy of Sciences, who kindly hosted the participants on the first day.

The first panel focused on overseas flight trajectories and opened with Antoine Burgard, University of Manchester, who talked about the War Orphans Project. Antoine narrated the trajectories taken by these orphans and the issues concerning silence, misremembering, and falsification of accounts. Gaps in trajectories were also common, leading to the question on how to map this vagueness. The second presentation, from Rebecca Erbelding, USHMM, focused on the visualisation of boats arriving in the USA with refugees between 1938 and 1941, complicating the view of some Americans that the USA was culpable in the Holocaust for turning away refugee ships from their border. Rebecca closed her presentation by considering how to make maps and visualisations more interactive whilst incorporating relevant metadata. The session was closed by Sara Halpern, Ohio State University, who talked about Shanghai and forced Jewish repatriates in 1950. Sara has looked at a sample of just over 100 refugees who travelled from Shanghai to Germany, landed at San Francisco

and put on a sealed train to Ellis Island to be shipped to Germany and continues to analyse this particular group.

After a coffee break, a dedicated session to introduced the participants to the work of EHRI: Giles Bennett, IfZ, offered an overview of EHRI; Francesco Gelati, CEGESOMA, and Michael Bryant, King's College London, presented how archival descriptions appear and can be used in the EHRI Portal; and Wolfgang Schellenbacher, Jewish Museum of Prague and Masaryk Institute and Archive of the Czech Academy of Sciences, introduced the EHRI Document Blog. The audience engaged with the speakers and asked questions about how to best use the EHRI online resources.

There followed a working lunch and participants were encouraged to join one of three groups for 'hands-on' sessions where they could use their data to explore various digital tools used by EHRI partners. Francesco Gelati and Giles Bennett focused on using the EHRI Portal through guided thematic searches, export and analysis of Portal data, and using APIs. Michael Bryant and Michael Levy, USHMM, showed how location data could be matched against Geonames, EHRI, and other resources, which responded to the practical needs of many of the workshop participants. And Wolfgang Schellenbacher demonstrated building Neatline presentations from participants' data, where those in the session were given access to Neatline and started to create their own data visualisations. There was plenty of discussion and participants enjoyed testing experimental set ups.

In the session following, Aneta Plizáková, Terezín Initiative Institute, and Benjamin Frommer, Northwestern University (who joined via the Zoom videoconferencing service), talked about refugee data in Prague with particular reference to the Terezín Album project on which they have both worked. This was followed by Laurence Schram, Kazerne Dossin, who discussed how Kazerne Dossin functions as a resource centre following the trajectories of Jewish refugees and victims and survivors of the Holocaust. It illustrated the need for archives created for the purpose of documentation of deportations and of the names of Holocaust victims to think more broadly about the data of Holocaust-era refugees. The final presentation in this session came via Zoom from Anne Knowles and Justus Hillebrand, both University of Maine, on mapping movements to and from ghettos, which led to a discussion about there being potential for future collaboration with EHRI via Michael Bryant. Interest was also expressed regarding the creation of a graph database.

The final session of the first day saw Anne Schult, New York University, expounding the problems and opportunities of using the survey by John Hope Simpson on 'the refugee problem' in interwar Europe, which led into a broader discussion on data categorisations and quantitative methods. The discussions and networking were then continued over a working dinner in the centre of Prague, where projects and potential collaborations were considered.

On the second day the workshop moved to the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Science. The first two sessions of the day broadly covered trajectories of refugee flight. Claire Zalc and Thomas Chopard, CNRS, opened a thought-provoking session on the challenges of creating appropriate methodologies when reconstructing the trajectories of large groups of individuals, such as the 3000 Polish-Jews from Lubartow that form the base of their research. This linked well with Miriam Schulz, Columbia University, who presented on Polish-Jewish refugees and the Vilna committee.

The second session saw Nicoletta Fotinos, Amsterdam University, talk about her ideas for possible directions her research on Dr Gisella Perl might take. Kinga Frojimovics, Vienna Wiesenthal Institute, continued the medical theme looking at Jewish refugees in hospitals of the Jewish community of Pest and talked about how to interpret relevant data.

Following a short break, Sebastian Bondzio and Lukas Hennies, both University of Osnabrück and on behalf of the People on the Move project, discussed patterns in data that might otherwise be hidden, as found through their project on revisiting events and narratives of the European refugee crisis 1930s-1950s. They were followed by Ron Coleman, USHMM, looking at refugee case files as new sources and potentially rich and invaluable data sets. As restrictions on files start to expire, Ron encouraged researchers to consider re-evaluating the way they might approach and use this data. Michal Frankl also talked about new sources and data sets including his HICEM Paris case files digital experiment.

The lunch was again a working lunch with a second batch of 'hands on' sessions for participants. Wolfgang Schellenbacher continued his very successful Neatline experimentation of the previous day, with more participants trying out this method of mapping their data. Michael Bryant took a group to learn the basics of QGIS and some helpful tips for another form of mapping and visualisation. Michael Levy and Joshua Zampetti, USHMM, walked participants through the process of how they developed techniques to recognise logos and other material as part of the process combining OCR, NER and computer vision to extract metadata and identify particular types of documents. Although Michael and Joshua's work was not something the participants could immediately experiment with, there was an interesting discussion that prompted many participants to re-evaluate their opinion of OCR and consider using it in different ways.

After the excitement of the hands on sessions, three further presentations followed. Alexandra Kramen, Clark University, talked about justice and revenge in the displaced persons camp, Föhrenwald. Christian Groh, ITS, explained the complexities and availability of the files of the IRO and how these can be used in research. Jakub Bronec, University of Luxembourg, offered a comparative take on Jewish minority populations in Czechoslovakia and Luxembourg.

In the final set of presentations, Tanja Lenuweit, Minor – Berlin, presented her project on refugee stories from the 1930s and modern day refugees. Tanja talked about finding ways to tell the story and show human rights violations and a central part of this project will involve building up a network through which the stories can be learned. The central focus of her project will be Vilnius as a city of refuge before 1942 and Palermo as a current sanctuary city for refugees. Jakub Mlynář then considered the Czech-Jewish refugee experience in Switzerland during the Second World War and how he is using information from Shoah Foundation interviews for educational purposes.

The question that framed the workshop was 'can digital methods assist in the study of migration/refugee history?' and Michal Frankl concluded by saying how great it was that new networks had been created at the workshop which it would be very interesting to map. Michal encouraged participants to consider whether data driven research is an end in itself and that we should not be frustrated when there are problems with data visualisation as that in itself is a learning experience. For future issues that could be considered in other EHRI events he referenced the fact there is currently no standardisation of encoding life trajectories and also data sustainability, and these are topics that need further consideration and investigation. Comments from the audience included asking for more hands on sessions in future and expressing pleasure that the participants came from a variety of backgrounds including archivists, librarians and academics, which is a mix participants would like to see more often. Overall, the workshop was considered a success by the participants who encouraged discussions about future research projects, collaborations, and new ways of interrogating data on refugees and displaced persons.



Fig. 1 – An example of a visualisation worked on at the workshop from the HICEM Paris case files experiment

Workshop Programs

Sunday, November 11th

20.00: Welcome Event

Monday, November 12th

venue: Technology Centre, Academy of Sciences, Ve Struhách 1076/27, Prague 6

9.30 – 10.00	Opening Comments	Michal Frankl (Prague, Vienna)
10.00 – 11.30	Trajectories of flight overseas	Antoine Burgard (Manchester) Mapping uncertainty: Reconstructing the trajectories of young Holocaust survivors from wartime Europe to postwar Canada
		Rebecca Erbelding (Washington, DC) “The Last Boat”: The Impact of the Encroaching War on Refugee Immigration to the United States, 1938-1941
		Sara Halpern (Columbus, OH) The 'Hard Core' and 'Hard-Hard Core' of Shanghai: Exploring the Personal Data of Forced Jewish Repatriates in 1950

11.30 – 11.45	Coffee Break	
11.45 – 12.30	European Holocaust Research Infrastructure and refugee history	Giles Bennett (Munich) The EHRI project
		Francesco Gelati (Brussels) Extracting Refugee-related Archival Descriptions in the EHRI Portal
		Mike Bryant (London)
		Wolfgang Schellenbacher (Prague) The EHRI Document Blog - “BeGrenzte Flucht”
12.30 – 13.00	Lunch Break	
13.00 – 14.30	Hands-on Session	
14.30 – 16.15	Government Immigration and Refugee Files	Aneta PlzÁková (Prague) / Benjamin Frommer (Evanston, IL) The Terezín Album project and refugee data [preliminary title]
		Laurence Schram (Mechelen) Kazerne Dossin: a resource center to study trajectories of Jewish refugees?
	Conceptualising Mobility	Anne Knowles, Justus Hillebrand (Orono, ME) Mapping Movement to and from Ghettos
16.15 – 16.30	Coffee Break	
16.30 – 17.30	Decoding Statistics and Categorisations	Anne Schult (New York) Counting Displaced Persons, Defining Refugees: Sir John Hope Simpson’s Refugee Survey of Interwar Europe
		Discussion on data statistics and categorisations chair: Daniel Cohen (Vienna)

19.30: Working dinner

Tuesday, November 13th

venue: Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Gabčíkova 2362/10, Prague 8

09.00 – 10.00	Flight Trajectories I	<p>Claire Zalc, Thomas Chopard (Paris) How to reconstruct the trajectories of 3000 Polish-Jewish refugees? Three methodological issues</p>
		<p>Miriam Schulz (New York) Bind Up (and Digitize) the Message: Polish-Jewish Refugees and the Vilna Committee, 1939–1940</p>
10.00 – 10.10	Coffee Break	
10.10 – 11.10	Flight Trajectories II	<p>Nicoletta Fotinos Tracing Jewish Medical Refugees across Sources around the Globe - The Curious Case of Escape Artist Dr. Gisella Perl</p>
		<p>Kinga Frojimovics (Vienna) Jewish Refugees in the Hospitals of the Jewish Community of Pest in 1938-1944</p>
11.10 – 11.20	Coffee Break	
11.20 – 12.20	Complex data and refugee research	<p>Sebastian Bondzio, Lukas Hennies (Osnabrück) People on the Move – Revisiting events and narratives of the European refugee crisis (1930s-1950s)</p>
		<p>Ron Coleman, Michael Levy, Joshua Zampetti (Washington, DC), Michal Frankl (Prague, Vienna) Refugee Case Files</p>
12.20 – 12.50	Lunch Break	
12.50 – 14.00	Hands-on Session	
14.00 – 15.30	Refugees in Post-war Europe	<p>Alexandra Kramen (Worcester, MA) Justice Pursued: Jewish Survivors' Struggle for Post-Holocaust Justice in Displaced Persons Camp Föhrenwald, 1945-1957</p>

		<p>Christian Groh (Bad Arolsen) The digitized collection of the “Care and Maintenance”-files of the IRO. Chances and limitations of (online) research in digital historiography</p>
		<p>Jakub Bronec (Luxembourg) Cultural and educational activities of the Jewish minorities in Czechoslovakia and Luxembourg (1945-89)</p>
15.30 – 15.45	Coffee Break	
15.45 – 16.45	Refugee Data and Education	<p>Jakub Mlynář (Prague) Collective memory as an interactional practice: The case of the Czech-Jewish experience in Switzerland during the WWII period</p>
		<p>Tanja Lenuweit (Berlin) We Refugees. Transnational Digital Research and Education Center on Refugees</p>
16.45 – 17.30	Concluding remarks and discussion	