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Digital Mapping and Memory

Recollection and Mediation in Two Memory Maps of Anglo-Jewish History

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Abstract

This paper presents two digital public history resources—online maps—that are concerned with the everyday lives and reminiscences of Jewish people in two cities in the United Kingdom: London and Manchester. Using techniques derived from Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and the spatial humanities more broadly, these resources take the form of interactive maps which compile recordings of oral history interviews with background research, documentary photographs, and historical maps. Drawing on the work of Raphael Samuel and Pierre Nora, and the insights derived from space syntax urban research and what we have termed 'memory mapping,' we discuss the tensions between *memory*, which in Nora's sense refers to the past as it is recalled informally and colloquially, and *history*, the academic study of the past. Digital mapping technologies, we argue, shape new opportunities for exploring the relationship between these two modes of historical thinking. Through a consideration of specific examples taken from the two maps, we discuss how bringing these materials into dia-

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logue with cartographic maps opens new avenues for spatially and historically situated research into memory.

Keywords

spatial humanities – oral history – memory studies – urban studies – mapping – Jewish history

1 Introduction

This paper presents two digital public history resources concerned with the everyday lives and reminiscences of Jewish people in two cities in the UK: *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End* (https://jewisheastendmemorymap.org) and *A Memory Map of Jewish Manchester* (https://jewishmanchestermemorymap.org/). Using techniques derived from Geographical Information Science (GIS) and the spatial humanities, these projects draw on the archive and expertise of Rachel Lichtenstein, a leading historian of the Jewish community in East London and an expert in oral history methods; Laura Vaughan, an architect and historian with expertise in the spatial dynamics of the formation of Jewish communities in place; the Survey of London, a group of architectural historians based at the Bartlett School of Architecture; and Duncan Hay, a Digital Humanities specialist whose work addresses the relationship between culture, place, and technology.

Both projects are based on Memory Mapper, an open-source web mapping tool created by the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, University College London. This software, based on earlier research into the documenting the history of the built environment conducted by the Survey of London, was created specifically for *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End*. It was designed to explore how best to combine different modes of thinking and talking about the past, and how interactive maps can be used to present this material to public as well as academic audiences. The creation of this software has enabled a number of subsequent projects, led both by the Bartlett and independently. Of these, *A Memory Map of Jewish Manchester*, is one of the most fully realized, and is a collaboration by Rachel Lichtenstein and Manchester Metropolitan University in partnership with the Manchester Jewish Museum, and funded by the Jewish Historical Society.

There is a tension in public history projects such as these which is felt as the distinction made by Pierre Nora between 'memory' and 'history.' For Nora, his-

tory, as an academic discipline, is concerned with "the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer."[1] Memory, conversely, "is a phenomenon of emotion and magic," and "thrives on vague, telescoping reminiscences, on hazy general impressions or specific details."[2] The projects discussed in this paper sit at the intersection of memory and history in Nora's terms. Through a discussion of these websites, we demonstrate below the ways in which, in seeking a public audience, they stage an encounter between the personal and subjective discourses of memory and the source-based, ostensibly objective, practices of historical research.

Nora's distinction is productive in that it provides a useful heuristic for discussing different modes of articulating the past. Yet, as Aleida Assmann notes, Nora (echoing earlier thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Maurice Halbwachs), in the 1990s "rehabilitated memory over against the ideal of abstract and objective histor(iograph)y."[3] She goes on to argue that these two modes, rather than being simply opposed, are co-constitutive: "historical scholarship depends on memory not only for oral testimony and experience, but also for criteria of meaning and relevance; on the other hand, memory depends on historical scholarship for verification, substantiation, and falsification."[4] These projects demonstrate this co-construction in different ways. The distinction between memory and history is echoed firstly in the gap between the cartographic representation of space and the structure of memory as it is recalled. That is, memory has an associative logic which does not necessarily sit easily with the mapped representation of space. Thus, by using memory maps as the underpinning database, the historian can focus on the specificity of the place which is being remembered. Or, to reformulate, mapping memories through the digital map reveals how they operate as moments of the particular within the abstraction of space that the map brings to representation. Following Assmann, the memory is placed in spatio-historical context, gaining legibility (and authority) in so being; conversely, the map becomes visible as *social* as well as spatial.[5] The mapping of place is important also in that it emphasizes the

1 Pierre Nora, "Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Vol. 1, Conflicts and Divisions*., ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1–20, here 3.

2 Ibid., 3.

3 Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research*, 75(1) (2008): 49–72, here 60.

4 Ibid., 64.

5 Michael Frisch's work on 'shared authority' in public history and oral history projects is relevant here. See Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990).

spatial-morphological context for history; it allows the reader of history to locate themselves in a time-geography; and allows the researcher to triangulate partial information against source maps in order to fine-tune historical evidence. Nora's tension is also echoed in the form of digital media themselves, which at once privilege simultaneity, speed of access and revision, and promise, in the database form itself and the potential scale of comprehensive historical databases, to preserve and make available more of the traces of the past than ever before. In the following, we reflect on these tensions, and, through a discussion of several 'sites of memory' on each, investigate the affordances for conducting historical research presented by digital mapping technologies.

2 GIS and Historical Studies: Space Syntax and Memory Mapping

The technical underpinnings of *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End* and *A Memory Map of Jewish Manchester* emerge from a strand of work, conducted principally by researchers at the Bartlett Faculty for the Built Environment, University College London, into extending the capabilities offered by Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for research into the history of urban environments. At its core, GIS involves the combination of digital maps, represented either as images or as geometric data (points, lines, and polygons encoded as sets of coordinates), with other (not necessarily spatial) data sources such as demographics, species distributions, air quality, geology, and so on. This paradigm allows for the description and analysis of the way in which features of the world are distributed spatially, and therefore to make inferences about them.

GIS is hugely powerful and has applications in many disciplines such as the geographical sciences, public health, ecology, epidemiology, town planning, and architecture. However, due to its origins within primarily quantitative disciplines (human geography and computer science), it has historically found less use within the humanities. In recent years this has begun to change, and GIS methodologies have begun to be used more within humanistic disciplines, most notably within historical studies. At least initially, this has been primarily through the application of quantitative methods to historical research questions. As Ian Gregory and Alistair Geddes put it, "when GIS first began to be used by historians it was not surprising that much of the early focus was also quantitative."[6] Projects such as *A Vision of Britain Through Time* (https://www

6 Ian N. Gregory and Alistair Geddes, "Introduction: From Historical GIS to Spatial Humanities:

.visionofbritain.org.uk/), for example, have used GIS to combine maps and historical census data to analyze, statistically and spatially, the changing social structure of the UK in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, duplicating methods used by social scientists of contemporary social structures with historical data sources. Yet this quantitative, empiricist bias in many respects sits uncomfortably with the predominant textual and theoretical approaches in the humanities. Though Gregory and Geddes note that GIS does not require quantitative approaches,[7] as Sam Griffiths and Laura Vaughan have argued, in the humanities, maps have been viewed primarily as ideological constructs rather than sources of empirical knowledge about the world.[8] That is, they are seen as bearers of the cultural values of the societies which produced them or, to recast this in Foucauldian terms, as articulating and performing the distribution of power/knowledge. As such, their capacity to encode spatial descriptions, which in themselves can be the source of historical insight (though never in ideologically unmediated form), has been overlooked.

Within the Bartlett, there are two major streams which have sought to bridge this epistemological divide through the innovative application of GIS techniques. Space syntax, developed within the School of Architecture, is a set of methods largely (though not exclusively) performed within GIS for analyzing the mathematical properties of street patterns when modelled as graph networks.[9] To cite Griffiths and Vaughan, the advantage that this confers is as follows:

> The spatial configuration of the street network provides researchers with the elusive link between what the historical geographer Colin Dooley refers to as the 'patterns on the ground' (the material city of built forms) and the corresponding social patterns they mediate and reproduce. Space syntax analysis of maps and plans produces both visual and numerical

Deepening Scholarship and Broadening Technology," in *Toward Spatial Humanities: Historical GIS and Spatial History*, eds. Ian N. Gregory and Alistair Geddes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), ix–xxii, here ix.

7 Ibid.

8 Sam Griffiths and Laura Vaughan, "Mapping Spatial Cultures: Contributions of Space Syntax to Research in the Urban History of the Nineteenth-Century City," *Urban History* 47(3) (2020): 488–511.

9 That is, topological abstractions which describe the relationship between entities as collections of nodes and the connections between them. In the case of space syntax, this consists of the street network itself. The method is also widely used in building analysis, from research into ancient settlements and dwellings, to studies of complex buildings such as hospitals and museums.

> descriptive data which can inform propositions, for example about the patterns of movement, encounter and land use in the past, that cannot be quantified by non-cartographic historical sources and help in their interpretation.[10]

Approached in this way—critically, at once recognizing their ideological nature, but not dismissing their value as empirical descriptors—maps become a source of insight into the socio-material aspects of historical spaces.

A second, related strand of work involves the combination of GIS techniques with web technologies for historical research, which can be placed under the general rubric of 'memory mapping.' Web GIS, now a long-established part of many people's daily lives since the release of Google Maps in 2005, brings the GIS paradigm from the domain of specialist research software and onto the web browser or smartphone.[11] Whilst the primary use for these technologies has been navigation, the combination of GIS with networked data sources has facilitated a proliferation of potential applications. In a humanities context, this expansion touches not only the textual, visual, and material artefacts which are the traditional objects of humanistic study;[12] but also the practice of historical research, and the ways in which academic historians understand and articulate their relationship with their audiences and with other modes of thinking about the past.

The project which began the memory map work was the Survey of London's Whitechapel Initiative, which investigated the architectural and social history of the parish of Whitechapel in East London. It was a collaboration between two research units within the Bartlett: the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA), which specializes in the use of GIS and associated methods for the quantitative study of cities; and the Survey of London, an architectural history research group which has worked to document the history of London's built environment, under various institutional banners, since its establishment in 1894. Though they have always been concerned with the writing of public history rather than specifically academic historical research, the Survey has published much of their research ('what got built and why') in monograph

10 Griffiths and Vaughan, "Mapping Spatial Cultures," 489.

11 Jordi Martí-Henneberg, "Geographical Information Systems and the Study of History," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 42(1) (2011): 1–13.

12 E.g., projects such as Recogito (https://recogito.pelagios.org/), which integrates semantic text annotation with GIS, or Locating London's Past (https://www.locatinglondon.org/), which maps a number of historical sources related to taxation, poverty, and crime in London, both combine digitized historical textual data with digital maps to provide new methods for visualizing and understanding those sources.

form. Thus, whilst their work is aimed at a broader audience than much historical research produced within universities, they nonetheless have a largely specialist readership of professionals working in the built environment, such as planners, heritage specialists, and architects. All three authors were involved in the above.

The principal outputs of the project were the historical GIS website *Histories of Whitechapel* (https://surveyoflondon.org/) and an accompanying two-volume monograph. *Histories of Whitechapel* aimed to be both the platform through which the Survey published their ongoing research into Whitechapel's buildings and spaces, and, uniquely for the Survey, a place where members of the public could contribute their own images, reflections, and research about the parish. Both of these functions are mediated through an interactive map, allowing users to explore and contribute to a growing historiography of Whitechapel's built environment. Yet, as the pluralized 'histories' of the title indicates, the project sought a reconfiguration of the role of the historian. *Histories of Whitechapel* serves to enact Raphael Samuel's argument that writing and thinking about the past is not only the domain of the professional historian, but a social mode of knowledge: "the work [...] of a thousand different hands."[13] This broadening of the notion of what it means to record public history through the use of digital methods led to the creation of the Memory Map Toolkit (https://memorymapper.github.io/), an open-source web mapping package based on the software created for *Histories of Whitechapel*, which in principle allows anyone (with some technical knowledge) to create their own interactive maps of cultural heritage. This forms the technical underpinning for the two maps of Jewish cultural heritage discussed in this paper.

Whilst neither the space syntax nor memory mapping methods approach the cartographic map naively (as the many critics of cartography have noted, maps *do* function ideologically, nor are they neutral containers for facts about the world),[14] they also hold that the spatial thinking that maps and mapmaking enable are useful for thinking historically. In the case of space syntax, this is by using the spatial configuration of the street network, as recorded in historical maps, to formulate hypotheses about the (often quotidian and therefore undocumented) socio-spatial character of these environments. For memory mapping, this is in the capacity of web GIS to embed research about the

13 Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory. Vol. 1, Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994), 15, cited in Laura King and Gary Rivett, "Engaging People in Making History," *History Workshop Journal* 80: 219–233, here 219.

14 See, e.g., Denis Wood, John Fels, and John Krygier, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010).

past within the spatial context provided by the interactive digital map, and to thereby demonstrate in qualitative, descriptive terms the relationship between space and culture.[15]

Writing on the subject of oral history in a 1976 *History Workshop* editorial, Raphael Samuel stated that:

> With the aid of living memory [...] the historian can draw up fresh maps, in which people are as prominent as places, and the two are more closely intertwined. He or she can then explore the moral topography of a village or town with the same precision which predecessors have given to the Ordnance Survey, following the ridge and furrow of the social environment as well as the parish boundaries, travelling the dark corridors and half-hidden passageways as well as the bye-law street.[16]

Here Samuel writes figuratively, using cartographic mapping as an analogue for the new territories of historical research opened by the then-new methods of oral history.[17] Both of the projects presented here draw on oral history testimony, presenting recordings and research alongside and in parallel with digitized historic maps. As such, they demonstrate the affordances that such approaches have for making Samuel's metaphor concrete.

3 Jewish Communities in London and Manchester

Whilst this is not the place to rehearse the history of Jewish people in Britain, some context is needed to understand the place of the East End of London and the city of Manchester within British Jewish culture, and why these locations were chosen for the two mapping projects discussed below.[18] The two maps

15 'Memory maps,' as we have termed them, could be considered a form of digitally enabled 'deep mapping.' The foundational text for this concept is William Least Heat-Moon's *PrairyErth: (A Deep Map)* (London: Deutsch, 1991), which takes the form of a literary exploration of the history and geography of Chase County, Kansas. On contemporary deep mapping practices across a range of humanities disciplines, see David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor M. Harris (eds.), *Making Deep Maps: Foundations, Approaches, and Methods* (London: Routledge, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367743840.

16 Raphael Samuel, "Local History and Oral History," *History Workshop* 1 (Spring 1976): 191–208, here 199.

17 See Anne Karpf, "The Human Voice and the Texture of Experience," *Oral History* 42(2) (Autumn 2014): 50–55.

18 A much fuller account can be found in Tobias Metzler, *Tales of Three Cities: Urban Jewish Cultures in London, Berlin, and Paris* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014).

embody and express, in different ways, the well-rehearsed idea that modern Jewish history is inherently urban in character. In this argument, Jewish urban identity is characterized by a number of tensions, most significantly the way in which the urban environment impresses itself on its constituent communities. This is expressed both in terms of the desire to maintain a specifically Jewish way of life and the way in which that culture is transformed when situated in the city, whether as a result of interaction with the wider society or as a result of seclusion from it.[19]

In its broadest sweep, the modern history of Jewish people in Britain begins with their re-admittance to the country by Oliver Cromwell in 1656, having been expelled from England in 1290. From this point onwards, Jews had tacit permission to practice Judaism, though full political rights only transpired well into the nineteenth century. Encouraged by the country's trading links with Jewish merchants overseas, Jewish incomers began to settle on the edge of the City of London. The first arrivals were primarily Sephardim—namely with origins in the Iberian Peninsula, followed closely by Ashkenazic Jews from central and eastern Europe. Both communities established places of worship, with purpose-built synagogues serving each on Bevis Marks and Dukes Place having been established by 1722. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a steady trickle of Jewish immigrants to London, primarily from Russia and Poland, but also from across the continent, who set up *chevrot*—namely small, independent synagogues that served charitable and social purposes—close to their places of work and home. Jewish immigrants began to establish themselves economically through establishment of niche trades that allowed for small-scale production and specialization by the group. Alongside the demands of religious worship, and a desire to avoid persecution, patterns of employment also contributed to the physical clustering in each of the areas of settlement. By the late nineteenth century London, always the primary place of arrival, was joined by several provincial cities as a focus for Jewish settlement.

19 While the urbanity of Jewish life is broadly true, it has also been used as an antisemitic trope, so should be qualified accordingly. See Joachim Schlör in his chapter, 'Jews and the Big City: Explorations on an Urban State of Mind,' in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, eds. Julia Brauch and Anna Lipphardt (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 228–240. See also Hitzer and Schlör's analysis of how to approach the interpretation of Jewish urban space: "Interpretation of historical maps and a close reading of space-related laws and decrees allow us to reconstruct the spatial distribution of a community. Had they been isolated by some kind of spatial organization, or had they been banished to the margins of a city?" Bettina Hitzer and Joachim Schlör, "Introduction," *Journal of Urban History* 37(6) (2011): 819–827, here 822–823, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144211413228.

It is in this context that the places which are the focus of the Jewish East End and Jewish Manchester maps came to prominence. Whitechapel and Spitalfields in London and Red Bank and Strangeways in Manchester are inner-city areas which were the sites of large concentrations of Jewish immigrants. In the late nineteenth century, persecution in Russia and eastern Europe led to a large number of Jewish migrants arriving in Britain, coming primarily to London but also to cities in the North such as Manchester and Leeds.[20] Many of these people would have been forced or have chosen to settle close to their compatriots in poor, overcrowded neighborhoods, and, in their economic precarity, were vulnerable to exploitation. Faced with a mixture of moral concern, indifference, and occasional hostility from broader British society,[21] and sympathy tempered by anxiety from the largely integrated existing Anglo-Jewish population (as Tony Kushner has it, "a form of conditional toleration"[22]), these migrants formed tight-knit communities bound by a culture in common, shared economic hardship, and networks of mutual aid.

By 1900, London's Jewish population had grown to around 135,000, a large majority of whom were migrants who settled in the East End.[23] As Rachel Lichtenstein puts it in the preface to *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End*:

> Many of those people would have disembarked at the Port of London and settled in the nearby East End, to join the already established Jewish community and the work and support available there. Whitechapel and Spitalfields, just to the north of the docks of Wapping and St Katherine's, became the heart of a thriving Jewish quarter, with the population of streets such as Petticoat Lane being as much as 95% Jewish.[24]

This community was often desperately poor, and many found employment in the textile, shoemaking, and furniture trades, all of which were character-

20 See, e.g., Cecil Bloom, "The Politics of Immigration, 1881–1905," *Jewish Historical Studies* 33 (1992–1994): 187–214; and Laura Vaughan and Alan Penn, "Jewish Immigrant Settlement Patterns in Manchester and Leeds 1881," *Urban Studies* 43(3) (March 2006): 653–671.

21 Bloom, "Politics of Immigration," 194–196.

22 Tony Kushner, "'On the Eighth Day': Jews and Manchester," *Jewish Culture and History* (2023): 416–437, here 432.

23 Laura Vaughan, *Mapping Society: The Spatial Dimensions of Social Cartography* (London: UCL Press, 2018), 44.

24 Rachel Lichtenstein, "Memory Map of the Jewish East End," https://jewisheastendmemorymap.org/, accessed September 2023.

ized by 'sweating': long hours and poor working conditions, often conducted at home and paid on a piece-work basis.[25]

The picture in Manchester, though different in scale, nonetheless holds many similarities. Alongside Leeds, the city was in the late nineteenth century the most important area of Jewish settlement in Britain outside London,[26] and in 1914, the population stood in the region of 30,000.[27] The presence of Manchester on a trans-migration route between eastern Europe and the United States led to a preponderance of eastern European Jews travelling through the city, many of whom chose to stay.[28] Spatially and socially, as Bill Williams has argued, the nineteenth-century Manchester Jewish community was characterized by an existing Anglo-Jewish population who lived predominantly in the northern suburbs and the newer, poorer immigrant community from eastern Europe who settled in the city center in densely-populated areas such as Red Bank and Strangeways.[29] In Williams's words, a "brash petit bourgeoisie" of eastern European Jewish Mancunian entrepreneurs were by the 1870s dominant in the British cap-making and waterproofing industries, and were hugely successful in Manchester's tailoring, cabinet making, jewelry, and optical and scientific instrument trades, though often at the expense of their 'sweated' Jewish workforce.[30]

From the early decades of the twentieth century onwards, these communities began to disperse. Improvements in the economic prospects of Jewish migrants and their descendants, in combination with interventions around housing, employment law, and health on the part of local and national governments, encouraged many to leave for better housing in the inner suburbs of London and Manchester. Following the destruction wrought on the East of London during the Blitz, the already shrinking Jewish population in Whitechapel and Spitalfields dwindled further,[31] and by the early 1950s most of the Jewish residents of the East End had departed for the northern London suburbs and adjacent counties of Middlesex and Essex.[32] In Manchester, the concen-

25 Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 23–24.

26 Vaughan and Penn, "Jewish Immigrant Settlement Patterns," 655.

27 Bill Williams, "'East and West': Class and Culture in Manchester Jewry, 1850–1920," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23 (Fall 1989): 88–106, here 89.

28 Rachel Lichtenstein, "About this Map," https://jewishmanchestermemorymap.org, accessed September 2023.

29 Williams, "East and West," 90.

30 Ibid., 91.

31 Rachel Lichtenstein, *On Brick Lane* (London: Penguin, 2008), 3.

32 Anne Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields, 1660–2000* (London: Routledge, 2002), 65.

trated population of Yiddish-speaking eastern European Jews dispersed from Red Bank and Strangeways to the primarily middle-class areas of Hightown and Higher Broughton.[33] In both cases, what were previously bustling sites of Jewish culture were left largely bereft of the visible traces of their former residents, though vestiges of these remained: on the one hand, with permanent buildings—synagogues and charitable institutions—and on the other, Jewish-owned businesses that had deep local economic ties that were at least initially difficult to unravel.

4 Digital Maps and Memory

In their disappearance as places central to the conduct of Jewish life, Whitechapel and inner-city Manchester have come to hold a particular status within Jewish culture (and British culture more broadly) as sites of reminiscence: the places wherein an important component of contemporary Jewish identity was forged. In the words of the French historian and pioneer of memory studies Pierre Nora, they have become "*lieux de mémoire*": sites or realms of memory. As he defines it:

> A *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material nature, which is by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.[34]

Significant buildings such as the sites of former Jewish social institutions, schools and synagogues; or more quotidian locations such as bakeries, barber shops, or streets of houses, become part of the landscape of memory: anchors around which descriptions of a time and place cluster and through which the evocation of the past unfolds. For Nora, such recollections and their associated anxieties about cultural identity (and authenticity) are symptomatic of a "rift" in memory, a particularly modern mode.[35] Whilst we do not have to follow Nora in understanding *lieux de mémoire* as sites (only) of loss, his identification of them as being crucial to the articulation of cultural identity is compelling. To take one London example, events such as the Battle of Cable Street, in which working-class people, irrespective of ethnic origin, joined to prevent a march by

33 Lichtenstein, "About this Map."

34 Pierre Nora, "Preface," in *Realms of Memory*, vol. 1, xvii.

35 Nora, "Between Memory and History," 2.

Oswald Moseley's British Union of Fascists, have become symbolic of a particular picture of the East End and of working-class Jewish identity. As Benjamin J. Lammers, puts it:

> East Enders expressed their new-found sense of self in a massive act of civil disobedience at Cable Street, and did so in defense of a notion of local identity that was open and inclusive. This is one reason why the image of the East Ender remains such a powerful one in twenty-first century Britain.[36]

It is these articulations of cultural identity through memory that these two maps preserve and give voice to.

It is important to note here that memory studies have a particular place within Jewish historiography. Kerwin Lee Klein, for example, traces the term's origins jointly to Nora's work and to Yosef Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982).[37] Nor is the term uncontested, in particular when elisions are made between the psychology of the individual and notions of a collective memory of a group, community, or nation.[38] For the purposes of this article we use the term 'memory' in the concrete sense of a recorded oral recollection by an individual of a particular time and place in the past.[39] In both *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End* and *A Memory Map of Jewish Manchester*, memories, in the form of edited clips of oral history interviews with members of the Jewish community in each location, have been 'pinned' to the locations they describe using an interactive map. On clicking on a pin, a visitor to the site can listen to the interview (or read the transcript), view photographs of the location, and read a short history of the site. In connecting the recordings with the map, the relationship between the individual memory and space is made explicit.

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36 Benjamin J. Lammers, "The Birth of the East Ender: Neighborhood and Local Identity in Interwar East London," *Journal of Social History* 39(2) (Winter 2005): 331–344, here 341.

37 Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations* 69 (2000): 127–150.

38 Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41(2) (2002): 179–197.

39 The use of the term in this sense follows Assmann, in that whilst memory as a mental phenomenon is individual and psychological, those memories can be shared (and mediated), at which point they become social. "Once they are verbalized in the form of a narrative or represented by a visual image, the individual's memories become part of an intersubjective symbolic system and are, strictly speaking, no longer a purely exclusive and unalienable property." Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," 50.

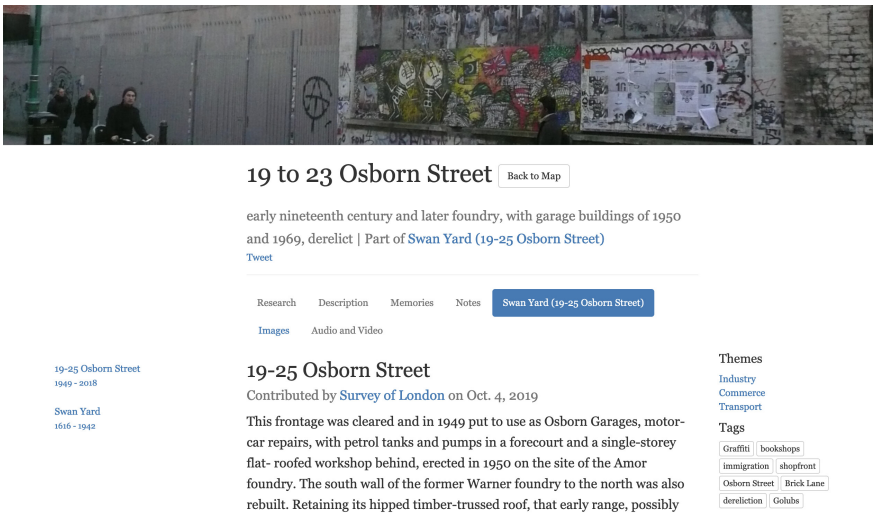

FIGURE 1 Histories of Whitechapel

When approaching the design of the Memory Map Toolkit which underpins both maps, we came with a particular set of needs, which are usefully contrasted with the antecedent *Histories of Whitechapel* website. Because *Histories of Whitechapel* is a comprehensive reference work for the history of the built environment of Whitechapel, it needed to be able to both publish and gather a huge amount of material. As the Survey are architectural historians, their principal unit of analysis is the individual building or plot. These two concerns led to the decision to implement a building-based ontology for the mapping component of the website, with every building in Whitechapel (circa 2016) being represented as a polygon. On clicking on a building, the user would be taken to a separate page containing historical research by the Survey (for major buildings), contributions by members of the public, photographs, and archival audio and video material. Here, users were invited to contribute to this growing collection of documents.

These design decisions had a series of consequences, some intentional, some less so. First, the building-centered research methods of the Survey did not always fit comfortably with what community members wanted to contribute, in that people did not always think about the past through the window of the built city. In many instances, people's recollections of Whitechapel could not necessarily be located to specific buildings. Instead, they would prefer to write about something which only had a temporary or transitory presence (the markets, for example); or more abstract concerns such as wanting to write about a series of places, for example the restaurants they went to or their memories

of particular shops. Contributors might not have that much to say about these buildings individually (a sentence or two, perhaps), though in aggregate they might add up to a substantial contribution related to more than one location. Second, whilst we tried to avoid imposing a hierarchy between community contributions and those written by academic researchers, this was to some extent unavoidable. As the Survey's primary audiences were identified as professionals and researchers working in the urban realm, and who are interested primarily in the research produced by the Survey itself, this material was (generally) presented first, with community contributions being identified by authorship attributions. This decision, though necessary, introduced something of a tension between the two modes of writing about the past—'history' and 'memory' in Nora's terms, or 'official' and 'unofficial' history in Raphael Samuel's—which have animated the discussion above.[40]

A Memory Map of the Jewish East End, the first of the projects discussed in this paper, and which was the first testbed for the Memory Mapper software, offered a new set of design concerns. We made the decision early in the project that *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End* would not solicit contributions from the public. This decision was made primarily on the basis of available resources: gathering, moderating, and editing public contributions is a huge amount of work and we did not have capacity to do this. However, this also meant that the content associated with each map feature would not have to accommodate material contributed by multiple authors and could therefore be given a more coherent editorial presentation and authorial voice. Much of the material on the map comes from Rachel Lichtenstein's hugely rich collection of oral history interviews with members of the Jewish community in East London, gathered over many years in her work as a writer, archivist, and historian of this community. This material almost exclusively tips towards the 'unofficial' end of Raphael Samuel's spectrum: it is concerned not with the accurate reconstruction of what happened and why (no matter how incomplete and subject to the interpretation of the historian this may be), but with the recollection of personal experience and anecdote. The role of the website then became not to *contain* the tension between memory and history, but, in a much more self-conscious fashion, to express it. That is, to present these memories in such a way as to allow them to retain their power to evoke the texture of life in a particular time and place (in all their partiality) and to place them within an historical context which makes their nuances legible.

40 On 'official' and 'unofficial' history, see Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*.

FIGURE 2 A memory map of the Jewish East End

The richness of Rachel Lichtenstein's oral history interviews and the evocative qualities of Shloimy Alman's documentary photography—which was coupled to formal photographic records, such as those from the Survey of London's architectural historians—led us to re-think how the user would interact with the map. Much of the material gathered relates to the 1940s–1970s. Though this is well past the time at which Whitechapel's population was majority Jewish (the peak of Jewish Whitechapel had certainly passed by the end of the Second World War), many major institutions of Jewish life were still very much present at this time. However, we chose to use a scan of the 1913 Ordnance Survey 6-Inch series as the base map for the project as this represented the inflection point between the peak of the Jewish East End and the boundary of living memory.[41] In common with the Whitechapel project, on clicking about a map feature the user is presented with a popup which shows a photograph of the location, and an invitation to read more about it. However, whilst oral history interviews made up only a component of *Histories of Whitechapel*, here they were the main focus. Where an interview is present, each popup therefore has an audio player. This has the effect, for each site, of layering the mapped representation of the location (and therefore its historical spatial context), a contemporary photograph, and the oral reminiscence. The spatial, visual, and the aural are

41 The map was provided by the National Library of Scotland, who hold an excellent collection of digitized historic maps.

brought together within a single frame, a mutual co-contextualization which adds meaning to each component.

5 London and Manchester Recalled

Having discussed the historical, technical, and design questions that informed the development of *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End* and *A Memory Map of Jewish Manchester*, we end this essay with some specific examples of locations taken from each. These sites have been chosen as examples of entries which express most strongly the relationship between memory and history, particularity and generality discussed above. The multifarious nature of Jewish urban life is captured in many of the memories recorded on the two maps. Synagogues, unsurprisingly, are a common theme across both. The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue in Manchester is a case in point.[42] The map's explanatory text provides the formal architectural historical record of the building, along with some of its social history. In contrast, the recorded memories enrich the historical record, not just with personal reflections, but also with a sense of how the building was used: women and girls being distanced from the men, except on special occasions, or the resonance of cantorial singing echoing around the structure.

Similarly, the recorded memories of London's Machzike Hadath[43] describes waiting outside, poised on the steps, with another drawing a picture of waiting in the synagogue's doorway to invite Jewish men passing by to make up a quorum for prayers. This synagogue is an interesting outlier in the history of Jewish worship in the area. Previous analysis has found that synagogues and other Jewish communal institutions were located relatively deeply within the interstices of the neighborhood, in the streets of greater spatial segregation and higher density settlement. Where the inner life of the community is contained on the more private streets, its external life is reserved for the public streets, which are much more integrated into the spatial network, especially in the case of economic life. In this instance, the location on a strategic street corner meant that the synagogue beadle could use this vantage point to connect private to public space.

42 "Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue," https://jewishmanchestermemorymap.org/?feature_type=point&id=288, accessed August 2023.

43 "Machzike Hadath, Spitalfields Great Synagogue," https://jewisheastendmemorymap.org?feature_type=polygon&id=22, accessed August 2023.

The interplay between private and public is expressed also in the secular institutions on each map. For example, in London, the writer and dramatist Bernard Kops speaks of his experience going to the Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor, and the desperate poverty he experienced as a child:

> My father came to London, thinking he was going to America, and he got off the ship near Aldgate and that was it … no work, no money, no food, no joy. Many, many children. The most important thing for me was going with my dad, every night we'd go with a saucepan … this was the place where the poor came. It was called the Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor. And I would queue up, we'd go in there and the ladies heaping out the soup, they were all smelling so incredibly, well, beautiful, and they all looked so clean, their hair all lovely …
> 'What do you want sonny? Do you want pea soup, or something else?'
> And I'd say 'Pea soup. I want pea soup.'
> And my father and me would walk back, and it was nearly a mile walk to our home in Stepney. And my father would say:
> 'We do not go on the main road because we do not want people to see us.'
> And we'd go into the side roads back to home. So, we used to carry the saucepan with the soup. The Soup Kitchen in many ways they … well I won't say bacon, but it saved our lives.[44]

Kops evokes the atmosphere of the soup kitchen and the privations of the time, and at once drolly expresses the tensions between poverty and respectability, public and private, and the experience of being Jewish within a wider English culture. But in describing the covert journey back to Stepney, the excerpt also serves to illustrate how these tensions were experienced spatially as well as socially.

In Manchester, an anonymous interviewee tells of her experience in the Manchester Jewish Soup Kitchen, though from the other side of the counter:

> We only started the first week of November till say about a fortnight before *Pesach* (Passover) and then we used to give the Yiddish people who came, Passover food, *Pesadicke* food. Butter, margarine, sugar,

44 Transcript of an interview with Bernard Kops, https://jewisheastendmemorymap.org/?feature_type=polygon&id=1, accessed October 2023.

> everything they wanted for Pesach, all those things in a bag we used to give to them and it was ready for them.
>
> [...]
>
> *Well, how many people do you think would come in on a day, on an average day, how many would you get?*
>
> About 100 I think or 120 odd.
>
> Besides the soup, they got bread for *Shabbos*, so many breads, so many loaves. You can see here, I'll give you this one, 1942, 1118 cans of soup were filled for Jewish families to eat at home. 8877 meals and every day, you know when it came, we had to write, kept a record. Then that was the meals served on the premises to casual applicants of all creeds and denominations. And some 150 non-Jewish families were supplied with food to take home. And in all 7793 loaves of bread and over 3005 gallons of soup were distributed.[45]

Where Kops's interview expresses his experience of Jewishness and Englishness almost parenthetically, here the interviewee addresses the religious dimensions to the Soup Kitchen's mission directly, in the provision of food for Passover and, later in the interview, on *Shabbos*. In her recollection of precise numbers, she conveys her sense of not only of the scale of the operation but, we might infer, the importance which she attached to her role within it. In her description of the provision of food for non-Jewish poor, we also get a sense of how the philanthropic organizations set up by the Jewish community sat within the broader social fabric of Manchester in the 1940s.

At the Challenge Club, an anti-fascist youth club started by the Cheetham Young Communist League in 1935, for the anonymous interviewee, Jewishness and working-class politics were one and the same thing:

> Now with the rise of Fascism, Jewish people felt that they ought to face up to the world around them and the Challenge Club became not only a typical club, it was far from that, there'd be readings there, there'd be lectures on various things, rambles, in particular, rambles every weekend. The countryside was opened out for them, not only, but Jewish children for the first time they were able to go out in the country & rambling [hiking] became as important a factor of Jewish progressive life as anything. I would say the Challenge Club was instrumental in opening the whole

45 "Philanthropic Hall / Jewish Soup Kitchen" https://jewishmanchestermemorymap.org/?feature_type=point&id=253, accessed October 2023.

> of Derbyshire and the whole of the Pennine Way for ramblers and they did a wonderful job. But it was all coupled with this anti-Fascist business, it was, somehow it wasn't something separate. Literally one could say if you were playing table tennis you were playing table tennis with an anti-Fascist feeling about it. The rambling was, it was part of it, you didn't separate things. It was all part and parcel of the same thing [...].[46]

Here, the interviewee describes the way in which different aspects of political, social, and cultural life were combined through institutions such as the Challenge Club. Of particular note is the connection between the Jewish anti-Fascism, working class political activism, and the history of the politics of land access in the United Kingdom. Though not mentioned directly, the interview alludes to the 1936 Kinder Scout Mass Trespass, a landmark event in the history of the 'right to roam' and access to the countryside in Britain, and which involved a large number of members of the Young Communist League.[47] We note here that both projects discussed in this paper, as much as they reflect the proposition that Jewish history is predominantly urban, serve also to reinforce and to construct this view. The intersection with rural spatial politics given in this example indicates the potential for memory mapping projects to add nuance to generalizations such as this, congruent with what Bodenheimer has described as the 'open' character of 'deep' maps.[48]

These themes of anti-Fascism, resistance, and spatial politics are also evident in the East End. Most significant of these is the Battle of Cable Street, which is recalled by Bernard Kops, Beattie Orwell, and others on *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End*.[49] Yet it is marked in other ways as well. Antony Laurence, for example, describes the life of his parents, migrants from Poland who came to London in the 1930s, fleeing antisemitism:

> They settled in the East End near Brick Lane and started a little jewelry shop. [...] He would say about Brick Lane that his part of the street was

46 "Challenge Club," https://jewishmanchestermemorymap.org/?feature_type=point&id=350, accessed October 2023.

47 See, e.g., Ben Harker, "'The Manchester Rambler': Ewan MacColl and the 1932 Mass Trespass," *History Workshop Journal* 59 (Spring 2005): 219–228; and Peter Hetherington, *Whose Land is Our Land? The Use and Abuse of Britain's Forgotten Acres* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015).

48 David J. Bodenheimer, "The Varieties of Deep Map," in Bodenheimer et al., *Making Deep Maps*, 1–16, here 7.

49 "Cable Street," https://jewisheastendmemorymap.org/?feature_type=point&id=40, accessed October 2023.

> absolutely fine, but if he went beyond the railway arch that was territory he couldn't go to: it was Bethnal Green, and that was where Moseley and the Fascists were, so they never went there.[50]

In the quote above, we get a sense of how the relationship between the Jewish community and hostile elements of British politics played out in day-to-day life in the sharp demarcation between familiar and hostile space, within the same London borough and over a distance of less than 100 meters.

We end this section with a reflection on the role of voice in the two projects, and the part that recorded audio has in each. Voice (and accent in particular) in these projects is as much a 'site of memory' as the locations evoked in each reminiscence. As Anne Karpf has noted in an essay which contributes to a long-standing debate in oral history studies about the role of transcription, "digital media enable audio to become as readily available as written text."[51] These technical advances have underpinned the maps presented here, but her point has particular meaning in this context. Karpf argues, in relation to an interview with a refugee presented as part of the exhibition 'Belonging' at the Museum of London that,

> the recording [...] adds an overwhelming sense of individual experience. What in transcript form had been somewhat flat, though powerful, is transformed through the voice into a still continuing human tragedy, and a very particular and personal one.[52]

The sense of embodied experience, and thus the relation between that body and space as mediated through the voice, is a presence across both maps, and which is enabled by the use of the recordings. On *A Memory Map of the Jewish East End*, the interviews with Beattie Orwell are exemplary of this. Orwell was a former Mayoress of Tower Hamlets (the London borough in which Whitechapel is located), a participant in the Battle of Cable Street, and, until her death in July 2023 at the age of 105, the oldest member of the British Labour Party.[53] Her voice is heard on several sites, most of which are associated with

50 Transcript of an interview with Antony Laurence, https://jewisheastendmemorymap.org/?feature_type=polygon&id=67, accessed October 2023.

51 Karpf, "The Human Voice and the Texture of Experience," 54.

52 Ibid., 52.

53 Gloria Tessier, "Obituary: Beatty Orwell, Labour's Oldest Member," *The Jewish Chronicle* 27 July 2023, https://www.thejc.com/news/news/obituary-beatty-orwell-labours-oldest-member-3Vat3Q7gEmQUOGMLKkJ6qR, accessed October 2023.

her childhood: the Tenterground Estate, the Brunswick Buildings, and Goulston Street Baths. Though it is lost in the transcript below (we recommend that the reader follow the links in the footnotes and listen), her strong East End accent is evident in all of these interviews, and she speaks with humor and affection about the poverty she endured as a child:

> I was born in Goulston Street in Petticoat Lane in 1917. I can't tell you how small what we called the scullery. In the scullery we had … the gas stove and a coal place where to put the coal cos we used to have coal fires. And there was the toilet, you couldn't swing a cat in it, it was so small […] it was happy days there. We had like a playground and we used to all play in the playground. There was a woman and she used to bring her piano down[…] and it was happy. Yeah.[54]

Her use of idiom, her phrasing ("you couldn't swing a cat in it," "it was happy days there," "we had like a playground and we used to all play") and, most particularly, her accent, are as much a part of the meaning of the interview as the content it conveys. Similarly, in the excerpts related to the sites in Manchester above, fragments such as "120 odd" or "you were playing table tennis with an anti-Fascist feeling about it" evince a distinctively Northern English turn of phrase. These interviews capture ways of speaking which, especially in the case of the East End accent, are now increasingly rarely heard.[55] As such, as much as the locations themselves and the documentary photographs which illustrate each map, the recordings satisfy Nora's criteria for *lieux de mémoire*, bearing with them the all the associations of a particular group of people in a particular time and place.

6 Conclusion

In the above we have given a technical, theoretical, and discursive account of the two Jewish memory maps and their context within a broader strand of work

54 Transcript of an interview with Beattie Orwell, https://jewisheastendmemorymap.org/?feature_type=polygon&id=46, accessed October 2023.

55 This is particularly evident in East London, where the Cockney accent is generally only spoken by older people, with 'Estuary' or Multicultural London English being now more common. See Amanda Cole and Bronwen G. Evans, "Phonetic Variation and Change in the Cockney Diaspora: The Role of Place, Gender, and Identity," *Language in Society* 50(5) (2021): 641–655.

centered on the use of digital and GIS methodologies for study of historical urban environments. In so doing, we have emphasized the way in which GIS techniques have much to offer historical study. This is both in terms of their usefulness for quantitative spatial analysis (through space syntax), and in the ways they allow historical and oral history research to be conducted and presented in new ways, which themselves have the potential to change the relationship between the academy and its publics.

The interactive maps presented here, in giving spatial context to interviews, photographs, and research allow for a rich exploration of the way places have changed over time. However, we also note that previous oral history mapping projects have questioned the academic value of techniques such as this, observing that perhaps their real worth is in making visible the work of oral historians to non-specialists.[56] The Jewish East End and Jewish Manchester memory maps and the *Histories of Whitechapel* project were all created with a public audience in mind, and the enthusiastic responses we have had from members of the public and the press attest to their success in this. Yet we might reflect on what it is that makes the map presentation so compelling, and what implications this might have for academic research. Firstly, it makes visible the way in which the social and the material are interpenetrated and co-constructive of one another. To return to Raphael Samuel, in the moment of reminiscence the "physical environment [comes alive] if seen as an area of activity rather as an impersonal ecological force or a repository of archeological remains."[57] In being 'populated' by the memories of the people who lived in the place which it represents, the interactive map begins to describe these active capacities of space. Secondly, and whilst this is not an avenue that the authors have pursued for reasons of project constraints, the technique suggests the possibility of combining oral history accounts with space syntax or other GIS-based spatial analysis. Though we would hope that it is evident from the above that the authors would not dismiss the value of theory out of hand, here we open out to the possibility of a grounded understanding of the remembrance of the past; one in which the relationship between the social, the spatial, and the individual memory lives in the material and the concrete.

56 See Clíona O'Carroll, "Digital Pathways: Questions of Digital Curation for Archives of Everyday Experience," *Béaloideas* 83 (2015): 34–52. This article, published in 2015, anticipates our use of the term 'memory map' in an oral history context, though the authors were not aware of this work at the time that the maps discussed here were created.

57 Samuel, "Local History and Oral History," 199.

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