

# EHRI: Holocaust Research in the Digital Age

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With this paper, we aim to demonstrate how EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure) is taking up pending research questions on the Holocaust with digital tools and methods, and on the basis of digitized archival material. EHRI is an infrastructure and research network financed by the European Commission (EHRI-1 by the *7th Framework* program and [from 2015 onwards] EHRI-2 by the *Horizon 2020* program) that tries to overcome one of the most challenging issues in Holocaust research: the dispersal of Holocaust archival material in and outside Europe and the consequent fragmentation in Holocaust research. EHRI-2 consists of 23 partners from 17 countries and initiates new connections between research communities and institutes, particularly in Eastern and Southern Europe. The program stimulates cooperation between research communities in its broadest sense. The key component is an online portal, which brings together Holocaust related archival material in and outside Europe.

The project we present in this paper focuses on Holocaust survivors and the question which role social and other networks played in their survival. During the Second World War most Jews needed the support of other people to survive. Generally they searched for aiders inside their personal and group network. The leading question in this project is the way these members operated within and upon the social, political, legal, economic, and intellectual institutions of their time. Analyzing these networks makes it possible to improve our understanding of the various chances of survival that persecuted Jews all over Europe had and the kinds of dislocations, deportations and migrations that occurred before and during the Holocaust. The following questions will be addressed: To what extent did Jews participate in various types of networks? Can the digital reconstruction and analysis of networks indicate that there is a relation between taking part in a certain networks and survival? What kinds of networks did religious and secular Jews have and how did this influence survival? Were some networks more important for survival than others? Were political networks more important than social or economic ones, or vice versa? Was participation in non-Jewish networks particularly helpful? In the first phase of the project, we will focus on the Jews in the Netherlands. This is of high relevance because in the Netherlands an extraordinary figure of seventy-five percent of Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. By analysing the networks in which the Dutch Jews – and the German Jews who migrated in the Netherlands in the 1930s – participated, we aim to contribute on the one hand to the explanation of this exceptional figure, and on the other hand examine the reasons behind survival.

The project is inspired by the work of Marten Düring, who in 2015 for a specific individual German survival case, on the basis of network analysis among other things looked at forms of help, the intensity of relationships, motives for action, dates of help and the role of brokerage chains. Yet, this project approaches the research question on a more general and collective level, by using a variety of digitized data in which we in particular aim to focus on 'weak interpersonal ties' in order to identify and analyse the role they played in survival. The starting point is the archive of the Jewish Council Amsterdam. Furthermore, two other collections can be incorporated into this research. In the first place the dataset of the Digital Monument to the Jewish Community the Netherlands (*Digitaal Monument Joodse Gemeenschap Nederland*), in which extensive biographical information on individual persecuted Dutch Jews has been collected. Second, the list of Dutch Jewish survivors held at our partner institute the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) will enable us to identify survivors and analyse the networks in which they participated. Additionally we aim at including different cases from other occupied countries. They can likewise provide information on the networks in which Jews participated and the role they played in survival. In short, in this paper we will present some preliminary results of our digital research into changes of survival that persecuted Jews had, based on the 'Jewish Council Amsterdam'- archive.

## Reference

Düring , M. (2015) 'The dynamics of helping behaviour for Jewish refugees during the Second World War. The importance of brokerage', In: M. Gamper, L. Reschke and M. Düring eds, *Knoten und Kanten III Soziale Netzwerkanalyse in Geschichts- und Politikforschung* Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, pp 321-340.