

A Geography of Occupations

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Overview

This project seeks to visually explore the spatiality of Soviet and Nazi violence in the Baltic States using ArcGIS mapping. This project uses georeferenced locations collected during fieldwork and Soviet-era declassified CIA documents to build a map of burial sites, prisons, and military barracks used by the Nazi and Soviet armies. This map provides a visualization of the overlapping use of space by these armies. The article function of StoryMaps allows for archival information to contextualize each site to support identifying similarities in how the spaces were used.

Findings:

As a result of this prototype, I found that there was **significant overlap in the locations used by the German and Soviet armies** during their occupations.

1. Following the expulsion of the Soviet Army from Alytus in 1941, the German army used the prisons and military barracks established by the Soviet Army.
2. The burial locations of Holocaust victims are in close proximity to the burial locations of victims of Soviet violence.
3. The burial locations are in close proximity to the prison used by both the Soviet and German armies

Research Questions

1. How much overlap is there between the burial locations and prisons used by the Red Army and by the Nazi Army?
2. How were those the burial locations and prisons used by each army?
3. How much does the memory of mass violence committed by each entity overlap in those spaces?

Theories:

1. This project builds from the transnational analysis of violence in Eastern Europe found in **Timothy Snyder's Bloodlands**. Snyder's approach argues for the analysis of German and Soviet violence by looking at how each occupying force approached the Eastern European space with similar cultural, political, and ideological methods for enacting violence.
2. This project also builds from **Anne Kelley Knowles' Holocaust Geographies** which pioneers the application of Digital Mapping to the forced transportation of Jews during the Holocaust. In *Holocaust Geographies* Knowles encourages the use of mapping technology to better understand the extent to which the Holocaust encompassed the European landscape.

Methods:

1. **Digital Mapping:** In this project I seek to use the precedent set by Knowles of analyzing the Holocaust using Digital mapping combined with Snyder's historical approach to create a map that demonstrates how the Holocaust and Soviet violence were enacted in nearly the same locations.
2. **Data Visualization:** As this project expands, I plan to incorporate data visualization to compare the number of casualties at each site to better understand the scale of violence perpetrated by each occupying force at each site.

Future Iterations

Future iterations of this project would:

1. Expand the data set to **include other cities within Lithuania** to see if the pattern of occupying forces using the same spaces applies in both rural and urban sites.
2. Expand the data set to **include the other Baltic States** to see if this pattern is consistent in the approach of both occupying forces to other nations in the Eastern European context.
3. Expand the dataset to **includes sites of cultural violence** in Alytus to see if cultural violence follows the space trend as the physical violence analyzed here.
 - a. Examples of possible spaces in Alytus include: the Alytus synagogue, Latvian churches in Alytus, other cultural meeting spaces

