

# On the Peripheries of Memory: Tracing the History of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław's Urban Imaginary<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław offers a unique perspective on the changing tectonics of memory construction in a Central European city. In this article, we trace the little known history of the cemetery and the ways in which its position in the urban imaginary changed in the context of large-scale geopolitical transformations. Through the cemetery's history, we can follow the fate of one of the most prominent Jewish communities in pre-World War II Germany, starting with its emergence following the emancipation of German Jews in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to its demise under Nazi rule. After the city's transfer to Poland following the Potsdam Conference (1945), the cemetery became an increasingly isolated relic of the Jewish past of the city until its grassroots-led revitalization commencing during the 1980s Solidarity era. After this important period of civic-led renaissance tied to the city's Jewish heritage, today, the cemetery has been pushed again to the periphery, an outcome of a process we refer to as the policy of memory containment.*

## Introduction

In this paper we consider the politics of memory in the Polish city of Wrocław, drawing on a site of remembrance in its built

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