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## Introduction: Historic Jewish Spaces in Central and Eastern European Cities

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Today, historic Jewish districts in several European cities are experiencing a revival. Rediscovered as targets of cultural tourism, Jewish traditions and mementos of the Jewish past are packaged for consumption; at the same time, Jewish districts, and one-time places of worship turn into *lieux de mémoire*, often being the sites of national Holocaust memorials.

The real role of these urban areas is, however, often controversial. Is it justifiable to speak about continuity, living or rediscovered traditions, or are Jewish quarters reemerging mainly as tourist sights, with their one-time populations often gone or changed beyond recognition? In what way is the Jewish heritage contributing to the physical and social renewal of previously neglected or decaying urban neighborhoods? Are new Jewish quarters emerging in European cities? What is the role of space and place in Jewish cultures and communities today? These issues have been inspiring a growing number of conferences and research projects that yield exciting works in modern urban history, architecture, urban sociology, and Jewish studies. Recent writings addressing the above questions include Gruber (2002 and 2009); all the articles in Murzyn-Kupisz and Purchla (2009) and in Šiaučiunaitė-Verbickienė and Lempertienė (2007); and several studies in Brauch, Lipphardt, and Nocke (2008).

The present thematic issue of *East Central Europe*, which places urban Jewish spaces and their histories in the focus, is intended to be a contribution to this relatively new field. Its articles represent an array of possible historical approaches and a broad spectrum of geographical locations ranging from Central European cities to Istanbul (or Constantinople, once the capital of the Ottoman Empire). This *ECE* issue has grown out of a conference session organized in Prague as part of the eleventh International Conference on Urban History in 2012. That context in itself predetermined a multidisciplinary approach; as is often the case with urban history conferences and collective volumes, the contributors of the present thematic issue come from a variety of

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### Jewish Spaces, Spatial Approaches: At the Crossroads of Disciplines

The recent tide of scholarly attention toward historic Jewish spaces can be explained by several reasons.

First of all, scholars' curiosity has apparently been motivated by the increasing *lay* interest in Jewish quarters and in other "places of memory" related to Jewish history. Equally remarkable is the supply side of the phenomenon: the emergence of a kind of heritage industry, a specific branch or today's tourism, which builds on various kinds of touristic demand and is an integral part of several cities' cultural economies (AlSayyad 2001: 1–33).

Tourists who visit Jewish sites—or places marketed as one-time Jewish sites—are driven by diverse motivations, and tend to arrive with diverse expectations. Many tourists, Jewish by religion or by ancestry, seek out places which used to be significant locations in European Jewish history; they wish to pay tribute to extinguished communities and a vanished Jewish past. Among them

one will find descendants of former Jewish residents of the given city, children of emigrants or people who left the place themselves as emigrants before or after World War II.

Non-Jewish visitors of Jewish sites in fact also perform acts of remembrance when they visit Jewish quarters, restored synagogues, Holocaust memorials, or concentration camps. They too evoke the memory of victims, driven by a sense of compassion, or at least by a serious intention to understand the impacts of the Holocaust and imagine the lifeworlds which that dark chapter of history wiped out once and forever.

But there might be a more general motivation behind tourists' visits to historic Jewish sites. Jewish quarters—e.g., the Scheunenviertel in Berlin, Josefov in Prague, Kazimierz in Cracow, or Erzsébetváros in Budapest—are often listed in today's urban guidebooks among the main tourist sights of a given city, and many visitors regard them as a "must see" experience alongside museums, galleries, castles, flea markets, noted restaurants, beer halls, and the like. The latter type of tourists often seek exoticism and entertainment, and expect the distinctive flavor of a vanished Jewish world; from the point of view of historic falsification, mass tourism is the most problematic in the sense that it calls forth fake images, clichés, and representations of an invented past that has never existed in the form presented by the tourist industry. In the extreme case, the marketing of Jewish sites turns those locations into what is regarded by critics as Jewish Disneyland, catering to the broadest possible public looking for the "typically Jewish" feeling. Much of the scholarly literature on Jewish districts deals with exactly that impact of tourism and those controversial aspects of the heritage industry. (For observations on invented Jewish lifeworlds and the touristic exploitation of the Jewish past see Weiss 2002; Gruber 2002: 6–7; Lustig 2009: 81–83; Murzyn 2006: 438–452.)

Besides the touristic renaissance of Jewish sites, certain paradigm shifts in the humanities have also directed scholars' attention to the spatial aspects of Jewish history, and brought into focus the locations that used to loom large on the map of the diaspora during the past centuries.

The spatial turn, which has had a strong impact on the humanities and social sciences in the past few decades, changed the ways historians used to think about the relationship between space, history, and society (for overviews of the spatial turn, see Gunn 2001; and Warf-Arias 2009). The inspiration coming from geography—or, to put it better, the interaction between geography, the humanities, and social sciences—is perhaps the most apparent aspect of the new way of thinking (Soja 1989). One central idea of the spatial approach is that physical space—e.g., the urban tissue of a city—should no longer be perceived as a permanent condition, a lifeless and passive backdrop to events

and social processes, but should be interpreted as a changeable thing, “constructed” and “produced” by the people who inhabit it (Lefebvre 1991). Various groups and individuals perceive and use space, each in their own ways: they project their identities into it, they conquer it and compete with one another in order to possess it, they attribute meanings to spaces and use them as symbolic locations; they perceive some places as their own, while regard others as alien or dangerous territory. Space plays a prominent role in the formation of identities; symbolic demarcation lines which communities draw between themselves and others might be essential in the definition of a group’s own identity (Lefebvre 1991). These notions may indeed be quite useful when one interprets the perceptions of Jewish space in a given city or region, and may even be helpful in understanding the ways Jews appear in politics and public discourse in certain historical periods.

It is rather telling that the organizers of a 2012 Berlin conference chose the title *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context* for the event (5–6 November 2012, Humboldt University, Berlin). The same may be pointed out when one evokes the titles of some recent books such as *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place* (Brauch, Lipphardt, and Nocke 2008) or *Jewish Space in Central and Eastern Europe: Day-to-Day History* (Šiaučiunaitė-Verbickienė and Lempertienė 2007). Other studies such as *The Jewish Space in Europe* (Pinto 2006) use the word in a more specific sense; as Ian Leveson and Sandra Lustig point out, “‘the Jewish space’ has come to be an accepted term in the discourse about Jewish life in Europe today” (2006: 187). In the cases of some other works, the spatial aspect is not featured explicitly in the title but is nonetheless rather obvious. The authors of a seminal work *Jewish Budapest: Monuments, Rites, History* chose to arrange the contents of their book into sections bearing the names of those Budapest districts which used to be noted for concentrating the Jewish population of the Hungarian capital (Frojimovics, Komoróczy, Pusztai, and Strbik 1999, originally published in Hungarian in 1995). Most other topics, from holidays and customs to life stories of major figures of Jewish cultural history, are included as subchapters within the main blocks featuring the districts. *Jewish Budapest*, which has become a bestseller since its first publication in 1995, a basic for anyone interested in Hungarian Jewish history, has influenced the ways a broader reading public learned to think about Jewish history, making the spatial approach *the* basic frame of reference.

Finally, the recent interest in historic Jewish spaces might also be linked to current debates and public issues in Central and East-Central Europe. Discussing the controversial aspects of urban Jewish heritage will inevitably lead one to broader issues of Jewish history, including the history of the

Holocaust in countries of the region. Questions about the ways the Jewish population and majority society used to relate to each other in the past might easily raise questions about the ways they relate to each other today—provided there have been any survivors and that there is any continuity between prewar Jewish populations and today's residents, or at least returnees and committed revivalists who may successfully resurrect Jewish traditions.

Unlike in present-day Germany where the confrontation with the country's Nazi past has over time become a steady element of the nation's historical consciousness, a sincere confrontation with the past is a relatively recent thing in post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. During the four decades of state socialism, the discussion of interwar history, World War II, and the Holocaust was heavily influenced by ideological considerations, and was bound by several taboos. The very question of the Holocaust was either surrounded by deep silence or was discussed in rather evasive terms. Its victims used to be mentioned under the general term "the victims of Fascism and Nazism" in most Eastern Bloc countries, together with executed political opponents of the Nazi regime, resistance fighters, partisans, and civilian casualties (about this kind of politics of memory in the GDR, for example, see Fulbrook 1999: 120–126). After 1990, a radical reevaluation of the interwar era took place in most countries of the region, characterized by strong reactions to earlier taboos.

In recent decades, there have been intense debates—both inside and outside the historical profession—about Central and Eastern European countries' roles in World War II and the Holocaust; in those debates, the adversaries often voice radical and diametrically opposing interpretations. The bitterness of the debates, of course, depends on which side a given country stood during World War II; today's public opinion is less divided where the country was clearly a victim of Nazi Germany's expansion (i.e., Poland or Czechoslovakia), and more divided where questions of collaboration and participation can be justifiably raised (i.e., in Austria, Hungary, Croatia, or Ukraine). But, whatever the viewpoints are today, there is a rising consciousness of the problem of responsibility, and questions such as the relationship of the Holocaust to national histories or cooperation with Nazi Germany are at least now openly on the agenda. The belated confrontation with the past is under way, generating controversies in several countries of the region (for Austria, see, e.g., Uhl 2011; for Hungary, Rigó 2013; for Ukraine, Portnov 2013; on "memory wars" in Eastern Europe in general, Rutten 2013).

In such political contexts, Jewish spaces may be charged with particularly strong emotional and political connotations (Gruber 2002: 235) and can easily

turn into potential battlefields. In countries where extreme right-wing movements have evolved over the past few decades, where anti-Semitism is tacitly tolerated by certain governments and is present in public discourse, and where it can still (or again) be a matter of discussion whether people who identify themselves as Jewish are or are not part of a given Central European nation, questions such as the architectural heritage of old Jewish quarters or the preservation of monuments are far from being the only problematic issues to handle. Whether or not Jewish history (the history of Jewish spaces included) should be discussed as part of mainstream national histories is an open question in most countries of the region.

### **Jewish Spaces, Jewish Settlements: Imprints of Jewish History**

Historically, Jewish districts may be viewed as spatial representations of communities, and the histories of those urban quarters have been linked inextricably to the ups and downs of European Jewish history at large.

Jewish presence in Europe dates back to the formation of the diaspora. By the first and second centuries CE, most of the Jewish population had left Palestine and lived scattered around the Mediterranean; they settled down in farther Roman provinces such as Gaul and Hispania as well (Karády 2004: 41). Characteristic Jewish neighborhoods began to evolve in towns and cities from the earliest beginnings of the diaspora. Jewish quarters, under constantly changing circumstances, kept forming as the Roman Empire gave way to later political entities. The role of such quarters was both cohesive and protective. Jewish communities remained closely knit and adhered strictly to their faith; their residential quarters forming around synagogues provided the environment for that, and offered protection to their members amidst majority societies (Prepuk 1997: 14; Vidal-Naquet 1996).

The position of Jewish communities was thoroughly influenced by Christianity becoming dominant in all parts of Europe. As John Edwards put it, “religious tension between Jews and Christians is of the essence of the origins of Christianity itself” (1991: 12). Directives of the Church strongly influenced secular policies toward Jews over the centuries (1991: 16–17). Most medieval Christian states and most European cities developed controversial attitudes toward Jews: these attitudes were rooted in Christian doctrines on the one hand, and in economic factors on the other. When urban development gained momentum in Western Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Jews began to represent economic competition to urban Christian merchants and artisans; from then on, the sentiments and policies toward them were shaped

by a combination of religious and economic elements. Belated urbanization in Central Eastern Europe meant that this kind of economic conflict surfaced later in the Eastern regions of the continent. It also has to be stressed that kings of countries such as Poland and Hungary had often ignored the prescriptions of the Church before the fourteenth century, and had not enforced such Church-induced discriminatory measures as obliging Jews to wear distinctive clothing and signs (Gonda 1984: 16–18).

In Western and Southern Europe, the ambivalence toward Jews was expressed in characteristic policies throughout the centuries of the medieval period: in repeated expulsions of Jews from several European cities, in urban magistrates' hesitation between accepting or expelling them, and in their segregation in terms of social roles, dress, and residential space. Although the institutionalized discrimination against Jews and their isolation within Christian cities in fact took centuries to take shape, Jews were from early on restrained from several professions; besides the fields of finance and commerce, only certain trades remained open for them. They were allowed to live only in certain cities and had to be content with a legal status that was severely restricted compared to the rights of Christian inhabitants. On the other hand, the authorities in several cases protected Jewish communities. Monarchs and states needed their services and financial resources; rulers often recognized the importance of their contribution to local economies and sometimes even appreciated their cultural and scholarly achievements.

In comparison to Christian Europe, medieval Muslim states and empires seemed relatively tolerant toward their Jewish subjects. These empires, as a rule, put much less pressure on Jewish communities to convert to Islam; nor were Jews routinely persecuted because of their different religious beliefs, although as non-Muslims they were considered to belong to an inferior category of subjects. Although atrocities did happen in the Muslim world as well, acts of persecution were relatively few and far between (Gilbert 2010: Map 21). It was usually sufficient for Jewish communities to pay their due taxes, be loyal to their rulers, and contribute to the commercial exchange inside as well as outside the Muslim states; in exchange, they could prosper and live in relative peace.

That was an important reason why Jewish communities and their culture were thriving on the Iberian Peninsula under Muslim rule (the Umayyad Emirate, 756–929 CE, the Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba, 929–1031 CE, and their successors). For a while, prominent members of Jewish communities were able to preserve their positions even after parts of Spain had been reconquered by Christian armies in the twelfth to fifteenth centuries (Karády 2004: 45). Likewise, religious tolerance was an important reason why urban Jewish

communities in the Ottoman Empire proliferated and grew substantially during the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries. Jewish communities in the Eastern Mediterranean, living under Ottoman rule, were joined by refugees from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century.

As far as Christian Europe was concerned, the institutionalized physical confinement of Jews was a relatively late development in European cities. Whereas the earlier residential segregation of Jews was largely voluntary, the High Middle Ages, i.e., the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, brought about the birth of the ghetto which served the purpose of the *institutionalized* isolation of the Jewish population: the ghetto was a walled-in and closed area where Jews were obliged to live, and which they could only leave on certain conditions. Ghettos tended to be designated at locations which were naturally separated from the city proper (e.g., on an island), or at least off the town center (e.g., on the outskirts of early modern cities). Some authors portray the ghetto primarily as an invention of the early modern period. According to Umberto Fortis, the Venice ghetto, or "*seraglio* around San Girolamo" in Venice came to exist in 1516, and functioned continually until 1797. The pattern was adopted and imposed by the Church in several Italian cities during the same century (Fortis 1987: 5–6 and 9), and introduced in a multitude of other urban centers around Europe.

Although alternating with periods of tolerance, anti-Jewish policies and sentiments seem to have been recurring features of medieval European history. Jewish communities often became scapegoats and victims of violent acts in times of crisis and upheaval, be it crusades, wars, or epidemics. After the Church had formulated clear suggestions to European rulers regarding the institutionalized separation of Christians and Jews, anti-Jewish policies in some states became elevated to the level of royal policy: the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries witnessed the expulsion of Jews from certain countries, which triggered waves of migration on a continental scale. Almost the entire Jewish population was expelled from England by Edward I (r. 1272–1307) in 1290. Then, within a century, Jews were forced to leave France as well. Philip IV, the Fair (r. 1285–1314), expelled Jews from Paris and its environs in 1303, while Charles VI (r. 1380–1422) expelled them from the whole of France in 1394 (Edwards 1991: 11–17). This large population found new homes first in German areas (i.e., the western lands of the Holy Roman Empire) and in Spain, but not permanently: Jewish communities fled several German cities too during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The attitudes toward Jews during the period of the Reformation were no less antagonistic. Jewish refugees moved on eastwards from German areas to the eastern parts of the Holy Roman Empire (i.e., Bohemia and Moravia), Poland, and Hungary, often encouraged by the receptive and protective policies



of East-Central European kings (for an overview of migrations on a continental scale, see Karády 2004: 54–56 and 63–70).

As far as Southern Europe was concerned, Jews were forced to leave the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century. In the wake of the *reconquista* and the unification of Castile and Aragon, Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497—except for those who were willing to convert to Christianity (about the expulsion, see Edwards 1991: 27–38; and Beinart 2001). Connected to diaspora communities that had come to exist earlier in the Eastern Mediterranean, long-lived communities established themselves in urban centers of the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere; later also in areas that came under Ottoman rule by the sixteenth century. The most significant Sephardic centers included Constantinople and Salonika, and there were several smaller but important communities in cities like Sarajevo in the Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire. In this issue, the article by Meltem Özkan Altınöz deals with the evolution of historic Jewish communities in Constantinople/Istanbul, exploring the residential areas, spatial concentration, and architectural heritage of subsequent Jewish immigrant groups, each one of different geographical origin.

By the seventeenth century, the Jewish population of Europe had largely settled down on the peripheries of early modern Europe: Jews driven out of German areas settled in Poland-Lithuania and the Habsburg Empire, whereas Jews coming from Spain and Portugal found new homes around the Mediterranean. (Later, after the partitioning of Poland, finalized by 1795, a substantial Jewish population found itself under Russian rule; dissatisfied with the policies of the tsars, some Jewish groups migrated further to other areas where they could find more favorable conditions: to the Habsburg Empire, to the Romanian Principalities, and to the Jewish centers of the Ottoman Empire.) Holland seemed to be an atypically tolerant country amidst the general pattern of early modern Northwestern Europe: substantial groups of Spanish and Portuguese Sephardim found permanent shelter there after the expulsion, contributing to the subsequent rise of port cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

In the areas where large Jewish populations settled by the early modern period in Central and Eastern Europe, rulers' attitudes toward them were often ambiguous, although by the late eighteenth century, as a rule, neither open persecution nor spontaneous violence was tolerated any more in enlightened absolutist monarchies. Empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740–1780) was the last one to actually expel the Jewish community from Prague; but the measure was only partially carried out, and Jews were in fact soon—in 1748—readmitted to the city. During later years of her rule, Maria Theresa never resorted to such harsh

measures again. Members of certain dynasties, the Habsburgs in particular, seemed nonetheless consistent in their anti-Jewish sentiments for the most part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even if they tolerated the presence of Jewish communities in their realm.

Some of the significant Jewish hubs of early modern Central Europe came to exist because of the expulsion of Jews from the imperial center. Most Habsburgs were clearly unenthusiastic about the presence of their Jewish subjects near their imperial residence (only a few individuals and families were exempt, notably those “court Jews” whose financial services and advice monarchs found indispensable). Leopold I (r. 1658–1705) expelled Jews from Vienna in 1670, and from entire Lower Austria in 1671 (Prepuk 1997: 24). The eighteenth-century Jewish community in Berlin owed its formation directly to the fact that the Habsburgs wished to keep Jews away from Vienna: Electoral Prince Frederick William invited several Jewish families expelled from Vienna to settle down in his capital after Jews had been forced to leave the Habsburg imperial center. He issued a permission in 1671 allowing fifty families from Vienna to settle in a suburb of Berlin (Simon, Nachama, and Schoeps 2002).

In certain Habsburg provinces which had received large numbers of Jewish settlers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Jewish “overpopulation” was curbed by legal measures designed explicitly to limit the number of Jews in those areas. In a law issued in 1726, called the *Familiantengesetz*, Charles VI of Habsburg allowed only one son of each Jewish family in Bohemia and Moravia to get married and start a family. The *Familiantengesetz* resulted in the large-scale migration of younger males to other lands of the empire, unaffected by the law; Hungary was among one of the popular destinations of young Jewish men from Bohemian and Moravian areas.

Under the enlightened absolutist rulers of the late eighteenth century, the situation of Jewish populations was nonetheless increasingly well regulated in Central and Eastern Europe, albeit in different ways in different monarchies and empires. Royal policies in some cases broke down the traditional resistance of local power toward the in-settlement of Jews, and, in the long run, prepared the way for the better integration of Jews into the urban societies of the region. The Edict of Tolerance, issued by Joseph II of Habsburg (r. 1780–1790), for instance, allowed Jews to freely settle down in cities and towns of the Habsburg Empire (with some exceptions such as the mining towns in Hungary).

As they were usually unwelcome in chartered towns during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in Central and Eastern Europe, Jews often found shelter under the protection of landowners, forming their own little communities attached to the country residences and landed estates of aristocrats. While urban elites in the early modern period usually regarded Jewish merchants and

tradesmen as competitors of local Christian traders and artisans, and kept them out of the cities, landowners—especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when large landed estates in countries like Poland and Hungary began to produce for the market—needed the financial resources and commercial expertise of Jews and were willing to offer protection in exchange. Besides trade and commerce, Jews had other functions, especially in the Polish-Lithuanian areas, where they kept inns (which was a right of nobles rented out to Jews), rented and managed extensive estates of the noble landowners, and so on (Gartner 2001: 36–37; Haumann 2002: 27–31).

As a consequence, a large part of the Jewish population of German, Polish, Bohemian, and Hungarian areas lived in the countryside or in small towns by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jews often settled down in non-chartered, non-privileged provincial towns that were under the jurisdiction of noble landlords. In Moravia, that was the predominant pattern of Jewish settlement already by the mid-sixteenth century (Miller 2011: 2). Since these towns had no right to pass their own statutes, they were usually less rejective when it came to the in-migration of Jews.

### **Variations on a Theme: Ghettos and Jewish Quarters in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Central Europe**

The presence or absence of Jews in European cities largely corresponded to the above patterns of regional or country-level policies, and depended on cities' resistance or tolerance as well.

A characteristic solution of the eighteenth century was for magistrates to keep Jews out of the city but let them settle just outside the city walls. This type of Jewish settlement, in fact a suburb, was not a ghetto *per se*, as it had no walls or other clear physical boundaries, and its residents were not legally obliged to live there. Rather, they settled there voluntarily and stayed with their own folk as this kind of concentration guaranteed safety, community connections, an immediate network of help and support, and the proximity of Jewish religious institutions. Still, this type of suburb was a more or less separate Jewish residential area with a high concentration of Jewish residents, markedly different from the city proper.

In other cases, real ghettos were established and they sometimes prevailed until as late as the mid-nineteenth century. The ghetto in Prague, for example, was surrounded by a wall from the seventeenth century to 1848, and functioned literally as a city within the city throughout the centuries of its existence (Pařík 2009: 181–183).

In rare cases, such as in Berlin, there were no legal barriers at all. As mentioned before, Jews banned from Vienna found shelter there in the mid-1700s, and lay the foundations of a thriving community; Berlin became the cradle of Haskalah, the movement of Jewish Enlightenment in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Jews of Berlin were in fact not confined to the Spandauer Vorstadt, i.e., the residential area where Berlin's first Jewish quarter evolved, and they were not limited in their freedom to choose their place of residence in the city; so they soon began to appear in various other neighborhoods of Berlin (Wilke 2009: 152).

By the early nineteenth century, the old barriers began to gradually disappear in many other cities of Central Europe as well. Town magistrates of chartered towns and cities as a rule did everything they could to keep Jews out of the city as long as the decision was left up to them. In the late eighteenth century, however, some enlightened rulers began to force cities to give Jews equal freedom to settle in the city, or at least established various types of new legal status for Jews, e.g., granting them the right of temporary residence, or exempted some of them from the general ban on settlement. Urban magistrates had to comply grudgingly, and a gradual but continuous Jewish in-migration began into several cities in Central Europe. In Vienna, however, it was the imperial governments themselves that prevented Jews from residing in the city in large numbers before the mid-nineteenth century; only a few thousand "tolerated" Jews had the right to live in the imperial capital before 1848. After then, however, the limitations were gradually lifted and the Viennese Jewish community began to grow at a rapid rate (Rozenblit 1983: 17).

The "sieve" of chartered towns and cities was usually won by Jewish traders step by step: they were first present in cities—temporarily at first—on the occasion of fairs; then the first residential areas of Jews were formed outside the city walls, at an optimal distance from the marketplace; at some point, certain Jewish individuals and families acquired the privilege of residing in the city on a temporary basis; finally, the right of permanent residence was granted to a growing number of individuals, until eventually all legal limitations were lifted (for such a pattern, see Frojimovics, Komoróczy, Pusztai, and Strbik 1999: 67–105).

One of the authors in this issue, János Mazsu, has revealed those patterns of Jewish in-migration into the East Hungarian town of Debrecen in his earlier writings; his article in this issue deals with the residential patterns of the already established Jewish community in Debrecen in the late nineteenth century.

Due to the removal of medieval barriers, Jews in the nineteenth century began to break out of the physical and symbolic confines of former ghettos. The full legal emancipation of Jews was often preceded by the partial and gradual

abolishment of earlier limitations; the ban on settlement was lifted, and Jews were granted the right to acquire property, as in the Habsburg Empire in 1860 and in parts of Poland under Russian rule in 1862. (In the Habsburg Empire, several restrictions were abolished by the Kremsier Parliament already during the revolutionary wave of 1848, and the equal rights of all citizens—including Jews—were declared in the Imposed March Constitution of 1849; but most of the 1848 laws were repealed later and the constitution itself was suspended in 1851 when the system of neo-absolutism solidified.) After the suspension of physical confines, legal emancipation followed suit in several places. But in Russian-occupied Poland that did not happen until the eve of independence in 1917; and in large areas of late nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, e.g., in Russia and Romania, even the residential restrictions prevailed (Karády 2004: 100).

Emancipation came at different times in different countries. The earliest country to introduce emancipation in Europe was France during the revolution (1790–91, partially revised under Napoleon); an early case in Central Europe was Prussia, where civil rights were granted to Jews by the Edict of 1812 (true, the 1812 law was not fully put into practice and was partially rescinded afterwards). In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 1867 was the turning point when emancipation was finally legislated (for stages of the process, see Katz 1973: 167–180). But whenever it took place, legal emancipation opened up the roads of integration and upward mobility for Jews in society.

The evolution of Jewish communities in smaller towns followed somewhat different patterns during the nineteenth century than in large cities of Central and Eastern Europe. In the easternmost provinces of the Habsburg Empire, especially in Galicia and Bukovina, and also in some of the northeastern counties of historical Hungary, Jews formed substantial groups within the populations of provincial towns; in certain cases, notably in Galicia, they represented the absolute majority. The Galician border town Brody, one of the Habsburg Empire's gateways to Russia, was noted for being "the most Jewish town" in the Habsburg Monarchy: between 1795 and 1914, 60 to 80 percent of its population was Jewish (Kuzmany 2011: 125–126). This majority, however, was not homogeneous, just like it was not homogeneous in other towns either: in different proportions in each town and city, the urban Jewish populations were comprised of groups representing various degrees of observance.

Because of their high proportion, the relationship of Jews to other ethnic groups in certain provinces and cities was characterized by a much greater degree of cooperation and mutual tolerance than elsewhere in the region. Galicia, part of the Habsburg Empire from 1772 to 1918, was one of those atypical areas. This was the reason why Jews in Galicia enjoyed a stronger political representation in certain Galician cities already in the early nineteenth century,

and this is why their representation was more pronounced on both the municipal and the provincial level during the late Habsburg period. In this issue, the article by Börries Kuzmany will show how those traditions of representation informed the achievement of Jewish autonomy—alongside the autonomy gained by other ethnic groups—in late Habsburg Galicia.

During the age of assimilation, a gradual “dissolution” of Jewish districts began in larger as well as smaller cities. Spontaneous societal changes, the residential mobility of the Jewish middle and upper middle classes, and conscious urban planning often led to the transformation of one-time Jewish quarters.

The wealthier and better educated tended to leave the Jewish quarters; upward social mobility very often went hand in hand with spatial mobility, if not within one generation, then within two generations for sure. In some cases, the Jewish bourgeoisie blended into the populations of upscale non-Jewish neighborhoods; in other cases, upscale but substantially Jewish neighborhoods formed spontaneously in newly built, fashionable parts of cities. In both cases, it was important for well-to-do Jewish residents to move away from “the ghetto,” both in the literal and in the figurative sense (Katz 1973). On the other hand, a certain attachment often prevailed, in spite of the “out of the ghetto” drive: in the histories of several Central European cities, a certain percentage of the upwardly mobile either stayed in the traditional Jewish areas or in fact moved no farther than to neighboring districts, keeping a physical closeness to the original “Jewish quarter” and continuing to be involved in the social networks of Jewish society. Patterns of residential detachment and attachment in Łódź and Warsaw, both noted for their large Jewish populations in the second half of the nineteenth century, have been described by Wesolowski (2009: 302) and Bergman (2009: 293). The attachment of several wealthier Jewish residents of Vienna to the “ghetto” and the organic relations between traditionally Jewish areas and neighboring districts before 1914 have been analyzed by Rozenblit (1983: 82–84).

In any case, after the lifting of residential and property restrictions, the wealthier middle and upper middle class had the opportunity to filter out of the former Jewish quarters, which in turn affected the outlook and reputation of those neighborhoods. The remaining residents tended to be lower middle-class or working-class Jews intermixing with Christians of similar social background. The old Jewish districts, in fact, had never been regarded during their history as particularly prestigious areas within the cities where they came to exist, and they tended to keep their lower middle-class, moderately prestigious reputation—if not worse—between the two world wars as well. Authors writing about such districts often call attention to the factors of slow decay and relatively low prestige in the interwar period (Smagacz 2008: 51; and Kupisz 2006: 106).

In the wake of emancipation, with the gradual departure of wealthier Jewish families, the Jewish quarters left behind were likely to experience a period of physical stagnation, and were definitely in need of urban renewal by the inter-war period. In some Central European cities, the former Jewish quarter had gradually turned into a slum, and was eventually regarded as a problem area with decrepit housing and disastrous sanitary conditions (Kupisz 2006:106, quoting Majer Bałaban), characterized by poverty, deprivation, social problems, and crime.

Such areas may have become the targets of urban renewal projects as early as in the 1890s: Prague's old Jewish quarter of Josefov, for instance, underwent profound reconstruction beginning in 1895, after which there remained almost nothing left of the old building stock except for some of the sacred buildings. Even the street network of Josefov was redefined: the one-time Jewish ghetto, in terms of its old appearance, had physically disappeared by the early 1900s, and elegant new streets with stylish residential buildings were created in its place (Giustino 2003; Pařík 2009: 184–194). What we know as the “Old Jewish Quarter of Prague” today is barely identical with old Josefov except for the synagogues, the old Jewish cemetery, and one or two other historic community buildings.

In other cases, the renewal of such districts was on the agenda by the first decades of the twentieth century, or by the 1940s at the latest, but the outbreak of World War II prevented the revitalization plans from being realized.

But whichever phase of the Jewish districts we speak about between about 1870 and 1945, an important feature needs to be stressed, namely, their ethnically and denominationally mixed character. In the late nineteenth century, and especially in the first half of the twentieth, the former Jewish quarters could no longer be interpreted as isolated ethnic ghettos. Although they often continued to be perceived as Jewish spaces, coded as “Jewish” by both insiders and outsiders (Silverman 2012: 26), their local society was much more complex than that: the intermixing of Christian artisans, shopkeepers, and workers with their Jewish counterparts created peculiar and multicultural local milieus, characterized by strong traditions of symbiosis (Szívós 2012). In some cities, according to certain accounts, Christian and Jewish social circles kept their separateness up until World War II (Smagacz 2008: 52, quoting Rafael Scharf); in other cases, the intermixing was much more intimate (Szívós 2012: 172–180).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, at the time when “ghettos” were dissolving, certain neighborhoods still remained areas of concentrated Jewish settlement. But these areas, with their intermixing ethnic and denominational groups, were becoming exactly the locations where patterns of Jewish-Gentile coexistence evolved, and where intense cultural exchange was

taking place. In this issue, János Mazsu shows explicitly in the example of Debrecen that instead of interpreting acculturation and assimilation as a one-sided process—meaning Jews' adapting to majority society—a “mutual learning process” was taking place, in which both “hosts” and “guests” were learning each others' mentalities, and contributed together to successful urban modernization. That was apparently the case in many other urban centers of Central Europe.

The separation and “otherness” of Jewish society, on the one hand, was in certain historical periods reinforced by the arrival of traditional groups, which, together with the already established Jewish communities, created multilayered and heterogeneous Jewish societies in Central European cities. In the late nineteenth century, for example, there was continuous Jewish in-migration to Vienna from all areas of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and the newcomers included several Orthodox or Hassidic families from Galicia and Bukovina as well. In the early 1880s, large numbers of Jewish refugees fled to Central European cities from the pogroms in Tsarist Russia (the larger dimension of that migration movement, i.e., migration overseas, is very important but it is outside the concern of the present issue).

The Eastern Jews (*Ostjuden*) were not exactly welcome by westernized, assimilated Jewish urbanites in cities like Vienna; the latter regarded the former with a degree of contempt, and saw their own reputation being threatened by the appearance of their traditionally dressed, Yiddish-speaking coreligionists wearing caftans and payots (sidelocks) (Rozenblit: 1983: 43). The majority society regarded the perceived “influx” of Eastern Jewish immigrants with increasing irritation as well. The problem surfaced on an even larger scale when the Jewish populations in capital cities of Central Europe were replenished by refugees from the east during and after World War I (Silverman 2012: 12). The outcome of the Great War and the dissolution of empires in Central and Eastern Europe created severe problems and produced social tensions on a mass scale; in this tense situation, the arrival of Eastern Jewish refugees was met with even stronger resistance than in the prosperous period of the 1880s.

In the post-emancipation phase, Jews contributed significantly to the cultural prominence as well as to the economies of European capitals. But with the emergence of modern political anti-Semitism, coexistence and assimilation proved increasingly problematic. The 1920s and 1930s saw the birth of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, some of which implicitly or explicitly endorsed anti-Semitism as part of their official ideology. In the interwar period, popular as well as political anti-Semitism intensified in many areas of Central Europe, although the combination of reasons might have been different in each country's case: the losses of World War I blamed on Jews, the Christian or explicitly Catholic self-definition of certain new states (Silverman 2012: 9–13),



or the spread of right-wing radicalism. Political polarization, right-wing radicalism, and officially sanctioned anti-Semitism cast their shadow on the neighborhoods with Jewish reputation, although their world as experienced by insiders was still continuous with the peaceful pre-1914 period.

The article by Lisa Silverman in this issue presents the perceptions of Jewish spaces in interwar Vienna, notably the images of Vienna's "Jewish district" of Leopoldstadt, in the mirror of contemporary representations.

In Nazi Germany and Austria, the latter part of the Third Reich after the *Anschluss*, Jewish neighborhoods and their inhabitants came under siege by 1938 at the latest, in a figurative as well as in the literal sense. The events of 1938 completely overwrote earlier traditions of coexistence if we consider the consequences of the *Anschluss* (March 1938) and regard events such as the Kristallnacht (November 9 of the same year).

Historical Jewish districts would reemerge once again as ghettos in World War II. In all the countries annexed or occupied by Nazi Germany in the course of 1938–1941, the Jewish population was subjected to the same discriminative legal measures as in Germany proper, and was soon faced with mass extermination. Prior to their deportation to concentration camps, people classified as Jews by racial laws were forced to move to ghettos in each town and city in German-occupied areas. These ghettos were often set up in neighborhoods which, historically at least, used to be Jewish quarters, or in streets which were noted for their Jewish character between the two world wars. The temporary ghettos had been emptied of their non-Jewish residents before Jews were forced to move in, and then emptied again when the deportation trains carried the victims away. The only exception was Budapest, where, due to specific historical circumstances, the decisive majority of the ghettos' populations survived the war. In some cases, the ghetto was not set up in the historic Jewish quarter but in a different district. In Cracow, for instance, the Jewish residents were forced to leave the traditional "Jewish quarter" of Kazimierz, and join others concentrated in the designated ghetto in another district (Podgórze). Their twentieth-century exodus meant final departure, which left Kazimierz something like a ghost town by the post-1945 period.

### **Stories of Absence and Revival: Jewish Spaces from World War II to the Present Day**

World War II and its aftermath, as a rule, changed the outlook and social composition of former Jewish neighborhoods beyond recognition in Central and Eastern European cities.

Wartime events, the Holocaust, the postwar emigration of survivors, the policies of state socialist regimes, and other factors resulted in the radical transformation of neighborhoods that used to have high percentages of Jewish residents before the war. Historians of postwar Jewish history in fact often point to the significance of post-1945 emigration: out of the overall number of survivors, only a few thousand Jewish citizens remained in countries like Poland or Czechoslovakia by 1989, while the rest had emigrated (for Czechoslovakia, see Iggers 1992: 24; and Pařík 2009; for Poland, see, e.g., Gebert 1994; for today's surviving populations in general see Gruber 2002: 7). The decrease or complete disappearance of the Jewish population left a void which was filled by the influx of non-Jewish and often lower-status residents; in capitals of Communist countries the latter aspect had much to do with conscious housing policies of the city authorities. The change in residential composition was, as a rule, accompanied by physical decay. The situation was further aggravated after 1945 by the Communist regimes' general and often intentional neglect of historic urban districts.

After the war, recovery and the immediate tasks dictated by wartime damages were more urgent than the revitalization of old Jewish quarters; in a case like Warsaw, the total physical annihilation of the ghetto gave "revitalization" quite a different definition anyway.

In the wake of the Jewish population's demise, the sacred spaces (such as synagogues) and Jewish community buildings became dysfunctional in countless cities of the region, which was often an excuse for Communist authorities to close those buildings down and assign them other, completely secular functions. Several synagogues were simply demolished, based on the claim that they were neglected or were in a ruinous state.

The rediscovery of former "Jewish districts" in Central European cities began in the last decade of the twentieth century, and was in most cases related to the profound changes brought about by the political transition of 1989–1990. Following the collapse of state socialist systems, new conditions emerged in almost every field related to urban development, which permitted the physical and symbolic revival of hitherto neglected urban spaces in the early 1990s (Murzyn-Kupisz 2009).

After 1990, the reorganization of municipal governments—replacing the Soviet-type city councils characteristic of party states—made autonomous urban policy-making and local planning possible again, and urban economies could at least partially detach themselves from national governments and national politics. The privatization of real estate, or, in the case of some countries, the restitution of property, led to the rebirth of full-fledged real estate markets, which fit into the larger systems of emerging capitalist economies in

Central and Eastern Europe (the practices of restitution, other forms of reprivatization, and the impact of these on real estate development and urban policy has been analyzed, e.g., by Sýkora 2005). In these new market economies the centrally located historic districts, the “old Jewish quarters” among them, began to acquire values that used to have very little significance during the long decades of state socialism.

Real estate investors, municipal authorities, and private owners soon realized the potential vested in these old districts, and the resulting investments, ownership changes, and municipal revitalization programs began to transform the old neighborhoods in terms of outlook as well as social composition. The population that was still residing in those districts in the early 1990s began to gradually move out as a result of rising rents and the general increase in residential mobility. Old run-down neighborhoods have turned into gentrified, fashionable residential areas and entertainment zones where cultural enterprises and restaurants and cafés dominate the scene (like Berlin’s Scheunenviertel or Cracow’s Kazimierz). In some cases, like in the case of Prague’s Josefov, the area in question was in a relatively good condition around 1990, but gentrification in the past twenty years has been nonetheless obvious: the replacement of native residents by foreigners, the appearance of upscale shops, and the opening of trendy cafés have been unmistakable signs of the process. The touristic potential of the “old Jewish districts” has been increasingly exploited as mass tourism began to hit the post-Socialist cities from the 1990s on (see, e.g., Tóth 2008 on the touristic impact on “the old Jewish quarter” of Budapest). In sum, the political transition of the early 1990s created entirely new conditions in which the physical as well as the symbolic reinvention of hitherto neglected urban spaces became possible.

The recent redefinition of urban neighborhoods as “old Jewish quarters,” as mentioned earlier in this introduction, has been a controversial process from the point of both touristic exploitation and historical accuracy (Szívós 2012: 166–169). If we consider today’s residential composition, the former ethnic and religious character of old Jewish districts is mostly a thing of the past, especially in countries where there had been barely any Jewish inhabitants left by the end of the twentieth century (about the numbers of Jewish inhabitants left in various Central Eastern European countries by the end of the twentieth century, and about the problems of Jewish identity, see Gebert 1994; Gruber 2002: 7; Iggers 1992: 24; and Kovács 1994). But, irrespective of their largely non-Jewish residential populations today, the “old Jewish quarters” do indeed function as places of identification and places of remembrance for several visitors and native residents (Gruber 2002: 9; and Murzyn 2006: 256), similarly to Jewish monuments, synagogues, museums, and Holocaust memorials, or actively

functioning Jewish theatres, festival sites, and other cultural venues. In a city like Budapest where a sizeable Jewish population has existed continually throughout the twentieth century, and where a significant number of residents identify themselves as Jewish in one way or another today, Jewish cultural venues tend to multiply and evolve along generational lines: authors analyzing that phenomenon associate officially recognized, established events and institutions with the older generations, while they link alternative venues, events, forums, and organizations with the subculture of a younger generation of Jewish people (Gantner and Kovács 2008).

It must be stressed that the rediscovery of identities may in fact lead to authentic revivals. Jewish traditions may indeed be successfully brought back to life; the authenticity of new forms of Jewish religious practice and community initiatives cannot be called into question even if these new traditions are not necessarily continuous with those local traditions that used to govern the lives of a city's prewar Jewish communities. Monika Murzyn-Kupisz, monographer of Cracow's Kazimierz district, has written extensively about the recent revitalization of Kazimierz and the ways the "Jewish renaissance" has contributed to the current popularity of the district. In that context, she has amply commented on the vanished world of prewar Kazimierz and the inauthenticity of the way Jewish themes are sometimes presented to visitors today. In this issue, however, Murzyn-Kupisz reveals another important contemporary aspect of that renaissance, namely the *real* revival of Jewish community life and the new institutions that have been created in recent years.

The revival of Jewish space (the revival of traditions as well as the physical revival of urban spaces) is taking place in varying public contexts in today's cities in Central and Eastern Europe. The process depends on the weight and influence of existing Jewish communities today; but it depends very much on the attitudes of municipal and national governments as well. Those attitudes may be influenced by material aspects: the condition of one-time Jewish districts and the professional preservation of Jewish spaces today is in part a financial issue, directly connected to the general condition of the city centers, or, more broadly, to the question whether a given post-Socialist city is experiencing a boom or a decline in recent decades (see, e.g., Wesolowski 2009). But the symbolic aspects of public attitudes are equally important.

The politics of remembrance, pursued by municipal and national governments as well as civilian groups, creates the context in which it becomes possible for communities to cultivate collective memories in the public domain, and pay attention to places which carry symbolic significance in the past of a community. It takes political will to create an atmosphere in which places of Jewish memory, instead of being issues of small communities, can become

matters of concern for entire nations as well. It is among the aims of this issue to attempt to understand how urban spaces, which have a distinguished place in Jewish history, are becoming part of public memory in various cities of Central and Eastern Europe.

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