

**Sammelrez: Modern Jewish History**

Heinert, Felix; Gromova, Alina; Voigt, Sebastian (Hrsg.): *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context*. Berlin: Neofelis Verlag 2015. ISBN: 978-3-943414-44-8; 302 S.

Lässig, Simone; Rürup, Miriam (Hrsg.): *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History*. New York: Berghahn Books 2017. ISBN: 978-1-78533-553-2; 327 S.

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During the last decade the impact of the „spatial turn“ is receiving more and more attention in the field of Jewish Studies and Jewish history. Based on the theories of Henri Lefebvre, Edward W. Soja, David Harvey, Karl Schlögel and others, a variety of new topics regarding the meaning of „place“ and „space“ in Jewish history are now reexamined. These two volumes, „Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context“ (hereafter the first volume) and „Space and spatiality in modern German Jewish History“ (hereafter the second volume) present a rich and diverse contribution to this developing research discourse. Both books open with detailed and informative introductions in which the editors present their topics in wide historiographical contexts.

The transformation of European Jews to the modern era, and specifically to emancipation, is often presented as a move „out of the Ghetto“. A few of the articles in both books offer a fresh and critical perspective on the binary representation of Ghetto and emancipation. In an original article in the first volume German historian Jürgen Heyde illuminates the conceptualization of the term Ghetto from the early modern times until today. Ghetto, we learn from the article, was a very loaded and contested concept already since the formation of the Ghettos in 16th century Italy. Heyde's article analyses the history of the concept „Ghetto“ in a similar method to Koselleck's school of *Begriffsgeschichte*. His choice to deal with it from contemporary historical discussions and then back to the early 20th century, to the 19th and then to the 16th

century in my opinion is very interesting. Thus, for example we see how in 1928 two European Jewish immigrants who became leading scholars in American universities – sociologist Louis Wirth and historian Salo W. Baron – presented two different versions of the cultural connotations of the „Ghetto“ as what can be termed today as „a place of memory“. Heyde's additional article in the second volume illuminates how the Ghetto became a metaphor for Jewish-gentile relations in late 19th century Galicia. Based on articles in the Polish Jewish press of that time he shows how both Assimilationists and Zionists have located the Ghetto in their agenda regarding the Jewish present and future. It would have been interesting to examine also if and how this concept was presented in the Polish non-Jewish press of that time.

Like „Ghetto“, „Shtetl“ is another key concept, both in Jewish historical spatial reality in Eastern Europe, as well as in modern Jewish imagination. Polish historian Maria Ciesla reconstructs in her article in the first volume the Jewish-gentile relations in small towns in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17th and 18th centuries. Based on detailed documentation from a variety of case studies Ciesla describes patterns of Christian-Jewish daily coexistence and various shared social spaces in the early modern Commonwealth – a very different picture from the one of isolation which is common in modern literary representations of the Shtetl. Ciesla's thesis clearly corresponds with the conceptual assumption of the editors of the first volume „that Jewish spaces develop only in relation to non-Jewish spaces“ (p. 14).

Both volumes also include articles which illuminate Jewish spaces from the emancipation era. In an important article in the second volume German historian Andreas Gotzmann examines the transformation of the function of synagogues and cemeteries in the communal life of German Jews in the 19th century. Gotzmann opens with a detailed analysis of the way in which both synagogues and cemeteries gave Jews during the early modern period, as they were dispersed among other nations, a sense of belonging to one religious community. He then turns to analyse the changes in their formation in the course of the

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emancipation era as German Jews aspired to be integrated into the German nation. The new synagogues, he asserts, were built now (predominantly in the second half of the nineteenth century) more and more in the open space and expressed the Jewish aspiration to become visible and recognized. Gotzmann presents them as a spatial expression of the Jewish political project of integration, but he is also aware of their complex need to present the distinction in the architecture of the synagogues. Whereas the new synagogues presented the future aspirations on emancipated Jew, he asserts, the cemeteries expressed their need to cling to the past and prove a long-standing history in the German space.

American historian Saskia Coenen Snyder analyses in her article in the first volume the building process of the Berlin synagogue on Oranienburger Straße which was inaugurated in 1866. Predominately inspired by the theories of Lindsay Jones regarding the Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture, Coenen Snyder criticizes the common tendency of scholars to generalize the interpretation of the 19th century western and central European synagogues as bearers of the proud message of a new emancipated Jewry. Instead, she offers a close reading of the sources which documented the two decades long process of building the Oranienburger Straße synagogue. The intensive discussions between Jewish representatives and the city and state authorities, as well as among Jews themselves, regarding the location, the design and the visibility of the synagogue expose a complex variety of ideological positions regarding Jewish integration in the German space.

Another innovative contribution concerning this topic is Joachim Schlör's article in the second volume. Schlör calls historians of German Jewry to use new insights from the field of cultural anthropology more extensively. Dealing with the concept of Jewish sacred spaces, Schlör presents a variety of typical practices of the German Jewish home and interprets them as expressing the tension between „longing“ and „belonging“. The synagogues, he asserts in his analysis of their entrance inscriptions, offered Jews „a home away from home“ (p. 237). Well known in recent years as one of the innovative cultural

historians of modern German Jewry, specifically in the context of the „spatial turn“, Schlör also contributed a short but noteworthy foreword to the first volume.

Both volumes include various additional articles that contribute to the implementation of the spatial perspective in a variety of aspects of Jewish history. Nils Roemer and Kerstin von der Krone attempt in their articles in the second volume to analyse the German Jewish culture of memory (Roemer) and press (von der Krone) from spatial perspectives. A few of the articles in the first volume present social and cultural mappings of Jewish life in specific spaces such as eastern European immigrants areas in Berlin (Anne-Christin Sass) or the Prussian-Russian border zone (Ruth Leiserowitz). In the first volume, one can also find a few articles which are devoted to Jewish experiences beyond the world of German Jewry like Nora Lafi's article about Jewish Spaces in Ottoman Algiers and Frank Golczewski's contribution about the Ghettos for Jews in Eastern Europe during World War II. Anthony Kauders' original analysis to the deep involvement of Viennese Jews in the formative period of psychoanalysis (using terms like „third space“ and „heterotopic Jewish place“) and Ofer Ashkenazi's interpretation of the German films of E. A. Dupont – both articles in the second volume – illustrate the potential that a spatial analysis offers to cultural historians.

Both volumes offer a great variety of examples to the fruitful potential of the spatial perspective for modern Jewish history. Future works might refer more to transnational perspectives (which can be especially relevant for the Jewish diasporic experience), rethink fundamental questions in Jewish history and perhaps even offer new narratives of the modern Jewish experience which will be based on the spatial perspective.

HistLit 2018-2-084 / Guy Miron über Heintert, Felix; Gromova, Alina; Voigt, Sebastian (Hrsg.): *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context*. Berlin 2015, in: H-Soz-Kult 15.05.2018.

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