

Inscribing Jewish Community Politics into Space: A Workshop Marking the 70th Anniversary of the Death of Marcus Ehrenpreis (1869-1951)

June 3rd 2021, 6pm-8pm (CET)
University of Vienna/University of Gothenburg
On Zoom

Organisers:

Dr Fani Gargova (Department of Art History, University of Vienna)

Dr Maja Hultman (Centre for European Research/Department of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg)

Moderator: Dr des Mirjam Wilhelm (Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies)

Marcus Ehrenpreis was a crucial figure in shaping Jewish spaces across Europe during the first half of the 20th century. He was born in the Habsburg Galician town of Lviv in 1869 and educated in rabbinical and religious studies at Berlin's *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and through his employments he connected 'peripheral' communities in the Balkans and Sweden to the map of Jewish Europe. As chief rabbi of Bulgaria (1900-1914) and Stockholm (1914-1948), he not only determined religious practices and their spatial manifestations, but also had a lasting impact on cultural, political, and social aspects of local Jewish life. The communities he oversaw were diverse in ethnic, ideological, and religious outlook, dimensions that were articulated in hierarchical tones in community politics and internal conflicts. Thus, during his 55 years as rabbi, Marcus Ehrenpreis' ideas on the religious and cultural aspects of Jewish identity were challenged by his encounters with Jewish groups of Sephardi and/or Eastern European background, both in Sofia and Stockholm, but also during his travels across Europe.

The European Jewish world inhabited by Marcus Ehrenpreis was similarly caught up in kaleidoscopic trends. Haskalah and the Reform movement continued to guide many communities, oftentimes defined against an imaginary 'Ostjudentum'. A romanticised Orientalism shaped Jewish spaces in the public urban landscape, while Jews from the Balkans, Northern Africa or the Levant as formerly Ottoman subjects, or Eastern Europe, sometimes with an affiliation to Orthodox Judaism, were simultaneously excluded from partaking in or shaping official Jewish leadership. At the same time, Zionism became a strong Jewish political movement against the backdrop of rising European antisemitism.

Viewing Marcus Ehrenpreis as an embodiment of the complexities and struggles of Jewish Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, this workshop aims to situate his role in, impact on and ideas of the communities in Sofia and Stockholm within a transnational European context. Marcus Ehrenpreis, as a Jewish religious and cultural leader, was at the forefront of negotiating the dialectics between Reform and Orthodox Judaism, between Central and Western hegemony over 'peripheral' communities, and between the frictions of ethnic, religious, and political minorities and their relationship to community leadership.

We will build on the spatial dimension as a window into the physical manifestation of such internal power relations. Therefore, in this workshop, Marcus Ehrenpreis becomes the entry point to understanding the preconditions, processes, and dynamics of the inscription of Jewish community politics into urban space. What role did internal discourses and differences play in shaping spaces of 'Jewishness' and/or Jewish difference? How did Jewish religious leaders relate to the ethnic, religious and political minorities within their communities? In what terms were those minorities constructed? How did the power relationship become apparent in the

urban landscape? And can we find similarities across such disparate European capitals as Sofia and Stockholm?

This event is planned as an online workshop centering on a public group discussion. For this, we invite participants with expertise on the life and work of Marcus Ehrenpreis, as well as scholars with research interests in transnational histories, cultural transfers, community power politics, religious discourses, ethnic diversity and/or spatial analysis in relation to Jewish life in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries.

To spur discussion, the workshop will be started off by three expert lightning talks followed by general discussion.

Programme:

6:00-6:10 pm

Mirjam Wilhelm: Welcome

6:10-6:25 pm

Fani Gargova: Ehrenpreis' Efforts in 'Uniting' the Diverse Jewish Community of Sofia

6:25-6:40 pm

Andreas Schein: A Jewish Community without Eastern European Jews? Ehrenpreis' Sermons in Stockholm

6:40-6:55 pm

Maja Hultman: Ehrenpreis and Stockholm's Orthodox Diversity – Spaces of Power, Relations and Conflicts

6:55-8:00 pm

General Discussion and Final Remarks

Please register for the workshop before May 20, 2021:

<https://univienne.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0kcuygqDguHNE0JJyzYLkjWnSWJzU1xdmt>

After registration, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the workshop. Should questions arise, please contact fani.gargova@univie.ac.at.



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