German remembrance? Jewish museums in Germany

The example of the Jewish Museum Göppingen

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Introduction

The *Jewish Museum Göppingen* in the Göppingen district of Jebenhausen exhibits the history of the local Jewish community in a former church, which is a surprising location for a Jewish museum. Today's city museum presents a lovingly assembled collection that illustrates both the history of the Jewish community in the region until 1945 and their coexistence with their Christian neighbors. The Jewish Museum Göppingen is, at least thematically, the type of Jewish museum that wants to contribute to interreligious understanding and has an exposed position in Germany – not least against the background of the *Shoa* (Hebrew for Holocast).

Like many Jewish museums that have been established in Germany since the 1970s, the Jewish Museum Göppingen has been designed by regional town historians with the aim of conveying historical knowledge about the region and keeping alive the memory of the local Jewish heritage. Based on this observation, the study takes a closer look at the narrative that the Jewish Museum Göppingen chose to adopt and to the accompanying museum educational measures and goals. Delving into the museum's ideological narrative will expose the ways the common cultural heritage of Christians and Jews is combined, the ways the museum deals with the remaining mobile heritage, and the ways the museum acts as an agent and a mediator of historical narratives of the interwoven local history. The extent in which the exhibition in Jebenhausen can make the idea of a shared heritage fruitful can contribute to the expanding knowledge regarding the mediation and presentation of narratives that work against racism and antisemitism.

Museums as cultural heritage agencies

As Cole and Knowles note, human experiences and knowledge are mostly shaped by "institutional, structural expressions of community and society" (2001, p. 22), which

are mediated through primary and secondary educational institutions. Museums are such secondary educational institutions that house mobile cultural heritage and make it accessible in their exhibits. The exhibits on display are interpreted as witnesses of a meaningful past, which is still relevant for the present of the visitors as well as, possibly, for their future, and therefore should be known by them.

As secondary educational institutions, museums can be seen as places of teaching and learning that convey factual knowledge but also collective values. The museums make the past visible as history (Rüsen 2013), initiate processes of reflection, and invite dialogue (Sternfeld 2018). As semiotic media, exhibitions also possess the possibility to reinforce or weaken social narratives, to hand down hegemonic conventions, or to counter historical self-images. Critical museology in particular emphasizes the latter (Groschwitz 2017). Hochreiter even defines museums in this context as "centers of definitional power" (Hochreiter 2015, p. 54).[1]

At the same time, museum work is characterized by scientific narratives. Insights are gained with the help of empirical methods by viewing contextualized artifacts (Hochreiter 2015). The credibility of the institution is thereby based both on the scientific working methods of the experts, and on the authoritative position of the museum itself, which is an educational institution. However, Peter Van Mensch points out that the knowledge conveyed here is also a product of institutional logic:

> [E]very cultural institution puts a well-defined, dominant meaning on objects by its way of selecting and presenting. [They] can be considered factories in which authorized meanings, without much discussion or reflection, are constantly produced (2019, p. 200).

For a long time, museums did not openly state this connection between methodology and authority in their generation and production of meaning in knowledge (Groschwitz 2017). Only with the "reflexive turn" in the early 2000s did this come into view. Museums as agencies of knowledge were now perceived in relation to the respective prevailing social system (Sternfeld 2018). The consequences of this "reflexive turn" were, on the one hand, more transparency in museum work (by disclosing institutional methods and attitudes). On the other hand, there has been an increased integration of the visitor's interpretation processes (with different cultural experiences) and an intensification of the dialogue structure. To this end, museums increasingly employed pedagogical practices designed to enable active participation in constructions of meaning (Offe 2000). This turn in the educational and mediation work of museums is of particular importance for Jewish museums in the Diaspora.

1 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. German sources and literature are marked as such in the bibliography.

The museumization of German Jewish culture

The first collections of Judaica in Germany emerged at the beginning of the 19th century in the course of the revaluation of (religious) traditions and their redefinition as cultural Jewish heritage in the Diaspora (Loewy 2017). Towards the end of the 19th century, some of these collections were put on public display. Jewish departments already existed in larger German museums (Offe 2000). The first independent Jewish museum was founded in Vienna in 1895, followed by the *Museum of Jewish Antiquities* in Frankfurt on the Main in 1922, the first museum of its kind in Germany. Housed in the former banking house of the Rothschild family, it presented mainly Jewish cult objects. Only a few days before the *Machtergreifung* (German for Seizure of power) in January 1933, a Jewish museum was opened in Berlin next to the New Synagogue, which exhibited Jewish modern art as well as arts and crafts and historical testimonies.

In the course of the November pogroms, SA and SS men destroyed the Museum of Jewish Antiquities in Frankfurt, as well as a large part of its collection of some 18,000 objects (Wiesner 2022). The Gestapo closed the Berlin Museum on November 10, 1938, and confiscated its inventory. The art collection is now partly in Los Angeles and in Jerusalem (see Other Sources: No. 5). With National Socialism, all attempts in the German Reich to make Jewish heritage visible with the help of the institution of the museum came to a brutal and widespread end. Only in the late 1970s was a new attempt made to actively integrate Jewish culture into the German cultural memory. Most of the museums founded in the course of this new culture of remembrance functioned as places of remembrance for non-Jews after the *Shoa* and were located in places where Jewish life no longer existed. Former synagogues also fulfilled the task of remembrance without active descendants. Some of them were rehabilitated and used as historical witnesses, memorials or places of remembrance and encounter (Pellengahr 2017).

In the course of this revitalizing culture of remembrance of German Jewry, not only were the large Jewish museums of the prewar period reestablished (such as the ones in Frankfurt and Berlin), but new museums were also founded, sometimes with the active participation of the Jewish community, such as in Munich. In addition, many small museums sprang up in the German provinces where Jews had previously lived. They focused on the local history of Jewish life in their community and attempted to illustrate it with ethnographic artifacts relating to economic and social history. Typical objects of these museums were (and still are) Judaica and Hebraica, but sometimes also works of art by artists of Jewish origin (Offe 2000).

Another feature of these new museums and places of remembrance was that Jewish history was told by curators who were usually not of Jewish origin or faith, but German historians. They usually presented the history of a Jewish minority to a non-Jewish majority. This constellation implied that experts "from the outside" told

a story that included cultural and religious dimensions that were not part of their own socialization; this trend could generate ambivalences (Loewy 2017). What can be seen as equally problematic today is that these curators were supposed to make Jewish life visible primarily to people who had little or no prior knowledge of Jewish customs, culture, and history. This circumstance, described by Sabine Offe as "paradoxical" (2000, p. 95), held the danger of an "exoticization" of Jews and of Jewish life in Germany, as well as that of an unconscious (re)production of old stereotypes (2000, p. 101).[2]

For this reason, Offe pleads for a sensitization and for a reorientation of Jewish museums as "places of engagement with present, real Jewish life, not only as places of commemoration of the dead" (2000, p. 97). In her analysis of Jewish museums and their exhibitions, she notes that the "memory relationship" (Offe 2000, p. 39) is often in the foreground. Based on this observation she suggests that Jewish collections should fulfill two central goals: first, to create a broader picture and deeper understanding of Jewish history and identity, and, second, to deconstruct a false and often even antisemitic image of Jews and Jewish history that is embedded in the minds of visitors (Offe 2000). Jewish museums that understand themselves and perform their task in this way can function as intellectual and transnational centers (Loewy 2017) and make an active contribution to combating racism and antisemitism (Offe 2000).

The Jewish Museum Göppingen

The Jewish Museum Göppingen is one of those regional museums that were established as places of remembrance and commemoration of a Jewish community. Jews lived in Jebenhausen from the 16th to the 20th century, but not during the *Shoa*. At that time, the community had already moved to Göppingen as a nearby trade and transport hub.

Today, the museum is administered by the city of Göppingen, together with three other museums and the city archives (see Other Sources: No. 2). It employs a few staff members; however, most tours are conducted by local volunteers who participate in the *Lauchheimer House Association – Preservation and promotion of the Jewish cultural heritage of Jebenhausen e.V.* Founded in 1985 as the Jewish Museum Göppingen, the permanent exhibition which opened in 1992 and was revised in 2017 now displays local Jewish heritage in a former Lutheran church.

2 The *Central Council of Jews in Germany* has also recognized this problem. In order to get to know current Jewish life in Germany at first hand, it has initiated the *Meet a Jew* project, an encounter project in which Jewish volunteers are placed in institutions interested in an exchange. In this way, many authentic voices have their say (see Other Sources: No. 4).

Information about the history of the Jews in Jebenhausen and Göppingen can be found in an accompanying publication of the Göppingen Municipal Archives. According to this, the barons of Liebenstein[3] and representatives of the Jewish community signed a letter of protection on July 7, 1777, which sealed the foundation of a Jewish community in Jebenhausen (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992, p. 18). The Jewish settlement was established next to the Christian village, where it coexisted peacefully for more than 130 years. The fact that the two populations did not mix was due to legal regulations as well as religion and different value systems. For example, the Jewish merchants and peddlers had a different, more urban, and cosmopolitan lifestyle than the Christian farmers and craftsmen (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992, p. 22). However, the Jewish community dwindled in the course of the 19th century and especially in its second half, when emigration to North America or settling as textile manufacturers in the nearby larger Göppingen offered Jews better options for their lifestyle (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992, p. 30). Thus, it came about that the Jebenhausen community moved in its entirety to Göppingen and dissolved in 1899. Their departure led to a memorable gift in 1905: when the local Jewish community had its synagogue demolished, it donated its ceiling chandelier and pews to the Lutheran parish. There, both served well until the church was abandoned in 1966 in favor of a new building for the Lutheran congregation. Today, the former church (as a symbol of Christian religion) and the interior of the synagogue (as a symbol of Jewish religion) are united in the museum's narrative of Christian-Jewish coexistence and the two communities' shared heritage.

This narrative finds its beginning when looking at the exterior façade. Several loose metal bars are attached to it, which from a certain angle give the impression of representing a destroyed Star of David.[4] This impression is artistically intentional and supports the conception of the museum. When the museum was first established, it was a goal of the curatorial team around city archivist Karlheinz Rueß[5] to emphasize and convey the factor of the peaceful coexistence of a Christian-Jewish heritage in Jebenhausen (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992). In this way, the narrative of a shared cultural heritage was to be underlined. Consequently, the exhibition aimed to present Jewish life as an integral part of Jebenhausen's town history rather than simply an epochal period.

3 The Barons of Liebenstein belong to the oldest noble families in Swabia. For more information, see: the Ludwigsburg State Archives (see Other Sources: No. 1).

4 According to curator Dr. Karlheinz Rueß, the artwork, a battered Star of David, is meant to symbolize how Judaism and Christianity are connected – "for better or for worse" (2020).

5 Dr. Karl-Heinz Rueß, a historian, is the initiator and founder of the museum. He headed the City Archives and Museums of the City of Göppingen from 1983 to 2020. His successor Dr. Dominik Sieber took office in May 2020.

Methods

The following analyses of the conception behind the permanent exhibition and the mediation concerns of the Jewish Museum Göppingen was carried out with the help of a methodological triangle: document analysis, three expert interviews, and an accompanied tour of the exhibition (participant observation) were conducted.

For the document analysis, the author drew on publications that the museum itself had published, namely catalogs on the permanent exhibition. In the selection of experts, the focus was placed on the curators and the designer. The aim was to obtain various differentiated perspectives on the part of the exhibition's authors. The first interview was conducted with former museum director Dr. Karl-Heinz Rueß. The historian is not only the founder of the museum, but also its idea man. He has intensively researched the local history of the Jewish community and built from scratch the collection that can be seen in the museum today.[6] The second interview was conducted with Dr. Dominik Gerd Sieber, Dr. Rueß's successor and current museum director. The questions he was asked were related to aspects of outreach and organization.[7] In addition, the museum's designer, Kurt Ranger of Ranger Design, was chosen for an interview.[8] He has accompanied the development of the museum since 1992 and designed both permanent exhibitions together with the curators. Design is important to the research question from an educational-strategy perspective, so the goals of the aesthetic design were the focus here. The length of the guided interviews ranged from 55 to 100 minutes. All three interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews and recorded in German. Particularly relevant aspects were transcribed by the author. Subsequently, the given information was compared and supplemented by the method of participant observation, in which the author took an accompanied tour of the exhibition on site and thus slipped into the role of the visitor.

6 Interview with Karl-Heinz Rueß, former director of the Jewish Museum Göppingen, December 11, 2020 (telephone conversation/tape). Henceforth cited as Rueß 2020.

7 Interview with Dominik Gert Sieber, Director of the Jewish Museum Göppingen December 2, 2020, (in person/tape). Henceforth cited as Sieber 2020.

8 Interview with Kurt Ranger, owner of Kurt Ranger Design Stuttgart, December 15, 2020 (telephone conversation/tape). Henceforth cited as Ranger 2020.

The permanent exhibition: Exhibits, conception, and design

In the following, the central elements of the exhibition at the Jewish Museum Göppingen will be outlined: collection, narrative, and exhibition design. On the basis of this information, it will then be examined whether the curatorial idea of a shared cultural heritage is accessible to visitors on site.

a) Exhibits: Like many of the Jewish museums founded after 1945, Jebenhausen does not have its own collection on Jewish town history. When it was founded, the museum possessed exactly five exhibits: two rare inn signs from Jewish inns, including that of the oldest Jewish inn *König David* (around 1800), the two ceiling chandeliers and a table from the former Jebenhausen synagogue (Rueß 2020). In addition, there were various gravestones for the Liebenstein family already present in the church. In order to be able to exhibit Jewish life, objects from other areas were consequently needed. The curatorial team found what they were looking for in a *genizah*[9] of the former Freudental synagogue, which had been discovered during the synagogue's renovation; they came to Jebenhausen on loan. A few objects were acquired in the art market. In addition, there were donations from the descendants of the former Jewish community, who personally agreed to support the museum project (ibid).[10] In this way, mainly photos and documents on the town's history came into the possession of the museum.

b) Conception: The curators proceeded in a similar way in the development of the museum narrative (ibid). On the one hand, it was a matter of researching the history of Jebenhausen, but on the other hand, it was also a matter of relating personal fates and biographies to this history. An indispensable source for the former turned out to be the book *Geschichte der Juden in Jebenhausen und Göppingen* (History of the Jews in Jebenhausen and Göppingen) (1927) by the local rabbi Dr. Aron Tänzer (1871–1937) who had researched the community at the turn of the century (Tänzer [1927] 1988).

Although almost all copies of his book had been destroyed during the Nazi era, some were saved and thus knowledge about the Jewish neighborhoods and communities was preserved; today the book contributes significantly to research on local heritage (Rueß 2020). The source was supplemented by scientific research in the archives and personal access in the sense of an oral history. The cooperation at eye level with the descendants of former Jewish citizens promoted the willingness to share family memories and personal possessions and to contribute to a historical

9 The word *geniza* comes from Hebrew and refers to a storage room in Jewish synagogues. Since worn-out religious items, such as language books or papers, may not be thrown away for religious reasons, they must be kept or buried in cemeteries (*gniza*). Since *gnizas* are often found in hidden places, some survived the Nazi era and serve as important testimonies.

10 The museum publication of 1992 refers to them in its acknowledgement (Göppingen Municipal Archive 1992, p. 6).

narrative "from below". In addition to contemporary witnesses and their descendants, the narratives of the Württemberg state rabbi Joel Berger (b. 1937) were an important source for conveying Jewish life in Württemberg (ibid).

c) Design: Together with a design office, basic guidelines were developed for the first exhibition, and six thematic areas were defined. The revised 2017 presentation introduced a visual motif (bright white and somber black) in addition to the thematic tour, in a color scheme intended to divide individual eras and direct the visitor's gaze; the color contrasts finally break in the person of Dr. Aron Tänzer to symbolize that Jewish and German identities are not mutually exclusive; Tänzer was both Jewish and patriotic German (Ranger 2020). Apart from this, the design relies on various media of information, including explanatory texts, quotations, original objects and documents, large-scale images, models, films, and interactive stations. As an example, there is a touch-screen installation that makes it possible to locate the homes of Jews in Göppingen. In this way, the integration of Jewish life into a Christian environment is to be made directly tangible, and the narrative of a shared heritage is to be supported (ibid).

Accompanied tour of the exhibition

The museum has two floors, which allow organizing the presentation chronologically and thematically. (Fig.1) A timeline divides the Jewish life of the community into two main periods: before the Holocaust, and during and after the Holocaust. The exhibition tour focuses on six central themes. The first section deals with Jewish culture, the second with the history of the Jews in Jebenhausen, the third with the history of the Jews in Göppingen, the fourth with the biographies of outstanding personalities of the town, and the fifth with the atrocities committed during the National Socialist era. The last section focuses on coming to terms with the consequences of the Nazi era and on issues of racism and antisemitism.

When the visitor enters the museum, he/she is first led to a large altar with the Liebenstein coat of arms. This exhibit, set into the church wall, provides a special, perhaps even sublime moment. The visitor begins his/her tour on the left side of the church with an introduction to Jewish culture and religion, festivals, customs, and traditions. This aspect is illustrated by selected sample exhibits and pictures of the former community. This area is intended to give an impression of the religious life of Jews in the past and present. Other, non-religious interpretations of Judaism are not presented.

Fig. 1: View into the exhibition room. In the center the candelabra of the former Jebenhausen synagogue (Photo: Rose Hajdu, Stuttgart)

Fig. 2: Model of the Göppingen synagogue inaugurated in 1881. It was destroyed during the pogrom night on November 10, 1938 (Photo: Rose Hajdu, Stuttgart).

In the second section, the visitor learns details about the founding of the Jewish community in Jebenhausen. From now on, the tour is structured chronologically: it shows the life of the community since the year 1777, the aforementioned signing of the letter of protection and the influx of the first Jewish families to the Jebenhausen estate. The first synagogue was built in 1803. It is also important to note that the communities were not assimilated, but maintained parallel lifestyles within the village. A short film summarizes the section with the exhibit of the *King David* inn sign from this period. The sign features a harp-playing king. In combination with the Star of David, it serves as a key visual for the Jewish Museum Göppingen today.

With the acceptance of citizenship by the Israelite Law of 1828, the Jews were given equal legal status with the rest of the German population, so that they were allowed to establish factories from that time on. This law was decisive for the community's move to the larger town of Göppingen, where the Jews were given the right to build their own synagogue, inaugurated in 1881. (Fig. 2) In the following third section, the exhibition focuses on the history of the Jewish community in Göppingen, describing Jewish-Christian coexistence and everyday life. Historical photos show Jewish residents of the town in their activities, in club life or in school. Visitors can also find in this section some brief references to the Jewish-born industrialists who drove the progress of the city.

On the second floor of the exhibition, the narrative changes. The fourth section, as a small subsection, focuses on the lives of German Jews from Jebenhausen. It highlights the work of Dr. Aron Tänzer, who was an important witness not only to the history of the town but also to German-Jewish relations. In Göppingen, Tänzer was a respected citizen who contributed much to the life of the town, for example by opening the first library. Out of patriotism, he changed his first name to "Arno" and volunteered for military service at the outbreak of World War I in order to "take an active part in the great struggle of the German people for existence and progress" (Diary 1915, exhibition plaque). Tänzer was "virtually the prototype of a German patriot with a Jewish background" (Ranger 2020). After the German defeat, he, like many other Jews, faced antisemitic slander; likewise, he was denied awards for outstanding service in the German military. Tänzer died unnoticed by the public in February 1937, and his children survived Nazi persecution. His biography shows the impact on the local Jewish community of the antisemitic propaganda that paved the way for National Socialism.

Tänzer's biography leads over into the fifth section, the history of National Socialism, whose ideology from its beginnings to the end of the Second World War in 1945 is explained on the basis of Göppingen's local history, such as the confrontation in the so-called *Walfischkeller*.[11] The increase in antisemitic attitudes is documented

11 During the so-called "Battle of the Walfischkeller" between Communists and National Socialists, the NSDAP made its first appearance in Baden-Württemberg. It is a brutal, armed,

by the call to boycott Jewish stores in 1933 and the destruction of the local synagogue on *Reichspogromnacht* in 1938. The exhibition then tells of the deportation of Jews to a concentration camp in Riga. Since then, a Jewish community has never again settled in Göppingen. In this section, the exhibition works mainly with photographs and material testimonies of the time (such as the Yellow Star). Film recordings of the Auerbacher family show their everyday life in Göppingen and the family's later escape to the United States.

The sixth and last part of the exhibition deals with the legal and social reappraisal of National Socialism after 1945. In the context of Göppingen's town history, the case of the local pharmacist Viktor Capesius, who turned out to be a former SS lieutenant general, is highlighted. Capesius was charged in the first Auschwitz trial in 1965 as a war criminal for aiding and abetting murder in the Dachau and Auschwitz concentration camps. In addition, there is information on reparations and civic engagement that promoted Nazi ideology in the city. Songwriter Peter Rohland, known for his arrangements of Yiddish songs, is featured in this section of the exhibition. The exhibition concludes with a video sequence showing Inge Auerbacher, as a Holocaust survivor, in a discussion with a school class in which she points to antisemitism and racism as a current problem in society.

Overall, the exhibition offers a comprehensive overview of Jewish history on a local and national level. Through the approach of a "history from below", individual fates become transparent, enabling individual comprehension. In this way, the exhibition also avoids the danger of exoticization and "Othering" outlined above. Furthermore, it repeatedly emphasizes the commonalities of Judaism and Christianity, thus realizing its approach and its intention to illustrate a shared heritage. By pointing out current dangers in its outlook, it offers possibilities for a museum pedagogical discourse on racism and antisemitism.

Place of dialogue? Museum, mediation and antisemitism

Half of the visitors in Jebenhausen are currently school-age children from the region.[12] This raises the question of didactic and educational intentions. At the same time, the museum sees itself not only as a place of remembrance and history, but also as a lively venue for panel discussions, lectures, talks, and educational events in the community (Sieber 2020).

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and violent group of thugs. Several people were injured during the planned clash with the labor movement. The day of the battle was later glorified and henceforth celebrated as the founding day of the Göppingen NSDAP (Haas 2012).

12 According to museum director Dr. Dominik Sieber, the museum had 2,800 visitors in 2019, compared to about 1,800 visitors in 2015 (Sieber 2020).

Museal mediation, it can be said, aims to establish connections between past, present and future and to consider learning from history with the help of material culture as a possibility for coping with the present. This form of extracurricular learning is also presented in the context model, where it is understood as a kind of dialogue between the individual and the environment (Falk and Dierking 2018). Such learning offers the opportunity to acquire and reflect on knowledge. Klare and Sturm also point out that this is a basic pedagogical prerequisite for questioning ideologies and historical myths (Klare and Sturm 2017). They emphasize the importance of offering visitors a space for free discussion, exposing them to critical pedagogy, and thus paving the way for a possible change of perspective on issues and attitudes. Furthermore, subject-oriented museum pedagogy can help memories become relevant, reflexive, and political (Scherr 2010; Giesecke and Welzer 2012). Thus, provoking contradiction and conflict in historical observation can also lead to critical reflection on past and present ideologies, such as those represented by antisemitism or racism (Meier and Werner 2020).

As a place of extracurricular education, the museum has an educational mission. As Kößler and Mende explain, this mission is primarily historical, but also includes aspects of cultural and political education (Kößler and Mende 2017). The question therefore arises whether the concept of the Jewish Museum Göppingen is also suitable as an extracurricular place of learning – for example, to combat current forms of antisemitism. The 2011 antisemitism report by the Federal Ministry of the Interior already pointed out the urgency of the issue. The report suggested developing pedagogical and didactic methods to show the connection between historical events and current antisemitic forms (BMI 2011).

a) Education and factual knowledge: In Jebenhausen, Karlheinz Rueß emphasizes the importance of factual knowledge in the fight against antisemitism. To counter it, the museum must present facts and invite reflection on racist ideas in history. In his view, exhibitions that convey knowledge also have the power to change attitudes (Rueß 2020). In Jebenhausen, this is to be done through the narrative of a shared heritage – from the presentation of the former conditions of coexistence in Jebenhausen to the integration of the Jews in Göppingen. In this way, ethnic "Othering", which sees Jews and Germans as two mutually exclusive groups, is on the one hand historically classified, and on the other hand refuted as a fallacy.

b) Substitution of personal experience: Since many visitors lack everyday contact with Jewish people or communities, many Jewish museums to this day provide a substitute for this direct experience with Judaism in many places. In a Jewish museum, such personal experiences should be at least partially possible. Thus, the curator sees the museum as a place of active encounter that makes the narrative of a shared heritage (the Jewish citizens were primarily German) vivid and tangible. Here, oral history with contemporary witnesses in the exhibition makes just as great a contribution as the invitation of (Jewish) guests in the educational program.

c) Political education: In order to contribute to the active fight against antisemitism, the invalidation of religious prejudices is just as relevant as that of ethnobiological and geopolitical stereotypes. According to Karlheinz Rueß, the Jebenhausen Museum can only make a small contribution to interreligious dialogue.[13] His successor, Dominik Sieber, notes the great responsibility of Jewish museums that have arisen in the course of a dialogic culture of remembrance as places of commemoration and enlightenment. However, he also sees that it is a difficult pedagogical undertaking to convey morals and ethics. It is not to be expected that visitors will be affected after the visit.

d) Place of dialogue: Through interactive offerings in the exhibition and its outreach program, the museum aims to promote dialogue. This function is underlined by exhibition designer Kurt Ranger, who sees the museum as an educational institution "where you can think about the future" (Ranger 2020). The extent to which the Jewish Museum Göppingen can stimulate discussion about the pitfalls of modern racism and antisemitism cannot be conclusively ascertained by the interviews. Cooperation with schools plays a major role here. However, it is questionable whether the museum can motivate those who position themselves ideologically in the field of antisemitism to engage in dialogue.

Conclusion: Shared or difficult heritage?

The Jewish Museum Göppingen uses various curatorial practices to realize the concept of a shared cultural heritage. This seems to be an adequate way to sensitize visitors for the history, but also for the lived present. In doing so, the museum trusts in the possibility of using the concept of a shared cultural heritage to develop a multiperspective approach and also to historically debunk racist prejudices.

Between 1985 and 1992, the Museum conducted intensive research and cooperation with the city's former Jewish community and with their descendants. The main narrative of the exhibition is based on this collaboration; it takes into account the perspective of the victims as well as the socio-political impact on their overall life stories. Shared heritage will be expressed through individual biographies, objects, oral histories, written books, public lectures, and events that keep the heritage alive and vivid. Thus, the Jewish Museum Göppingen has become not only a place of German-Jewish history, but also of German-Jewish cooperation. On this level, shared

13 "In the museum, we can rather ask questions or initiate a discussion; we cannot hand out recipes or attitudes that everyone has to develop for themselves. […] It's tedious, but there is no other way to approach prejudice and racist thinking. It's not a quick way, but it could be a starting point" (Rueß 2020).

heritage is understood as a mission to learn from history for a more peaceful future. However, even if the shared Jewish-German heritage can be confirmed from a historical point of view, the future is uncertain, as there is no longer an active Jewish community locally.

The question of the extent to which the narrative of a shared heritage can also be used to prevent antisemitism cannot be answered conclusively. But the fact that the museum takes the non-negotiable position that Jews were just as much Germans as their Christian fellow citizens at every point in history until the fall of National Socialism can be used for educational work. In this way, visitors have the opportunity to learn about other perspectives and to broaden their own (Klare and Sturm 2017; Falk and Dierking 2018). In this way, the approach of a "history from below" also underlines the pedagogical intention of democratic learning from the past. All in all, it can be said that, in the case of the Jewish Museum Göppingen, the concept of a shared heritage seeks to invalidate polarizations and works toward the prevention of antisemitism.

So, is the concept of a shared heritage also suitable for conclusions that lead to political positioning? This initial question can be answered in the affirmative, albeit with the qualifications made above. Insights from historical catastrophes such as the Holocaust can help to address the current antisemitism and racism of the multicultural migration society. However, the role of the historical museum as an extracurricular place of learning should not be overestimated. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the reappraisal of the past provides knowledge that is important for democratic educational work. Thus, in 2011, the *Stolpersteine* (stumbling blocks) initiative, which luminously lays stones in front of houses where Jews used to live, was also started in Göppingen.[14] In addition, a memorial trail was established in Jebenhausen that leads through nine Jewish stations in the community (including the site of the former synagogue). These activities emanating from the museums have made Jewish life more visible to the public and keep the memory of the Jewish community alive. In this sense, the concept of a shared heritage certainly contributes to the peace work of the present.

14 *Stolpersteine* is a European art project by the artist Gunter Demnig, who wants to commemorate the victims of National Socialism by laying golden paving stones at former Jewish places of residence (see Other Sources: No. 3).

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