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Public History oltre lo Stato: presentare il passato Yiddish nell'Europa contemporanea

di Gerben Zaagsma

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Public history beyond the state:

Presenting the Yiddish past in contemporary Europe¹

Introduction

In the introduction to a recent publication on public history and National Socialism in Germany, Frank Bösch and Constantin Goschler propose a definition of public history that moves away from a rigid academic/non-academic dichotomy. First of all, they aim to avoid looking at non-academic representations of history as mere disseminations of academic knowledge, but propose to evaluate them on their own merits and question what original contribution they make to reconstructing the past. Secondly, they focus attention on who is reconstructing the past in what ways, and question the extent to which one can distinguish between professional historians and other actors when history 'goes public'.²

This is a particularly fruitful perspective when dealing with Europe's 'Yiddish past' and the question of how it is presented, commemorated, engaged with and re-enacted in contemporary Europe. The ways in which Yiddish, its culture and its speakers, are inscribed in representations of Jewish history in Europe today demonstrates that definitions of public history, which predominantly focus on how professional historians take history to a broader non-academic public, are insufficient, especially when dealing with relatively marginal topics. Indeed, it is precisely the interaction between various types of what, for the sake of argument, could be called public history practitioners that characterises this case study, as well as the relative non-centrality of academically mediated knowledge.

The case of Yiddish in Europe also highlights the important role of the state in driving public history activities, particularly because of its sponsorship of the heritage sector.³ As a non-territorial, transnational, language and culture, Yiddish did and does not belong to any particular state and that simple fact has obvious consequences for confronting the Yiddish past in Europe: after all, who takes responsibility for saving that past when it does not exclusively belong to one country?⁴ Yet, as Dovid Katz once stated, Yiddish is a quintessentially European language, "European more than anything else quite simply because it has thrived across the time and space of medieval and modern Europe".⁵ It was also in Europe that 75% of the world's Yiddish speakers perished. At the same time, European developments in the past two decades have to a large extent created the context in which Europe's Yiddish past is now slowly becoming more visible.

When hearing the word 'Yiddish' most people will likely think of music as it was the 'klezmer revival', which began in the United States in the mid 1970s and hit Europe in the 1980s, that brought non-Jewish audiences in contact with Yiddish culture. Resurrecting a seemingly forgotten musical tradition, contemporary self-styled *klezmerim* made Jewish folk music and Yiddish song an established part of the world music landscape. The klezmer revival fuelled the increase in the number of Yiddish language summer courses in the 1990s in Europe that nowadays attract non-academics and academics alike. These developments suggest a growing public interest in Yiddish culture. Yet what is often labelled as a 'Yiddish revival' is in reality a multi-faceted phenomenon that has little to do with a revival in the true sense of the word.⁶ And all too often there is a tendency, as Yitskhok Niborski has put it, „to reduce the Yiddish heritage merely to its musical aspect and to some scraps of folklore”.⁷

This article aims to qualify the engagement with Yiddish, its culture and speakers, outside academic settings in contemporary Europe. How is this integral part of Europe's Jewish history represented and in what institutional and non-institutional settings? What role does the state play in different countries and how does 'Europe' come into the picture? And, given the

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relatively small number of academics and heritage professionals that know Yiddish, who is involved? As space is limited, and the scope of the topic considerable, my analysis will not be exhaustive. Rather, my purpose is to provide a framework that could form the basis for a more wide-ranging investigation and highlight some basic questions that such an analysis will have to address, also in relation to more general themes in public history.

Yiddish in Europe in historical perspective

Once the mother tongue of an estimated 8 million European Jews, Yiddish has been a part of the European Jewish landscape for several centuries. Nevertheless it is difficult to speak about Yiddish in Europe in general. To begin with, Yiddish as we now understand it is actually Eastern Yiddish, which developed out of its Western variant as Ashkenazic Jews began to migrate eastward in the late middle ages. In the process it incorporated both grammatical and lexicographical elements from neighbouring Slavic languages. Western Yiddish as spoken in Germany, the Netherlands and France (notably the Alsace region) disappeared almost completely as a vernacular in the 18th–19th centuries. Proponents of the *Haskalah*, or Jewish Enlightenment, sought to eradicate the use of what they saw as a corrupt *jargon* while government policies aimed at integrating Jewish minorities also played a significant role in its demise.⁸

Yiddish was the mother tongue of the majority of Jews in Eastern Europe (particularly Poland, Romania, the Baltic States and Russia) and continued to be so until WWII, despite the eastward expansion of the *Haskalah* from the late 18th century onwards, and opposition from the burgeoning Zionist movement that considered Hebrew to be the favoured language. For Zionists, Yiddish represented the language of the ghetto that had to be abandoned in favour of Hebrew, the language of the new Jew who would build up the future Jewish homeland. These struggles notwithstanding, a vibrant and rich Yiddish culture developed in Central and Eastern Europe.

Yiddish re-emerged in Western Europe with the influx of Jewish migrants, largely from 1880 onwards. Their numbers varied and their attachments to the language changed over time as a result of different trajectories of migration and subsequent processes of acculturation and integration. Consider for example France and Britain, the two biggest recipients of East European Jewish migrants in the early 20th century.⁹ Most Jewish migrants arrived in Britain before World War I and many of their children grew up speaking English. In France, 2/3 of Jewish migrants arrived after WWI and Yiddish was still a vibrant part of Jewish life in the interwar period. Such varying degrees of importance of Yiddish in daily life on the eve of WWII influenced Yiddish-related activities after the Holocaust as can be witnessed to this very day.

A majority of the world's Yiddish speakers vanished in the Holocaust and Yiddish all but disappeared from the European landscape. Continuing repression of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union, which had already begun in the late 1930s, prevented viable continuity. In other countries of the Eastern bloc, notably Poland until 1967 and Romania, Yiddish fared slightly better but the number of speakers was decimated and continued to dwindle.¹⁰ The same was true for Western Europe where most of the surviving speakers did not pass the language on to their children. This gradual demise of Yiddish in immigrant communities was a result, as well as a sign, of integration and acculturation of the 2nd and 3rd generations. Yiddish became the language of parents and grandparents, perhaps endowed with a romantic or exotic quality and often evocative of images of impoverished *shtetlekh*.¹¹ Moreover, in the wake of the Holocaust and the foundation of the State of Israel, Yiddish also acquired new associations as a language reminiscent of destruction and of a ghetto world that was no longer there.¹²

Presenting the Yiddish past: which Europe?

Contemporary interest in Yiddish culture is not an isolated phenomenon but part of the Jewish heritage 'boom' that has provoked much discussion in recent years.¹³ While possessing its own characteristics, the Jewish heritage 'boom' itself is part of a growing general preoccupation with heritage that dates back to the 1980s.¹⁴ The creation of a "Jewish space" in the 1990s, to use Diana Pinto's well-known phrase, initially centered on a "gradual integration of the Holocaust into each country's understanding of its national history and into twentieth-century history in general".¹⁵ In contemporary Europe, however, it has come to include almost every conceivable aspect of Jewish history and culture, as we witness a shift away from viewing European Jewish history exclusively through the lens of victimhood and destruction. The rewriting of national histories in post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe also brought about a reevaluation of the history of the region's Jewish populations. And a final factor, but of equal importance, is the reappraisal of the histories of minority groups in the post-colonial era in contemporary Europe and their integration in national historical narratives.

How does Yiddish fit into this picture of a Europe that has become increasingly preoccupied with cultural diversity and acutely aware of its Jewish past? Certainly, as the weight of the Holocaust diminishes, more space becomes available to reconstruct the full richness of pre-war Jewish life on the continent. Yet, because the number of Yiddish speakers relative to the total Jewish populations of the countries of Europe varied considerably, the inclusion of 'things Yiddish' in contemporary narratives of Jewish history differs from country to country. One distinction is nevertheless obvious: that between Western Europe, where Yiddish-speaking immigrants and their culture formed but a part of local Jewish populations, and Eastern Europe, where Jewish life was to a large extent Yiddish life.

An obvious first place to look for representations of Jewish migrants and Yiddish culture in Western Europe are Jewish museums. Until recently, Jewish museums in important European destinations for Jewish migrants, such as Paris, London and Berlin, paid scant attention to this story in their permanent exhibitions. The reasons for this situation can be traced back to pre-war times. Historically speaking, relations between Jewish migrants and existing Jewish communities in Western Europe were often tense as the latter felt their established position threatened by what they considered to be non-emancipated, and uncivilised, newcomers.¹⁶ Local Jewish elites and communities were keen to emphasise their successful integration and contribution to the societies in which they lived and Jewish museums reflected this self-image for a long time.¹⁷ Obviously, the experiences of Jewish migrants could not easily be fit into such narrative strategies. The often conflicting relationships between existing communities and migrants were thus effectively reproduced in Jewish museums.

In Britain this situation changed in 1983 when the Museum of the Jewish East End was created (later to be named London Museum of Jewish Life). It merged in 1995 with the Jewish Museum (1932) to become the Jewish Museum London. In the museum's new permanent exhibition (reopened in March 2010) the history of Jewish migration to Britain and migrant daily life are integral to its reconstruction of Britain's Jewish history. It also contains a section on the Yiddish theatre which evokes Yiddish cultural life in the capital. A special educational programme aims to teach children about the process of integration and acculturation of Jewish migrants in Britain. The London museum also offers walking tours in the Jewish East End. Of course one has to remember that Britain, at least since the days of the History Workshop movement which initiated public history practices in Great Britain, boasts a strong tradition of such public engagement with social history, as compared to continental Europe.

Indeed, the British example contrasts with the permanent exhibitions of the *Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme* in Paris and the *Jüdisches Museum Berlin* where information on the life and culture of Jewish migrants is much more minimal.¹⁸ The museum in Berlin is currently planning a major temporary exhibition on Jewish migrants in the city though, due in spring 2012. This exhibition is a good example of the diffusion of academic knowledge in public reconstructions of the past; it is one of the outcomes of the international academic research project *Charlottengrad and Scheunenviertel - East European Jewish Migrants in Berlin during the 1920/30s*, which is hosted at the Osteuropa Institut of the Freie Universität in Berlin.¹⁹

Such physical reconstructions of public history should be distinguished from the information and narratives belonging to the realm of *digital* public history that are offered on the websites of these museums. The websites of the London and Paris museums only offer very basic information on their permanent exhibitions, including some references to Jewish migration and Yiddish culture. But both websites also offer an online search facility for objects from the respective museum collections; in London these include several Yiddish items and migration-related materials, in Paris by contrast almost all 'Yiddish objects' relate to art and literature and thus shed little light on the social history of Jewish migration. Strikingly, the museum in Berlin does not mention migrants in the description of its permanent exhibition at all, though there is a page on *Ostjuden* in its online learning center.²⁰

Of course Europe's Yiddish past does not reveal itself in *Jewish* museums only. As part of a global trend, there is a growing number of migration institutions in Europe. Museums, organisations and documentary websites have been created in several European countries in recent years, which aim to integrate migrant experiences in the national narrative and raise public awareness.²¹ Probably the best known of these institutions in Europe is the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* in Paris, which is not only a museum but also offers extensive online documentation of the histories of various migrant groups in France, including Jews.²² The British website *Moving Here - 200 years of Migration to England* does not only narrate particular migration experiences but has also made a number of primary sources available online. These include various materials relating to Jewish migrants from the collections of the London and Manchester Jewish museums as well as the National Archives.²³

While museums, as well as the innovative online exhibitions they offer, constitute important narrative forms in the realm of digital public history, they are far from the only places where Yiddish culture can be encountered in Europe. A range of private institutions, as well as universities, offer Yiddish language classes and related cultural activities.²⁴ Importantly, they often blur the boundaries between academic and non-academic. The Institute for Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp in Belgium, for instance, offers Yiddish classes to regular university students as well as the general public. Another example is the *Maison de la Culture*

Yiddish - Bibliothèque Medem in Paris, without doubt the most successful non-academic institution dedicated to Yiddish culture in Europe.²⁵ The Center is run by a team composed of paid professionals and volunteers (with a mix of academic and non-academic backgrounds). It caters for the general public as well as academics and offers library & archival services, Yiddish classes and lectures on a variety of Yiddish-related topics, while also participating in an online library catalogue that indexes the holdings of several Parisian Jewish institutions.²⁶

Public history, of course, does not only take place in institutional settings. Walking tours and internet blogs or websites offer other modes of engagement. London is, again, an illustrative example. In 2003 the Jewish East End Celebration Society (JEECS) was created, among other things to “encourage the academic study of all aspects of the history of the area”.²⁷ Here is a rare example of how non-academic initiatives can provide impulses for academic research.²⁸ The JEECS publishes a magazine documenting the history of the Jewish East End, organises walks and cultural activities. Its website is rich in documentation and testifies to the changing nature of historical authorship in the age of the internet²⁹. The organisation is run by volunteers with academic as well as non-academic backgrounds while its ‘life president’ is a well-known historian.

Though the public history activities discussed above also can be found in Central and Eastern Europe, the situation there is very different as Jewish life was to a large extent Yiddish life. Any reconstruction of Jewish history therefore implies engaging with Yiddish culture.³⁰ Two related facts have an important bearing upon the ways in which Jewish heritage in the heartland of Yiddish is confronted. First, it was here that the Holocaust took place. And, secondly, most American Jews, and many Israelis, trace their ancestry to Eastern Europe. Many activities that promote Jewish history are therefore a response to the demands of Holocaust and/or ancestral tourism, and funding from abroad drives various public history initiatives such as educational centers, museums, and heritage tours.³¹

While Holocaust tourism is one exponent of engaging with Jewish life in pre-war Poland, the counterpart to this ‘dark tourism’ can be found in the promotion of Yiddish musical culture.³² In the past decade however, new forms have emerged, notably focusing on preservation and education. The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, founded in 2002 and supported by a range of Polish and international partners, is concerned with Jewish material heritage in Poland and also operates an educational program targeting Polish schools.³³ This educational aim is also present in the foundation’s internet portal, POLIN - Polish Jews Heritage, which documents Jewish life in pre-war Poland in over 500 Polish cities and towns.³⁴ POLIN is also interactive and allows users to upload information themselves.³⁵

POLIN resembles another documentary web project, the Virtual Shtetl portal, which documents Jewish life in Poland online and is also interactive.³⁶ The Virtual Shtetl is a project of the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews that is currently under construction in Warsaw. Founded by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, the Polish Ministry of Education and the City of Warsaw, and funded by donors from Poland as well as abroad, the museum is due to open in 2012.³⁷ While not the first modern Jewish museum in Poland, it will be the first to tell the history of Jews in Poland. Its core exhibition is created by an international group of academics.³⁸ All these projects operate on the basis of an agenda which seek to counter stereotypes of Poles as endemic anti-Semites, while stressing that Jewish life in Poland is integral to Poland’s history.

As in Western Europe, such large scale institutional projects concur with bottom-up initiatives. A new project, begun only in 2010, is the *Yidish Lebt* project which “unites young artists, linguists and scholars of Yiddish [Jewish as well as non-Jewish, GZ] who want to prove that the Yiddish language is still living and fruitful”. The project focuses mostly on the development of online learning resources (such as a dictionary and atlas of place names with historical information). At the same time the *Yidish Lebt* website functions as a news page for Yiddish-related news in Poland.³⁹

Europe confronts its Yiddish past

While national and local contexts and initiatives remain important it is easy to overlook the stimulating and enabling role that European institutions, particularly the Council of Europe (COE), have played in promoting Europe’s Yiddish past.⁴⁰ In 1987, the COE adopted a ‘Resolution on the Jewish contribution to European culture’, which recognised „the very considerable and distinctive contribution that Jews and the tradition of Judaism have made to the historical development of Europe in the cultural as well as in other fields”.⁴¹ A COE-sponsored conference on Sephardi Jewish culture in the same year was followed by a conference on Yiddish Culture that took place in Vilnius 3-5 May 1995.⁴² That conference led

to the adoption of a recommendation on Yiddish culture in March 1996 by the parliamentary assembly of the COE.⁴³ Among other things, the assembly regretted “that at present the main centres for Yiddish culture are outside Europe: in Israel and the United States of America. For historical and cultural reasons, Europe should take steps to encourage and develop within Europe centres for Yiddish culture, research and language”.⁴⁴

The subsequent recommendations, which are not legally binding for member states, were ambitious and included an ‘invitation’ to “Ministries of Culture of member states to help Jewish and non-Jewish cultural institutions concerned with the Yiddish cultural heritage to reconstruct in publications and ethnographic and art exhibitions, in audiovisual records, etc., the full picture of the pre-Holocaust Yiddish cultural landscape that is today scattered throughout Europe”. While such lofty recommendations suggest a huge potential for public history activities, its effects seem to have been meagre. A Yiddish Summit took place in Strasbourg between 5-9 November 2000, organised by the City of Strasbourg under the auspices of the COE, and brought together many scholars and cultural activists. On the other hand, in a typical display of French universalism, the ensuing plan to create a European Centre for Yiddish Studies in Strasbourg was annulled by the city government for being too *communautariste*.⁴⁵

More successful in terms of its effects is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which was adopted by the COE’s Committee of Ministers on 25 June 1992 and entered into force on 1 March 1998.⁴⁶ Designed to protect regional and minority languages in Europe, the charter excludes non-territorial languages from this category, on grounds of their non-territoriality, making it applicable to Yiddish only in limited part.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, non-territorial languages can certainly benefit from the protective measures that the charter promotes; ratifying countries indicate to which languages in their territory the charter applies and are subsequently obliged to report on their activities to preserve and promote those languages. Among the countries that ratified the charter with regards to Yiddish are: Finland (1994), the Netherlands (1996), Sweden (2000), Romania (2007), Poland (2009) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2010).

It is clear from this list that Yiddish has an official status as a minority language in its Eastern European ‘home’ countries, notably Poland and Romania, but not in countries with once significant Jewish migrant populations. The absence of the United Kingdom or France is striking.⁴⁸ It should be noted that the status of a minority language is not always dependent upon explicit wishes of its users. Yiddish speakers in Finland, for example, have not requested support despite being able to do so, whereas in the Netherlands the granting of minority language status to Yiddish speakers is almost purely symbolic, given the absence of native speakers.⁴⁹

A good example of what can happen when the charter is applied is Sweden, which became home to a community of Yiddish speaking Holocaust survivors after the war. Another small group of mostly Yiddish-speaking Jews fled Poland in the wake of the ‘anti-Zionist’ campaign of 1967-68. The country operates a specific minority policy that includes support for historic minority languages, including Yiddish. As such, Yiddish is included in the educational policies of the government; the Swedish school authority has created a special website dealing with minority languages and policies in Sweden which also has a Yiddish section.⁵⁰

Perhaps the most tangible, and certainly public, result of European institutional support can be seen in efforts to preserve Yiddish culture on the Internet. *Judaica Europeana*, a part of the *Europeana* project that is funded by the European Commission, will provide online access to a variety of primary sources documenting urban Jewish life in Europe. One of its partners is the Paris centre.⁵¹ The project is run by the London-based European Association for Jewish Culture, which has partnered with a number of institutions that will provide content and has an academic advisory board. Similarly, the European Library offers access to digitised sources as well as bibliographical material in Europe’s national libraries.⁵² In addition, several EU-funded Polish digital libraries as well as the Lithuanian national digital library offer online access to a wealth of Yiddish materials, in particular books and newspapers.⁵³ While offering primary sources, not stories, these digital resources have been selected by archivists and librarians and thus imply certain narrative choices concerning a public history of Yiddish.

Concluding remarks

As this brief survey suggests, there is an increase in activities promoting Europe’s Yiddish culture in the public space that can be labelled as “public history”. Yet that label has to be qualified. Different stimulæ are at work in different countries and a variety of modes of disseminating that past, and spaces to reconstruct it, can be discerned. The absence of the state as a prime interest taker in promoting Yiddish heritage (until recently) means that different actors are involved. Long a marginal topic in museums, Western European concerns with migration have now become an important driving force behind the inclusion of Jewish migrants and Yiddish culture in revised national and Jewish historical narratives in migration institutions

and Jewish museums. Insofar as these institutions are government sponsored, the state becomes indirectly involved.

In Central and Eastern Europe the situation is different. As the example of Poland shows, there is an absence of local communities that can sustain public history activities but a significant demand for heritage from abroad. Many American Jews trace their ancestry to pre-war Poland and American-Jewish philanthropic organisations have become major players in terms of funding new initiatives. Meanwhile, European legislation as well as funding to digitise its heritage, has seen Europe itself become an increasingly important actor in preserving and promoting Yiddish culture. In all of Europe, though, such larger developments concur with 'bottom-up' activities that often have a much longer history (as the centre in Paris illustrates)

This brings us to the question of how the story is told, and by what actors. The Yiddish case highlights a truly *interactionist*, as opposed to *diffusionist*, form of public history.⁵⁴ Museums or major internet projects are diffusionist in that academic expertise (either from historians or Yiddish Studies experts) is drawn upon to tell the past to non-academic audiences. Yet this is only half the story. The number of academics who know Yiddish, or can combine it with the languages of the relevant countries, is low. Important organisations, such as the Paris centre, or the JEECS in London, have been founded by the offspring of Jewish migrants. While academics might be involved, these organisations operate outside academic settings and do not follow academic agendas. Yet they provide vital contributions in reconstructing and preserving the Yiddish past, and contribute knowledge that even academics that know Yiddish often lack.

As befits a transnational language and culture such as Yiddish, some of the most important initiatives to preserve it take place through a borderless medium: the Internet. In the process, continental and national boundaries are blurred; several important projects documenting Europe's Yiddish past are, not surprisingly, American-based.⁵⁵ And European funding enables crucial digitisation efforts and new forms of presenting Jewish history online. As a result, Jewish as well as non-Jewish audiences have access to a culture that, until recently, was seen as marginal and obscure (Western Europe), ignored (Central and Eastern Europe), and all too often reduced to clichés. Many of the developments outlined above are of course new; we do not know the full gamut of representations of Europe's Yiddish past they will eventually yield. One conclusion can nevertheless be drawn: the Yiddish case highlights a distinctive *European* form of public history, where local, national, supra-national and cross-continental impulses and actors interact to spawn new reconstructions of the past.

1 All websites mentioned in this article have been accessed between January and March 2011.

2 F. Bösch and C. Goschler, 'Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Public History', in *Public history : öffentliche Darstellungen des Nationalsozialismus jenseits der Geschichtswissenschaft*, a cura di Frank Bösch and Constantin Goschler, Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 2009 7-23, 8-10.

3 On the importance of the role of the state in public history see: L. J. Jordanova, *History in practice*, London, Hodder Arnold, 2006, 155-162.

4 The notion of *Yiddishland* that is sometimes invoked, denotes a transnational spatiality and at the same time resonates with nostalgia. For a short essay on Yiddishland see: J. Shandler, 'Mapping Yiddishland: Place, Time, and Speech' in: Marvin Herzog et al. eds., *EYDES. Evidence of Yiddish Documented in European Societies. The language and culture atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2008, 291-303.

5 D. Katz, 'A thousand years of Yiddish in the European arena'. Paper given at the Colloquy on Yiddish Culture organised by the Council of Europe, 3-5 may 1995 in Vilnius. Online proceedings d.d. 13 February 1996: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc96/EDOC7489AD.htm>.

6 It often mistakes or equates an interest in cultural phenomena with that of the language itself. See for an analysis of this point: H. Beer, 'Yiddish without Yiddish?', in «European Judaism», 42, 2009, pp. 10-18.

7 Y. Niborski, 'Yiddish Culture in France and in the French-speaking Areas', in «European Judaism», 42, 2009, 3-9, 8.

8 See for instance: B.T. Wallet, "'End of the jargon-scandal" – The decline and fall of Yiddish in the Netherlands (1796–1886)', in «Jewish History», 2006, .

9 Belgium also had a sizable Jewish migrant population while in Germany Jewish migration was less significant and more often of a transitory nature. Only few Jewish migrants came to the Netherlands.

10 See: *Under the red banner: Yiddish culture in the communist countries in the postwar era*, a cura di Elvira Grözinger and Magdalena Ruta, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2008.

11 The Yiddish word *shtetl* (plural *shtetlekh*) originally refers to those Polish small market towns where Jews had a sizable presence or comprised a town's majority. In contemporary usage it often represents an idealised and romanticised image of pre-war Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe. See: S. Kassow, 'Shtetl' in *The YIVO encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe - Online Edition*, a cura di Gershon Hundert, 2010. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx?id=27>.

12 In Israel, Yiddish culture continued to be repressed after the state's foundation and only gained a form of legal

recognition in 1996. In March 1996 the Knesset passed the National Authority for Yiddish Culture Law and the National Authority for Ladino Culture Law. This should not be seen as a sudden enthusiastic embrace of Yiddish; as one commentator put it, “the political attitude has shifted from outright suppression to one of passive neglect”. See: A. Raz, ‘Standing for Yiddish in the land of Hebrew’, in «Haaretz», 11 December 2009. For a general discussion of language in Israel see: W. Safran, ‘Language and nation-building in Israel: Hebrew and its rivals’, in «Nations and Nationalism», 11/1, 2005, 43-63.

13 The best known example being: R.E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish : reinventing Jewish culture in Europe*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002.

14 D. Lowenthal, *The heritage crusade and the spoils of history*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

15 D. Pinto, ‘A new Jewish identity for post-1989 Europe’, in «JPR Policy Paper», 1996, 6.

16 To give but one example, see attitudes towards Jewish migrants (usually pejoratively labelled ‘Ostjuden’) in Germany: S.E. Aschheim, *Brothers and strangers : the east European Jew in German and German Jewish consciousness, 1800-1923*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1999.

17 D. Clark, ‘Jewish Museums: from Jewish Icons to Jewish Narratives’, «European Judaism», 36, 2003, 4-17.

18 The Paris museum has two travelling exhibitions dedicated to Yiddish topics, but only one of those, “Artisans et paysans du Yiddishland (1921-1938)”, could be qualified as truly historical in nature while the second exhibition, “Klezmer et Klezmerim, a yiddisher tam, a yiddisher tempo”, clearly aims to capitalise on the popularity of klezmer music.

19 See the project website: <http://www.charlottengrad-scheunenviertel.de/>.

20 There is one page devoted to ‘Ostjuden’ on the Rafael Roth Learning Centre of its website: <http://www.jmberlin.de/main/DE/01-Ausstellungen/03-RRLC/01-geschichten/ostjuden.php>.

21 On migration and the museum see: Joachim Baur, *Die Musealisierung der Migration : Einwanderungsmuseen und die Inszenierung der multikulturellen Nation*, Bielefeld, Transcript, 2009. The global dimension is well illustrated by the creation in 2006 of the International Network of Migration Institutions, a project jointly supported by UNESCO and the IOM. See: <http://www.migrationmuseums.org/>.

22 See: <http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/>.

23 See: <http://www.movinghere.org.uk/>.

24 An overview can be found on my website Yiddish Sources: <http://yiddish-sources.com/>.

25 See the website: <http://www.yiddishweb.com/>.

26 Rachel - Réseau européen des bibliothèques judaïca et hebraïca: <http://www.rachelnet.net/>.

27 See the website at: <http://www.jeeecs.org.uk/>. The JEECS also explicitly states that it “will not romanticise nor glorify the conditions that faced Jewish refugees at the turn of the twentieth century as the settled in London’s East End, to escape pogroms and poverty in Eastern Europe?”. See: <http://www.culture24.org.uk/am29602>.

28 A point also made in: Bösch and Goschler, ‘Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Public History’.

29 See for an investigation of this point: S. Ho, ‘Blogging as Popular History Making, Blogs as Public History: The Singapore Case Study’, in «Public History Review», 14, 2007, 64-79.

30 The number of Yiddish speakers as a percentage of the total Jewish population in Poland, for example, was never less than 80%.

31 See for instance: G. J. Ashworth, ‘Holocaust Tourism: The Experience of Kraków-Kazimierz’, in «International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education», 11, 4, 2002, 363-367; C. Aviv and D. Shneer, ‘Traveling Jews, creating memory : Eastern Europe, Israel, and the diaspora business’ in *Sociology confronts the Holocaust : memories and identities in Jewish diasporas*, a cura di Judith Madeleine Gerson and Diane L. Wolf, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. Ruth Ellen Gruber’s emphasis on non-Jewish participation in the Jewish heritage ‘boom’ obscures the fact that much of what she describes is a result of American-Jewish demand, in other words, the result of an interplay between non-Jewish and Jewish actors that differs from place to place.

32 For years now, the main driving force has been the annual Jewish Culture Festival in Cracow. See: <http://www.jewishfestival.pl/index.php?lang=e>.

33 See: <http://fodz.pl/?d=6&l=en>.

34 See: <http://polin.org.pl/>.

35 No information on those who operate the Foundation or POLIN is given on the respective websites.

36 See: <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/>.

37 See: <http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en/cms/home-page/>.

38 The origins of the museum project date back to the 1990s. For an in-depth discussion that also focuses on the larger Polish political context and the museum’s role in post-1989 nation-building, see: R. Ostow, ‘Remuseumizing Jewish History in Warsaw: The Privatization and Externalization of Nation Building’ in: *(Re)visualizing national history : museums and national identities in Europe in the new millennium*, a cura di Robin Ostow, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008, 157-180.

39 See: <http://jidysz.net/index.php/en> (date of access: 23 January 2011). Interestingly, young Poles interested in Yiddish use the internet more than others as a source of information. A look at the user statistics of the Facebook page of the Yiddish Sources portal (<http://yiddish-sources.com/>) reveals that 34% are US-based, versus 16% in

Poland; yet if we look at cities Warsaw is ahead of New York with 12% of users versus 8% (in those cases where city is known: data valid on 22 January 2011).

40 See: <http://www.coe.int/>.

41 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Resolution 885 on the Jewish contribution to European culture (1987). See: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/ta87/eres885.htm>.

42 Yiddish culture, Doc. 7489 (12 February 1996). Report of the Committee on Culture and Education, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. See: <http://assembly.coe.int/mainf.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc96/EDOC7489.htm> (date of access: 12 January 2011). See also the notes of the colloquy: Colloquy on Yiddish Culture, 3-5 May 1995, Lithuanian Seimas, VILNIUS. Doc. 7489 Addendum (13 February 1996), <http://assembly.coe.int/mainf.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc96/EDOC7489AD.htm>.

43 Recommendation 1291 (1996) on Yiddish culture (Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 20 March 1996). See: <http://assembly.coe.int/mainf.asp?Link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta96/erec1291.htm>.

44 The inclusion of Israel here is surprising as it is not, and has never been, an important center of Yiddish culture.

45 See: Ariane Singer, 'Le torchon brûlé', in «Le Point.fr», 24 May 2002.
See: <http://www.lepoint.fr/archives/article.php/63235>.

46 See: <http://languagecharter.eokik.hu/theCharter.htm>.

47 See: Council of Europe, Explanatory report to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS no. 148). See: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/reports/html/148.htm> (date of access: 12 January 2011).

48 France is a specific case when it comes to dealing with and recognising minority languages. See: Simo K. Määttä, 'The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, French Language Laws, and National Identity', in «Language Policy», 4, 2005, 167-186.

49 See the *Report of the Committee of Experts on the application of the Charter* for Finland (2001).

50 See: <http://www.modersmal.net/jiddisch/>.

51 See: <http://www.judaica-europeana.eu/>.

52 See: <http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/>.

53 See for example this collection in the National Digital Library POLONA: <http://www.polona.pl/dlibra/collectiondescription2?dirids=31>.

54 Bösch and Goschler, 'Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Public History', 8-9.

55 See especially: *YIVO encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe - Online Edition*, 2010, a cura di Gershon Hundert.

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