

## CALL FOR PAPERS:

International Conference of the  
DFG Priority Program  
on "Jewish Cultural Heritage"  
(SPP 2357)

**Jewish Cultural Heritage in Light of Critical Heritage Studies****March 3-6, 2025**

at the

**Gustav-Stresemann-Institute in Bonn, Germany**

The definitions of what Jewish cultural heritage is or should be, what significance it has for various stakeholders, and how it is used as a social, cultural, religious, economic, and political resource are subject to social and political changes. The conference is dedicated to various tangible and intangible manifestations of Jewish cultural heritage, which will be discussed from the perspective of Critical Heritage Studies. The field of Critical Heritage Studies reconceptualizes heritage by paying attention to themes such as power, identity, economic development, and conflict, and by engaging with wide areas of critical inquiry. It is further concerned with locating heritage in the present and not the past, as it is in the present that people assume responsibility for the safeguarding of Jewish heritage; in the present, different groups of stakeholders interpret the meaning of Jewish heritage and associate it with particular meanings, values, and even identities. Jewish heritage is thus both a cultural asset and a social and political instrument for (re-)defining Jewish culture, Judaism, and Jewishness.

**Conference objectives**

The objective of the conference is to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the intricacies of Jewish cultural heritage and to identify novel avenues for both academic inquiry and cultural policy, in light of Critical Heritage Studies. The conference aims to challenge dominant narratives and to expand the discourses and horizon of Jewish cultural heritage in a fast-paced, almost daily changing world. Comparative perspectives on Jewish heritage are welcome.

**Individual papers:**

Individual papers and panels are invited to touch upon a wide array of topics connected to constructions of Jewish heritage as a social practice, investigating the connection between heritage and sustainability, etc. Individual papers and panels are invited to discuss the following topics:

- *Making and selecting Jewish Cultural Heritage:* How and by whom is Jewish heritage created, selected, and promoted? To what extent are these processes politically controlled and constrained? Detailed explanations of these negotiation processes will discuss the implications of this for the shaping and representation of Jewish heritage.

- *Navigating national narratives about Jewish heritage:* In Critical Heritage Studies, the discourse is oriented toward the complexification and investigation of heritage narratives. Papers and panels are thus invited to discuss and deconstruct dominant national narratives and the role of the states, institutions, and scholars in creating, transforming, or challenging the narrative of Jewish cultural heritage: How can Jewish heritage be reimagined by connecting it to its relevance in the present or by telling different stories with the same objects, monuments, and places?
- *Polyphony in the making of Jewish heritage – past and present:* Jewish heritage is often perceived to have two distinct roles within the state. Firstly, it is seen as a historical legacy, representing the past and the disappearance of Jews from the territory. Secondly, it is viewed as a contemporary phenomenon, encompassing present-day Jewish life as well as tourism. How can these discrepancies and diverse interests and meanings be addressed? For Germans, Poles, Czechs, and so forth, Jewish heritage is an integral component of their national heritage, influencing their interpretation of historical events. Conversely, for Jews from abroad visiting these locations or for local Jews today, the significance of these places differs and has a distinct meaning. How can these multiple perspectives be acknowledged while maintaining and supporting the creation of Jewish heritage for all communities involved? How to envisage more dialogue between these different groups of stakeholders, and communities, including potentially conflicting dialogue, to ensure Jewish heritage remains integrated with the broader societal context? What are the tensions and constant negotiations among the multiple actors involved in the making of Jewish heritage?
- *Repatriating Jewish heritage:* The debate around decolonizing museums and the repatriation of objects in museums and institutions, includes Jewish communities as well as Holocaust survivors and their descendants, who demand return of objects they consider part of their heritage. How could we view the issue of repatriation in the context of Jewish heritage and national identity, and how should the state and institutions respond to this question?

#### **Panel discussions – suggested topics**

- *Jewish World Heritage:* The conference will place a particular focus on initiatives relating to Jewish World Heritage in Germany and other countries. This will include, for example, an examination of the ShUM cities of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz. The presentation and communication of the complexity of the tangible and intangible Jewish heritage of these World Heritage sites, the socio-political and economic interests of various stakeholders, the significance of Jewish heritage for the cities in which it is located, and the impact on tourism can all be discussed. Additionally, the question of what role Jewish World Heritage plays in the daily lives of the inhabitants of these cities can be addressed. What role does it play for the local Jewish communities? What new points of contact, relationships, and changes in Jewish/non-Jewish coexistence arise? What criteria were used to designate Jewish heritage as World Heritage? Who recognized it as World Heritage?
- *Approaching Jewish Heritage after October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023:* Given the tragic impact of the ongoing Israeli-Gaza war on Jewish life and the rise in antisemitism, the following questions shall be addressed in this panel: How do heritage institutions, initiatives, practitioners, and scholars adjust their work in times of conflict? What are the new challenges to be faced in disseminating knowledge about Jewish heritage considering these developments (or the



ones to anticipate)? How to rethink and redefine the socio-political role and function of Jewish heritage in light of these recent events? What is the connection between Israel and shaping Jewish heritage, Zionism and Jewish heritage, etc.?

### Abstract Submission

Presentation types:

- Individual papers: 20 minutes of presentations plus 10 minutes of discussion
- Panel sessions: 90 minutes in total, consisting of 3 paper presentations (20 minutes each, plus 10 minutes of discussion)

Please hand in your abstracts for individual papers or panels (300 words max.) by September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 to [spp.ezjm@hmtm-hannover.de](mailto:spp.ezjm@hmtm-hannover.de).

Please provide your name and the names of the co-presenters, institutional affiliation, and contact information. Please also indicate which technical requirements are necessary for your presentation: e. g. beamer, sound system, etc.

We kindly ask you to let us know if you need to bring your children to the conference with you. If a significant number of accompanying children are registered, we will make every effort to organize a program for your children during the conference.



#### SPP 2357 JÜDISCHES KULTURERBE | CONTACT

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