

CfP Jews, Europe, and the Business of Culture

Centre for European Research at University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Centre for Business History, Stockholm, Sweden.

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On Zoom

In 2017, when archivist and researcher Benito Peix Geldart at the Centre for Business History in Stockholm was about to start cataloguing the archives from the international Hollander Hides Companies, he found several large leather briefcases. Previously owned by Fritz Hollander, former CEO and lay leader of the Jewish Congregation in Stockholm, the briefcases were crammed with plastic folders, holding letters related to activities of both his global business and the Swedish capital's Jewish community from the 1930s to the 1990s. Physically stacked next to each other, international business life and local culture were intimately interlinked, indeed inseparable.

The fusion of Jewish business life and local culture, materially seen in the original briefcases of the Hollander Hides Companies archive, is indeed a feature of the European Jewish diaspora across time and space. In the last hundreds of years, European Jews have facilitated transnational business networks related to, for example, diamonds, ostrich feathers and hides, while staying firmly rooted within a local Jewish community. Studies on the *port Jew* have certainly explored Jewish merchants' immersion into and importance for the development of a cosmopolitan, transnational culture. Likewise, projects associated with the "economic turn" in Jewish studies, spearheaded by Professor Gideon Reuveni, have investigated how Jewish economic activities provide a "conceptual door" for understanding local cultural constructions.

We ask ourselves, what can the correlation between businesses and local communities reveal about Jews and their relations to local, regional, national, European and global spaces? How Jewish and/or European were Jewish business networks transporting goods across seas and national borders, and what was their role in processes such as colonialism and cosmopolitanism? Looking in the opposite direction, how was the European aspect of Jewish business life transferred and translated into national and local communities? How did Europe's historical relationship to Jews – moving from exclusion to emancipation, and later on, the Holocaust – affect Jewish business networks? And what can an analysis of the relationship between business networks and local communities uncover about the European Jewish experience of the dialectics between the local and the global, culture and economy, sacred and secular?

In short, how can the concept of "Europe" serve our efforts to understand the motives, experience, function and importance of Jewish cultural-economic activities across time and space? We welcome papers that explore the connection between Jewish businesses, local culture and Europe from topics related, but not limited to:

- Cultural transfer and translation
- Networks and transnationalism
- Business history and biographical studies on businesswomen and men
- Imperialism, nationalism and colonialism
- Urban studies
- Local history and micro-history
- Comparative studies

- Jewish/non-Jewish relations
- Antisemitism and the Holocaust

We are delighted to announce that the keynote will be given by Gideon Reuveni, Professor of Modern European History at University of Sussex.

To apply for the conference, please send an abstract of 250 words together with a short biography to maja.hultman@gu.se by July 1, 2021. Accepted participants will be notified at the end of August. Selected papers will be published in a special journal issue. If any questions should arise, please contact maja.hultman@gu.se.

Organisers:

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

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