
Partizipativer Sammlungsaufbau in der Gegenwart

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Patrimonialization and Cooperation

Jewish Cultural Heritage in Regensburg

The historical and cultural significance of Regensburg's medieval Jewish community is of great – and international – importance, although little evidence of it remains visible in the old town today. This essay will examine how Jewish history and culture is currently presented in museums and in the old town which has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2006 and how these Jewish remains were treated by the various cultural, political, and scientific actors semantically. Situated in the old town, the remains of the former Jewish quarter and community are part of this heritage. Thus, the question arises whether the Jewish remains were also addressed as “Jüdisches Kulturerbe” in German or “Jewish cultural heritage” in English and by whom.¹ This essay also focuses on the participation of the present Jewish community in the presentation of Jewish culture, more specifically on ways to encourage the various community members to actively participate in the process of patrimonialization and heritagization by discussing and defining their cultural heritage.

First, we will outline the history of the Jewish community, and then give an overview of how Jewish history and culture have been presented and addressed in Regensburg to date. We will then provide an insight into our DFG-funded cooperation project with today's Jewish community in Regensburg. Finally, we highlight the opportunities and challenges, with a particular emphasis on the overarching goals of this integrative project.²

¹ The distinction between these two terms was discussed by Sarah M. Ross and Dani Kranz, “‘Jüdisches Kulturerbe’ versus ‘Jewish heritage’. Zum gesellschaftspolitischen Stellenwert von jüdischem Erbe in Deutschland,” “Jüdisches Kulturerbe” versus “Jewish heritage”, *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland – Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, bpb.de, accessed May 14, 2024.

² A project description can now be found at: https://www.jgk.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/jgk_mittelalter/forschungsprojekte/fp-shared-histories/index.html.

The History of the Jewish Community in Regensburg

The earliest documented mention of a Jewish presence near Regensburg dates back to 981 when a Jewish man named Samuel sold two plots of land near Regensburg to the imperial monastery of St. Emmeram.³ In the early 11th century, there is evidence of a Jewish residential area in the city. It is probable, though unproven, that this was the same area that later became the Jewish Quarter, located at what is now known as the *Neupfarrplatz* in the immediate vicinity of the cathedral.

The medieval Jewish community in Regensburg was the most significant Jewish community in Bavaria and among the most important in the German Empire. In addition to a synagogue, the community also had a mikvah, a dance hall, a meat bank, and a cemetery.

From approximately 1150 to 1519, Regensburg was also a prominent center for Jewish scholarship. The first group of scholars at the Beit Din was closely connected with scholars in the ShUM cities (Speyer, Worms, Mainz; the ShUM cities were awarded the title UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2021)⁴ and France. Jehuda ben Samuel heChasid, who lived around 1140/50 to 1217, authored the *Sefer Chasidim*, one of the fundamental writings of the *Chasidei Ashkenaz*. Benefitting from Regensburg's economic ties to the eastern part of the empire, the Regensburg Talmud School quickly became a “hub” between the religious centers in the east, such as Prague, Poland, and Kyiv, and in the west, such as Speyer, Worms, Mainz, and Paris.⁵ During the First Crusade, all Jews in Regensburg had been forcibly baptized in 1096; however, Emperor Henry IV allowed them to return to their Jewish faith shortly afterward. The Jews of Regensburg were not directly affected by later waves of persecution that ravaged through the German Empire during the Middle Ages. Starting in the middle of the 15th century, the relationship between the Christian inhabitants and the members of the Jewish community, however, deteriorated. As part of the so-called Innsbruck Trial, a legal dispute between the city of Regensburg and the Jewish com-

3 Bavarian Main State Archive, Munich, Kloster St. Emmeram Regensburg Urkunden Nr. 28; see <https://www.monasterium.net/mom/DE-BayHStA/KURegensburgStEmmeram/000028/charter>, accessed June 11, 2024.

4 <https://www.unesco.de/kultur-und-natur/welterbe/welterbe-deutschland/unesco-welterbeschum-staetten-speyer-worms-und>, accessed June 11, 2024.

5 Andreas Angerstorfer, “Regensburg als Zentrum jüdischer Gelehrsamkeit im Mittelalter”, in *Die Juden in der Oberpfalz* (=Studien zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur in Bayern 2), ed. Michael Brenner and Renate Höpfinger (Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag GmbH, 2009), 9–26.

munity, the city council unsuccessfully pursued the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg from 1516 onwards.⁶ When the patron of the Jews, Emperor Maximilian I, suddenly died at the beginning of 1519, the Regensburg city leadership took advantage of the resulting power vacuum and illegally expelled the Jews from the city. After the Jewish community had left, the Christian inhabitants destroyed the Jewish quarter on *Neupfarplatz* and desecrated the Jewish cemetery. In place of the destroyed synagogue, a wooden chapel called *Zur Schönen Maria* was built. Next to it, work on the new *Neupfarrkirche*, a stone church that still stands today, began just a few months later in November 1519.⁷

After their expulsion from Regensburg, it is assumed that many Jewish families settled in nearby villages. However, in 1551 the expulsion order of the Jews in the old Bavarian lands was reissued by Albrecht V. After inquisition proceedings against four Jews in Munich, two of whom had settled in Stadtamhof, a small town that is located directly next to Regensburg across the river Danube, the four detained Jews were only released on the promise that no more Jews would be allowed to settle in Bavaria in the future.⁸ Following the dispute, the national ordinance of May 13, 1553, also stated, that “from now on, no male or female Jew shall be settled in our duchy whether with their own home, nor business, nor trade, and shall not be tolerated or taken in by anybody”.⁹

A local exemption from this rule formed the so-called ‘Reichstagsjuden’. These lived under the protection of the Imperial Hereditary Marshals of Pappenheim in Regensburg as emissaries or part of foreign delegations during the time of the Perpetual Diet. This led to the formation of a separate and permanent small community by the 1660s, which was subject to the Imperial Marshal and whose presence was heavily regulated from 1695 onward.¹⁰ Nevertheless, at least one Rabbi – Rabbi Isaak Alexander (1722–1802) – is documented to have taught in Regensburg before the 19th century.¹¹

6 Veronika Nickel, *Widerstand durch Recht: Die Regensburger Judengemeinde vor ihrer Vertreibung (1519) und der Innsbrucker Prozess (1516–1522)*, Harrassowitz Verlag 2018.

7 Silvia Codreanu-Windauer, “Wiederentdeckung der Synagoge in Regensburg – Erste Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen auf dem Neupfarplatz”, *Denkmalpflege Informationen* 103 (1995): 4–6.

8 Rolf Kießling, *Jüdische Geschichte in Bayern. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Studien zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur in Bayern, vol. 11 (De Gruyter 2019), 208.

9 Quoted from Kießling, *Jüdische Geschichte*, 209.

10 Till Strobel, *Jüdisches Leben unter dem Schutz der Reichserbmarschälle von Pappenheim 1650–1806*, (Bibliotheca-Academia-Verl. 2009), 35.

11 Andreas Angerstorfer, “Die Geschichte bis zum Holocaust. Teil II. Von der Vertreibung der Juden aus Regensburg 25. Februar 1519 bis zum Holocaust”, Memento vom 16. August 2017 im Internet Archive, https://web.archive.org/web/20170816150913/http://www.jg-regensburg.de/bis_zum_holocaust, accessed May 14, 2024.

In 1813, the *Edikt über die Verhältnisse der jüdischen Glaubensgenossen im Königreiche Baiern* allowed the formation of new Jewish communities in Bavaria, encouraged trade relations between Jews and non-Jews but also heavily regulated the number of Jews that were allowed to live in the kingdom.¹² In the following decades, the new community in Regensburg inaugurated a prayer hall and grew to 430 members by 1871. A new cemetery, a new Jewish elementary school, and a new synagogue quickly followed.¹³

The Nazi period once again meant disenfranchisement, dispossession, and dehumanization for the Jewish community of Regensburg. On April 2, 1942, 106 people were deported from the site of the destroyed synagogue to Piaski, a transit camp near Lublin (Poland). All of them were murdered in the extermination camp Belzec.¹⁴ After the war, Regensburg, largely undamaged, served as the first reception camp for liberated concentration camp survivors. However, the majority of these survivors chose to emigrate from Germany. The new Jewish community of Regensburg was established in 1950 and had about 200 members in 1951.¹⁵ Just two years later, a Jewish kindergarten and a Hebrew school were founded. Following the Collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s, Regensburg experienced an influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union, and the number of Jewish community members rose to 400 in 1998. Today the Jewish community counts more than 1,000 members.¹⁶

As in most Jewish communities in Germany, the sharp break in history and the culturally diverse composition of today's community members also lead to difficulties in dealing with the city's Jewish cultural heritage.

How has Jewish Heritage been Presented So Far?

While thousands of documents detailing the long history of the Jewish community in Regensburg are preserved in archives across Bavaria and beyond, only a few sites in the city visibly reflect its medieval Jewish heritage today. During excavations at what is known today as *Neupfarrplatz* between 1995 and 1998,

¹² Dieter Albrecht, *Regensburg im Wandel – Studien zur Geschichte der Stadt im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Mittelbayerische Dr.- und Verl.-Ges., 1984), 90–105.

¹³ Angerstorfer, “Die Geschichte bis zum Holocaust II”.

¹⁴ Andreas Angerstorfer, “Die Geschichte bis zum Holocaust”, *Regensburger Almanach* (1986): 167–72, here 172.

¹⁵ Siegfried Wittmer, “Juden in Regensburg in der Neuzeit”, in *Geschichte der Stadt Regensburg*, vol. I, ed., Peter Schmid (Pustet 2000), 656–76, 672.

¹⁶ <https://jg-regensburg.de/ueber-uns/>, accessed June 11, 2024.

archaeologists found several cellar vaults that belonged to houses the medieval Jews lived in. As officials wanted some of these structures to remain accessible, a documentation center (*document Neupfarrplatz*) was established,¹⁷ where three of the former cellars can be visited by guided tour only. Apart from the medieval structures, visitors can see and learn about some remains of the Roman legionary camp, the foundations of the *Neupfarrkirche*, and also part of a *Ringbunker* from 1939. The documentation center also includes three showcases exhibiting replicas of a golden ring, a pile of gold coins, and a small statue (presumably depicting the high priest Aaron), all of which were found during excavations at *Neupfarrplatz*.¹⁸ An accompanying film attempts to reconstruct the medieval Jewish quarter, but unfortunately no longer corresponds to the current state of research.

Just a few steps away from the entrance to the *document Neupfarrplatz*, a memorial to the destroyed medieval synagogue was erected. The monument was created in 2004/5 by Dani Karavan on the basis and in the form of the foundations of the 13th-century building, the discovery of which was a sensation during the excavations.

All over the old city of Regensburg, one encounters Jewish tombstones that were once stolen from the Jewish cemetery shortly after its desecration by the Regensburg Christian inhabitants in 1519. Members of the city council of Regensburg and other members of the city elite displayed these stones in the facades of their houses and mansions as proud signs and trophies of their involvement in the expulsion of the Jews.¹⁹ About 20 of these stones are still visible today; however, they lack any kind of modern description or commentary signs next to them, thus their identification and meaning are left to the interpretation of often uninformed visitors. These structures and tombstones are part of the old town of Regensburg and therefore they are also a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

17 Silvia Codreanu-Windauer, “document Neupfarrplatz”, *Denkmalpflege Informationen* 121 (2002): 55–7.

18 Their original counterparts are all on display at the Historical Museum of the City of Regensburg.

19 We would like to explicitly state that this is our modern interpretation of events. There are no historical documents (that we know of) that mention the display of tombstones in facades and connect it to a feeling of pride. However, this way of displaying the tombstones – some are even accompanied by a plaque remembering the expulsion – is unique to Regensburg. In other cities, robbed Jewish tombstones were merely used as cheap building material, not purposely put on display.

Another space in the city where Jewish history is on display is the Historical Museum of the City of Regensburg. At the end of a narrow corridor several Jewish gravestones are displayed with translations of their inscriptions, accompanied by just one main text on the history of the medieval Jews and a display case showing a few finds from the excavations. Original gold coins (whose replica are showcased at the *document Neupfarrplatz* mentioned above) are exhibited on the same floor, establishing a connection to the economic history of the city.²⁰ On the second floor, a model of the *Neupfarrkirche* from the time of its construction and leaflets with drawings of the chapel *Zur Schönen Maria*, which also show the destroyed Jewish quarter, are on display, accompanied by a short text on the events of 1519.

These examples represent the publicly visible way in which “the city” deals with its medieval Jewish history and culture.²¹ “The city” in this case refers to several parts of the government agency whose areas of responsibility focus on the city’s history and culture: The Municipal Cultural Office (*Kulturreferat*) which includes, among others, the Department for Cultural Heritage (*Amt für kulturelles Erbe*) with the offices “Lower Monument Protection Authority” (*Untere Denkmalschutzbehörde*), “Municipal Archive Department” and “World Heritage Coordination”, the Department for Culture (*Kulturamt*), and the Municipal Museums (*Museen*) with the Historical Museum (*Historisches Museum*), as well as the *document Neupfarrplatz*.

Following the excavations, several events were initiated by the municipality. The annual “Regensburger Herbstsymposion” (“Regensburg Autumn Symposium”) has led to several publications including the discussion of Jewish history in the city: “Neupfarrplatz. Brennpunkt – Zeugnis – Denkmal” (1999), “Spolien – steinerne Zitate der Geschichte. Von Römersteinen, Judensteinen und falschen Gräbern” (2015), and “Jüdisches Regensburg. Zeugnisse und Spuren im Stadtbild” (2018).

Among the various researchers, Andreas Angerstorfer, who died in 2012, a theologian and historian who had been a researcher at the University of Regensburg since 1973, deserves special mention. He was a highly renowned specialist in Jewish history in Regensburg and beyond. As most of his research was carried out in the late 1980s and the 1990s, new research has had to revise some of

20 Gerd Stumpf, Silvia Codreanu-Windauer, and Heinrich Wanderwitz, “Der Goldschatz vom Neupfarrplatz: ein spätmittelalterlicher Münzfund in Regensburg”, Ausstellung der Museen der Stadt Regensburg im Historischen Museum vom 20. Juni bis 12. Oktober 1997, Stadt Regensburg 1997.

21 We should also mention the Museum for Bavarian History, which displays several items on Jewish history. As it is funded by the House of Bavarian History and not by the city of Regensburg, however, we have decided to not discuss this exhibition further.

his statements, e.g. the idea of the quarter of the Jewish community as a ghetto.²² Nevertheless, Angerstorfer has significantly advanced academic research on Jewish history in Regensburg.

In 2019, which marked the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews, the Historical Museum commissioned a special exhibition on the history of Jews in medieval Regensburg with the title “Regensburg – Mittelalterliche Metropole der Juden”. And when “1700 years of Jewish life in Germany” were celebrated in 2021, the Bavarian Main State Archive took part in an online exhibition on the subject of “Regensburg and its Jewish community”.²³

In addition to public institutions, the Jewish community itself also engages with its part of Regensburg’s history: in guided tours of the new community center, which opened in 2019, visitors can learn about local Jewish history. A small collection of pictures, documents, and other sources is also on display in the corridors of the community center. The efforts of the Jewish community, however, are mainly concentrated on visitors in their own facilities.

Outside the community center, the display of Jewish history and heritage is mainly handled by municipal officials, sometimes in cooperation with scientific experts. The question therefore arises, to what extent was the Jewish community involved in the decision-making process regarding the handling of these medieval remains and whether this was in any way appropriate.

One more initiative should be mentioned here: the EU project “REDISCOVER” was dedicated to the “rediscovering and valorization of the hidden Jewish heritage in the Danube region”. While 18 partners are named in the list of project partners, including five Jewish communities in the eastern Danube region, Regensburg was represented by the city’s World Heritage Management;²⁴ the Jewish Community of Regensburg is not listed as an official partner in this supra-regional EU project, but participated in the discussions about possible Jewish heritage projects.²⁵ As the Jewish community was not usually the initiator or main project partner in the public and academic projects mentioned so far, we wanted to take a new approach to dealing with Jewish history and culture in Regensburg.

22 For Angerstorfer’s achievements, see Michael Brocke, “Unbeirrbar, furchtlos – Andreas Angerstorfer zum Gedenken”, in *Jüdische Lebenswelten in Regensburg. Eine gebrochene Geschichte*, ed., Klaus Himmelstein (Verlag Friedrich Pustet 2018), 28.

23 <https://www.bavarikon.de/judaism-regensburg>, accessed June 11, 2024.

24 Danube Transnational Program Homepage (interreg-danube.eu), accessed June 11, 2024.

25 REDISCOVER – Interreg Danube, interreg-danube.eu, accessed June 11, 2024.

The New Cooperation Project with the Jewish Community of Regensburg

As we have seen, most projects were largely carried out without a clearly visible involvement of the Jewish community. In other words, the portrayal of Jewish history in Regensburg was discussed and determined mainly externally. As the remains of the former Jewish quarter were mentioned in the application for inscription on the World Heritage List, it was described as “Jewish heritage”. Since this application process was carried out by The Municipal Cultural Office (*Kulturreferat*), this act can be seen as an appropriation of Jewish cultural heritage, i. e. a process by which institutions or persons other than the Jewish community ascribe the status of cultural heritage to tangible and intangible objects.²⁶ It is a recurring observation in German cities that Jewish communities – if they exist – are often excluded from the decision-making processes regarding cultural assets. They are typically only brought into the discussion as a last resort after decisions have already been finalized and deemed irreversible. As a result, Jewish communities are often forced into a reactive role in cultural discourse, with their critiques being acknowledged but often not truly heard.

The preservation of Jewish heritage from an etic approach presents several challenges. One major issue is the misinterpretation of objects, particularly when researchers lack specialized knowledge of Jewish culture. This often results in objects being inaccurately assessed for their significance, uniqueness, or historical importance, leading to frequent misinterpretations. Regrettably, these erroneous findings are often unquestioned by the public and perpetuated in guided tours, exhibitions, and oral histories, contributing to a distorted public perception of Judaism and reinforcing existing biases rather than addressing them.

Our project in Regensburg makes an initial attempt to reverse the order of authorization instances. Instead of asking the Jewish community for approval as a very last step, we started by asking “What is important to you? What makes certain aspects of this town’s history part of your cultural heritage?” We view culture and heritage as a living thing, as “the totality of expressions of Jewish life, being and action”.²⁷ One that can be twisted, reinterpreted, and newly formed to fit modern interpretations in all its flexibility.²⁸ According to sociologist Jean Davallon, patrimonialization describes the process by which a commu-

²⁶ Ross and Kranz, “Jüdisches Kulturerbe”.

²⁷ Ross and Kranz, “Jüdisches Kulturerbe”.

²⁸ See David Oswell, *Culture and Society: An Introduction to Cultural Studies* (SAGE Publications, Limited 2006), 9; <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bsb/detail.action?docID=334358>,

nity grants tangible or intangible objects the status of cultural heritage.²⁹ But what should not be forgotten is the fact that our working group and interview partners normally refer to such intangible objects and expressions as “custom” or “tradition”, which Rodney Harrison describes as “unofficial heritage”.³⁰ Much more important than the object itself is the composition and political reality of the community that determines the status of the objects. Culture creates identity and the decision as to what is culture and what is not thus creates a sense of belonging, but also a clear demarcation to a certain group of people.³¹ Cultural heritage is therefore never neutral due to its origins but can – and often has been – used to elevate or demean others.³²

Our work began with a project presentation in the community center, to which all members of the community were invited. We presented in detail how we envisage working together and how we can support the community with our knowledge in dealing with its own cultural heritage. In the end, all members were invited to actively participate. Stemming from previous negative experiences several participants had with interviews and the projection of their answers and opinions, we have quickly decided to approach this project more slowly, to get to know each other better and to build up a basis of trust. As a result, we opted to curate several small exhibitions, portraying a plethora of ideas and topics that members of the community have asked to explore. These exhibitions will initially be designed by the community for the community. They are therefore exhibited in a room in the community center itself. This means that the Jewish community has absolute power to decide who can visit the exhibition, how, and under what circumstances. The Jewish community may choose to make individual parts of the exhibitions available to the general public at a later stage.

After the initial introductions, we gathered suggestions for topics. Through an anonymous online vote, all community members had the opportunity to consider the proposed topics and ultimately select one. The focus hereby lies in the

accessed May 29, 2024; and Samuel Maruszewski and Randall Auxier, “Post-Cultural Studies: A Brief Introduction”, *Eidos. A Journal for Philosophy of Culture* 7, no. 4 (2023): 78–80.

²⁹ Laurence Gillot, Irène Maffi, and Anne-Christine Trémon: “‘Heritage-scape’ or ‘Heritage-scapes’? Critical Considerations on a Concept”, *The Journal of Ethnologies*, <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1026546ar>, accessed June 11, 2024.

³⁰ Rodney Harrison, *Heritage. Critical Approaches*, (Routledge 2013), 18.

³¹ Abdoulaye Touré, “Betrachtungen über die Zukunft postkolonialer Sammlungen: Wem gehört Kultur?”, in *(Post)Kolonialismus und kulturelles Erbe. Internationale Debatten im Humboldt Forum*, ed., Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (Hanser 2021), 56.

³² George Okello Abungu, “Die Frage nach Restitution und Rückgabe: Ein Dialog der Interessen”, in *(Post)Kolonialismus und kulturelles Erbe. Internationale Debatten im Humboldt Forum*, ed., Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (Hanser 2021), 117.

Jewish community determining what they consider part of their Jewish cultural heritage and what they wish to pass on to future generations. Therefore, it was essential for us that the members also have a say in what will initially only be presented within the community center. After the initial topic selection, we held a collective brainstorming session to identify suitable objects, texts, and ideas. Subsequently, people grouped together based on their respective interests and worked on developing the content and detailed topics for the exhibition.

The practical work with the working group takes place once a month, allowing us to collaborate on the chosen theme. During the latter half of the approximately six-month preparation period, we also offer individual or small group meetings and, if suitable, interviews to discuss specific texts and objects, allowing each participant to share their thoughts and ideas. In this role, we serve as facilitators, guiding the sessions, posing targeted questions, offering examples of objects and ideas from other areas, and suggesting presentation options. We also provide instructions on text design for exhibitions and emphasize critical aspects such as audience orientation. Furthermore, we select historical sources from the Middle Ages, the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, and objects that align with the community's chosen themes, thereby creating a bridge between the past and the present. To choose these historical sources, we draw from a broad array of medieval sources from our research. Additionally, we have been granted access to the private community archive by the Jewish community in Regensburg to collect objects and sources. Of special interest is the former community archive that has been relocated to Regensburg in a digital form that can provide information on community history and biographies of Jewish inhabitants of Regensburg from the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the ultimate decision-making authority of what should be part of an exhibition and in which way it should be presented lies with the Jewish participants of the community.

Challenges and Opportunities

As anticipated, we encountered various challenges, some of which we had prepared for, while others became apparent as we progressed with our work. For instance, we were mindful that most participants would likely have no prior experience with exhibitions. We also expected that the contemporary Jewish community might not have a strong connection to the medieval history of the city and the Jews in Regensburg due to its diverse cultural backgrounds. A significant number of current community members immigrated to Germany from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s. This meant that community members had to

overcome some obstacles to participate in the working group including language barriers, which is why the invitations were sent out bilingually. Building mutual trust and getting to know each other better is crucial for establishing a strong foundation for cooperation and learning the stories behind the people. Since we do not speak Russian, we are grateful for the assistance of a native Russian speaker who has been supporting us with communication and other tasks. The language barrier also presents a challenge in reaching our target group, as the participants have been considering whether to keep the exhibition texts bilingual and, in the end, decided to offer Russian translations of each text in smaller booklets attached to our posters.

Despite these difficulties, we are committed to this way of working as it forms the foundation for what follows. Our long-term aim is to showcase the cultural heritage of Regensburg's Jewish community, emphasizing the significance of objects, topics, ideas, and concepts chosen by the community itself. By patrimonializing this cultural heritage, the Jewish community holds the power to shape future discourse on Judaism in the city. Embracing all eras of Jewish history, we aim to bring today's Jewish community closer to an international awareness of the city's significance and build bridges between medieval, modern, and today's aspects of Judaism. So far, we have opened two diverse exhibitions in the community center and have started to form a new way of handling cultural heritage and connecting strains of Jewish culture throughout the centuries. As Irina Gaydar, member and cultural advisor of the Jewish community in Regensburg, put it in her speech opening our first exhibition:

Our exhibition is the result of a close collaboration between the members of our community and renowned historians from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich – Prof. Dr. Haverkamp-Rott, Dr. Riedler-Pohlers, and Mrs. Weigand.

Together we have created a multifaceted and fascinating picture of Jewish culture, which includes music, language, art, literature and humor. Our private memories and ideas, which we brought to Regensburg, were supplemented by the LMU team with documents and pictures from Regensburg's Jewish past.

Of course, our exhibition only covers a small part of the possible aspects and materials. The most difficult task for us was to build a bridge between the medieval past and us – mostly “Soviet Jews”.

In the course of our work we were amazed. We suddenly realized that medieval Jews in Regensburg and our Ashkenazi ancestors most likely spoke the same language – Yiddish – and laughed at the same jokes. Music was and is a universal language that connects people and awakens emotions. In this way, the medieval legacy of the Jews here in Regensburg no longer seemed so far removed from our ancestors and, as a result, from us.

This exhibition is a call for appreciation and dialog. It reminds us that cultural diversity is an enrichment for our society and that by getting to know and understand these sources, we can broaden our own horizons and leave them as cultural heritage for our children.³³

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³³ Irina Gaydar, "Eröffnung der Ausstellung 'Unseres! Jüdische Kultur durch die Jahrhunderte'", <https://jg-regensburg.de/eroeffnung-der-ausstellung-unseres-juedische-kultur-durch-die-jahrhunderte/>, modified June 2023, accessed June 11, 2024.

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