Transnational Gateways
Urban Jewish Philanthropy in the Age of Migration[*]

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Abstract

The long nineteenth century was not only a century of mass migration. It also saw the emergence of modern forms of organized philanthropy. Based on a micro-historical comparison of two institutions established in London and Paris around the turn of the century for the purpose of assisting Jewish migrants and transmigrants, this article calls for a revision of traditional views of urban Jewish philanthropy. Rather than being exclusively a site of internal conflicts, philanthropic institutions became spaces where different models of social organization and cultural identity converged and new forms of intra-communal coexistence were established. Besides functioning as local points of entry, these institutions also occupied an important liminal position within transnational migratory networks.

Keywords: Philanthropy, Migration, Liminality, Jewish identities

บทคัดย่อ

ช่วงปลายศตวรรษที่ 19 ถึงต้นศตวรรษที่ 20 ไม่ได้เป็นเพียงศตวรรษของการย้ายถิ่นขนาดใหญ่ แต่ยังเป็นช่วงที่เห็นการเกิดขึ้นของการจัดตั้งองค์กรการให้เพื่อสังคมสมัยใหม่อันมีจุดเริ่มต้นมาจากการเปรียบเทียบทางประวัติศาสตร์ขนาดเล็กระหว่างสองสถาบันที่จัดตั้งขึ้นในช่วงย่างเข้าศตวรรษใหม่ในกรุงลอนดอนและปารีส เพื่อให้ความช่วยเหลือผู้อพยพชาวยิวและผู้อพยพย้ายถิ่นฐานออกนอกประเทศ บทความนี้ต้องการเรียกร้องให้มีการทบทวนแก้ไขมุมมองต่อองค์กรการให้เพื่อสังคมของชุมชนชาวยิวในเมืองที่มีมาแต่โบราณที่เป็นสถานที่อันทำให้เกิดความขัดแย้งภายในชุมชน แต่ในทางกลับกันสถาบันการให้เพื่อสังคมได้กลายเป็นพื้นที่ที่หลากหลายรูปแบบขององค์กรทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรมภายในชุมชนชาวยิวได้มาบรรจบกันและทำหน้าเป็นทางเข้าสู่ชุมชนสำหรับผู้อพยพ นอกจากนั้นสถาบันการให้เพื่อสังคมยังมีบทบาทข้ามชาติในการอนุญาตให้ผู้อพยพย้ายถิ่นฐานจากที่หนึ่งไปยังอีกที่หนึ่งได้เช่นกัน

คำสำคัญ การให้เพื่อสังคม การอพยพ จุดเปลี่ยนผ่าน อัตลักษณ์ของชาวยิว

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1. Introduction

The long nineteenth century has aptly been called the age of mass migration. Unprecedented numbers of people relocated from their old homes to new destinations. Most of them settled in urban areas. Jewish migration from Central and Eastern Europe constituted a substantial segment within this global migratory regime. In their wake, these migratory movements led to fundamental socio-economic transformations, altering local social structures and infusing new cultural patterns into the existing urban fabric. Such developments triggered a fundamental restructuring of urban Jewish charitable institutions. This article sets out to show how philanthropy became a major site of convergence linking local and transnational elements. Through the comparative micro-historical analyses of two philanthropic institutions set up in London and Paris, the following study reconstructs the complexities of encounters and entanglement between established communities and the migrant contingent. Against the traditional historiographical views, stressing the antagonism between these different urban Jewish groups, this article argues that philanthropy was not merely a means of exercising social control but also a space of exchange and cooperation. Furthermore, this article sets forth the argument that approaches analysing philanthropy solely in local and domestic frameworks are insufficient. A transnationally embedded micro-historical approach, promises to rectify some of these long-standing views on urban philanthropy. Rather than centring the analysis around elite discourses of charitable work and the ideological superstructure of social policy, a micro-historical approach shifts the focus onto the level of actual practices, revealing the ambiguities characterizing philanthropy at work, its alternating and, at times, contradictory functions as well as its role within the context of intra-communal relations.

Besides their local function as gateways into the new urban environment, institutions such the Paris Asile de nuit and the Jews' Temporary Shelter in London played an important mediating role between global migratory networks and local urban settings. Both institutions became liminal spaces. On the one hand, they constituted mechanism of incorporating the migrants into the existing urban Jewish frameworks. On the other, the London Shelter and the Paris Asile served as transitory spaces linking transnational migration routes as well as establishing contact and exchanges between different Jewish and non-Jewish groups. Despite the transitory nature of these encounters, they had a lasting impact on both locals and transmigrants, shaping their views and constituting patterns that continued to shape Jewish communal culture and organization on both ends of the migratory continuum. Unfortunately, migration studies have hitherto addressed this aspect only impartially. One of the reasons for

this desideratum is the lack of an insufficient source base to obtain viable empirical results. The developments of the two institutions analysed here, provides a rare insight into this marginalized aspect.

In order to explore these aspects, this paper employs the term 'liminality' in a broad sense, stressing the notion of transitionality and *becomingness*. The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep was the first to introduce the term *liminalité* in 1909. In his seminal study *Les rites de passage*, Gennep utilized liminality as an analytical device to study the middle stage of rites of passage. (1960, p. 11) Victor W. Turner rediscovered Gennep's work and extended the concept of liminarity onto various dislocations. (1977, esp. ch. 3) In his work, Turner (1969) focusses on the relationship between various renderings of individual transformation embodied in behavioural ritualization that signal a new stage of the individual's psychosocial ontogeny. Over the course of this transitional process, the liminal *personae* are detached from their previously held positions in the social structure and undergo a transformation rendering their structural attributes ambigious,before reemerging into the social structure with enhanced functions or status. (Gilead, 1986, p. 183) During the liminal stage, the subject is left 'betwixt and between' positions. (Turner, 1977, p. 95)

This article applys these notions to the field of urban Jewish migration and philanthropy by linking them to aspects of transnationalism. In doing so, it expands the concept 'liminality' to apply to individuals as well as social formations, replacing the ritualistic dimension of rites of passage with socio-symbolic processes aimed at the creation of collective identities.

Rather than being mere way stations amidts transnational migratory flows, the urban Jewish philanthropic insitutions discussed below represent locations of transition *and* transformation. Not only did they help to transform the migrants passing through them but they also played an essential role in transforming the sociocultural communal environment from which these institutions emerged. The following discussion, hence, rejects the assimilationist perspective long dominant in migration studies, most prominently put forward by members of the Chicago School of Sociology, replacing it with a view stressing the aspect of multidirectional transformations of and by both migrants and established community.[1] Neither does the urban context per se constitute a place of accelerating continual assimilation, nor does philanthropy

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[1]On the work of the Chicago School, see Park, Burgess, and McKenzie, 1925 and Wirth, 1928. For a critical perspective, see Alba and Nee, 2003.

solely serve as an agent of sociocultural integration. Both city and philanthropy represent ambiguous spaces where homogenizing and diversifying tendencies converge.

2. Setting the scene

Around the turn of the century, both London and Paris became major European centres of Jewish migration and transmigration. According to estimates, some 120,000 to 150,000 Jewish immigrants settled in England between 1881 and 1914. (Endelman, 2002, p. 127) During the same period, about 44,000 arrived in France. (Green, 1986, pp. 201-206) More than eighty per cent of these immigrants settled in the capital cities. The figures of transmigrants were presumably even higher.

For a long time, views stressing the antagonism between the acculturated and socially integrated "native" Jewish communities and the socially backward "unwelcome strangers" (Jack Wertheimer) from Central and Eastern Europe have dominated the historiography of Western European Jewry. Repeatedly, historians have stressed that the existing Jewish communities regarded the arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the urban centres of Western Europe as a threat to their carefully cultivated self-presentation and sociocultural position. Of central importance in this context was the public visibility and territorialisation of Jewish immigration. Upon arriving in London and Paris, most Jewish immigrants – not unlike many other earlier and later migrant groups – set up their own religious and educational infrastructure, including networks of mutual aid. This process of transplanting traditional organizational elements from the old home into the new urban environment often resulted in spatial and linguistic self-segregation. The immigrant communities' parallel administrative system evaded the hegemonic claim of existing communal institutions and organizations. The deepening socio-spatial division of urban Jewish communities resulting from these developments led to growing anxieties among the local Jewish establishment. Many English Jews feared that a visible Eastern European Jewish presence in certain urban neighbourhoods would give rise to anti-Semitic sentiments jeopardizing their social status. Consequently, the established community sought ways to discourage a further influx of foreign coreligionists or to install procedures insuring a swift transmigration of the newcomers to distant locations across the Atlantic or on the imperial periphery. Both attempts, however, had only marginal affects.

The immigrants' area of first settlement became a focal point for these fears and concerns. Many contemporaries, perceived neighbourhoods such as the East End of London (see Feldman, 1994, esp. ch. 7) or the Marais and Belleville districts in Paris (see Benain,

1995; Simon, 1993) as a world apart or as new ghettos. Increasingly these areas became contested territories, where different concepts of urban Jewish cultures clashed. Hence, both Anglo-Jewish and French-Jewish leaders turned to measures directed at the local immigrant population. Eradicating the immigrants' perceived foreignness and transforming them onto a copy of themselves became the communal leadership's leitmotif on either sides of the Channel. They often did so in a paternalistic manner disregarding the cultural patterns and traditions of their foreign brethren. (Hyman, 1978, pp. 220-222) These attempts, especially the fundamental reorganization and extension of the Jewish welfare infrastructure in response to the continued influx of immigrants, highlight the extent to which migration and migrants challenged and shaped the existing urban Jewish landscape in both capital cities. The London Jewish Board of Guardians and the Comité de bienfaisance israélite de Paris – both founded long before the onset of the Eastern European Jewish exodus – gained central importance in the endeavour of urban Jewries to coordinate and centralize local charitable initiatives. (see Dove, 1998; Kahn, 1886; Leglaive-Perani, 2010; Lipman, 1954; Magnus, 1909)[2] For the existing Jewish communities, the emergence of an immigrant "ghetto" within their cities represented both an anachronism and a challenge to their position. Having achieved full legal emancipation, both British and French Jews felt compelled to show their allegiance to their respective societies by furthering their own sociocultural integration. This process found an expression in the Jewish communities' adoption of central ideological features of the host societies. The 1894 Dreyfus Affair represented a stark reminder of the fragility of this integrationist project and triggered a long-term debate concerning Jewish assimilation and its discontents. Simultaneously, the established Jewish elites in Britain and France felt a strong sense of commitment to aid their persecuted coreligionists and promote their sociocultural advancement. Consequently, communal philanthropy represented a highly ambivalent activity, constantly shifting between the poles of ethnic solidarity and cultural domination. (see Green, 1987)

While the existence of internal divisions shall not be denied here, a critical reassessment of the view of two antagonistic, segregated urban Jewish communities confined to distinct areas within the urban landscape is needed. Contrary to such an interpretation, this article argues that the modern city in general and urban philanthropic institutions in particular served as spaces of encounter, enabling different Jewish groups to renegotiate and remodel patterns of urban Jewish culture.

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[2] David Feldmann (1989) provides a critical survey of the modernization discourse at work in this context.

3. A bakery back room

In the wake of waves of pogroms sweeping through the Russian Empire in the early 1880s, Anglo-Jewry was one of the first groups in Western Europe to stage public protests against Tsarist discrimination against Jews. The publication of a series of articles in the London *Times* entitled 'The Persecution of the Jews in Russia' in 1882 marked the beginning of this campaign. In addition to publically expressing their support for Russian brethren and condemning tsarist atrocities against Jews, representatives of London Jewry lobbied MPs and government officials. These efforts peaked in a great public meeting at Mansion House, the office of London's Lord Mayor. The meeting decided to set up the so-called Mansion House Relief Fund to assist Russian Jewry. (*Jewish Chronicle*, 3 February and 27 October 1882, Anonymous, 1882) Faced with growing numbers of Russian-Jewish refugees arriving at British ports, initial solidarity, however, quickly gave way to a more reserved attitude toward the "persecuted brethren". Increasingly, the Anglo-Jewish leadership tried to find ways of discouraging further immigration. (Gartner, 1960, pp. 24-26) Simultaneously, Anglo-Jewry began to modernize the antiquated community's welfare institutions in an attempt to enable them to cope with the unprecedented numbers of poor Jews in the metropolis. The aid offered to the newcomers, however, remained partial. The London Jewish Board of Guardians, for instance, denied any charitable support to individuals until they had lived in Britain for a period of at least six months. (Black, 1988, p. 79) Besides attempting to discourage further immigration of Russian Jews, Anglo-Jewish leaders vehemently propagated the speedy Anglicization of those already in London. Philanthropy seemed to provide an appropriate instrument to gaining social and cultural control over the immigrants and to foster their sociocultural integration into the existing communal structure. (see Rozin, 1999; Sharot, 1974; Tananbaum, 1991) Such a view was not specifically Jewish. It rather reflected the dominant late-Victorian ideology on charity and social policy more generally.

Yet the Jewish elites faced specific challenges to their endeavour. Their attempts of forced enculturation were met with growing resentment among the immigrant population. Many Jewish immigrants regarded the establishment's charitable work as a deliberate attack on their traditional mores and beliefs. Consequently, they increasingly attempted to take matters of charity and social support into their own hands by setting up independent structures of mutual aid outside of the establishment's philanthropic apparatus.

An early example for this development was the refuge founded in the heart of the immigrant Jewish settlement in Whitechapel in 1879. Simon Cohen, a Polish Jew who had

arrived in England in 1870 and had established himself as baker in the East End, allowed an unoccupied portion of his premise on Church Lane to be used as a temporary shelter, 'which gradually absorbed within its precincts a considerable proportion of the homeless foreign Jews.' (PJTS, First Annual Report, 1885-6) Furthermore, he provided those staying in his bakery with clothes and kosher food. The proximity to the *beth ha'midarash* (Jewish house of learning) on Church Lane, moreover, provided the newcomers with facilities for prayer and religious studies. (*Jewish Chronicle*, 26 October 1888) These aspects underscore the liminal character of Cohen's shelter. Rather than just easing his coreligionists' transition into the unfamiliar urban environment by supplying them with necessities such as food and shelter, Cohen also ensured that they had access to facilities vital for the upholding of a traditional (Eastern European) Jewish way of life. The shelter, thus, linked the old and the new home in a way that ensured the continuation of virtual translocational flows.

Cohen set up his improvised refuge without obtaining any permission by official London-Jewish philanthropic bodies and this unsanctioned decision soon brought his refuge into the firing line. Once they had learned about its existence, members of the London Jewish elite came to regard the shelter as an open challenge to their authority. The debates concerning the unsanitary conditions of many East End dwellings, triggered by the enquiry of a commission set up by the leading British medical journal *The Lancet* in 1884, provided the Jewish leadership with a pretext to regain the upper hand in matters concerning metropolitan Jewish philanthropy. (Lancet, 1884, see also *Jewish Chronicle,* 9 May 1884) In April 1885, representatives of the Jewish Board of Guardians paid Cohen's shelter a surprise visit. In their subsequent report to the Board, they pointed out the desolate sanitary conditions and expressed their concern that 'such a harbour of refuge must tend to invite helpless foreigners […], and therefore was not a desirable institution to exist.' (JBG, Minute Book, 8 October 1885)

4. The clash

The report sparked an open dispute between the Anglo-Jewish establishment and immigrant groups. During the following weeks, the Board of Guardians successfully worked towards bringing about the closure of the refuge. The high-handed decisions to close Cohen's shelter led to an outbreak of protests the establishment had not anticipated. In the face of the immigrant Jews' growing opposition to their decision, the Board called a public meeting in the East End to defend its decision. The meeting, however, did not produce the desired outcome and rather than calming down the situation, it aggravated it further. The gathering ended in

turmoil. By the end of the meeting, the situation was at the brink of an open fight between 'some English Jewish lads and some of the Polish Jews' and 'it was found necessary to call in the assistance of the police to disperse the crowd.' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 1 May 1885)

Resolving the situation and to ease tensions seemed increasingly impossible. In this muddle, a group of successful Jewish businessmen gathered to consider alternative solutions to the shelter question. They suggested replacing Cohen's shelter with a permanent refuge complying with the Board's standards. The *spiritus rector* behind the plan was Hermann Landau, a Polish-born immigrant, who had become a successful stockbroker. Assisted by the banker Samuel Montagu (later that year elected Liberal MP for Whitechapel) and others, Landau organized several meetings to discuss his plan. He also entered into negotiations with Anglo-Jewish officials. Following intense exchanges with representatives of the Board of Guardians, both sides agreed to entrust the further evaluation of the shelter question to a conjoint committee.

After several meetings, the committee presented a scheme for establishing a shelter for immigrants. According to this scheme, the new shelter should neither 'distribut[e] relief in money,' nor should it 'open[…] any workshop for the purpose of giving actual employment.'(Mundy, 1922, ch. 3) New arrivals were to be admitted into the Shelter for a maximum period of two weeks without being allowed to re-enter thereafter and, in case an inmate did not succeed in finding employment during this period, the Shelter should refer him to the Board for repatriation. (Mundy, 1922, ch. 3) On 5 October 1885, the committee presented its compromise to the Board of Guardians. Despite the recommendation of the Board's president Lionel L. Cohen to accept the plan, the members rejected it by ten to four votes. (JBG, Minute Book, 8 October 1885) Even in Anglo-Jewish circles, the Board's decision came under harsh criticism. In an editorial, the *Jewish World* reminded Anglo-Jewry of its responsibility for the foreign immigrants:

'All Jews are brethren, and there are probably not ten Jews in the whole United Kingdom whose residence here can be traced back one hundred years.'

(*Jewish World*, 9 October 1885)

Despite the Board's rejection, Landau and his supporters continued their efforts, stressing that they were optimistic the Board of Guardians would revise its decision and join their effort for establishing a temporary shelter. Indeed, Landau suggested that the Board

should eventually offer financial support for the project. In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle,* Landau pointed out that '[r]egarding the action of the Board of Guardians, I have only to say that events will prove the wisdom of the minority in desiring that this Shelter should work in harmony with, and under the guidance of the Board.' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 16 October 1885)

The shelter activists now turned their attention to gaining support among East End Jews. The following week, Landau and his supporters called a public meeting in East London to formally establish the 'Poor Jews' (Temporary) Shelter'. Besides electing a provisional general committee for the institution, the meeting passed a resolution in the form of a letter to the Board of Guardians. This letter, undersigned by Hermann Landau on behalf of the Provisional Committee, stated that the establishment of the Shelter was 'secured by the widespread sympathy with which it has been greeted by the community, and especially that portion of it that resides in the East End of London.' Simultaneously, Landau and his supporters assured the Board of their continued interest in cooperation between both bodies. Hence, the open letter stressed that the formal establishment of the shelter was by no means intended to present a challenge to the Board's work but that its 'activity will begin only where yours [the Board's] constitutionally ends.' Moreover, the letter addressed the establishment's central objection to the shelter. It explicitly emphasized that the new institution would 'effectually discourage' bringing 'irretrievably helpless, the aged, the sick, the worthless and the drones' to Britain whilst promoting 'habits of cleanliness, industry and independence.'

Emphasising the local community's support for their quest, the authors hailed the self-help attempts of the 'comparatively poor Jewish inhabitants of the East End of London' to assist the poor immigrants as best as they could.

'But they do feel the hardship of having to dispense their charity almost daily and of necessity—having no means of examining facts—indiscriminately. They therefore determined to found an institution which they will support small […] contributions, whose object it will be to examine thoroughly each case […].'

The letter closed by assuring the Board that 'with or without direct cooperation on your part we are determined that none but the most cordial relations shall subsist between your body and our own, both being inspired with the same spirit of true Jewish charity.' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 23 October 1885) In another letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, Franklin, Landau and Montagu called on the Anglo-Jewish communal leadership to assist the immigrants in their mutual aid

projects more generously. (*Jewish Chronicle*, 13 November 1885) This appeal, however, received no official reply. (PJTS, First Annual Report, 1885-6)

5. New beginnings

Despite a difficult financial situation, the new Shelter opened its doors at 12 Great Garden Street in November 1885, some blocks away from Cohen's bakery. The building, however, proved inadequate for the purpose and, with just ten beds, the premise was soon overcrowded. Nonetheless, the idea of the shelter as an institution able to bridge the East-West divides gained momentum and reverberated in many public statements of activists and supporters. The following months saw growing efforts of securing the urgently needed funds. Simultaneously, a major change in the relationship between the organizers of the shelter and the Anglo-Jewish establishment took place.

The presence of many Jewish notables at the formal opening of the Shelter in its new building on Leman Street the following year indicates to what extent the organizers had succeeded in changing the Anglo-Jewish leadership perspective. Herman Adler, the Delegate Chief Rabbi, had agreed to deliver the inauguration address. This publicly displayed support for the new institution should however not be overrated. A closer look at Adler's discourse reveals the continuing disquietude among the community leadership. Adler expressed these concerns, when he proclaimed:

'May the inmates who come here from time to time ever be penetrated with the thought, that they must not eat the bread of idleness, but that if they eat the labour of their hands, then and then only will they be happy.' (Mundy, 1922, ch. 7)

He continued by emphasising that the new institution ought to make every possible effort to ensure the migrants' economic self-sufficiency.

An examination of entries in the shelter's visitors' book, however, indicate that the general defensive attitude of West End Jews towards the institutions increasingly gave way to more accommodating, even enthusiastic views. Members of the established community were often impressed by the institution's model conditions. In the entries they left in the Shelter's visitors' book, they praised the new 'useful and necessary' institution enthusiastically for its 'good principles' and 'cleanliness'. (PJTS, Visitor Book, 1886) These entries demonstrate the fundamental change in attitude to the project of a temporary refuge among many West End

Jews, underscoring that the Shelter served as liminal space in two ways. Besides facilitating the newcomers' integration into the existing communal structure, it also fostered a change of mind among the establishment leading to a more receptive attitude towards their foreign coreligionists.

Despite the growing communal support, the organizers of the Shelter still saw themselves confronted with the reproach that their institution continued to attract "undesirable" Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Separate parliamentary committees set up to investigate social developments in London's East End in 1888 and 1903 were eager to determine if the Shelter attracted further immigration. In his statement to the 'Royal Commission on Alien Immigration' in 1903, Herman Landau refuted such allegations by stressing that the Shelter's primary task was to provide 'temporary refuge and protection for those immigrants who were proceeding to America, South Africa, and other countries.' Furthermore, he emphasized that the relief offered by the shelter was 'essentially only temporary, and cannot by any stretch of the imagination be termed an attraction to the immigrants.'(Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, 1903, pp. 568-569, qq. 16271, 16280)

It is difficult to determine the Shelter's actual "pull". Given the extensive coverage of migrant experiences in the Yiddish-speaking press, it is to be assumed that the Jewish population of the Pale of Settlement[3] was well aware of its existence. Informal transnational networks, such as personal correspondence and the reports of returning migrants also helped to disseminate information about the philanthropic infrastructure in Western Europe. Over the years, the shelter officials increasingly sought to counter these allegations by setting up schemes for organized transmigration of the shelter inmates to overseas destinations (especially to South Africa). In practical terms this meant that the Shelter assisted transmigrants in obtaining tickets for their onwards journey and organized their transfer to major international ports, such as Southampton (Barker, 1998; Newman, 2005) The attempt to reconcile 'opposing outlooks on immigration policy,' hence became a central feature of the Shelter's agenda. (Gartner, 1960, p. 54) On the one hand, it continued to serve as an important gateway into the

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[3]The term 'Pale of Settlement' (in Russian Черта постоя́ннойевре́йскойосе́длости, cherta postoyannoy yevreyskoy osedlosti) refers to the territories of the Russian Empire in which Jews were permitted to settle permanently. Following the first partition of Poland 1772, large number of Jews came under Russian rule. In response to a petition by the Moscow merchant class fearing competition, Empress Catherine II's government issued a degree prohibiting Jewish merchants from trading in the provinces of inner Russia. According to census date, close to five million Jews lived in the Pale by 1897 (94% of the total Jewish population of the Russian Empire). For more details, see Klier (1986).

city for many immigrants. Alternatively, it came to be a hub linking transnational inbound and outbound flows of migration.

Besides attempts to encourage migrants to continue their en route journeys and prevent them from permanently settling in Britain, the representatives of the Shelter regularly went down to the docks to offer assistance to newly arrived immigrants, trying to protect them from falling into the hands of missionaries, swindlers or petty-criminals and helping them to make a start in London. (PJTS, Seventeenth Annual Report, 1901-2)These activities are a graphic example of the Shelter's persistent liminal function.

By the time Landau gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Immigration in 1903, more than 10,000 immigrants had passed through the shelter. (Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, 1903, pp. 569, q. 16278) In order to cope with this high number of migrants, the shelter moved to a new purpose-built edifice at 82 Leman Street in 1906. On the occasion of the new building's inauguration, the *Jewish Year Book* effusively editorialised the institution's success. Yet, the editors still deemed it necessary to fend off accusations that the Shelter attracted undesirable immigrants, stressing that the inmates 'either proceed to their destination abroad (the United States, Canada, South Africa, or Australia) or find employment in England.'(Harris, 1907, p. 106) The Shelter's work underscored that a conjoint effort of migrant self-help supported by the established community could lead to mutually beneficial improvements. The eradication of the term "poor" in the institutions title was but one indication of this transformation.

The developments leading to the establishment of the Jews' Temporary Shelter (as it was officially called after 1902) highlight the dividing forces within Anglo-Jewish philanthropy. At the same time, these developments reveal the transformative power emerging from the clashes and convergence of competing outlooks on charitable work and sociocultural integration that eventually led to new forms of communal action and identity. The debates surrounding the Shelter's mission and place within the fabric of a diversifying urban Jewish community in turn-of-the-century London, underscores the institution's liminal position. Rather than being absorbed by the hegemonic discourse of late Victorian philanthropy adopted by the Anglo-Jewish establishment, it succeeded in bringing about alternative forms of ethnic solidarity and intra-communal exchanges, transforming the immigrant contingent as well as the urban Jewish community in London as a whole.

6. The formation of the Asile Israélite in Paris

Around the time of the consolidation of the London Shelter, Jewish circles on the other side of the Channel projected a similar institution for the French capital. Like London, turn-of-the-century Paris had become an important destination of Eastern and Central European Jewish immigrants. As in Britain, Jewish migration to France resulted in growing diversification as well as fragmentation of urban Jewry. Similar to their East End co-religionists, Eastern European Jews in Paris sought to set up their own communal networks and were determined to administer institutions besides those established by French Jewry. (Hyman, 1979, p. 81) Some scholars go as far as to argue, that the creation of cultural and philanthropic organizations such as *landsmanshaften* (fraternal organizations made up of immigrants from the same region of origin) and mutual aid societies 'signalled the desire for independence on the part of immigrant groups in relation to French-born Jews and their interest in managing their own affairs.' (Benbassa, 1999, p. 135)

An influential Yiddish almanac lamented that, until 1900, poor Jews travelling through Paris did not even have a place where they could stay temporarily and that the Franco-Jewish philanthropic networks lacked a Jewish *ha'kneset orkhim* (guesthouse). (Speiser, 1910, p. 61) That year, a group of Russian and Romanian Jews gathered in Paris to resolve the matter and establish a body to close the gap in the Jewish charitable network. Like the London Shelter, the Société philanthropique de l'asile israélite (as the new body was called), was initially the result of immigrant self-aid. Most of the Asile's founders had come to Paris as immigrants and had managed to establish their own small businesses there. They felt compelled and capable to assist their less fortunate brethren. The driving force behind the project was Moïse Fleischer, a proprietor of a successful cotton print business. (*Archives Israélites,* 8 August 1901) He was unanimously elected the first president of the new body, a post he held until his death in 1905. Among the founders were other eminent immigrants, such as the rabbi and scholar Jehudah Lubetzki or Solomon Novochelski, whose father had co-founded the first immigrant philanthropic organization in Paris in 1886, the Société de bienfaisance et d'humanité. (*Jewish Chronicle,* 23 September 1910)

The Asile's operational scope resembled that of the London Shelter. Upon arrival, the immigrants had to register. Then, they were provided with clean clothes, a hot meal and admitted to stay at the premise. (*Archives Israélites* 4 May 1911) Despite many similarities, there are also significant differences between the Paris institution and its London predecessor. The stringent rules concerning the length of time a person was allowed to stay at the Asile

were quickly relaxed and handled more flexibly than at the London Shelter. Initially fixed to a period of seven days, immigrants were soon allowed to stay for five to fifteen days. (*Archives Israélites*, 8 August 1901) Shelter, food, and clothing were offered completely free of charge. In the early days of its existence, the Asile provided some thirty to forty visitors a day with a hot meal and a change of clothes. (Green, 1990, p. 213) Over the following years, the figures soared dramatically. In 1911, the Asile accommodated 1,952 individuals and a year later, the figure stood at 2,469. In response to the growing demand, the Asile extended the space to accommodate women and their children. (Société philanthropique de l'Asile israélite de Paris, 1906, p. 23) Furthermore, the institution's hospitality was not limited to Jewish migrants but included transmigrants and other person in need, 'regardless of their religion or nationality.' Consequently, the number of French nationals accommodated at the Asile, at times, outnumbered that of migrants. (Société philanthropique de l'Asile israélite de Paris, 1906, p. 44) Additionally, the Asile offered aid to unemployed immigrants or French workers. In the case of those requiring to stay longer in order to secure employment, the institution was prepared to extent the fifteen nights limit. (Green, 1986, p. 93) These policies underscore the Asile's self-perception as a gateway and liminal space. Rather than solely managing the stream of migrants passing through, it defined its mission more broadly to include facilitating the newcomers actively in their attempts to settle in Paris. A possible explanation for this attitude may lie in the absence of a rigorous moral superstructure dominating late-Victorian philanthropy.

An early report of the Asile's activities stressed that the provision of immediate material support in the form of food, clothes and shelter was but one aspect of the new institution's agenda. The report expressed the founders' strong sense of solidarity towards their "malheureux frères" ("unfortunate brothers") based on the shared migrant experience.

'We who know the anguish of the poor in a foreign country, where he knows not the language, has no friend or acquaintance, *we,* who have all more or less gone through this critical stage ourselves, we must raise high the banner of hospitality. … We have thus wanted to come to our unfortunate brothers' aid, in offering them a refuge, their own home, where they will be considered, not as beggars, but as wounded brothers whose bleeding sores demand consideration and respect.'

The organizers of the Asile also sought to provide the newcomers with a sense of direction and 'orientation in the labyrinth of the metropolis.'(Société philanthropique de l'Asile israélite de Paris, 1906, pp. 13-15) While the report does not provide any further details concerning this issue, Hersh Mendel's autobiographical account of his arrival in Paris sheds light on the obstacles many immigrants faced in the unfamiliar urban environment. 'We were neither able to speak a word of French nor understand it', Hersh recalled. 'The young man accompanying me only knew the name of one street: Rue des Rosiers. Each time we ran into anybody who looked Jewish, we asked where Rue des Rosiers was located. And though everyone gave us some sort of answer, we understood but little. Evidently, however, we were approaching our destination.' Despite finding the street that appeared 'indeed a bit more like home, 'Hersh realized,' I neither had any addresses nor the name of acquaintants, nor did I have any money for a bite to eat. … It wasn't hard to see that I was a greenhorn.' (Mendel, 1989, p. 128)

7. Franco-Jewish support

The early development of the Asile reflects the trajectories of the Parisian Jewish community at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like the London Shelter, the Asile faced allegations of attracting undesirable immigrants bringing with them infectious diseases. Both the Asile's officials and French-Jewish institutions repeatedly refuted such assertions emphasizing that the refugees from the East were not professional beggars but in their majority "honest workers" willing to earn their living or visitors en route to overseas destinations. (Green, 1990, pp. 213-214)

The joint refuting of anti-Semitic allegations, points to a central dissimilarity between the shelters in Paris and London. The Asile did not have to face a hostile Jewish communal establishment; on the contrary, it soon received extensive public support. Initially, established Franco-Jewish institutions (namely the Alliance Israélite Universelle), eyed the new institution critically. Soon however, these reservations gave way to cooperation and the incorporation of the Asile into the communal philanthropic network.

The reports on the Asile appearing in the French Jewish press clearly indicated this changing attitude. Articles dealing with the newly founded institutions were full of praise and appreciation for the project. About a month after the Asile's opening, the community paper, *Archives Israélites*, provided its readers with a detailed account about this new institution founded by 'men of heart' to serve 'their unfortunate coreligionists from Russia and Romania

thrown onto the pavements of Paris by misery and persecution.' (*Archives Israélites* 8 August 1901) Hyppolite Prague, the editor of *Archives Israelites* praised the creation of the Asile as a manifestation of the immigrants' 'traditional sentiment of Jewish solidarity with their compatriots.' (*Archives Israélites* 18 April 1901)

Despite the media support, the Asile had to face a very difficult financial situation during the early years of its existence. (Speiser, 1910, p. 61) The public support of Jewish religious leadership served a major role in overcoming these initial difficulties. On 10 July 1901, Zadoc Kahn, the *Grand Rabbin* de France, paid the shelter a visit. Upon completing his tour of the premise, he penned the following lines into the shelter's registry:

'After having visited the house myself and after having appreciated its excellent conduct I would like to congratulate those who have opened the Asile, supporting and sustaining it with their donations and running it with great cordial devotion, from the bottom of my heart.

May God bless this eminent charitable institution and may many generous hearts show their generosity and support to it.' (*Archives Israélites* 8 August 1901)

The importance of France's leading Jewish authority visiting the newly founded institution can hardly be overrated. Kahn's visit marked a decisive turning point. It levelled the path towards broad-scale communal support for the shelter. Following the visit, numerous members of the Parisian Jewish establishment began to support the institution's work actively. One of the first to make a considerable financial contribution to its activities was the widow of Baron Adolphe de Rothschild. Out of her late husband's legacy to Jewish charities, the Asile received a generous donation of 10,000 francs. (*Archives Israélites* 8 August 1901) In the ensuing years, other leading Jewish families followed. In 1906, Saul and Georges Merzbach donated 50,000 francs in memory of their late father. (*Archives Israélites* 15 February 1906) The list of benefactors was not limited to representatives of the Jewish establishment but included a wide range of organisations and public figures, among them the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Préfet de Police. (Green, 1986, pp. 93-95) In addition to this outside support, major financial contributions towards the work of the Asile continued to come from members of the immigrant community, especially successful Jewish artisans and merchants. (Hofmeester, 2004, p. 207)

The growing base of support allowed the Asile to expand its activities. Whereas the original shelter had started out with only thirty beds, the capacity had reached one hundred by 1909. The development of regular contributors indicates a similar trend. Over the period of just five years, the number of subscribers rose from forty to 450. (Speiser, 1910, p. 61)

Until 1906, some 6.440 persons had passed through the Asile, among them 2.500 Russians, 1.470 Romanians, 1.540 Jews from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 750 form other countries and even 140 non-Jews. In addition to providing migrants and transmigrants with shelter, 2.700 meals had been given out. (*Archives Israélites* 15 February 1906) While the majority of person passing through the institution came from Eastern and Central Europe, the Asile also attracted Jews from around the Mediterranean. Between 1906 and 1911, approximately 7 per cent of those staying in the Asile were Sephardic Jews from the Levant. (Benveniste, 1989, p. 130) Hence, the Asile became a place of encounter between different Jewish migrant groups that would otherwise have remained within the limits of their respective *landsmanshaften*. Unfortunately, we lack direct accounts of these encounters. Nonetheless, it is credible to assume that the Asile contributed to intra-communal solidarity among early twentieth-century Parisian Jewry in general and different Jewish immigrant groups (chiefly Polish and Romanian) in particular.

8. From the *Pletzl* to the Butte

Besides its role in remodelling intra-communal exchanges, the development of the Paris shelter also reflects how the non-Jewish environment shaped the organization of Jewish philanthropy. In a more explicit way than in the case of its London predecessor, the Paris Asile came to approximate the model of French institutions of a similar type. The concluding decades of the nineteenth century saw a surge in the establishment of night shelters and temporary refuges across the French capital. In 1912, an official publication listed more than twenty night shelters offering some 2,500 beds in the inner city districts and suburbs of Paris. (Office central des oeuvres de bienfaisance et services sociaux, 1912, pp. 494-496) The establishment of the Asile Israélite followed this trend – a phenomenon not uncommon at the time. Across Western Europe, newly established Jewish philanthropic organizations followed the model of non-Jewish institutions. (see Dab, 1994) These organizations were predominantly foundations set up by the established communities eager to exhibit their high level of enculturation. Establishing modern-style Jewish welfare organizations became a means to display the established communities' willingness to bridge the traditional sociocultural divide between Jewish and non-Jewish

provision of social support. The fact that the Paris Asile had grown out of an immigrant self-help initiative, renders the case exceptional. It underscores the founders' preparedness to place their endeavour within the context of the ideological frameworks of Franco-Judaism. The choice of name, Société philanthropique de l'Asile israélite de Paris (echoing the name of the oldest laicistic welfare organization in France, the Société Philanthropique, founded in 1780), indicates how strongly the French context inspired and shaped the structure of the Paris Jewish shelter. The "modernization" of the Asile's operational structure coincided with far-ranging infrastructural changes. The rented premise at 15, rue du Figuier in the fourth arrondissement soon proved too small to cope with the growing number of inmates. In 1910, the Asile moved into a new building at 12, rue des Saules in the Montmartre district. (APACI, Exposé indiquantl' origine, p. 75) This dislocation from the traditional Jewish immigrant quarter to Montmartre reflects the ongoing transformation of turn-of-the-century Paris Jewry. Well into the inter-war years, the Jewish settlement around Rue des Rosiers remained a principal point of arrival for many Jewish immigrants coming to Paris. With the onset of the new century, however, many Jewish residents that had arrived in previous decades started leaving the district toward the more affluent western quarters of Paris. The spatial changes in the wake of social advancement redrew the map of Jewish Paris. The Montmartre district in the eighteenth arrondissement developed into a new centre of Romanian and Russian Jews – in their majority artisans or intellectuals. (Minczeles, 1989, pp. 40-43; Philippe, 1992, p. 35) As early as 1906, the Paris correspondent of the Jewish Chronicle reported of the existence of 'two real Ghettos' in Paris, one in proximity to the hôtel de ville, the other at the Montmartre. (Jewish Chronicle, 13 April 1906) During the following years, the Jewish population of the eighteenth arrondissement grew steadily and soon outnumbered the one in the traditional immigrant quarter in the Marais. (Roblin, 1952, p. 82)

The relocation to Montmartre coincided with a further expansion of the institution's operational scope. In 1911, a crèche (day nursery) and workshops offering employment to mothers opened on the premise. (Hyman, 1998, pp. 120-121) Three years later, an asile de jour (day shelter) was set up nearby at 16, rue des Cloys to complement the existing social services. These developments fundamentally altered the nature of the institution. Whereas initially it had focussed primarily on providing temporary shelter to 'poor men, women and children that pass through Paris, 'it now actively supported migrants intending to stay in finding employment and setting themselves up in Paris. (SPAI, Statut [1914]) Different from the case of the London shelter, this expansion of activities did not aroused major criticism from the local

Jewish establishment or the French officials. On the contrary, that same year, a decree by the Minister of the Interior granted the institution the *status d'utilité publique* (registered charity). (République Française, 1914, pp. 1553-1557) The official sanction accentuated the Asile's successful appropriation of aspects of modern social work. Increasingly, elements of traditional Jewish charitable work – a aspect central at the time of its foundation – faded away and gave way to contemporary practices of charitable fundraising, such as annual charity balls. (Green, 1990, p. 213) Another indication of these tendencies is the fact that the operation of the day nursery was overseen by a female director (resembling the organizational structure of public institutions run by a board of *dames patronesses*). (République Française, 1914, p. 1556) The fact that most Jewish philanthropic bodies on either sides of the Channel denied women any leading administrative role underscores the exceptional development of the Jewish shelter in Paris. Even organizations founded by women, such as the London-Jewish visitation committee or the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, were often run by male directors or boards composed exclusively of men. (Knepper, 2007, pp. 239-256; Penslar, 2001, pp. 190-192) By contrast the Paris Asile displayed remarkably flat gender hierarchies. The continual embrace of social policy trends and the endorsement of modern forms of philanthropic practice laid the foundation for its continued success. In 1923, the day and night shelter were moved together on a new premise at 16, rue Lamarck, where the Asile de nuit, Asile de jour et crèche israélite exists to this day. (Green, 1986, p. 93) By the late 1930s, the shelter was one of the largest Jewish welfare institutions in Paris second only to the Comité de Bienfaisance with an annual budget of 800,000 francs. (Alperin, 1942, p. 253)

9. Concluding Reflections

While there is no explicit evidence for a direct cooperation between the London Shelter and the Paris Asile, several factors indicate the existence of transnational links between them. One indicator is the existence of cross-Channel Franco-British migration routes. While the majority of the London shelter's inmates arrived from the major Eastern emigration ports, such as Libau in Latvia (today Liepāja), Hamburg or Bremen, significant groups of Galician and Lithuanian Jews came to the British capital via Paris. (PJTS, Register Book of the Inmates, 1899-1900) Another example suggesting that the existence of the London shelter was known on the other side of the Channel, is the fact that in 1919, the late Adolphe Haendler, a Russian-Jewish philanthropist from Paris, bequeathed 100,000 francs (at the time the equivalent of £42854s11d; well over £400,000 in today's money) to the work of the shelter. His legacy is

particularly noteworthy given the fact that it exceeded any British contribution to the shelter's work at the time. (JTS, Thirty-second Report, 1919-1921, p. 38) The close cooperation between established bodies of British and French Jews, such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Anglo-Jewish Association, in the field of organized transmigration underscores the existence of extensive transnational philanthropic ties between both communities.

Comparing both institutions provides a basis to reconstruct the place of urban Jewish philanthropic institutions within the context of transnational migration. Furthermore, it enables us to assess the role these institutions played locally in coming to terms with the fundamental sociocultural transformations in the wake of mass migration. The findings drawn from a comparative analysis of the above-discussed micro-historical examples shift the focus away from the specificities of particular locales towards a general typology to be found in different settings at different times, both within and beyond the context of Jewish history.

The comparison between the London Shelter and the Paris Asile reveal a number of striking similarities. Both institutions fulfilled a dual function. They represented transitory spaces for migrants passing through the city on their way towards America and other overseas destinations. Simultaneously, they served as points of arrival, offering migrants a first refuge amidst the foreign environment of the city and as gateways into the new urban world. Contrary to the accusations that both institutions attracted further immigration of foreign pauper and thereby contributed to the aggravation of urban social tensions, they became important agents of the migrants' integration into the existing communal fabric. This process, however, never resembled the full-scale assimilation envisioned by communal leaders at the onset of the period under consideration. It might be more appropriate to refer to this transformation as "mutual acculturation" re-shaping both established and immigrant community in its way. Both institutions played an important part in this process by way of serving as liminal gateways for both groups. The existence and activities of the two shelters compelled both segments of the urban Jewish community to redraw the pre-existing demarcation lines in order to establish new forms of intra-communal cooperation and urban Jewish communal identities.

Despite these obvious similarities, the comparison between both institutions also reveals significant dissimilarities. The developments of the London Shelter and the Paris Asile point to two distinct models of intra-communal structures. Despite their similar social composition, London and Paris Jewry developed different mechanisms to come to terms with centripetal tendencies within their respective communities. One possible explanation for this divergence in

approach are to be found in the socio-political contexts of turn-of-the-century Britain and France and the different traditions of social work in both countries.

This alone, however, does not fully explain the stark contrast in the established communities' reaction to the analogous emergence of institutions of Jewish immigrant self-help – a virtual clash between native and immigrant groups in London and a cooperative approach and mutual support of both groups in the case of Paris. The temporal dimension may hold an answer to this question. While the British Isles was *the* West European destination of Jewish migrants and transmigration in the concluding decades of the nineteenth century, immigration to France did not gather momentum until the beginning of the twentieth century – especially after the passing of the Aliens Act in 1906, which restricted immigration to Britain. During these years, the outlook on migration and sociocultural integration underwent significant changes. Whereas, the official restrictionist immigration policy in Britain led British Jews to rethink their attitude towards their immigrant coreligionists, France continued her open-door policy well into the interwar years.(see Gainer, 1972; Kershen, 2005)

To draw the conclusion that the presented case studies display a fundamental difference between the attitude of Anglo-Jewry and French Jewry towards their immigrant brethren would be precipitous and indeed wrong. The existing Jewish communities in both London and Paris shared an ambivalent attitude towards Eastern European Jewish migrants. The trajectories of the Shelter and the Asile signal that cooperation between both groups despite numerous divisions and tensions was not only possible but also successfully exercised. Both institutions owe their "success" to the ability to reconcile different and at times competing models of urban Jewish philanthropy. Besides serving the integration and enculturation of migrants, both the Shelter and the Asile also became sites of remodelling urban Jewish philanthropic activities and intra-communal patterns of identity. They were neither mere immigrant mutual aid societies nor exclusively philanthropic institutions of the established communities but the result of transitory processes. Over time, both institutions incorporated, combined, and remodelled elements of traditional immigrant solidarity and modern social work, rendering them liminal spaces and laboratories of metropolitan Jewish culture and community more generally.

List of Abbreviations:

JBG   Jewish Board of Guardians

JBD   Jewish Board of Deputies

PJTS   Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter

JTS   Jews' Temporary Shelter

JML   Jewish Museum London, Special Collection

APACI   Association philanthropique de l'asile de nuit,asile de jour et de la crèche israélites de Paris

SPAI   Société philanthropique de l'Asile israélite

LMA   London Metropolitan Archives

CDJC   Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine

Archival Repositories:

APACI, Ensemble de documents 1914 à 1939, CDJC, Cote: LXVI-1.

APACI, Exposé indiquant l'origine, le développement, le but de l'utilité publique de l'Œuvre, CDJC, LXVI-1, 75.

JBG, Minute Book, 1885, University of Southampton, Special Collections, MS 173/1/1/1.

PJTS, First Annual Report, 1885–6, LMA/4184/02/01/001/01.

PJTS, Register Book of the Inmates, 1899–1900, LMA/4184/03/01/00.

PJTS, Seventeenth Annual Report, 1901–2, LMA/4184/02/01/001/06.

PJTS, Thirty-second Report, 1919–1921, JML, 1988.375

PJTS, Visitor Book, 1886, LMA/4184/2/4/1.

SPAI, Dossier de demande en reconnaissance d'autorité publique de la Société Philanthropique de l'Asile de Nuit et de la Crèche Israélites, CDJC, Cote: LXVI-1(19-31).

SPAI, Rapport d'activités pour 1912. CDJC, LXVI-1.

SPAI, Rapport de l'exercise 1905–6. CDJC, LXVI-1.

SPAI, Statut [1914], CDJC, LXVI-1-2.

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