

Abstracts 11th Contact Day Jewish Studies on the Low Countries

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Antwerp in the Seventeenth Century: The "Must-have" city of the Amsterdam Jews

The "Exercice du culte israélite à Anvers" is a hot topic in the 1670s and the 1680s according to documentation of the funds "Archives du Conseil Privé sous le Régime Espagnole" and the "Conseil d'État", kept in the Archives Générales du Royaume in Brussels, involving religious and civil authorities.

The attempt of Amsterdam's Jews to live in Antwerp without having to assume another religious identity, reveals the importance of this neighbouring city in the "breathing of that community" with the Catholic world, from which so many had come, and with which many maintained business activities, sometimes dealing with their "Christian relatives" living there. If they were unsuccessful in establishing a definitive community in the city by the Scheldt, including a synagogue, and if residence permits were granted on an exceptional and temporary basis - as in the case of Lopo Ramirez and his nephew Isaac Aboab, both in conflict with the Mahamad of Amsterdam - the constant presence of Amsterdam Jews with another identity in Antwerp continued to reveal the key role this urban centre had as a revolving plate of their interests, business and even family relations with the Hispanic world. In fact, the wills of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam provide the best insight into the relationships between families formally separated by religion and geography, in which their identity was allowed or denied during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The core of the wealth to be distributed among different members of the family was primarily generated by their commitment to the commercial dynamics of the Portuguese and Dutch empires, directly or through intermediaries. And of course, the « Christians relatives » of Antwerp are also contemplate, as were others family members in Italy of Portugal, for example.

Our aim with this paper is to reveal some meaningful episodes of the presence of the Amsterdam Jews in Antwerp in the seventeenth century, which reveals how the two cities were often complementary in their social and negotiating strategies.

Tsila Rådecker

The Jewish network as motor for success. Jewish pillarization, acculturation and assimilation in the life of Dina Sanson, first policewoman in the Netherlands (1868-1929)

In 2018 it is 150 years since the first female and Jewish policewoman Dina Sanson (1868-1929) was born in Rotterdam. She is best known for her fight against baby farming. This was the practice where shelters, either intentionally or through indifference, neglected and malnourished infants to death. This was the reason for child care legislation. In addition, she was committed to improving the social position of (Jewish) women and children. As the first policewoman, she left her mark on history.

Like many Jewish women, Dina was active in the women's movement and held office in various charitable organizations, fighting for women's equal rights and supporting unmarried women with children. She owed her appointment as policewoman (1911) to the nomination of the Vereeniging Onderlinge Vrouwenbescherming (Association for the Protection of Women). Although Dina's neutrality is held to be the main reason for her appointment, her recommendation letter and affiliations tell another story. The letter omits references to her Jewish background and affiliation

with Jewish societies. Apparently, an all too open display of Jewish identity was not an asset. Moreover, the writers of the letter, the president and secretary of the Onderlinge Vrouwenbeschermig are both family members. It is also remarkable that this organization, more than any other, had so many Jewish women in their ranks. In addition, she also personally believed in Jewish pillarization. During her work as president of the Joodse Armezorg (Jewish Care for the Poor) she urged for religious segregation of social care. As it turned out, Dina depended largely on her Jewish network for professional success.

However, in her personal life she seemed non-religious. She didn't display a Jewish lifestyle, probably hardly attended synagogue services, nor ate kosher. Even her grave resides at the fringe of the Jewish cemetery, the place for the non-kosher people, children and committers of suicide. As such, Dina's life represented the dilemma Jews faced in Dutch society. This paper discusses Dina's so-called neutrality and Jewish identity. How Jewish is Dina and what role did Judaism and Jews play in her life? As will become apparent Dina's life moved back and forth between pillarization, acculturation and assimilation.

Saskia Coenen-Snyder

Agents of Empire? : Jews and the Nineteenth-Century Diamond Trade

During the late 19th century, many Dutch Jews were involved in the diamond industry, which experienced rapid growth and development after the discovery of abundant diamond deposits in South Africa in 1869. Enjoying a reputation as the finest diamond-manufacturing center in the world, Amsterdam received, via London, the bulk of newly extracted rough stones from South African mines. By 1890, at least 6,500 Jews were employed in het vak, in "the profession," either as buyers or sellers, as cleavers, cutters, and polishers, as jewelers, dealers, managers of diamond mills, or as apprentices. Indeed, estimates suggest that 25-30,000 Jews – approximately 50 percent of the total Jewish population in the Dutch capital—depended in some form or other on the diamond.

My proposed paper will analyze the Dutch-Jewish engagement in the 19th century diamond industry from the perspective of recent historiographical interests in the field of Jewish Studies, particularly with regard to Jewish economic and colonial history. For example, Ethan Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud Mandel (in their new edited volume *Colonialism and the Jews*, 2017) and Rebecca Kobrin (in *Purchasing Power: The Economics of Modern Jewish History*, 2015) have encouraged scholars to go beyond traditional academic frameworks/topics and approach Jewish histories from fresh angles. For too long, they argue, historians have shown reluctance to explore the complex ways in which Jews interacted with 19th and 20th-century empires – particularly economically – favoring instead nation-states as the framework within which Jewish modernization took place.

Moreover, I would add, scholars of Jewish history and culture have shied away from linking Jews to global markets in luxury goods – or to the growth of capitalism in imperial contexts – for fear of reinforcing antisemitic stereotypes about Jewish power. They are hesitant to analyze the symbiotic relationship between profitable long-distance trading networks and particular ethnic identities as it may give credence to supposedly inherent qualities that make Jews predisposed to capitalist enterprise and economic control. Consequently, historians have often focused on questions concerning Jewish political emancipation and integration, on religious reform or the complexities of antisemitism – all situated in national rather than transatlantic frameworks. Questions concerning Jewish commercial activity were often pushed to the sidelines and rendered Jewish economic history unpopular in the American academe. Jonathan Karp recently spoke of "a cloud of embarrassed silence that has persistently hovered over the topic of Jewish commercial livelihoods," and of a

(English-language) Jewish historiography strangely disembodied from the economic domain due to nervousness surrounding potential claims of essentialism.

With regard to the proliferation of the 19th century diamond trade, however, trans-nationalism, empire, and Jewishness mattered. This paper will address the Dutch-Jewish role in the transatlantic network and advocate normalizing the important commercial dimensions of the Jewish past.

Aalt Smienk

Jews in the Dutch press between 1890-1910 and 'Harderwieker risjes'

In my contribution to the conference, I want to share the findings of my Phd research (to be defended later this year) that compares the framing of Muslims in Dutch newspapers during the period 1990-2013 with the framing of Jews in Dutch newspapers between 1890 and 1910. In this presentation I will focus on the outcome of the research on the framing of Jews in Dutch newspapers, and use the results on the framing of Muslims in the period 1990-2013 in a more or less reciprocal comparative way.

An important finding of the analyses of the news reports is the change after 1900 in the way newspapers wrote about Jews. The newspapers I examined were the digitized versions of five daily newspapers with a different religious or political background and one Jewish weekly (Nieuw Israelitisch Weekblad). The news reports before 1900 gave a more negative, exclusive and polarized picture of Jews compared to news reports in the period after 1900. These negative and polarized images diminished or they were less prominent in news reports in the period 1900-1910. The negative and polarized images were especially found in the two Christian newspapers De Standaard and De Tijd.

Finally I will focus on the incident of the elections in Harderwijk (1903), using the news reports of local and national papers on this incident and the municipal archives with the correspondence of the Mayor on this incident. The incident shows how, at the beginning of the twentieth century in a multi religious and strongly pillarized society, space was created and solutions were found in situations of conflict of interests between the different groups.

Karin Hofmeester

Membership cards of diamond trade unions in Amsterdam and Antwerp as sources for research and more

At the end of the 19th century both Amsterdam and Antwerp had a flourishing diamond industry offering work to thousands of workers with various professions and skill levels, both male and female, Jewish and Gentile, immigrant and native. In 1894 the diamond workers in Amsterdam established the Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkers Bond (ANDB) (General Diamond Workers' Trade Union). Their colleagues in Antwerp followed one year later and formed the Algemene Diamantbewerdersbond van België (ADB) (General Diamond Worker's' Trade Union of Belgium). Thanks to their professional organization these unions were very successful. They created and consolidated unity amongst the various groups of workers, organised effective strikes for higher wages and shorter working days and also offered their members an elaborate system of social security as well as various forms of worker's education. After the decline of the industry (in Amsterdam after the First World War in Antwerp after the Second World War) also the trade unions started to weaken until they merged with other trade unions, respectively in 1958 and 1993.

Both unions left an extensive archive, including membership cards that offer a unique insight into the working lives of the diamond workers. They show us the exact profession within the industry as well as changes in profession that could indicate social mobility. The cards mention changes of address as well as migrations to other cities, giving us information on geographical mobility. Combined with other datasets the cards can tell us which part of the work force was male or female, Jew or Gentile and immigrant or native. The International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam and the AMSAB Institute of Social History in Ghent joined forces to digitize these membership cards, transcribe the information on the cards with help of a crowd sourcing project and to present the data on a searchable website. In my talk I will briefly present the project and the possibilities of the sources for public history.

Griet Blanckaert, Dorien Styven, Veerle Vanden Daelen, Carolina van der Star, Marieke Verboven

Art works and the Holocaust: testimony, conservation and the need for interdisciplinary cooperation: the cooperation between the University of Antwerp and Kazerne Dossin

During the Second World War, the Dossin barracks were used as an assembly camp for Jews, Roma and Sinti from where they were deported to the East, mostly Auschwitz. At this moment the historic site in Mechelen is home to a memorial, museum and documentation centre on Holocaust and Human Rights. Kazerne Dossin holds archives, objects and artworks concerning the Dossin barracks and the Holocaust that are either stored in the archives or displayed in the memorial and museum. Preserving the materials and presenting them in a secure way requires a specific set of skills, as does researching and understanding their value and meaning (which is often more historical and emotional than artistic). The presentation will provide an overview of the cooperation and lessons learned between Kazerne Dossin and the Conservation-Restoration Department in the University of Antwerp's Faculty of Design Sciences.

Janiv Stamberger

From East to West: Immigration, consolidation and transformation of Jewish society and politics in Belgium(1906-1940): preliminary conclusions

During the presentation I would like to take a quarter of an hour to present the main objectives of my thesis and some of the preliminary results which will form some of the main conclusions of my PhD.

The subject of my thesis, the immigration of Eastern European Jews to Belgium (which started in earnest from 1906) and their struggle to establish institutions which emulated the specific ideological and political organisations of *der alter haym* (the old country) in Eastern Europe, will be briefly discussed. I will discuss how 'integration' will form the focal point of my thesis, and how I have approached this concept as a threefold process of carefully negotiated positioning of immigrant Jewish society towards: Belgian society, the Belgian Jewish establishment, and the transnational Jewish cultural/political world then fully developing in all Jewish immigrant centres around the globe.

Next, I will focus on how within the context of Belgium's political, economic, and cultural developments of the time (mostly interwar period), Jewish immigrants attempted to negotiate these different ambitions in order to find a secure place for themselves in Belgian society, and their possibilities of doing so.

During the last ten to fifteen minutes, I would like to engage with the audience to discuss possible pitfalls, engage in constructive criticism, and benefit from the knowledge of my peers, which I am sure will be of great value as I go forth to the final months of writing my dissertation.

Dieter Tielemans

Integration of Russian Jewish diamond dealers in Antwerp (1880-1914)

Between 1880 and 1914 over 2 million Jews fled Russia towards the west. This was the result of pogroms after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and the poor economic situation. The goal of these refugees was to reach America, through the Western-European ports. However, some of them weren't able to reach their destination cause of financial problems or because they weren't deemed healthy enough. This resulted in them either going back to Russia or staying in Western-Europe.

One of the cities that saw a rise in its Jewish population because of this was Antwerp.

For my research, I'm going to look at how these Russian Jews integrated into the already existing Jewish population in Antwerp. In order to do this, I've decided to focus on one profession, namely diamond dealers and finishers. This is due to the fact that Jews played a pivotal role in the Antwerp diamond sector. Besides that, we can also see an influx of new diamond dealers because of these Russian refugees. Seeing these two points it made sense to focus on this profession. This, of course, doesn't mean that Jews were only active in the diamond sector, in fact, we can even see Jews in almost every profession in Antwerp. This research will be based on the Antwerp immigrant files, with other sources added when they are available.

In order to research their integration, I will focus on two main points. The first one is where they lived in Antwerp. For this, I will make a map of the streets in which Russian Jewish diamond dealers lived to be able to see if they stuck together or if they lived spread out over the city. Thereafter I will compare this map with already existing maps of the Antwerp Jewish population. By doing this I will be able to see if both groups mixed or if they stuck to their own neighbourhoods. The second main point of my research will be about their profession. Here I will firstly look at what functions these Russian Jews performed within the diamond industry. This can go from cutter to trader. Each of these professions had their own social position, so this will tell us a lot about the position of these newcomers compared to the existing Jewish community. Besides that, I will also take a closer look at their professional situation. Here I want to look at who they worked for if they did work for someone, and where they worked. By doing this I will try to see if these Russian Jews worked for 'Antwerp' Jews, or if they worked for non-Jews.

Huibert Schijf

The Nutkiewitz Brothers. Diamonds in Antwerp and a garment factory in Amsterdam

In my presentation last year on Russian-jewish migrants who settled in two streets in Amsterdam special attention was paid to the Schpektor family who survived by staying on Jamaica during the Second World War. As starting-point I used data which are collected and processed by Karin Hofmeester from the registration of these immigrants in the Amsterdamse Vreemdelingenregister (Amsterdam Registration of Foreigners). The present presentation will continue the story of the Schpektor family, but attention will also be paid to the three Nutkiewitz brothers who as orphans migrated from Poeltusk (Russia, Polish town): Nathan (1886), Meijer (1891) and Peter (1896). Nathan is the father of Margaretha (Greet) Nutiewitz who married Wolf (Willem) Schpektor. Two of the brothers settled in Antwerp and became diamond dealers, although they appear in the Amsterdamse Vreemdelingenregister and also, of course, in the Antwerp registers for Foreigners.

The family bonds between the Antwerp part of the family and the Amsterdam family remained very close, as will be shown.

The presentation will be illustrated, among others, by rare family pictures which were provided to me by Inez Baker-Scheptor, the daughter of Wolf Spector and Margaretha Nutkiewitz, and the granddaughter of Nathan. Meijer and Peter are her grand-uncles. The presentation describes the ups and downs of two Russian-Jewish migrants families, as an example of many other migrant families.

Geraldien von Frijtag Drabbe Kunzel

A Foreign Country. Concepts of collective and individual identity among Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria in the Netherlands

Since Hitler's rise to power in 1933, thousands and thousands of German and Austrian Jews tried to escape the growing discrimination and persecution in their homecountry: an estimated 24,000 of them found a new home in the Netherlands. The topic is well covered by scholarly research, but most studies focus on the official policy of the Dutch government, the organization and work of Dutch-Jewish relief committees and reactions of the Dutch general public at large towards the newcomers. These reactions were far from positive and welcoming and steered by fear for numeric dominance by Jews that would disturb the balance between Jews and Gentiles in the Netherlands, provoking antisemitism. It is generally believed that at least partly because of this fear, German and Austrian refugees were not well integrated at the moment the German authorities started their anti-Jewish policy in the Netherlands in 1941. And partly as a consequence, they were an easy catch for the German police once the deportation commenced in 1942: they simply lacked networks and contacts of friends that could help them to hide.

The proposed paper aims to critically assess these assumptions and to add to the research the voices of refugees. Based on research in the large collection of survivor's testimonies of the USC Shoah Foundation, this paper takes a microperspective and explores the refugees' sense of being and belonging, from 1933 until 1945, and looks at processes of identification and disidentification within this specific group. How did these refugees themselves appreciate their welcome in the Netherlands? Did they indeed experience distance or hostility from the side of the Dutch public? How did they organize their social life in the Netherlands? The main argument of this research paper is that from the perspective of refugees their integration was by and large successful: it was only after the war that they lost their feeling of belonging in the Netherlands: in most cases this also became obvious in the choice to leave the Netherlands after the war.

Herman and Annelies Rens

Deportation transports of Jews to Cosel

The Shoah is a murder out of anti-Semitism, but also an economic crime. Jews were deported because the Nazis wanted to own their possessions and their labor force. The compromise was called: 'Vernichtung durch Arbeit'.

In Europe hundreds of thousands of Jewish forced laborers worked for the German war economy. Many of them were engaged in constructing the big 'Autobahnen'. One highway passed through Silesia. There dozens of forced labor camps were situated, the Reichsautobahnlager. Thousands of Silesian Jews in these camps slaved away. In the end of 1940 Himmler assigned Albrecht Schmelt as 'Sonderbeauftragte für fremdvölkischen Arbeitseinsatz in Oberschlezen'. Schmelt could dispose of all Silesian Jews. They were hired to German companies for a daily rent. In the beginning he rented to companies working for the construction of the highway, but from 1942 onwards the accent was

on arms factories. In Silesia he established hundreds of Zwangsarbeitslager für Juden in the neighborhood of factories.

Soon Schmelt got a shortage of forced laborers. Himmler gave him permission to select 10.000 Jewish men, aged 15 to 50 years, out of the trains from western European countries on their way to Auschwitz. Between August 28 and December 10, 1942 Organisation Schmelt selected 9500 men, who came from Westerbork, Malines and Drancy. With violence on the station of the town of Cosel in Silesia they were separated from their families. First they were transferred to one of the former Reichsautobahnlager. Later they were dispersed over dozens of Zwangsarbeitslager. The biggest camp was Blechhammer, where the Oberschlesische Hydrierwerke from coal produced gasoline.

The life situation in the camps of Schmelt was utmost bad: heavy work in labor weeks of 70 hours, insufficient food and care. Many perished; ill people were deported and murdered in the gas chambers of Birkenau.

According to the model of Schmelt also the SS (the WVHA) started to hire out laborers from Auschwitz to companies, at the same charge as Schmelt did. It was the onset of a competition for laborers between Schmelt and camp commander Höss. Höss succeeded in his efforts to stop the selections in Cosel in December 1942. In the end of 1943 the whole Organisation Schmelt was liquidated. The camps were closed, or changed into sub camps of Auschwitz or Gross-Rosen. Forced laborers were changed into concentration camp prisoners. Again many men perished. In the beginning of 1945 many people died during the Death Marches. 800 of the 9500 in Cosel selected people survived the war.

Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld

Holocaust, history, commemoration: how history contributes to coping strategies and resilience

In 2016, I published a book in which I gave account of my search for the history of the Jewish family that once lived in the house I am living in today. At the heart of the book is the tragic history of the family's son, who was killed in Auschwitz. The last sentence of the book reads: 'I have become convinced that although, as historians, we cannot change one bit of the atrocities that happened, we can change the ways people cope with the memory of these events.'

As a next step, I now would like to investigate exactly this claim: can historical research contribute to developing coping strategies and if so, how does this work? What are the 'ways' in which people come to terms with a traumatic past? What is the relevance of historical 'facts' or of adding historical context in the process of coping and the development of coping strategies?

I suggest to investigate this by interviewing descendants of those who have undergone past atrocities and disaster, including the Holocaust, and that have been the subject of recent historical research as well as commemorative efforts.

This presentation is an important step in my attempt to formulate the research question and to delineate this research project's disciplinary scope: to what extent should it include, besides a historical focus, an approach informed by philosophy, psychology, and victimology (to name just a few adjacent fields)? And where should I look for relevant concepts, theories, and methods?

Here, I would like to focus on recent projects involving both research and commemoration of the Holocaust, such as the Dutch digital Jewish Monument (since 2005), Gunter Demnig's stumbling stones (in the Netherlands since 2007), the nationwide memorial event Open Jewish Homes (since 2012), and similar projects.

In what ways do these contribute to enable those living now (both descendants and those unrelated) to come to terms with the experiences of previous generations? What role does historical knowledge and contextualization play in this process? My project aims to assess the relevance and preconditions of the creation of narratives in which traumatic experiences are put in a historical context.