AJS Review 33:1 (2009), 155–164
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doi:10.1017/S0364009409000075

Review Essay
The New Spatial Turn in Jewish Studies

by

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Joachim Schlör. *Das Ich der Stadt: Debatten über Judentum und Urbanität, 1822–1938.* Jüdische Religion, Geschichte und Kultur, Vol. 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005. 512 pp.

Michal Kümper, Barbara Rösch, Ulrike Schneider, Helen Thein, eds. *Makom: Orte und Räume im Judentum; Real. Abstrakt. Imaginär. Essays.* Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007. 356 pp.

Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke, eds. *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008. 375 pp.

During the past decade or so, there has been a "veritable boom … of projects that investigate questions of place and space" in Jewish studies.[1] In this arena, scholars in various fields of Jewish studies have begun to engage with developments in the humanities at large. Since the 1980s, many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences have become more attentive to the cultural challenges of globalization, prominent among them the effects of increased movements of migration. From these movements have arisen questions about the effect and meaning of uprooting and dislocation, the significance of belonging to a place (or to various places), the emergence of diaspora communities, and so on. The spatial dimension of human existence began to move to the forefront of scholarly considerations, and with it, new names of fields of study, such as human, critical, or cultural geography. While Jewish studies has, of course, for the longest time been aware of "diaspora" as a dimension of human existence, often perhaps with the understanding that diaspora was historically a uniquely Jewish experience, to a certain degree our field remained caught in the binarism of diaspora versus nationalism or Zionism, at least until the advance of this new impulse in

1. See Brauch, Lipphardt, and Nocke, *Jewish Topographies*, 10. The editors provide a long list of Jewish studies conferences the world over that have been devoted to issues of space and place since 1990, and that list is quite impressive.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0364009409000075 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the humanities, identified by some as a "spatial turn."[2] Against such binarisms, the volumes under discussion repeatedly appeal to "multidimensionality" in Jewish topographies and in our approaches to them.

The three volumes listed here are part of this new trend, if there is such a thing as a trend in the making, but they also seek to shape it by insisting on the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach, as well as on the importance of collaborative practice. Further, they are intrinsically linked to each other, in that all three are, to one degree or another, the product of a collaborative research group that met over a number of years (2001–2007) in Potsdam, Germany, under the titular name of *Makom*.[3] That research group received financial support from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Germany's preeminent research foundation, and facilitated forty dissertations and three habilitations.[4] The programmatic statement of the group or *Graduiertenkolleg*,[5] initiated at the University of Potsdam by one of the foregoing authors, namely Joachim Schlör, states,

> In the beginning, and at the center, we posit the question about the understanding of place and the perception of space of a traditional (or: ideal or abstract) Jewish community. *Ha-Makom* is the Hebrew term, which—beyond the immediate translation as "place"—carries further meanings: the relationship to a place, the implied treatment of a place, also the act of taking possession thereof, the settlement and development of a place, and even the absence of such "normal" form of relationship to a place.[6]

Hence the project in general, and the published volumes derived from it in particular, self-consciously seek to shape the "spatial turn" in Jewish studies. The

2. Following Edward Soja's claim for the humanities in general—namely, that the privileging of time over place is attributable to the historicist tradition in Anglo-European scholarship—the editors of *Jewish Topographies* (1) suggest that Jewish studies was even more dominated by this approach than other fields. See Edward W. Soja, "History: Geography: Modernity," in *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 10–42.

3. A fourth volume that belongs in this group (Hiltrud Wallenborn, Michael Kümper, Anna Lipphardt, Jens Neumann, Johannes Schwarz, and Maria Vassilikou, eds., *Der Ort des Judentums in der Gegenwart, 1989–2002*, Sifria—Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek 7 [Berlin: Bebra Wissenschaft, 2004]) was not available for review.

4. See Kümper et al., *Makom*, 7. The German habilitation is roughly equivalent to a tenure book at American universities—that is, a second book beyond the dissertation. Schlör's *Das Ich der Stadt* is the published version of his habilitation. Beyond the published volumes and individual research projects, the *Graduiertenkolleg* invited a variety of guest lecturers, including myself in 2005, and organized three conferences.

5. According to the Web site of the DGF, "Research Training Groups (*Graduiertenkollegs*) are university training programs established for a specific time period to support young researchers in their pursuit of a doctorate. The Research Training Groups provide these doctoral students with the opportunity to work within a coordinated research program run by a number of university teachers. Doctoral students are incorporated into the research work being done at the participating institutions. The study program aims to complement and extend the doctoral students' individual specializations and to provide a structure for cooperation" (http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding).

6. Cited in Schlör, *Das Ich der Stadt*, 41. All translations from the German are mine.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0364009409000075 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contributors to the two anthologies reviewed here, *Makom* and *Jewish Topographies*, draw on a variety of theoretical models that allow them to conceptualize their particular subjects of study, hoping for a common conversation to emerge, or to demonstrate the "connections between seemingly disparate fields of research."[7] As Schlör puts it in his introduction to the volume *Makom*, "The central characteristic of the *Graduiertenkolleg* has been the attempt to put interdisciplinarity into practice, to search for a common language and common concepts" (20).

For the purposes of this review, let me begin by introducing the volumes individually. *Makom* assembles thirty relatively brief essays by participants in the research group at Potsdam, a mix of junior and senior scholars. The essays do not pretend to present freestanding research papers, but rather essays that introduce the projects that grew under the umbrella of the Makom research group. In what I consider an incredibly creative and therefore brilliant move, the medium of the essay is designed both to facilitate the interdisciplinary conversation and to invite a broader audience into the conversation about what a "Jewish place" (*jüdischer Ort*) might be (9). While the essays are designed to draw in a broader, interdisciplinary audience, they do not do so at the cost of sophistication, as the reader is encouraged to dig further and to read the books and dissertations toward which the essays point.

As to the contents, the editors of this volume mix essays on concrete places of a Jewish community ("Cemetery" by Michael Brocke; "Lehrhaus" (*beit midrash*) by Michael Kümper; "Medinat Israel" by Julia Brauch; "Mishkan" by Franziska Bark; and "Schtetl" by Anna-Dorothea Ludewig) with imagined places, such as "Heimat" (home) by Ulrike Schneider, and spaces of communication, such as "Sprache" (language) by Markus Winkler, "Öffentlichkeit" (public) by Johannes Valentin Schwarz, and "Gedächtnis" (memory) by Christina von Braun. In addition, a few of the essays/projects, such as "Imagination" by Stefanie Leuenberger, "Un-Ort" (non-place) by Barbara Rösch, and "Zwischen-Orte" (in-between spaces) by Anne Clara Schenderlein, are intended to point to the constructedness of the notion of place and space.

There is much that is unexpected here, and therefore thought provoking—for instance, an essay under the key word "Kabbalah" by Vladek Viehmann. What might be the spatial dimension of Kabbalah, one wonders? But the reader quickly discovers that Viehmann, who is working on a dissertation on the Catholic philosopher of religion Franz Molitor, writes his essay on the renaissance of Kabbalah in the Christian–Jewish "discursive space" of Frankfurt am Main. More concretely, he demonstrates the "location" of Molitor's engagement with Kabbalah at the Jewish educational institution of the Philantropin[8] in Frankfurt, to which he

7. Kümper et al., *Makom*, 8. The editors of *Jewish Topographies* attribute to Schlör the initial concept that resulted in the Makom program, and they go as far as to call him the "father of Jewish space studies" (xi). That might be a bit of an overstatement out of deference to the teacher.

8. The Philantropin was a school for poor Jewish children that was founded by Sigismund Geisenheimer in the early nineteenth century under the Enlightenment ideals of education and humanism.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0364009409000075 Published online by Cambridge University Press

was hired and where he first encountered Jewish culture. Viehmann thus points to the local and institutional setting as an important factor in the renaissance of Kabbalah in Germany.

Schwarz's essay under the rubric of "Öffentlichkeit" (public) deals with the rise of the Jewish press (in the form of periodicals and then newspapers) in Germany during the nineteenth century and reflects on the shift from the local *Kommunikationsraum* (space of communication) to the translocal one of the Jewish press. He conceptualizes the establishment of the Jewish press as a shift from an "imagined" to a "real" space. Under the rubric of "Gedächtnis" (memory), the editors include the text that the cultural studies scholar Christina von Braun presented to the research group on the virtualization of the concept of home.

The space allotted here does not allow me to list every single contribution. By way of summary, I would emphasize that the editors present an innovative kind of cultural lexicon, in which a number of different places and concepts of places and space are organized in alphabetical order, mixed with each other in order to avoid privileging one entry or essay above others. This lexicon successfully connects a significant variety of projects into one conversation. It invites further conversation, as a number of letters are left without entries (e.g., A to C, P to R, and X; Y describes *Yam Tikhoniut* or "Mediterraneity" as an ideal for Israeli culture). Further, the volume demonstrates the wealth of spatial thinking and practice in Jewish culture, the variety of ways of relating to space and place, and the diversity of media through which this can be studied (literature/texts, architecture, language, institutions). Surely this lexicon of sorts presents a successful model of collaborative work and research that so many of us strive to develop, and for which these editors ought to be applauded.

The second anthology on our list, *Jewish Topographies*, takes a different approach in its editorial decisions. First of all, the contributions take the more traditional form of freestanding research papers, though as with the volume *Makom*, many of the authors have worked on (or are producing) more extensive projects, whence the papers derive. The papers are grouped under five different categories that are deliberately broad and abstract so as to allow the editors to move away from traditional conceptions of Jewish places that would have led—in their view—merely to the reproduction of "stereotypical perceptions of Jewish space" (17). What does this say about the *Makom* volume in their view, one wonders, as *Makom* at least includes reflections on such traditional conceptions as the shtetl? In what follows, I would like to list the contributors and their work, and I ask the reader for patience, as many of the authors may not be familiar to Jewish studies in the United States, and as the listing will demonstrate once again the wealth of possibilities of studies in this area, as well as the existing work already produced.

The first larger rubric, "Construction Sites" (18), concentrates on the role of actual structures or buildings, although one might also conceptualize this rubric as religious architectures, based on the chosen topics. The section includes papers by Miriam Lipis on the Sukkah as a place that evokes the question of belonging; by Manuel Herz on the "Eruv" as a means to discuss the issue of "Jewish

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0364009409000075 Published online by Cambridge University Press

architecture" in Germany today;[9] and by Haim Yacobi on urban planning at Netivot. The section on "Jewish Quarters" presents issues ranging from "Ghetto Gardens" (on the ongoing effort to establish gardens in the shadow of death) by Kenneth Helphand to "The Mellah of Fez" by Susan Gilson Miller; on Orthodox "Religious Microspaces" in the Toronto suburb of Thornhill by Etan Diamond; and on "Jewish Subcultures in Budapest" by Eszter Brigitta Gantner and Mátyás Kovács. "Cityscapes and Landscapes" includes four papers, on Poland by Haya Bar-Itzhak, on the sea by Gilbert Herbert, on the desert in Israeli culture by Yael Zerubavel, and on the big city by Schlör. The fourth part, "Exploring and Mapping Jewish Space," assembles three papers by Samuel Kassow on "Travel and Local History as a National Mission" of Polish Jews, by Erik Cohen on Israeli backpackers, and by Shelley Hornstein on the Internet. Finally, the last section, "Enacted Spaces," presents papers on the importance of food to shaping a landscape, by Eve Jochnowitz; the importance of music for the same purpose; on Jewish Iraqi musicians in Israel, by Galeet Dardashti; and finally, on "Mini Israel," by Michael Feige. The volume concludes with an epilogue on "Virtual Jewish Topography" in Second Life.

Again, it is impossible to do justice to each of the individual pieces. In general, there is much to be learned in this volume, both on the banal level of gaining new knowledge and on a more sophisticated, conceptual level. As a scholar primarily of talmudic literature, but with a keen interest in cultural studies, I had, for example, never heard of "Second Life,"[10] let alone Jewish topography therein, nor—perhaps more embarrassingly—of Mini Israel, a miniature reproduction of "three hundred models of well-known, mostly monumental structures from around Israel, built to a scale of 25:1" (329), at a site near Latroun. The latter apparently has become an tourist attraction since its opening in 2002, both among Israelis and among visitors from abroad, and just as the phenomenon of Disney World has engendered analysis about its cultural function, so does Mini Israel lend itself to similar speculation. And while it may be arguable whether a scholar of talmudic literature such as myself stands to gain from knowledge of these kinds of spatial practices, it does indeed contribute to her understanding of the contemporary shaping of our world, and the place of Jews therein. Ultimately, I would emphasize, the power and persuasiveness of *Jewish Topographies* derives from the assembly of the papers. The result is indeed impressive and a token of the editors' commitment to the vision of the research group. In that regard, this volume, together with the previous one, establishes somewhat of a literary monument to what they—rightfully, I think—identify as "an unequalled pioneering effort to institutionalize the engagement with Jewish place and space from an interdisciplinary platform." Indeed, aside from the Makom project in Potsdam,

9. An earlier version of this essay, "Institutionalized Experiment: The Politics of 'Jewish Architecture' in Germany," appeared in the special issue of *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 3 (2005), edited by myself and Vered Shemtov, under the title "Jewish Concepts and Practices of Space." Herz has since updated his piece by integrating reflections on the recently opened Jewish Community Center with its synagogue in Munich.

10. Second Life is a 3-D virtual world that is continuously created by its users or "residents."

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collaborations on Jewish space and place have mostly taken the form of academic conferences.[11] The introductory essay, "Exploring Jewish Space: An Approach," by the editors, all three of them young scholars, presents a remarkably mature assessment of an entire field of study. It is the assembly of these papers and their scope that raises the specter, however faint, of the possibilities of reorganizing the field of Jewish studies along spatial lines rather than the habitual temporal ones (ancient, late ancient, medieval, early modern, modern, postmodern), or at least along a combination of spatial and temporal lines.

Joachim Schlör's *Habilitationsschrift*, finally, *Das Ich der Stadt: Debatte über Judentum und Urbanität 1822–1938* (The Persona of the City: The Debate about Judaism and Urbanism 1822–1938) presents a different model, and it is—to a certain degree—incommensurate with the previous two books, as this is a single-authored volume and the result of sustained research work by just one scholar. Nonetheless, the volume fits within this context, first of all for an obvious reason. That is, the entire Makom project at the University of Potsdam was inspired by Schlör to begin with, so much so that the editors of *Jewish Topographies* designate him in loving but perhaps somewhat hyperbolic terms as "the father of Jewish space studies." His work, therefore, is certainly intricately connected with the two volumes above through Makom, the research group.[12] Second, however, Schlör—as with the previous two volumes—is deeply committed to an interdisciplinary vision. With his focus on the Jew as *Städter* (city dweller), or as *Urbantyp* (urban type), he enters "the areas of folklore and anthropology, religious studies and history, geography and sociology, even philosophy and the history of art," and—he writes—he enters there "with the faith of one who seeks to foster dialogue between the disciplines with interest in Jewish Studies" (34). Broadly speaking, Schlör identifies his approach as "cultural studies," more precisely as "cultural studies of the city" (*kulturwissenschaftliche Stadtforschung*, 36). He seeks to distinguish himself from "merely" or "narrowly" literary approaches, such as have been advanced, for instance, by Murray Baumgarten's *City Scriptures* (1982),[13] and insists that the study of the city (as concept and fact) and the Jewish relationship to it also needs to consider "facts, movements, tendencies that can be empirically established" (44).

The centerpiece of Schlör's book surely is Moritz Goldstein's long-lost text from 1938, "Die Sache der Juden" (roughly, Concerning the Jews).[14] During the

11. An exception may be the themed fellow year on "Jews and the City" (2007–2008) at the Frankel Institute at the University of Michigan.

12. Schlör himself states that "the volume evolved in the intellectual environment of the Graduiertenkolleg 'Space and Places in Judaism' at the University of Potsdam" (39).

13. I am not certain that his critique of Baumgarten's book is entirely fair. In the end, Schlör's major issue is that the *literaturwissenschafliche* (literary) approaches pose as solely valid *kulturwissenschaftliche* (culture study) approaches, which is not what Baumgarten claims in his book. However, the point that textual studies about the city would be much enriched through grasping the phenomenon city by drawing on all kinds of visual and extratextual material is valid.

14. This text, according to the author, is being prepared for publication by Elisabeth Albanis and Till Schicketanz of Mainz, who are editing all of Goldstein's writings for an edition of his works (54 n. 2).

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golden years of the Weimar Republic, Goldstein became famous (or notorious) for his polemical article "Deutsch-Jüdischer Parnass" (1912) in one of the prominent cultural journals, which instigated a broader debate about the tension between Zionism and German Jewish patriotism. While this is a well-known and much-debated text, Schlör's interest lies elsewhere. The text that captures Schlör's imagination—"Die Sache der Juden"—did not produce any significant history of reception, but then again, Goldstein wrote it in 1938, already on the run from the Nazis and no longer having the attention of a stable German Jewish audience. Schlör's interest in the text derives from the fact that Goldstein entitles one of his central chapters "Die Stadt Israel" (The City of Israel). Goldstein apparently doubted the possibility of building a land, a country, because "a land has to grow" (61), and that, according to Goldstein, would take time—too much time, given the circumstances in Germany.

To Goldstein, the urgency of the situation of Jews in Germany called for urgent action, and he envisioned that action to take the form of a city—however utopian, I cannot tell. Goldstein's faith in the city (at least in concept) is what attracts Schlör to his text. That, and the fact that Goldstein was a Berliner, born and raised in Berlin, and one of Berlin's more or less prominent Jewish voices until the Nazis drove him out. Indeed, I would venture to suggest that much of Schlör's book is driven by a love for Berlin, and (implicitly, I think) by melancholia for the cultural wealth that the Nazis stole from the city and for the creative and energetic Jewish Berliners who were murdered by them. Again and again, Schlör points to the need for a yet-to-be-written monograph (however many volumes that might take) about the history of the Jews in Berlin,[15] and while his book is certainly not aiming to fill that gap, it points in the direction of how he might imagine such a history. It is Berlin most concretely—although by no means exclusively—that centers the figure of the Jewish *Urbantyp*, or the Jewish *Städter* in this book. Schlör carefully works with and against the stereotype, the cliché, the antisemitic distortion of this figure, fully aware that his figure gained currency in the antisemitic propaganda of the Weimar Republic. But Schlör loves the city, writes as a *Grossstadtmensch* (big-city person), just as Moritz Goldstein did, especially when he was driven out of the city.[16] Above all, Schlör seeks to free the figure from its antisemitic imprisonment. Thus, he produces a sensitive study, written with care and devotion and worth the read, every line of it.

At the end, let me move one particular issue to the foreground, as this is one that connects all three volumes in interesting ways. That issue is the concept of the

15. See, e.g., p. 105. Existing collaborative projects, such as the anthology *Juden in Berlin*, ed. Hermann Simon, Julius H. Schoeps, and Andrea Nechama (Berlin: Henschel, 2001), remain inadequate, according to Schlör. One might however question whether, in an era of fundamental doubts about master narratives, such a project might be even possible, at least if it is supposed to be single authored.

16. And what a powerful line from Goldstein's pen, emphasized by Schlör (90), describing his good-bye from the city, as he leaves by train: "My hometown threw itself into a new busy day of work, rushing and buzzing as I had always known it. The fact that the devil had possessed it, was imperceivable."

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eruv. Admittedly, I am focusing on this topic because I have been studying rabbinic literature on the *eruv* for several years now, as I consider it to be one of the most creative areas of rabbinic law. However, the *eruv* is, in fact, also the only concept discussed in all three books under review. The volume *Makom* lists Barbara Rösch's essay on the ideal of the Sabbath law in the rural world in southern Germany of the late eighteenth through the early twentieth century under the rubric of *Eruw* (thus the German transliteration). *Jewish Topographies* includes Manuel Herz's piece on Jewish architecture in Germany, drawing heavily and creatively on the *eruv* as a concept (rather than as a practice). And finally, Joachim Schlör frames his study with a reflection on the potential symbolic value of the *eruv* as a marker of Jewish space. The prelude of his book reports on a nineteenth-century East Prussian conflict about an *eruv*, at about the time when the walls of cities and towns were coming down (in fact, the report is reminiscent of some contemporary U.S. *eruv* conflicts, although the vocabulary of the East Prussian officials is quite a bit more overtly colonialist), and the conclusion presents another conceptual discussion of the *eruv.* All three authors thus recognize the symbolic potential of this religious practice, which entails the drawing of lines into the cityscape, or superimposing a Jewish symbolic map onto the city map, Herz and Schlör more extensively than Rösch. In Rösch's essay, the *eruv* plays a fairly subordinate role, as she is more broadly interested in how Jews marked their presence in the rural environment; because the *eruv* was only one of those ways, I will zero in on the other two.

I wish to foreground the discussions of the *eruv* here, as this will allows me to touch upon what I consider both the advantage and the danger of the interdisciplinarity favored by the Makom project and by others, myself included at times. Herz's essay juxtaposes the *eruv* as urban strategy, one that creates a realm "accessible to all groups of society and open to all uses" (49), with what he describes as the monumental and centralized nature of so-called Jewish architecture in Germany. His point is, of course, to praise the former at the expense of the latter. In Herz's words, "The *eruv* as an urban space can be described as containing a minimum of 'Jewishness' in a maximum of space" (49). A minimum of "Jewishness" because the establishment and maintenance of an *eruv* requires minimum intervention in the urban environment, while the current "official" architectural strategy of Jewish space in German cities is to visibly amass "Jewish presence onto a single spot" (52), as is the case with the Jewish community center in the city center on a small square in Munich. Herz's piece is creative, full of insights into symbolic valences of the *eruv*, which resonate all the more deeply as he places it in conversation with an unexpected interlocutor: contemporary architectural criticism (he is an architect himself, rather than an academic scholar). This reflection clearly is the fruit of interdisciplinarity. The danger, however, or so it seems to me, is the degree of negligence that this interdisciplinarity may entail. As much as I agree with the political sentiment of his essay—namely, with the favoring of diffusion of Jewish life throughout the social fabric of the city, rather than concentration at the city center—it also seems that Herz's concept of the *eruv* remains somewhat flat. That is, the *eruv* that Herz constructs has very little to do with the practice thereof, and even less so with the

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people who really care about it, namely, halakhically observant Jews. These factors seem to disappear as the *eruv* disappears into total abstraction. Further, at the danger of appearing petty, I would insist that interdisciplinary practitioners also have to do their homework well if they are to adequately represent sources from across the "home" discipline. In Herz's case, he claims, by referring to the Talmud, that "the *eruv* is understood as the Temple of Jerusalem" (46), while the talmudic discussion actually does something else altogether.[17] If the establishment of *eruvin* were not such a contentious issue in the United States, involving the legal culture of the separation of religion and state, one might gloss over the symbolic decoding of the ritual system of the *eruv*, particularly because Herz's conceptual approach has much to offer. Alas, particularly a religious practice whose symbolic value is what is at stake in the public debates requires precision.

Schlör's use of the *eruv* as concept to frame his book is quite different. He calls attention to archival papers that document the correspondence between a small East Prussian Jewish town and the Prussian self-identified enlightened government. The rhetoric deployed in this conflict is fascinating, especially because what is at stake is the place of Jews in the city. Therefore, in contrast to Herz, Schlör does give voice to the people for whom the *eruv* as a practice matters, at least insofar as they are represented in the archival material. But in Schlör's conceptualization, we encounter another potential difficulty. Schlör draws on the *eruv* and the controversy in East Prussia as the symbolic borderline that differentiates tradition from modernity. On one side of the line is the traditional Jewish community, which is skeptical about the challenge of modernity; on the other side are non-Jewish and Jewish reformers. The *eruv* boundary for Schlör marks the *Innen* from the *Aussen*, the inner world of Jewish tradition from the outer world of modernity, not just in the topographical sense. While I do not necessarily disagree with this symbolic use of the *eruv*, the subject does at times fall into the rhetorical trap of tradition versus modernization, and religious practice (the *eruv*) as in essence an antimodern tradition, rather than allowing a trajectory of religious practice to unfold that is not always already antimodern. To illustrate and therefore clarify this point, Schlör summarizes the nature of the halakhic practice of the *eruv* in the following way:

> The perfect observance of all [Sabbath] regulations requires a life, which could transpire in an equally perfect way in the inner [world of Jewish tradition and practice], without any contact with an outer world however that might be defined. … That is impossible for a religious group that lives as a minority among others. Outer circumstances reach into the inner life of the community. With the society's modernization and the challenges of modernity

17. The opening *sugya* of the talmudic tractate of Eruvin (2a–3a) suggests the Temple gates as one possible model for the mishnaic measurements of the height of the boundary markers for the *eruv* community, but this is one among other structures, such as the sukkah and royal palaces, all of them extremely suggestive. But in the end, our talmudic editors opt for another, more pragmatic explanation altogether, a topic that I discuss in my book manuscript.

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> the observance of these regulations become more and more impossible for ever larger parts of the community. (21)

This kind of rhetoric obscures the fact that rabbinic, halakhic Judaism did manage to design a system of observance that has allowed communities to operate as minorities among others, and still does so. We might add that to many Jews committed to Sabbath observance, these regulations do not seem impossible, as they live in the contemporary economic and social world.[18] And it is precisely the *eruv* as practice and as symbolic system that undermines the static division between the *Innen* of traditional life, separate from the *Aussen* of the non-Jewish majority world. Jewish law in general and the *eruv* in particular allow the religious group to engage that "outside" world, while remaining committed to its cultural script of Jewish law and practice.

This issue is one that seeks to engage the book critically, rather than pointing out a problem with it. Either way, throughout the book, Schlör is actually quite sensitive with regard to these issues, and he means to undo stereotypically distortions of Jewish culture. I think, more importantly, that these engaging and creative studies of Jewish culture in the cultural studies mode demonstrate that there is a meaningful conversation to be had.

In sum, the Makom project in Potsdam, in both its practices and publications, presents an exemplary way to produce scholarship, and it opens up new and imaginative ways of thinking in Jewish studies, and for that, we owe Schlör and his students a great debt.

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18. Here, Schlör seems to be overly influenced by his source from Wilhelm Nowack, whose 1926 translation of and commentary on Mishnah `Eruvin he cites, and who much more overtly applies the typical Protestant antihalakhic (at best) rhetoric to this tractate when he writes, "In as much as the regulations of the Sabbath rest were multiplied and intensified by the leading sages of the synagogue, in order to prevent the transgression thereof, so the difficulties grew for the Jew situated in practical life, to remain on top of the Sabbath laws that grew into infinity," cited on p. 21.

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