The spatial morphology of synagogue visibility as a measure of Jewish acculturation in late nineteenth-century London

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Abstract

This paper's historical focus is the latter two decades of nineteenth-century London. During this period the established Jewish community of the city benefited from political emancipation, but this was not the case for the recently arrived impoverished Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe. The spatial constitution of religious practice also differed across the city: in a study of two sample areas, one in the more prosperous West End which, other than an isolated case in the impoverished district of Soho, had purpose-built buildings fronting the street; and another in an area of Whitechapel, in the East End, which was dominated by smaller *ad hoc* arrangements – one-room or adapted premises, *shtiebels* – serving a wider communal and social purpose, similar to the practice of the old country. A comparative space syntax isovist analysis of the visibility of synagogue façades from surrounding streets found that while, in the West End, most synagogues had a limited public display of religious practice by this time, East End prayer houses remained visible only to their immediate, Jewish majority surroundings. The paper proposes that the amount of synagogue-street visibility corresponds to the stage of growth in both social acculturation and political confidence.

Keywords: religion, immigration, visibility, isovists, synagogues, London

Two large rooms knocked into one.... Its furniture was bare benches, a raised platform with a reading desk in the centre and a wooden curtained ark at the end containing two parchment scrolls of the Law, each with a silver pointer and silver bells and pomegranates.... The room was badly ventilated and what little air there was generally sucked up by a greedy company of wax candles, big and little, struck in brass holders. The back window gave on the yard and the contiguous cow-sheds, and 'moos' mingled with the impassioned supplications of the worshippers, who came hither two and three times a day to batter the gates of heaven and to listen to sermons more exegetical than ethical. They dropped in, mostly in their work-a-day garments and grime, and rumbled and roared and chorused prayers with a zeal that shook the window-panes, and there was never lack of minyan —the congregational quorum of ten. In the West End, synagogues are built to eke out the income of poor minyan-men or professional congregants; in the East End rooms are tricked up for prayer. This synagogue was... their salon and their lecture-hall…. It was a place in which they could sit in their slippers, metaphorically that is; for though they frequently did so literally, it was by way of reverence, not ease (Zangwill, 1922, pp. 110-11).

Introduction

This paper considers whether the spatial constitution and public visibility of Jewish worship reflects the process of immigrant acculturation. When religious differences occur alongside poverty, the perception can be that the minority group poses a greater challenge for integration. Yet there may be an advantage to minorities 'to remain hidden, out of sight of the dominant society...' since they are less likely to be rejected if the majority population is unaware of them (Sibley, 1992, p. 121). Spatial segregation, especially of religious practice, can be a protective measure and the history of the Jewish ghetto in Europe would support this especially to be the case for religious minorities (see Vaughan, 2018). Despite the confinement to a spatial sector being in effect 'a form of imprisonment', for Jews living in ghettos, it also provided an undisturbed space in which an 'ideal' form of Jewish life, a place to call their own, was realised – as Lässig and Rürup point out (2017, pp. 141-42).

Synagogues, as their meaning in Greek conveys, are gathering places: 'for communal prayer, study, debate and commentary on the Holy Scriptures, as well as for religious instruction' (Piechotka and Piechotka, 2015, p. 35). Prayer can, in fact, take place in any building, so long as there is a quorum of ten men (both men and women in non-orthodox congregations). The Sabbath, rather than the synagogues themselves – 'time rather than place' – is what is sanctified in Judaism (Heschel, cited in Fenster, 2018, p. 6). Heschel writes how this helps explain the lack of any but minimal guidance in Jewish law regarding the layout and siting of synagogues. Taking this alongside the diasporic nature of Jewish life, it is not surprising to find that, over centuries, synagogues have tended to either

minimise external elaboration entirely (saving this for the interior), or take on an architectural form that reflects the cultural, social and political context within which they are situated. Bearing in mind the vast time and space that a history of Jewish religious practice could cover, this paper focuses on the spatial specificity of how the interaction between Jewish places of worship set within their urban context manifested itself in the post-emancipation period of nineteenth-century Europe, considering the case of London, which had undergone significant change in the 1880s with the influx of refugees from Eastern Europe.

Partly due, at least in Christian lands, to restrictions on the visibility of synagogues that meant that they were not permitted to compete with churches in height, the construction of purpose-built synagogue building has been said to symbolise two changes that mark modern times: religious practice becoming more formalised, as well as the visibility of this practice increasing with political security (Snyder, 2013). So-called 'tolerance' prevailed, so long as worship remained hidden (Kaplan, 2005, pp. 142-3). Even the closed-off ghetto revealed an unexpected degree of ambiguity. As Gotzmann shows, post emancipation, and into the nineteenth century, 'there was an increased tension between Jewish communities wishing to demonstrate their relative freedom against the reluctance of most German states and provinces to accede to Jewish communities' desire to have structures whose representative qualities matched those of other religious buildings' (Gotzmann, 2017, pp. 142-4).

Most Western European Jewish communities remained isolated on the fringes of society until well into the eighteenth century. The only exception to this was Amsterdam, which provided religious freedom and social equality to Jews fleeing from a secret existence in Spain and Portugal in the early seventeenth century. It generally remained a unique case for the continent until the more widespread emancipation of the Jewish inhabitants of cities living in countries conquered by Napoleon, which freed them from confinement in ghettos, shaping a more equal interface between the synagogue, the street and the city. The emancipatory process, which started in France from 1789 onwards, took a further half-century to take root, especially in smaller towns across Germany and the Austrian Empire. Moreover, although improvements in political freedom continued throughout the nineteenth

century, rather than a process of complete integration, in many instances religious, juridical and legal practices became the responsibility of organisations, or *Consistoire*, a system of self-administration of Jewish congregations under Napoleon I. This self-administration, which revolved around the synagogue, led, as Katz (1978, pp. 6, 274) describes it, to a transition towards partial inclusion.

In contrast, Eastern European synagogues remained mostly secluded and hidden inside urban blocks throughout the 19th century, gathering the community needs around them (see Hanzl, 2017, pp. 190-91 on Poland). This did not preclude wider Jewish/non-Jewish interaction: Hanzl goes on to elaborate how proximity to the market place, workshops and other places of commercial activity was part and parcel of how Jewish living patterns were configured.

New tensions around managing spatial interactions emerged. Previously, so long as Jewish communities remained spatially segregated, their manner of worship, even if it spilled out into the street (such as for weddings, religious processions and the like) was less of an issue, as it remained out of sight to the general community. Following emancipation, a desire to integrate meant that religious practice in public tended to move indoors. Nevertheless, as Heilman (1973, p. 139) states, 'On Sabbaths and holy days, when the *shul*'s [synagogue's] boundaries extend out into the street, meeting on the street [would be] like meeting in *shul*...'.

The character of private-public spatial boundaries can thus be revealing of the social and political situation of a minority group, with the wider spatial morphology being worthy of analysis. As Hitzer and Schlör write, such analysis 'might tell us something about a growing visibility and self-awareness of a given religious community' (Hitzer and Schlör, 2011, p. 83). This makes London of especial interest, as it presents on the one hand an example of this transformation to relatively visible formal buildings for the settled community of West London but, on the other hand, the case of East London a residual practice of maintaining the synagogue as a secluded, communally focused activity during the period 1881-1905.

London 1881-1905: introducing the cases

The latter half of the nineteenth century was a period of rapid urbanisation in Europe and the Americas. Alongside a rural-to-urban movement by Christian populations, migratory flows of Jewish people into cities, with a big movement of migrants from Eastern Europe to the UK and USA, reshaped the religious landscape of their destinations. Some argue that this led to secularization, while others suggest that this is more akin to a shift to a different practice of religion that moves spiritual practice to be one of a diverse range of other activities – cultural, economic, social and political. In fact, this was just as much a period of prolific construction of churches, possibly the most so in European history, according to Steinhoff (2011). In the case of Jewish worship, the situation was more complicated: not just due to ongoing uncertainty about their political status, but also due to religious reasons. As orthodox Jews will not travel or carry items on the Sabbath, spatial clustering was an imperative even for those who attended synagogue three times a year, rather than (up to) three times a day. For immigrants of any religion, the place of worship would serve variously as a centre for charitable support, locus of social organization in an 'alien' culture, bridge between cultures, and source of economic opportunity (Vaughan, 2018, chapter 5)

The history of Jewish settlement patterns in the United Kingdom in general and London in particular diverges from that of continental Europe. In the first period following resettlement under Cromwell in 1656 (the Jews of England were expelled by Edward I in 1290, so were not formally present in the country in the interim period), synagogues were typically splendid, but hidden spaces, constructed as enclosed sanctuaries 'away from public gaze' (Kadish, 2004). The Sephardi (following Spanish and Portuguese rites) Bevis Marks synagogue of 1701 was the first of these built after the readmission of Jews into the country. Constructed on the edge of the City of London, its secluded location can be seen as a reflection of the community's desire to maintain a low profile in their relatively uncertain position in society, although there are sources which state that the siting was in fact due to an explicit requirement from the City authorities for synagogues to be built away from the highway in order not to arouse any offence among the surrounding population (Rubens, 2001).

London's Sephardi Jewish congregation became increasingly well-established throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. There was, in parallel, a steady trickle of Central and Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the city, most of whom worshipped in smaller buildings, many of which were chapel or church conversions. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Anglo-Jewry had sufficient confidence to start to seek civic rights, culminating in political emancipation via the Parliamentary Oaths Act 1866 (which removed the wording 'on the true faith of a Christian'). With this increased confidence came the establishment in 1870 of a centralized organisation, the United Synagogue, which brought most of the existing larger synagogues of London under its auspices.

The closing decades of the nineteenth century marked an increase in political confidence alongside economic security across Western Europe, leading to the creation of monumental synagogues on public streets in many of the larger cities, such as Börneplatz Synagogue in Frankfurt am Main, built in 1882 (see the painting by Max Beckmann from 1919 reproduced in Gotzmann, 2017), though many continued to modulate their position on the street according to local circumstances. In the case of London, West End synagogues such as the West London Synagogue (1867–70) was, Fenster maintains, 'unassuming' in its narrow, mostly unexposed façade, 'almost' buried amongst its surrounding buildings, leaving elaborate decoration to the interior (Fenster, 2018, p. 17). By 1880 the existing London Jewish community was, on the face of it, settled and the period studied here opens with the arrival in East London of large numbers of impoverished Jewish immigrants fleeing pogroms across the Russian empire that had increased dramatically following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 (many as well as seeking economic opportunity away from persecution that severely limited their ability to work). With their influx into one of London's poorest districts came the creation of countless smaller places of worship known as *shtiebels* to denote one-room prayer houses, or *chevrot* (plural of *chevra*, or society) to denote the many mutual aid and burial insurance societies from which synagogues stemmed). In both cases, mode of prayer and usage of the synagogue – as well as the architecture of the synagogue itself, as will be discussed below – differed from what had become common practice in the West End of the city. Rather than using the

synagogue solely for prayer, the incomers sought to follow their established custom of using the synagogue as a social, education and religious structure. This was very much an importation of practice from across Eastern Europe, where *shtiebels* operated in a highly decentralised fashion in numerous study halls/prayer rooms. As Wodziński and Spallek's historical atlas of Hasidism (2018) shows, in larger towns there might be several, or even several dozen different such informal organisations, following a rabbinical court from afar, with little formal representation in the public realm of towns and cities.

Many immigrant congregations of the period made do with temporary conversions of an area within houses. In this most restricted incarnation the East End synagogue would have simply been a temporary prayer room, set up at the back of workshops or living spaces. An anonymous account in *The Jewish Chronicle* of a visitor to a sick woman in Hanbury Street highlights how impoverished some of these settings could be, describing his climb up a steep staircase into what he thought initially was a bedroom, only to discover that it doubled as 'A Humble *Chevra* Room' (cited in Metzler, 2014, p. 99).

The East End Jewish congregations were also different from their West End counterparts by frequently being formed around a common trade or, just as significantly, a common place of origin. This resulted in synagogues which constituted a spatial consolidation of self-support within the alien culture. There were dozens of smaller synagogues of this type, many of which were named after their country of origin, (such as Crawcour Synagogue: founded as a mutual aid society by and for Jews from the city of Kraków, Galicia).

There was a close correspondence between the spatial morphology of East London synagogue-street relations and the building activity in the general district. Charles Booth's paper to the Royal Statistical Society describes how one could observe the process of recent building densification by studying the various types of infilling and conversions prevalent in the area – noting how one could see the original buildings still standing with their large gardens, but almost all open space other than churchyards and burial grounds had been filled in by houses of various sides, some back-to-back, with

access via 'a narrow footway, with posts at each end and a gutter down the middle' or small courts

utilising space to the rear of buildings, approached by an archway under the building fronting the

street, and others 'even arranged floor by floor, communicating with the respective floors of the house

in front by a system of bridges…' obstructing light and shutting out air (Booth, 1888, pp. 281-2) (see

Figure 1). All of these types prevailed for the *ad hoc* prayer rooms created by the East End

community and this, along with the mode of religious organisation itself, constituted the starkest
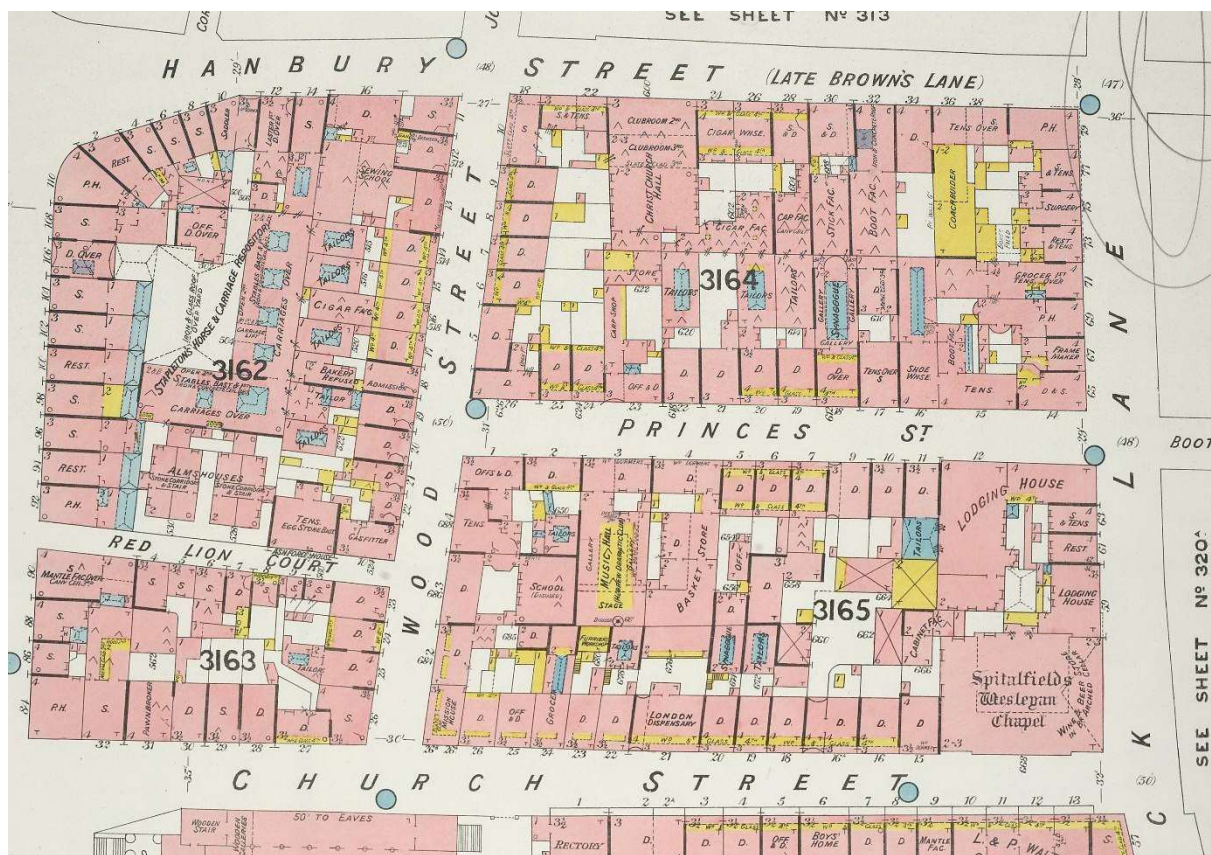
contrast between East and West.

Figure 1. Extract from Goad Plan of 1890, sheet 315 showing the pattern of high density infilling, conversions and extensions that were common in the Whitechapel area.

This contrast was very much of its time. As Snyder (2013) explains, prior to 1881 the various

synagogues of the East End were not seen by the United Synagogue and West End Jewry in general to

be problematic as they were similar in their religious outlook to West End synagogues, with the post-

1881 ones being preferred by the new immigrants as they found their mode of prayer more congenial. Many of the Jewish incomers 'did not recognize the chief rabbinate and openly accused the native Jewish establishment of practicing inauthentic Judaism, and because they [were seen to obstruct] the Anglicization process' (Snyder, 2013, p. 133). Nor could they, in most cases, afford the fees of West End synagogues. Metzler (2014) explains how *Chevrot* represented an alternative, institutional structure, both providing cheaper funerals, but also assisting in negotiating a way into a new urban environment by providing a familiar social and cultural network.

Methodology

Two sampled areas were studied, so the following will naturally exclude both the oldest synagogues on the City fringes and the newest suburban ones (such as St Johns Wood) of the period. For the West End, all the synagogues extant in 1899 in the entire area covered by Gerry Black's study were analysed. Black's study area constituted approximately 4.2 sq. km, encompassing Soho, Fitzrovia, Bloomsbury, Covent Garden, Marylebone, and Mayfair (op cit, p. 10). For the East End, a smaller sample area of Whitechapel was studied in order to capture all the hidden, informal prayer houses in 1899, information for which was drawn from the Goad Fire Insurance Plans of that year.[1]

The size of London's Jewish population resident in the West End at the turn of the century is estimated at 15,000 , of which 42% resided in Soho (Black, 1994, pp. 248, 252); with the most conservative appraisal finding at least 78,000 living in Whitechapel (Gartner, 1973, p. 147), and many more living in surrounding districts, especially to the north. Similar to the East End, Soho had its biggest increase of Jewish population, from 1881 onwards, peaking in 1910.

The following analysis of the fourteen synagogues found in the East End sample area is extracted from an earlier study which compared the building-street relationships between synagogues and churches in the area in order to assess the way in which the Jewish inhabitants of the district shaped their social-cultural relationships with their surroundings. History shows that none of the established synagogues was attractive for many of the newly-arrived, orthodox immigrants who 'preferred the

steamy, heady, intimate atmosphere of the *shtiebel*' (Black, 1994, p. 131). We hypothesized that the East London synagogues would be measurably less visible from the street and that the level of visibility would be associated with the spatial configuration and poverty situation of the surroundings (Vaughan & Sailer, 2017). The study below also compares the patterns of worship in East London with the prevailing West London synagogues, to assess whether the restricted visibility of synagogues formed by the new Jewish immigrants was more to do with their imported practices, than political confidence, or both.

Figure 2. Four types of synagogue found in Whitechapel, 1899 from top-left to bottom-right, examples of prominent, converted, passage and hidden types, highlighted on the Goad Plan of 1899. Image is (c) Crown copyright and Landmark Information Group

Information on all synagogues within a randomly-sampled area of Whitechapel, East London was obtained from Goad Fire Insurance plans for 1899, cross-referenced with other historical records (see Vaughan & Sailer, 2017 for detail). Four distinct types of buildings were identified (see Figure 2 and Table 1):

1) prominent and purpose-built structures, which could be recognised at a distance due to their size, distinctive style and décor;

2) converted buildings, many of which would have been religious buildings of another denomination, also visible from afar;

3) passage types: buildings situated in courtyards with no direct access or façade to the street. Access instead was through a passage, often with signs on a street façade indicating the presence of a synagogue. See example of *Chevra Shass* in Figure 3;

4) hidden: located in courtyards or above the ground floor, with neither direct access to the street, nor any visible sign to the street. These were often accessed through shops or workshops.

Figure 3. Chevrah Shass Synagogue, Whitechapel, London, with the synagogue entrance marked by a sign in Hebrew and English c. 1946-1959. Artist: John Gay (c) Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy

In contrast with the East End (Figure 4), even the poorest areas of the West End were cheek-by-jowl with the most prosperous streets of the city (see Figure 5). Notably, despite the fact that most historical accounts of the East End contrast its synagogues with the grand 'cathedral' type synagogues of the West End, Black (1994) mentions, along with three purpose-built synagogues in the district, an additional *shtiebel* located in Soho that followed the East End type.

Figure 4. The East End study area in a section of Sheet 5 East Central from the Charles Booth map of poverty 1898-9. Courtesy: London School of Economics.

Obtaining information on the presence of small, unofficial congregations elsewhere in the West End is challenging, but Lipman's classic social history (1954) shows that only a single case features in the list of synagogues incorporated into the Federation of Minor Synagogues that was set up in late 1887

to improve the methods and places of worship of the poorer congregations of London[2] (see Table 2), so while it is difficult to know for sure, it is evident that the Greens Court Talmud Torah is, at the most, one of only a handful examples of *shtiebels* in the West End, and even that had no presence on the street at all (and was not even identified by the Goad plan surveyor).

Analysis

Figure 4 highlights the fact that, although the East End had become a notoriously poor area by the late-nineteenth century, and although Booth's statistics confirmed that over 30% of the East End population was poor, there were also more prosperous streets surrounding pockets of severe poverty, with a significant effect made by railway, canals and docks cutting through communities. Previous space syntax analysis of the relationship between poverty and spatial segregation in the East End has found a close correspondence between the two (Vaughan, 2007), with very similar results in the district of Soho. As Figure 5 demonstrates, Soho had a large number of streets in the poverty tones of black, dark blue and light blue, framed by streets with red ('middle class') classifications. Further analysis of the district's configuration and morphological properties of the area, such as block size, showed significant differences between Soho and surrounding areas – on average the length of street segments was 47.32 m in Soho and 67.81 m in the district to its north, Marylebone, not counting Oxford Street itself (which has very long segments) (*op cit.,* 2007). The effect of smaller block size is an intensification of the grid, with the ability to make more small-scale journeys. While Hillier's (1999) proposition regarding the process of grid intensification is that this benefits increased commercial activity, due to smaller blocks enabling speedier journeys across the grid, later research by the author shows that local visibility is also essential to enable connection between local areas and the wider district (*op cit,* 2007). In both cases here, while the districts are not physically remote from the main commercial streets (Whitechapel Road in the East case and Oxford Street in the West), smaller blocks are not coupled with large visual fields and high integration, so, the consequential effect is likely to have been localised patterns of movement, and thus socialising, which do not engage as well with the larger scale built environment (and the larger patterns of socialisation). These

findings help explain how both Soho and the East End emerged over time as poor areas. It also helps explain how these areas have acquired a history of being the place of sub-cultures, whether of specific economic activities, specific markets or specific social groups. Indeed, Booth himself highlighted the importance of physical boundaries in isolating 'poverty areas' and their inhabitants from the mainstream of urban life. The reasoning behind this relationship might be lack of accessibility to place of work having an impact on poverty situation – not so much as where you live, but how where you live is connected to places of work in the area.
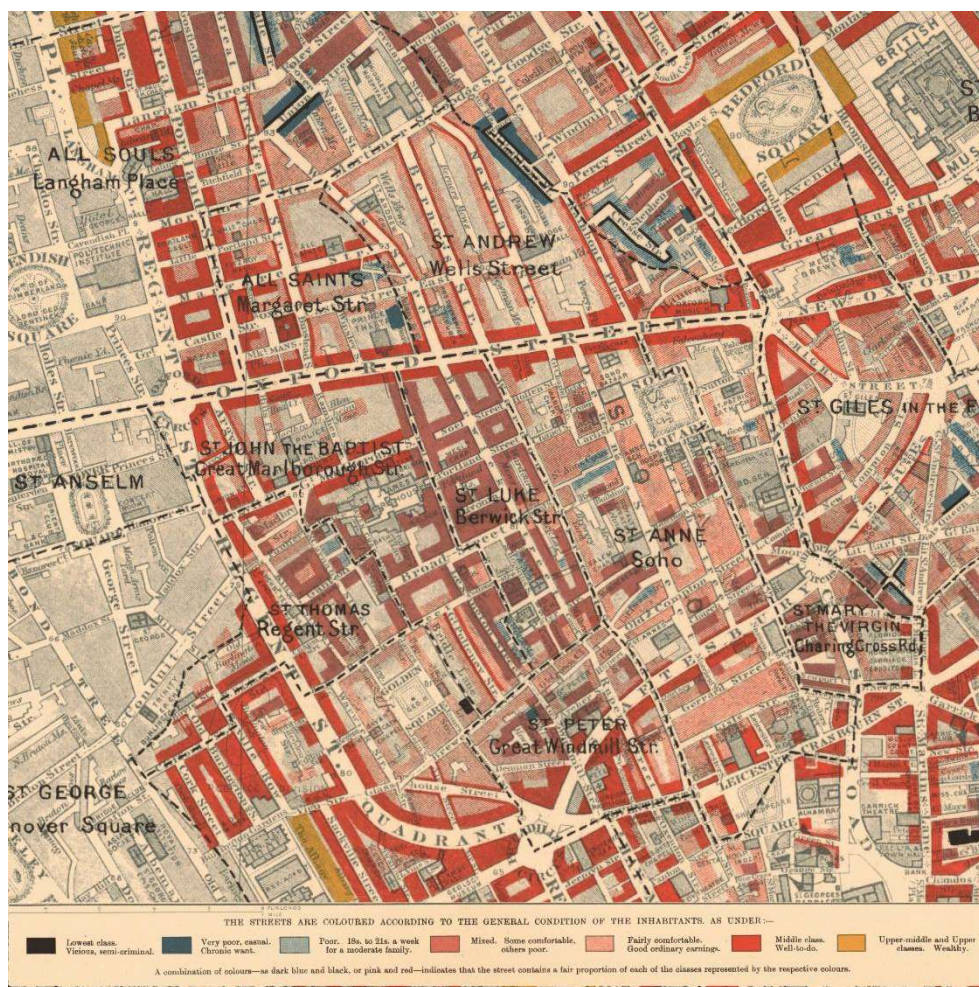
Figure 5. Soho, one of the poorer districts of West London. Section of Sheet 6 West Central of the Booth map of poverty 1898-9. Courtesy: London School of Economics.

The analysis then enquired whether the synagogues were likely to have been visible (whether to Jewish people or the wider community) and whether the degree of visibility changed according to the type of synagogue and/or the situation of the street within its urban context (namely, its degree of poverty). The method involved drawing an isovist from each building's entrance and analysing its shape and extents to account for the visibility of the entrance from surrounding streets. (An isovist captures the visual field of an individual or object. It marks the directly visible area from and around a vantage point, or line, such as the building façade). To construct isovists as realistic representations of a building's presence on the street, and the prominence of the building's façade towards its surroundings, the researchers measured both the building height and any signage in Hebrew that might indicate its purpose. The isovists were drawn according to a careful consideration of what was the likely visibility of the building from its surrounding streets.

1) *Prominent* and *purpose-built* structures and 2) *converted* buildings:

In the case of the first two types, isovists were drawn from all the faces of each building's façade and extended until they met another building. To ensure that the visibility of a façade was appropriately modelled according to human perception we used an angle of 170° (since façades would not be recognisable from a completely obtuse angle).

3) *Passage* buildings:

In the case of the passage type of synagogue, a photograph dating from *c*. 1959 of one the synagogues, *Chevrah Shass*, provided evidence for the way in which such synagogues announced their presence to the street, with a sign bridging the passageway at the point at which it met the street – this being the first point of connection of the synagogues to its urban environs. See for example Figure 6; an isovist was constructed from the passageway opening towards the street. Since a sign would neither be legible at a great distance, nor readable at an obtuse angle, two further limitations were introduced: first, that isovists were constructed at an angle of 135° (rather than 170° as above);[3] second, isovists were ended after 70 m, given that any distance beyond this the sign would cease to be readable. All the synagogues in both study areas were analysed using this method. Figure 7

illustrates the only extant West End synagogue, seen from a side street, and Figure 8a-d show the synagogue locations as they appeared on the Goad plans (with the exception of Central Synagogue, which was in an area not surveyed by Goad).
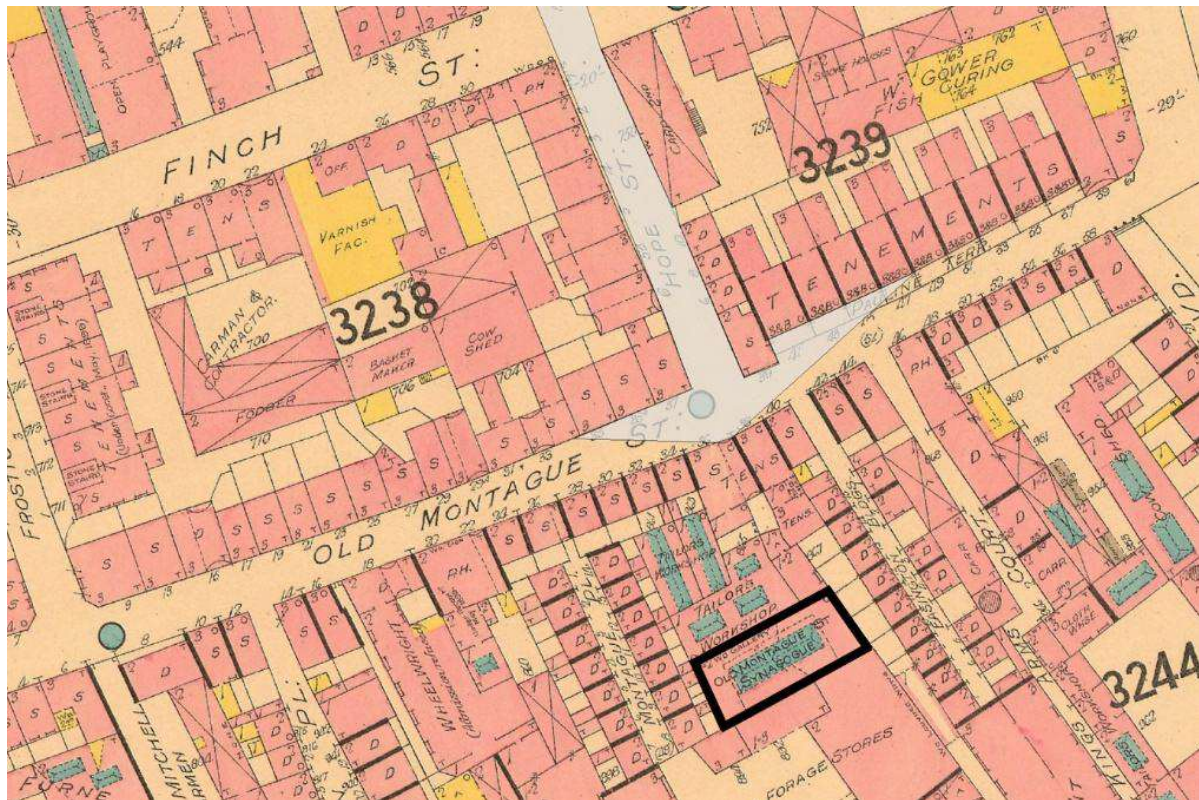

Figure 6. An isovist drawn from passage entrance to Montague Street synagogue (Chevrah Shass) drawn on the Goad Plan of 1899, sheet 322 © Crown copyright and Landmark Information Group;

The last category of *Hidden* synagogues was excluded from the isovist analysis, since they would not have any visible presence on the street.

Figure 7. West London Synagogue viewed from junction of Hampden Gurney Street and Upper Berkeley Street. Image by Basher Eyre, 2008.
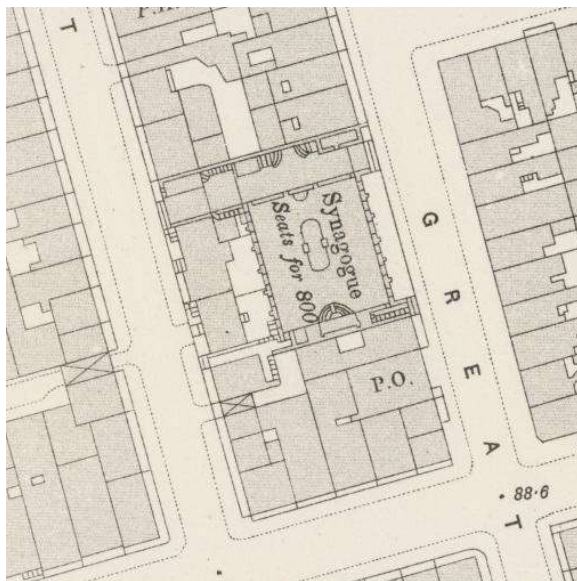

Figure 8a. Central Synagogue, 133-141, Great Portland Street (area not covered by Goad) on OS London, 1:1,056,
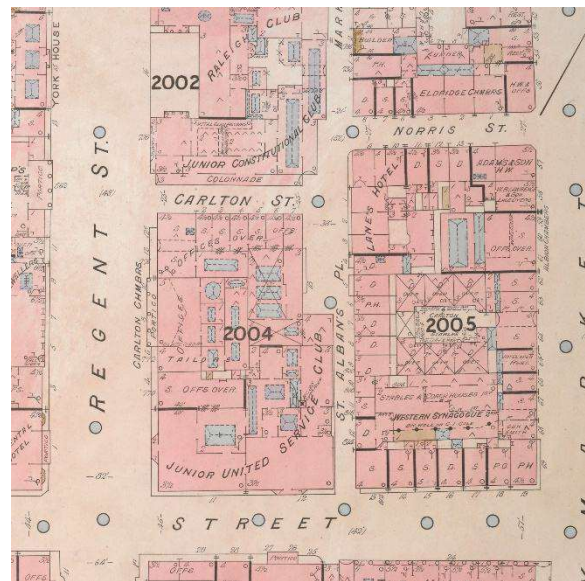

Figure b. The Western, St Albans' Place, Haymarket, in section of Insurance Plans of London scale 1:480 (1 inch
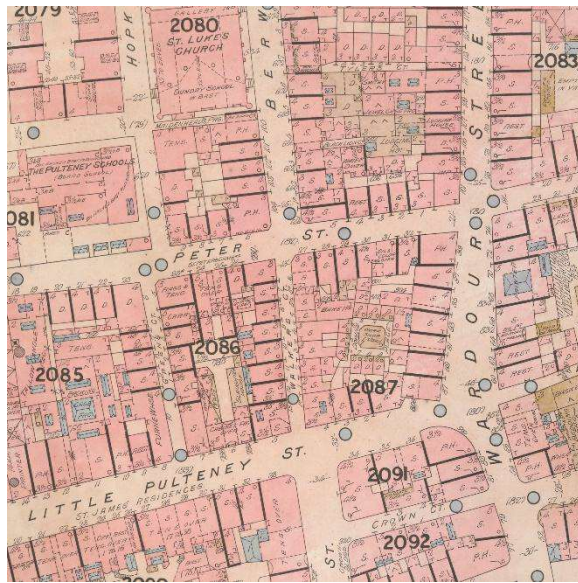
Figure 8 c. West End Talmud Torah (not marked on map), location on no. 10 Green Court in section of Goad Plan (details as above), Vol. IX; sheet 219.
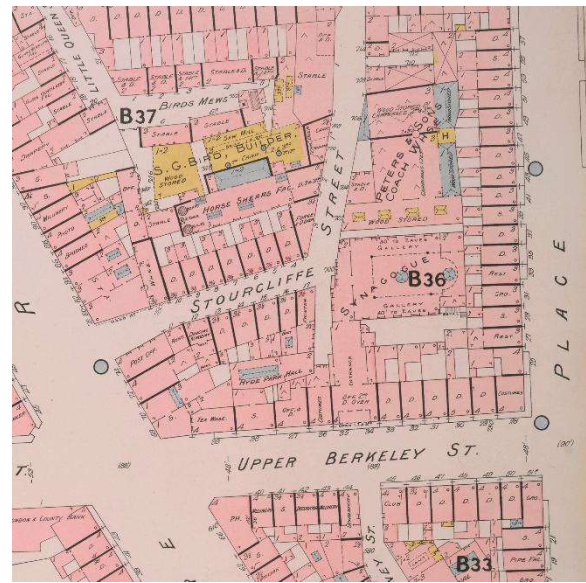
Figure 8d. d. West London Synagogue, Upper Berkeley Street in section of Goad Plan (details as above) Vol. B; sheet 7-2.

Table 1. List of synagogues in sampled area of Whitechapel, East London

Name	Founded	Address	Position	Isovist area and longest length
Brothers of Konin	1881-87	Hanbury Street 48	Passage	142 (38)
Cannon Street Road Synagogue	1895	143 Cannon Street	Converted	2268 (267)
Chevra Shass	1896	Old Montague Street 42	Passage	483 (60)
Chevra Torah	c. 1890	Booth Street 20	Prominent	2570 (287)
Crawcour Synagogue	1887	Fieldgate Street 29	Hidden	n/a
Fieldgate Street Synagogue	1899	Fieldgate Street 41	Passage	1353 (85)
Great Garden Street Synagogue	1887	Great Garden Street 9-11	Passage	74 (28)
Greenfield Street Synagogue	1896	Greenfield Street 81	Hidden	n/a
House of David United Brethren Chevra	1896	Fieldgate Street 33	Hidden	n/a
Limciecz Synagogue	1896	St. Mary Street 3	Hidden	n/a
Mile End New Town Synagogue	1880	Dunk Street 39	Passage	206 (45)
New Hambro	1899	Union Street 850	Prominent	1795 (133)
Plotsker	pre-1899	Commercial Road East 45	Hidden	n/a
The Brethren of Suwalki Synagogue	pre-1895	Hanbury Street 56	Hidden	n/a

Table 2. List of synagogues in sampled area of West London

Name	Founded	Address	Position	Isovist area and longest length in metres
Central Synagogue	1870	133-141, Great Portland Street (demolished)	Prominent	998 (67)
The Western Synagogue	1832	St. Albans Place, Haymarket (demolished)	Prominent	68 (21)
West End Talmud Torah	1880	10 Green Court, Soho	Hidden	n/a
West London Synagogue	1870	34, Upper Berkeley Street. (Reform)	Prominent	781 (73)

Tables 1 and 2 show that only a minority of the synagogues (three out of fourteen in the sampled East End area and one out of four in the West End) held a visible position in the urban fabric. These were either conversions (from chapels or churches), or a sole purpose-built synagogue from the most recent period.

The analysis of the isovists of synagogue façades showed little visibility of the religious practice at street level, especially if one takes account of the fact that a large number were completely invisible and not included in this analysis, with sizes ranging from 74 sq. m for the smallest (Great Garden Street Synagogue) to 2570 sq. m for the largest (Chevra Torah). Even more telling were the differences regarding the longest length of the isovist, indicating the prominence within the vicinity, since longer isovists mean that the building is visible from further afar. With the exception of Chevra Torah, all synagogues were characterised by a much shorter isovist lengths (28-133 m) than churches in the area (which ranged from 139 to 1093 m). A comparative analysis of the West End synagogues, which historical records show were more formal in their constitution, shows that they were well within the scale of East End synagogues, ranging from 68-998 sq. m in area, and up to 73 m in longest length (see, for example, Figure 6, which shows a photograph of West London Synagogue viewed from a side street). The West End Talmud Torah, the singularly hidden *shtiebel* of poorer Soho, provides a case to support the thesis that the spatial morphology of the synagogue was an aspect of cultural practice as well the degree of political confidence. It was also in the heartland of the poorest and most 'Jewish' of the district's streets in the late 1890s, as noted by Booth's researcher: describing

Soho's Broad Street as if it 'might be a bit of Whitechapel. Jewish faces, shops, children hatless tousle- haired women, men with bundles of trousers wrapped in cloth under their arms, hands of tailors as they draw through a thread seen above the window curtains…' (Booth, 1886-1903, , p. 4).

Additionally, space syntax analysis of the potential accessibility of the district's streets suggested that the structure of urban space in this area led to the relative seclusion of the areas of concentrated Jewish settlement, with most synagogues having little visual prominence to streets with a low Jewish presence, nor to the more prosperous streets in the area, yet remaining close to the economically active parts of the city. While the architectural and urban positioning was more likely to have been a result of the highly impoverished conditions of the community's life, along with preferences regarding religious practice, rather than a matter of choice, the significant lack of visibility of synagogues is a striking contrast with the apparent freedom of religion prevalent at the time.

The previous section demonstrated how the more enclosed Eastern European Jewish settlements had the benefit of allowing for religious life to spill out into the streets. It is interesting to see another parallel here, with historical accounts showing that in late-nineteenth century Whitechapel 'processions and celebrations at festivals like Purim or Simchat Torah, the sombre promenading at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the sedate Sabbath closure [of shops]' were a relatively common occurrence for the immigrant population (Englander, 2010, p. 32).

Conclusion

This paper opened with the a brief history that demonstrated how while Jewish places of worship varied in their exposure to the public gaze, even following emancipation, the interplay continued to be maintained: between political confidence of the minority group and their newness to local society on the one hand, and the amount of public display given to their religious practice on the other. Although synagogues were growing in their prominence at this time, this late-nineteenth century period was clearly a watershed, with most of the small synagogues of the East End forming an interior world, which allowed the incoming Jewish community – in all its multiplicity – to negotiate their way

into the urban environment and only the smallest of signs, evident from the larger isovists of the purpose-built synagogue (New Hambro) of the East End with is larger isovist area and length, being an indication of future trends. As Glasman (1988) has shown in her history of London synagogues of this period, the formation of the Federation of synagogues helped to speed up the transformation of mode of worship in the period leading up to 1899 from small, frequently undocumented, 'dingy' premises to 'model', larger, purpose-built structures. Nevertheless, it is telling how little the exterior of synagogues is described in the literature, clearly even in the established community of the West End, architectural elaboration was much more important for the inside than for outside.

The translation of political confidence (or lack thereof) into built form was reflected in the synagogue's position on the street, as well as its architectural detailing, hinting at the way in which public-private interface was being modulated throughout the nineteenth century. The street setting (as well as the mode of organisation) of small synagogues meant that they created an interior world, which allowed the Jewish community – in all its multiplicity – to negotiate their way into the urban environment, able to take advantage of a setting that was spatially integrated at a large scale, but locally segregated. Over time the differences in religious practice started to smooth out. The mode of worship that the West London establishment saw as messy was regularised, just as the ramshackle premises that hosted it were tidied up. In parallel, a secular public culture manifested in theatres, clubs and newspapers in both East and West sides of the city. To close, it is worth considering an example from continental Europe, which demonstrates how the relationship between Jewish places of worship with the urban realm can be seen as reflecting the fluctuating social and political contexts of the last century.

Offenbach Synagogue (built 1916) was a large building on the corner of two of the city's grandest streets. Its presence there could be viewed as reflecting the confidence of the Jewish urban society of that period. Following the horrors of the Second World War and the return of the surviving remnants of the community to the city, the site was offered back to them. Yet rather than occupying the prominent location close to the street, they decided that their new synagogue (built 1956) was to be an inconspicuous building, erected on the opposite side of the site, set back as far as possible from the

street. Since that uncertain time, the position of Germany's Jews has transformed again. A new

extension to the synagogue faces the city again, a structure that can be said to constitute, as well as

symbolise, this change in confidence of the community within German society. How the spatial

morphology of synagogues will evolve in the future is difficult to predict.

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Notes

1. Charles E Goad produced detailed coloured plans of urban areas in Britain between 1885 and 1970 to assess the risk of fire for insurance companies.

2. Of the "original federating synagogues" listed in Lipman, 1954, pp.120-121, none were in the West End, though Glasman (1982) shows in her 'List of Synagogues mentioned in the Federation Minute book 16th October 1187 – 10th March 1902' that Greens Court, Soho requested to join in 1890, but was refused. This is likely to be due it not having decent premises – the shtiebel itself moved to two other nearby locations before amalgamation with Bikkur Cholim Burial Society in 1910 to form New West End Synagogue, which moved to Dean Street in 1941.

3. This was established experimentally by a researcher noting signage sizes, distances and angles at which urban signage could still be read. The full elaboration of this methodology can be read in Vaughan and Sailer, 2017.