

# Walking the Jewish Past?

---

The effects of tourism on the interpretations of  
Budapest Jewish District

by  
Erzsébet Fanni Tóth

Submitted to Central European University  
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Sociology and Social  
Anthropology

Supervisor: Vlad Naumescu

Budapest, Hungary  
2008

## **Abstract**

In this thesis I am analysing how transnational tourism observes, narrates and sells the historical Jewish District of Budapest, Hungary. This urban space is a landscape of a specific memory, which has been constructed and shaped by different actors throughout the past half century. I argue that with the post socialist transformations this urban space became structured by and around Jewish identity and the experience of the Holocaust. I explore it through the study of walking tours, which constitute certain practices of place making. I show that the commoditisation of urban space physically reduces the territory of the District to a number of streets, which simultaneously turns into a sacred Jewish space for selective memories. Furthermore, at the same time it becomes an international enterprise with a positive meaning where new foreign heroes have emerged, nostalgia has been created for an idealised past and a selective amnesia is imposed for memories related to the Soviet past.

(Key words: Jewish District Budapest, Holocaust commemoration, social memory sites, memory tourism)

# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
Table of figures:.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Theoretical framework.....	6
2.1. History of the Jewish District.....	6
2.1.1. The Jewish District during Socialism.....	7
2.1.2. The Jewish District after the fall of Socialism.....	9
2.2. Reminding and Remembering.....	10
2.3. Alert walking in the urban space.....	12
2.4. Representations of the past.....	15
3. Methodology.....	18
3.1 Analysis of the commercial material.....	18
3.2 Interviews and field observations.....	19
4. Analysis.....	22
4.1 Analysis of the commercial material.....	22
4.1.1 Naming the tours.....	22
4.1.2 Urban space defined by tourism.....	23
4.1.3. Visual representation of the touristic Jewish District.....	26
4.1.4. Tourist-oriented narration of the urban space.....	27
4.2. Analysis of the interviews and field observations.....	29
4.2.1The actors.....	30
4.2.1.1. The tour operators.....	30
4.2.1.2. The walking tour.....	31
4.2.1.3. The tourists.....	33
4.2.2. Structure of narratives.....	35
4.2.2.1. Monuments.....	35
4.2.2.2. Heroes.....	36
4.2.2.3. Commemoration and commoditisation.....	38
4.2.2.4. Simultaneous silencing and emphasising Jewishness.....	41
5. Discussion.....	43

6. Conclusion .....	50
Appendix 1.....	55
Appendix 2.....	56
Appendix 3.....	57
Appendix 4.....	58
References.....	59
Books and articles.....	59
Brochures and leaflets.....	61
Online sources.....	61

**Table of figures:**

Figure 1: The Jewish Triangle of Budapest (by Komoróczy et al., 1999, pp.105).....	24
Figure 2: Map of the Jewish District .....	25
Figure 3: Common representations of the Jewish District.....	27
Figure 4: Carl Lutz memorial .....	42

## 1. Introduction

Jewish districts of Eastern Europe have undergone significant changes since the democratic transition in urban and social aspects, as well as in their historic and ethno-cultural appreciation (Gruber, 2002). The present research aims at providing explanation of how changes in culture of memory and commemoration have shaped the utilisation of urban space by opening it for commercial profit. Tourism appeared in the Jewish District of Budapest in the form of walking tours, which are organised by local tour operators for predominantly international visitors, who travel to the city (and to Central Europe) to search for their family roots and also to seek leisure. Commemoration of the Holocaust became closely linked to tourism.

The Jewish District of Budapest is a special location for numerous reasons. It was once the first area in Pest, where Jews were allowed to settle down. Later, in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the area of the current 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> districts became inhabited by mostly Jewish merchants and workshop owners. Furthermore, during WW2 one of the ghettos of the city was located in this area<sup>1</sup>, where 55-70 thousand Jews were forced to stay. On the territory of the district there are three impressive synagogues, located in Dohány, Rumbach and Kazinczy streets. A memorial park was created<sup>2</sup> next to the main synagogue in Dohány street to commemorate the Holocaust. This place has a strong potential of becoming a place of memory. The historical reality and truth is merged with the image of the notion of heritage Jewish Budapest. Currently, an interesting phenomenon is happening, which started in the mid-1990's: the

---

<sup>1</sup> During the last phase of the WW2 the big ghetto of Budapest was located on the territory of the 7th district. It was located in an area bordered by Király utca, Nagyatádi Szabó utca (the contemporary Kertész utca), Dob utca and Károly körút.

<sup>2</sup> Its creation can be linked to various actors: MAZSIHISZ (Alliance of the Jewish communities of Hungary), the Hungarian State, and numerous foreign donators of Jewish-Hungarian origin

newly emerging walking tours commoditise the space with its histories and memories and create a representation of Jewish District (sold as the “Jewish Budapest”), in which they merge the concepts of the historical Jewish district (located in the contemporary 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> districts) and the area of the former WW2 Ghetto, by shrinking it to a territory between three synagogues. These walking tours present an interesting topic for anthropological inquiry, since the re-discovery of the Jewish districts, the changes in commemorative practices and the emergence of memory tourism are all highly paradoxical and discursive (as described in the analysis part of this thesis).

The current research is a qualitative study of the walking tours, which re-define and shape the historical Jewish district of Budapest, Hungary. It focuses on showing how the urban space is commoditised and how is it consumed by international tourists. The main question is to how the changes in memory culture in the context of post-socialist transformations altered and structured a specific urban area by re-identifying it with Jewishness, linking it to a specific history and simultaneously integrating transnational memory tourism. Furthermore, I aim at showing how spaces of particular memories can be appropriated and created not only by political actors but also commercialised by entrepreneurs. The study of this phenomenon is important not only due to moral issues (e.g. “trivialisation” of the memory of the Holocaust) but also because its contribution to theory about commoditisation of the Shoah<sup>3</sup> and Jewishness.

As Cole (1999, 2002), Asworth (2002) and Gruber (2002) argue, there has been a recent discovery of Central Eastern European Jewish districts, where the remembrance of the Holocaust became an international enterprise utilised by transnational memory tourism. The

---

<sup>3</sup> Shoah - a term from the Bible, meaning “calamity”. Starting from the early 1940’s it became the standard Hebrew term for the Holocaust, which is preferred by many Jews to the term Holocaust. In this MA thesis I use both terms when I refer to the events of the Nazi terror.

increased appreciation of the neglected Jewish districts (among others of Prague, Warsaw, and Cracow) can be explained by religious revival after 1989 and also by the high potential for gentrification, because these districts have central location with old historical resources (Bodnár, 2001). After the opening of the national borders in 1989 many North American Jews have started to search for their roots in Central Eastern Europe. They are offered tours where by walking the cities they can rebuild the past, and remember their lost relatives (Hirsch, 1997). In this setting the Jewish districts of the region soon became the focus of tourist agencies<sup>4</sup> who by commoditising certain elements of the Jewish past and locating it in a specific urban space offer walking tours for foreign tourists<sup>5</sup>. The walking tours offer an insight into the past of the Jewish District and its religious inhabitants; however they are portrayed around the blooming age of late-19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish world. They create a space of nostalgia and memories of lost relatives on the top of the contemporary space and focus on exclusionary issues.

I argue that the walking tours by imagining, recreating and walking the area of the historical Jewish Budapest lock specific memories to certain locations through structuring and commoditising of urban space by and around Jewish past and identity and the experience of Holocaust. Furthermore, the study shows that this process puts a positive image on Jewishness and even though it uses the concept of the WW2 Ghetto, it avoids the Shoah, its memory and its interpretation, remaining non-judgemental. Instead, nostalgia is created in the urban space, which might be a work of reflecting on the space or the consumption of it. Using Ruth E. Gruber's (2002) categorisation, there might be different kinds of nostalgia, such as

---

<sup>4</sup> Tour operators who offer walking tours in the Jewish District are usually not Jewish (kosher) tour agencies. Usually they also organise tours to other parts of Budapest, as well as to the countryside.

<sup>5</sup> Not all the tourists of the Jewish District are Jewish. However, according to my findings many of those who visit this space to commemorate had relatives in Central Europe, and they walk the district to find their imprints (the way they lived and died) in the urban space.

pseudonostalgia for stereotypes, similar to the Fiddler on the Roof stage set images of Jewish life in the past. Secondly, there might be a nostalgia for the lost (and romanticised) world of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy when there was a coffee-house culture of Jewish intellectuals (Gruber, 2002). Thirdly, the commoditised contemporary urban space can be experienced as an imaginary Jewish space (Gantener and Kovács, 2007), which does not have to portray reality. Furthermore, by marketing negative past events in a positive way (talking about heroism and saving people in connection to the Holocaust instead of talking about the victims) the walking tours avoid the negative connotations of the area and attach only a positive image to it.

I examine how this memory tourism uses urban space and how does it commoditise memory, nostalgia and Jewish past by making use of local/global economic resources and by imposing discourses about politics of commemoration. At the local level it uses the urban area while on the global level it makes use of transnational flow of people, who are eager to visit the places where their ancestors lived and died because of their Jewish identity. Local and global are also articulated through specific urban spaces and monuments, such as the Dohány street synagogue, the Wallenberg Memorial Park and the Carl Lutz memorial. The Synagogue is introduced as the second largest synagogue in the world, therefore yielding extraordinary qualities and importance. The Wallenberg Memorial Park and the Carl Lutz memorial are narrated around contemporary values, such as demonstrating democracy, rights for freedoms and peaceful co-existence and mutual help of various nations. Since these memorials are devoted to rescuers of Jews during the Shoah, they represent heroism and exemplary altruism. However, it has to be asked what the balance between display and remembrance is in the walking tour of the Jewish District. I will argue that it is only a display, an exhibition of Jewishness, which involves distancing. “Museum Judaism” (Gruber, 2002) is created by entrepreneurs, where there is no interest in living Jews of Budapest, but only in the heritage

and the artefacts of the deceased. Since in Budapest the tours are organised only for foreigners (there are no Hungarian commercials and no Hungarian guided tours, excluding local Jews from participation) it can be argued that this form of commoditisation of the Jewish space and Jewish memory is not interested in contemporary Jewish community of Budapest. I base my argument on the fact that the tours do not include visits to active communities and church services.

The walking tours claim to have insight knowledge about the Jewish space, something that the contemporary locals do not even know about. Because of restricted participation in the walking tours (there is no Hungarian tour offered, and there is a lack of Hungarian commercial material) and the monopoly over narration (discussed further in the analysis of this thesis) I argue that the tour claims to know the reality better than the contemporary Jews of the city. I further argue that the aim of the walking tours of Jewish Budapest is not to show living sources of Judaism but rather to create a picture of what “Jewish” meant in the historical Budapest, at the golden times of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the representations of the past become the artefacts of the tour.

I put forward the hypothesis that mainstream Jewish representation of the district is imposed by tour operators and is shaped according to the needs of the market, in this case the tourism industry. The realities of this Jewish district are the expected narrations of the visitors who are mostly Jews from abroad. The space is created and re-created according to the nostalgic representations of tourism and the methods of imposing also comply with these rules. Though there are alternative readings of this cityscape (e.g. by Jewish foundations and educational institutions), they remain unknown to the foreign visitors and therefore they cannot choose between different representations.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. History of the Jewish District

Describing the historical background of the Jewish district of Budapest, by focusing on its particular history, ethno-cultural values starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is inevitable to understand its current situation.

The historical Jewish district of Budapest is located in the heart of the city, on the Pest side. It is part of the today's 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> district. Even though the area got a bad reputation during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>, it was once a thriving part of the city. Until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the area was an agricultural land. At the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the district had village-like features. It had free standing family houses, which were built in a perpendicular position to the streets. The houses all had gardens around them and they were known for their agricultural production. Only in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the district started to reach its today's view. New houses were constructed parallel to the streets and the occupation of people slowly moved from agriculture to merchandising.

Inner Erzsébetváros (on the territory of the contemporary 7<sup>th</sup> district) played a significant role in the life of the Jewish community, since it was the first area of historical Pest, which allowed the Jewish merchants to stay over for the night (in today's Király utca). Their first synagogue was also built in this area during the reign of Emperor Joseph, II. Until 1840 Jews were banned to own built properties in the city and only starting from the 1860's could they participate in constructing their own houses.

---

<sup>6</sup> During the course of the twentieth century the area's image was first linked to extreme anti-Semitism and ghettoisation of Jews during the WW2. Later due to its physical and social decay it got a negative reputation.

After the unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda there were big city reconstructing efforts, which also reached the Historical Jewish District. It started to develop in a rapid manner. The majority of 2-3 floor high buildings with decorated facades, courtyards and shops on the ground floor were built in this period. The three most remarkable synagogues of Budapest (in Dohány street, Kazinczy street and Rumbach street) were also constructed in this era. Before the WW1 the district was populated mostly by middle and lower middle class religious Jews, predominantly entrepreneurs. During the WW2 the Ghetto was established on the territory of the area, which determined the future of this urban space in a significant manner.

During the times of the Holocaust the ghetto in the 7<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest was a non-typical ghetto for different reasons (Cole, 2002). Firstly, it operated only for three months from November 1944 until January 1945. Secondly, the majority of the Jews who were forced to stay here were actually never deported to concentration camps, unlike the ones from the countryside of Hungary. And finally, it was liberated by the Soviet army, rather than liquidated (Cole and Smith, 1995). It has to be mentioned that the ghetto in the 7<sup>th</sup> district was not the only one in Budapest. There was an international ghetto in Újlipótváros, at the Pest side of the Margaret Bridge. Furthermore, there were hundreds of so called "yellow star houses" all around the city, since almost one fourth of the populations of Budapest were of Jewish religion (Komoróczy, 1999).

### **2.1.1. The Jewish District during Socialism**

After the Ghetto was liberated by the Soviet Army, the area around the Dohány street synagogue turned into a commemorative space of the Jewish fate (Cole, 2003). The first memorials were erected immediately after the Second World War. Even though there could

have been many locations all around Budapest, many of the memorials were constructed around the Dohány street synagogue. However, they all failed to remember the local victims of the Holocaust, and instead they focused only on the Soviet liberators. As the text of one of the monuments clearly suggests:

"In the Fascist period one of the gates of the ghetto stood here. The *liberating Soviet Army* broke down the ghetto walls on 18 January 1945."

Another one from 1985:

"As an eternal reminder of the day forty years ago, when the walls surrounding the only ghetto remaining in Europe were broken down by *the Soviet Army, liberators of our homeland*. 18 January, 1845 - 18 January, 1985.

(translations by Cole, 2002; emphasis by the author of the thesis)

This was clearly a top-down process of commemoration, organised by the state, whose ideology muted the particular Jewish specificity of the place and emphasised its own importance in the liberation.

After the WW2 many of the original residents did not return to the districts. Their houses were occupied by poor people, oftentimes by Roma (Csanádi, Csizmady, Koszeghy and Tomay, 2006). The development of the area stopped abruptly. The Socialist government nationalised all companies and the religious life was also discouraged and even banned. The big synagogues, which miraculously survived the war, were not used for religious purposes (Rumbach street synagogue was used as a storehouse). The development of the historical Jewish District was stagnant during the Socialist decades. The historical buildings bore the signs of the war, since the regime did not pay attention to their renovation (Csanádi, Csizmady, Koszeghy and Tomay, 2006). Even though there were Shoah commemorations and the local Jews received emigrant visitors whom they lead through the historical Jewish District, its level cannot be compared to the contemporary situation. Private commemorations

were rare since many survivor families did not talk about their memories and there was a generally more narrow framework of describing one's tragic memories about the Shoah. The official commemorations were organised by the state and were performed in the frame of celebrating the Red Army, which was not questioned or opposed by the local Jews.

### **2.1.2. The Jewish District after the fall of Socialism**

The democratic changes found the Jewish District of Budapest in a very bad physical condition. The synagogues of the area were all damaged due to their neglect and lack of renovation during the Kádár regime. The historical buildings in the streets around the Dohány street synagogue were lacking the amenities of modern housing. Starting from the mid-1990's however, the re-discovery of Jewish identity, the birth of the first Jewish cultural institutions and the gradual renovation of the main synagogue led to the slow emergence of tourism in the area.

Opening towards international visitors was also affected by religious revival in Hungary (Gitelman, 2001). Local Jews, as well as the ones in emigration started to talk publicly about their own memories. Gradually a sacred Jewish space was created in the streets around the Dohány street synagogue, initiated by religious organisations, the civil society as well as by the state. There were newly erected monuments around the main synagogue; kosher restaurants and food stores are mushrooming in the district, and travel agencies specialise in trips to Israel. The Jewish civil society has also "discovered" this district and established their offices in the streets around the main synagogue. There are schools where Hebrew is taught for different groups (young Jewish boys, people rediscovering their Jewish origin etc.), as well as courses in Jewish culture and the like. A guided tour is organised many times per day in English for foreign tourists. The public urban space is thus commoditised in order to sell the image of the area.

Finkelstein (2000) sees this phenomenon as part of the Holocaust industry, by which the Jews in emigration (mainly in the United States and in Israel) can identify with. He proposes (2000) that the Shoah is the only common denominator of American Jewish identity in the late 20th century and it is becoming a means of getting support for Israel. Cole (1999) adds that there is „Americanization of the Holocaust”, a process of reshaping of the Shoah history into a framework that reflect values of tolerance, democracy and human rights, qualities that the Western societies, especially the United States tells about itself.

The memories that people claimed to recall after the fall of Socialism all resembled the canonised history. They emphasised the heroism of certain figures, who were not talked about during the previous regime, while tended to change their position about the role of the Soviets. In the anti-Soviet atmosphere of the early 1990’s the local Jewish community recalled the memory of the Red Army as liberators who soon turned into dictators (this dual identity is discussed later in this thesis).

## ***2.2. Reminding and Remembering***

Memory and recollection of memories is never an individual act. Both recoding and recollecting happens in a social context, therefore it has a big impact on both people’s individual as well as collective memories (Halbwachs, 1980). Collective memories are shared with others, are transmitted and constructed through social interaction. These memories are very important on both individual levels and community levels for identification. Young (1993) proposed another term, “collected memory”, because as he claims, societies do have memories, but they cannot remember without individuals. This is reflected nicely in case of the Budapest Jewish district, provided that during the past half century there were different “memories” of the particular urban space, which contradicted each other due to different

remembering of the individuals (such as the memory of the Soviet army in relation to the urban space of the city).

Both collective and collected memories are different from history because while history aims at being objective, and non-biased, memories are often passionate. Furthermore, to remember the past one needs narrative structures, which are derived from a cultural context and are strongly related to the present. In this way, memory (the time remembered) is always influenced by social context of the time of remembering (Bakhurst, 1990) by which, the past and the present become inseparable. Thus, the events remembered are only partly connected to the actual past, since the circumstances, among which the event is recalled and narrated always have a significant impact on the memory and will in all cases reflect the present as well. The walking tours therefore, make the visitors to recall/create the past through the present context that they experience, the imposed and narrated memories of the tourist organisations.

The way past events are represented and commemorated is a clear indication of how the present is constructed (Assman, 1997) because the events and the people (the selected heroes) that the group of people decide to remember indicates their identity. “The past is not simply ‘received’ by the present. The present is ‘haunted’ by the past and the past is modelled, invented, reinvented and reconstructed by the present” (Assman, 1997, pp.9). Thus, by understanding commemorative practices of a certain community one can also get insights about the identifications of its members. As it is suggested above, the past is not only accepted and remembered but it is reconstructed through both narration and build form. The role of spaces and the monuments and buildings that represent certain past events becomes a constant reminder of the members of the community about their collective memories and their identity. Therefore the monuments have a crucial role in collective memories. Communities

of memory are formed and are being tied together by commemorative practices and sites referring to their common past, fate, ancestors, aims and the like. The walking tours of Jewish Budapest can partly be considered communities of memory however since they are part of memory tourism, their case is special for numerous reasons.

### ***2.3. Alert walking in the urban space***

The emergence of memory tourism can be linked to the rediscovery of Jewishness and its past key locations in the city. The walking tours emphasise collective memories of all Jews. By linking memory to specific places, defining the Jewish District of Budapest, being selective to particular events and people they are very powerful.. Walking tours are “alert walkings” not only through a certain route, but also through imposed memories. How the tourists consume the space and its imposed memories is influenced by the social context, which the formation of special communities of memory.

Firstly, nostalgia to the homeland of one’s ancestors is one of these qualities (Mitchell, 1998). It creates a bond between the idealised life of one’s parents and the life they lived. It is always envisaged as positive and stabile, where the daily life flows in a harmonic manner. Thus, by creating a nostalgic sphere with the walking tours, an emotional bond and a form of identification is generated. The myth that they are told becomes more real than the historic reality.

The second explanation why the participating tourists of the walking tours form a kind of community of memory however they do not fully identify themselves with the events and they are selective about their reception. In the post-modern world tourists can be characterised with qualities such as living in the present without past, talking to strangers without consequences, perceiving the environment and being of leisure (Bauman, 1996). In contrast to

the “flâneur” (Benjamin, 1973), who enjoys being on the road and having a home everywhere, is always away from home but simultaneously feels at home at all places, the post-modern tourists has a place of departure and a clear destination. While the flâneur is neither tied to space, nor to time and floats in the masses without clear destination and time constraints, the tourist usually has a route to complete and is tied to time schedules. They are both avoiding long-term relations, lasting networks of any kind, as well as tasks and obligations. Furthermore, contemporary tourists replace the role of the gaze of the flâneur with photographs (Urry, 1990). The aim of tourists is never to stay invisible. They want to be recorded (Urry, 1990) and want to record the others.

As the flâneur and the post-modern person, the tourist is also restless. This restlessness is caused by dissatisfaction with the presence and by the strong urge to find something that exists besides it. The desire for contrast is the most visible with the post-modern tourists (Rojek, 1993), whose dissatisfaction with present experiences, wanting to escape to a better place and longing for more ventures determine their leisure activities. Their escape to a more “worthwhile” space, moving to geographically and culturally distant places becomes hectic and results in constant temporal and spatial oscillation (Rojek, 1993). Furthermore, their urge to go away from the ordinary and everyday experience became completely commoditised, or as Benjamin (1973) calls it, it is an instance of “phantasmagoria of capitalism”.

In the modern context the urban scenery with *sites* gradually turns into a place with *sights* (Urry, 1990). Buildings and other artefacts are no longer used, as it was in their time of creation, but they are looked at and perceived. In the case of the Dohány street synagogue, as described more detailed in the analysis, people no longer go to pray but they visit it because of its recommended qualities and attached values. Sites are consumed by the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990), which is interested in symbols (signs) and recollections. The symbols helps the

tourists in orientation in space and recollection of memories, furthermore, they have a clear-cut reference to a given geographical space thus they are regular and predictable. Therefore, while on the surface the tourists become members of a particular community of Jewish memory of the lost and idealised world of their ancestors and the events of the Holocaust, their direct identification is not linked to these sites but is only helped by them.

Even though the contemporary post-modern tourists seemingly want to proliferate individual experiences and aims at discovering new forms of the collective (Voase, 2007), the contemporary tourist experiences are led by representations, portrayed in guide books, television shows and movies (in contrast to the flâneur, who was led by the urge of discovering new things, like it was in the case of the flâneur [Rojek, 1993]). Paradoxically, the participants of middle class mass tourism are neither interested in the everyday life of the locals, nor in discovering things for themselves. Their primary goal is to see the sites that are recommended by others and that a modern tourist has to see at least once in a lifetime (such as the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty and in the case of the Jewish district of Budapest the mystical places where their ancestors lived). Furthermore, they are as much attracted to the mechanical reproductions of the original objects (Benjamin, 1973) as to the real ones (e.g. the small metal version of the Eiffel tower or in the context of Budapest Jewish district a t-shirt with a picture of the Dohány street synagogue). For them the reproduction is as good as the real one (Benjamin, 1973) and they lose the sense of searching for the unique. Participating in the walking tour therefore also yields similar qualities. As the above described features of postmodern and transnational tourism indicate, even though the visitors reproduce personal memories and proliferate memories of their ancestors, they do not fully become members of a community of memory tightly connected to the Budapest Jewish District but rather of a

collective of contemporary Jews living in freedom and democracy, which is constituted through the narration of memories and histories of selected type.

#### ***2.4. Representations of the past***

Much research has been done about the memories of people and about the histories they are presented with. In Nora's account (1996) the "real memories" have been almost erased completely by the effort of writing "real historical accounts" of the past events and we need the urge to talk much about the memories because we do not have much of it left. Therefore, "*lieux de mémoire*" (sites of memory) have been created since we almost entirely lack the real environments of memory, the "*milieu de mémoire*" (Nora, 1996).

The monuments in the Jewish District have a special position: they were constructed for people to remember (being reminded of) events of the past to which its community (both local and international) is not linked organically any more (the memories are the canonised memories, approved by the state and by local Jewish Organisations). The remembered events (in this case the rescue of people during the Shoah) were raised from its time-frame and original location (as discussed later in this thesis) and are placed in a space that is aimed at commemorating only selected issues and selected people. Past is produced and reproduced through them even though there is no historical continuity in the monuments and the simultaneously affects the identification processes of the community as well.

Monuments are important elements of narration, since they serve as sites of memory through which people remember the past and as identification points of groups by representing a significant event that had an impact on the life of a community. Thus, monuments in themselves have the power of creating identities (Berger and Luckmann 1980) and simultaneously by defining the past they also define the present. The shared memories and

identical images of the past, represented in a monument or in a certain space (such as the Jewish district of Budapest) can constitute to people's modern identities. As Middleton and Edwards (1990) noted, these sites symbolically rise above the chaos of daily life and represent stability, an identification point, where one can always turn.

Therefore, monuments never exist in themselves. They are not only about the history, but they show how the past is integrated into the present (Brockmeier, 2002). An interpretation (narrative) is needed for which a cultural repertoire is necessary for reading its codes. The narration is always performative and it is never the past event but the current narrating event that is significant (Brockmeier, 2002). How the past is activated and built into the present is what makes the monuments important. Furthermore, there is a constant dialogue between the past and the present, since the monument represents certain values which the builders/initiators wanted to emphasise. Thus, the monuments of the Holocaust in the Budapest Jewish District do not only represent the past but they very consciously shape the present as well. Firstly, they guide people in evaluating the past by showing what and how to remember. By listing names the monuments symbolically replace the body of those, who perished during the Shoah and were never buried in cemeteries. This creates a very powerful cult of death (Verdery, 1999), since in a Foucaultian sense of *politics of emotions*, memorial architecture has an intense emotional power - it makes people feel fear and grief, which are experiences of danger and loss, qualities that are being politicised (Svašek, 2006). The dead bodies, which are missing here, are all used as social agents in political interaction. (Verdery, 1999). Since one of the ghettos was on the territory, where the walking tour leads people, this urban space is perceived as a place where victims are buried symbolically.

The characteristics of the memorials are shaped by their initiators and creators, such as the state, the church, historians, and various civic movements but also by intermediaries, such as

the media. In the post-socialist setting of Hungary, where the politics of victimization and regret was very prevalent (Cole, 2002) the creation of this space had social functions as well. The past was used for the sake of the present. According to the theory of Durkheim, emphasising collective memories leads to social cohesion (Durkheim, 1915). This can be observed at the Budapest Jewish District, where monuments are integrated into a specific reading and they serve intermediary tools of social cohesion. The main philosophy of the contemporary Jewish quarter is the emphasis of a particular history in slightly idealised sense. Next to the above mentioned things, it might have an effect among the Hungarian Jews, serving as an additional factor for (re-) identification in the times of the religious revival of the 1990s and early 2000 (Gitelman, 2001).

### **3. Methodology**

For the purpose of data collection and analysis I utilised two different types of methods. Firstly, I conducted analysis of the commercial material that the travel agencies use for attracting visitors into the Jewish District of Budapest. I analysed both printed and on-line material. Secondly, I conducted interviews with the main actors who interpret and shape the studied urban space, such as developers of the walking tours, the tour guides and the tourists. The first and the second part of the research, namely the study of commercial material and the interviews complement each other and provide a good basis for understanding how the urban space is utilised by tourism and how tourism shapes its memory.

#### ***3.1 Analysis of the commercial material***

During the first phase of the research I conducted analysis of the commercial material of the seven tour operators in Budapest, which offer tours in the historical Jewish district of Budapest. The analysis involved study of printed commercials, such as leaflets, brochures and posters. Furthermore, I also did investigation of online sources, such as websites of the agencies together with their advertisements. I focused my attention on four aspects of the commercial material.

Firstly, I looked at the terms, how the tour operators label the studied urban space. This is very important because it defines their approach of commoditising the given area and also the way they identify and give identity to the landscape. I also did a comparison of the name under they sell the area around the Dohány street synagogue.

Secondly, I investigated what is the urban space that the individual actors use as a commercial product. I focused on the routes that the walking tours follow and on the boundaries of the urban area that they define for touristic purposes as the Jewish District of Budapest.

Thirdly, I looked at the visual representations of the Jewish district of Budapest in these commercial materials and analysed what the main places are that the area is represented with. I analysed what they considered as the main characteristic of the particular space and what kind of message they transmit by showing these images.

Finally, I analysed the narratives of selling the urban space to tourists by studying the language they use. These narrative structures are very important in order to understand the way the actors approach the area and the methods how they utilise it for commercial profit. Since the tours are offered for foreign visitors and the commercial materials are in English, the quotes are directly taken from them.

### ***3.2 Interviews and field observations***

The second part of my ethnographic field work consists of semi-structured interviews. The aim of the interviews with the actors of the Jewish District was to get a better overview of the workings and effects of tourism in this particular location. I did eight semi-structured interviews with developers of the tour (managers of the agencies) and with tour guides of different agencies. Furthermore, I engaged in many informal chats with the tourists participating in the walking tours, and wandering in the area of the Dohány street synagogue and the Wallenberg Memorial Park.

The research was conducted in April and May 2008 in Budapest. All the interviews were semi-structured and were conducted face-to-face. No recording was done; however I took extensive notes during the talks. The interviewees were ensured of their anonymity and were asked whether they allow publishing what they said and if they asked for it, they were promised a copy of the final report. Because of confidential business information they were also ensured that neither their name, nor the name of their company will be openly stated in

the thesis. The interviews with the managers of the tour agencies and with the tour guides (discussed later in details) were conducted in Hungarian. Conversations with the tourists were usually in English and in one particular case in Dutch. The quotes in the text are therefore the translations of the author.

The main topics of the interviews (see Appendix 1,2 and 3 for the complete list of questions) involved asking general information about the interviewee, involving his/her age, sex, country of origin, religious affiliation, function at the workplace and duration and reason for doing the job. The second part of the interviews was about the walking tour itself. I was interested in the route the tour follows and the reasons why this exact path was set up and why those monuments were included. Furthermore, I asked questions about the narration of the space, focusing on the source of knowledge about the district and the special emphasis on exact issues/artefacts. In addition, I wanted to know what the aim of the tour is. The third part of the interviews focused on the consumption of the urban space and its actors, the tourists. I was interested in where the visitors usually come from, how old they are on average, whether they are religious Jews, are Shoah survivors (first, second or third generation survivors) and whether they have genealogy in Central Eastern Europe. Furthermore, I was curious what their aim of walking is, more specifically whether it is a pilgrimage for them, identity search, memory tourism or they are just seeking leisure in the region. Keeping in mind Cole's (2002) findings about Cracow, where tourists are more interested in the places where Spielberg's movie Schindler's list was filmed than in the real historical sites, I also formed a question about the effect of Imre Kertész's<sup>7</sup> Nobel prize-winning book, the *Fateless*. I was interested whether there have been an increased number of visitors since the book became well-known

---

<sup>7</sup> Imre Kertész (1929, Budapest - ), is a Hungarian Jewish author, who as a child was deported to concentration camps. In the year 2002 he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for his book *Fateless*, which describes his life during the Shoah and the difficulties of coming back to his hometown, Budapest. There is a film based on his novel, with the same title.

and whether tourists are interested specifically in issues linked to the book and the film that was based on it.

While the first part of the research about the commercial material provided me with an overview of the offered tours and of the different definitions of the Jewish district, by interviewing the tour operators and guides I acquired thorough knowledge of how the space is shaped by the narratives of the guides and how its memories are utilised for specific purposes (identification, creation of nostalgia and the like). Furthermore, by talking to tourists<sup>8</sup> I understood the demand side of the phenomenon and I could experience how consumes tourism the area and its narratives. In this way, I was capable of following the structures of narrated memory and history as well as the links that are made between the urban space and a specific memory.

---

<sup>8</sup> Due to time restraints the sample that is used in this research is small and might not be representative enough for generalising.

## 4. Analysis

As mentioned previously, the main aim of this research is analysing how changes in memory culture and commemorating the Hungarian Holocaust have affected the utilisation of urban space by opening it for commercial profit. For understanding this complex phenomenon, I provide analysis of the commercial material of the tour operators of Budapest and then present my findings from the field observations and interviews with the main actors of shaping touristically the Jewish District of Budapest.

### *4.1 Analysis of the commercial material*

#### **4.1.1 Naming the tours**

The focus of my analysis was the printed and online commercial material of seven tour operators in Budapest which offer walking tours in the urban space of the Jewish district. The seven tour agencies advertise their “product” and differentiate it from others by calling it differently. Even though the walking tours are all focusing on a small segment of the inner 7<sup>th</sup> district of the contemporary Budapest, their use of terminology about this space differs. Two of the agencies call and sell their tour as “Jewish Budapest” despite the fact that they lead the visitors only into a very small area around the Dohány street synagogue. One of the agencies calls their walking tour as a tour of the Jewish Quarter, and another one as a tour of the Jewish District. One tour operator offers the walk to “the old-new Jewish District of Budapest”, which is a term by Komoroczy (1999). Finally, one of the agencies, which offers kosher tours through the internet to individual Jewish tourists from all around the world, calls the walk “the tour in the old Jewish Quarter in Jewish Budapest” (Totally Jewish Travel).

As the examples show, there is no consensus about the name of this particular space. Even though one of the tours, which is offered as “Jewish Budapest” (it takes only three hours and it would be impossible to walk the entire city in this short period) uses this nicely sounding concept for a very small space, and as such, makes the term “Jewish Budapest” a metonymy<sup>9</sup> of the space around the Dohány street synagogue.

#### **4.1.2 Urban space defined by tourism**

One might wonder what is the exact space that the walking tours utilise. In contrast to the historical Jewish district of Budapest (Komoroczy, 1999) that had clear boundaries and was defined by its history and ethno-cultural characteristics, the contemporary space displays contradicting features. Tourism does not define its boundaries in terms of streets, nor does it link the area to contemporary active Jewish communities and synagogues. Instead, it defines the space in terms of its monuments and shapes it around their location (see the term “Jewish triangle”, which is defined by three synagogues in the area). For example:

“Jewish Budapest – we visit the Dohány Street Synagogue, the second largest synagogue of the world, the Jewish Museum (interior visit), the Jewish Cemetery, the Holocaust Memorial and the surroundings of the Synagogue. The tour ends at the orthodox centre, there is a possibility for a lunch in a kosher restaurant and visit of the orthodox temple.[...]” (In: EUrama sightseeing tours, Sightseeing City Tour Budapest, 2008-09, brochure)

Or

“Walk the path of history of the Jewish Quarter in the environs of Andrassy Avenue, World Heritage site. [...] Discover the representatives of the Jewish Triangle: the Dohány, Rumbach and Kazinczy street synagogues [...]. Along the stroll we learn about the Goldmark Hall, the Jewish Community Center, the mikvah, the famous Gozdsu Courtyard, the once most important street of Pest – Király street - and a great number of fascinating old buildings. Experience the unique atmosphere on the territory of the former Ghetto.” (In: Hidden Treasure Tours Ltd., Visit the Jewish Quarter of Budapest brochure, 2007)

---

<sup>9</sup> Metonymy is used mostly in literature. It is a trope, in which a certain entity is used to represent a bigger unit.

From the above two examples it is visible that the tourist agencies utilise the concept and the area of the Jewish District however they do not define it clearly in geographical terms. Its boundaries remain vague and its space is not defined by its streets but by its monuments. Furthermore, there are many interpretations of where the Jewish District of Budapest is. It suggests that “Jewish Budapest” is around the synagogue at Dohány street and there is additionally the orthodox centre. While in the first quoted case it restricts itself to the gated area around the Dohány street synagogue and expands the Jewish space only slightly, to the orthodox temple; the second quoted tour operator covers a larger area.

Even though the second example consumes a much bigger space, it is also uncertain in defining its location. While it refers to the fact that it is close to Andrásy Avenue, it misses pointing to its location in clear geographical terms. Furthermore, it refers to the concept of the Ghetto, which in Budapest was not identical with the historical Jewish district of Budapest (though parts of the historical Jewish district were also included in the territory of one of the WW2 Ghettos).



Figure 1: The Jewish Triangle of Budapest by Komoróczy et al. (1999, pp.105)

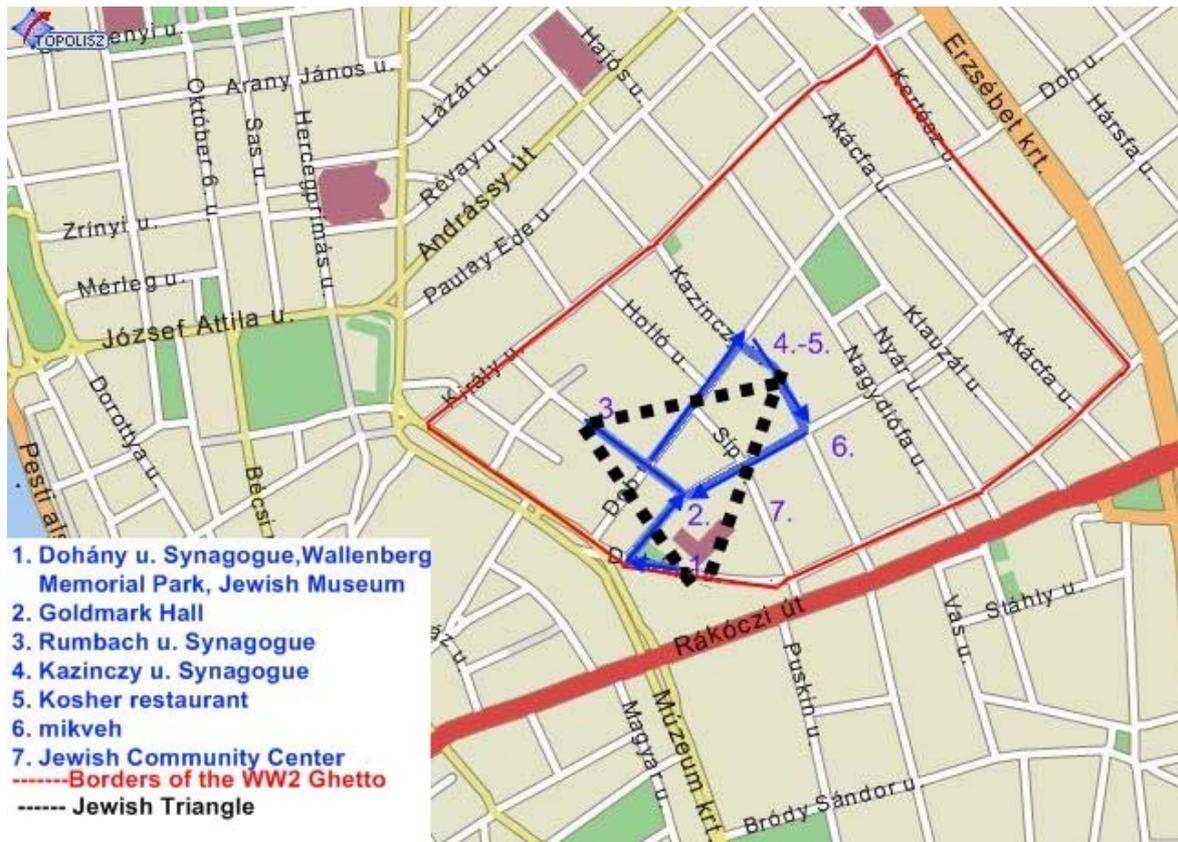


Figure 2: Map of the Jewish District (Map is taken from the website [www.mymap.hu](http://www.mymap.hu) ,comments by the author of the thesis)

The lack of consensus about what the Jewish district of Budapest is and where it is located can be also noticed in the leaflet of CITYRAMA.

“During the tour we show the most important Jewish Monuments of the Hungarian Capital and the **world’s second largest Synagogue**. We walk through the former **Jewish Ghetto** and visit the Dohány Street **Synagogue** and the **Jewish Museum** (interior visits). Next we show you the famous **Tree of Life, Temple of Heroes** and the **Cemetery** in the **Jewish Garden**. [...] The tour ends in the Jewish Quarter.” (In: CITYRAMA Sightseeing Tours, Jewish Budapest, brochure; emphasis from the brochure).

According to their perception, the Dohány street synagogue with the memorials is strikingly not part of the Jewish District. Furthermore, it excludes both the Rumbach and the Kazinczy street synagogues from the “picture” of the Jewish District.

### **4.1.3. Visual representation of the touristic Jewish District**

Representing a certain monument or site is very important in tourism since it has the power of attracting visitors and as such, making a commercial profit. Visual representation of the Jewish district in the printed material as well as online is as important feature in selling the image of the area as the verbal description of it. Analysing what a tour operator shows about its product, the urban space can provide important information. In case of the touristic Budapest Jewish district the Dohány street synagogue is displayed most frequently. Though it is located at the edge of the historical Jewish district, it is a very impressive building with its size and architectural features. Usually the Synagogue is showed from outside and only in a very few cases can the observer find an interior image of it. Another typical picture in the commercial materials is the Tree of life with the Synagogue in the background. Since it is a Holocaust memorial, it has a strong message to the visitors: they can not only visit the synagogue but at its close proximity they can commemorate the Holocaust as well.

Showing these two characteristic artefacts of the Jewish District serves a specific reason: it satisfies the needs of the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990). Tourists need a set of symbols that can be used as mile-stones in their travelogue. These symbols are usually predictable: thus in case of the Budapest Jewish District it has to be a synagogue, and due to its link to the Holocaust, it also has to contain a sign of commemoration. The tourist agencies serve the needs of the tourist gaze by placing these representations into their commercial material and interestingly enough these symbols reappear in most cases in the gadgets sold in the touristic space (Benjamin, 1973) as well as in the photographs by the tourists.



**Figure 3: Common representations of the Jewish District (Pictures taken from the website of EUrama travel agency)**

Interestingly, in none of the forms of commercial material are people visible, neither local Jews, nor tourists. In the interior images of the Synagogue one can notice only empty space. The emphasis is not on its liveliness and religious activity but on its architectural beauty. The construction of the space excludes contemporary life (in contrast with other tours, which are advertised with smiling couples, beautiful women and the like) and focuses only on mere artefacts, thus opening the space for historic interpretations and symbolic return to the past (Middleton and Derek, 1990).

#### **4.1.4. Tourist-oriented narration of the urban space**

The brochures and leaflets as well as the online commercial material have one particular purpose: to sell their product. Therefore, the way how the commercial material is shaped and how the product is narrated does not only reflect the attitude of the tour operators towards the particular urban space but also shows the needs and expectations of the tourists. Since the contemporary tourist experience is led by the urge of seeing representations that are portrayed

in guide books, television shows and movies (Rojek, 1993), the primary goal of the visitors is to see the sights that are recommended by others and that a modern tourist has to see at least once in a lifetime. This is very well reflected in the way the Jewish district of Budapest, as a touristic site is narrated. Taking the argument of Urry (1990), one cannot even talk about the District as a site but rather as a sites for tourists, since it is no longer used in its original qualities but it is transformed by the “tourist gaze” and it is looked at and visited.

Firstly, the focus is on the uniqueness of the given territory. For example, the Dohány street synagogue is not mentioned by its name but by its qualities, as the second largest synagogue in the world. In order to create the sense of exclusivity, such expressions are used as “experience the unique atmosphere”, “truly mystical and storytelling corner of Budapest”, “taste special Jewish dishes” and the like.

Secondly, even though Imre Kertész received Nobel Prize for his book *Fateless*, in which he remembers how he survived the Shoah as a teenage boy, there are no references made in the commercial materials neither to his novel, nor to the film based on it. Despite the fact that there was a hype of interest in Hungary right after his success, it did not spread to international level but remained a “local” cultural product. Therefore, in contrast to Cracow, which is associated with the movie about Schindler or Prague, which is advertised as the city of Kafka, the Budapest Jewish District is not commercialised through literary or visual representations. Not only Imre Kertész but Theodor Herzl, founder of political Zionism, and internationally recognised figure of Judaism born in the district is also not excluded from the commercial material.

Thirdly, in order to attract tourists, such terms are applied as the “ancient Jewish Ghetto” or “the ancient Ghetto of Budapest”. It has to be noted however that while in the context of Venice this concept holds true, it is quite questionable in the case of Budapest. Given the fact

that Jews were not allowed to settle in the city until as late as the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Komoroczy, 1999), one can hardly attach “ancient” to their historical district, that evolved in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, the territory where the Jews lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> district cannot be called “Ghetto” in the same sense that it was in Venice in medieval times, since in Budapest it never was a completely Jewish settlement. Though one of the Nazi ghettos of Budapest was on the territory of the historical Jewish District, the two “ghetto” concepts cannot be equated in any case. Therefore, by merging the concepts of the ‘ghetto’ in the sense it existed in medieval Venice with the Nazi terminology results in a slight distortion of historic reality. As this example indicates, the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1999) creates a representation of the “ghetto”, while it neglects the differences between the concepts.

Finally, the leaflets and online materials of certain agents offer a walking tour, where people can experience the olden days atmosphere, where there is a hidden treasure. In addition, they promise “to give insight knowledge” (In: Hidden Treasure Tours Ltd., Visit the Jewish Quarter of Budapest brochure, 2007), which even locals do not know. However, by sharing knowledge that even the local people do not know it is questionable whose memory and history they spread. If the tour has insight knowledge about the space which is not commonly shared with the locals (since they usually do not participate in the tours) but only with a certain group of international visitors, it has the power of creating a mnemonic community, with members living far away from each other, but all linked to a special social site of memory.

#### ***4.2. Analysis of the interviews and field observations***

In order to understand how the Jewish district of Budapest is shaped by tourism and how its narrative structures utilises and in some cases even transform the canonised history and existing memory frames it was important to conduct interviews with the local and

international creators of the space. In the following part I first I examine the interviews, in terms of the different agencies and their characteristics before turning to the tours themselves and to their tourists. In the next part I describe and analyse the narrative structures of the walking tours. I focus on the main monuments, on the heroism, on religious specificities, on historic realities, and finally on memory frames.

## **4.2.1 The actors**

### **4.2.1.1. The tour operators**

I conducted interviews with seven of the main tour operators of Budapest, organising walks in the Jewish District. They were all established after 1989, usually in the second half of the 1990's or right after the year 2000. Even though there were people visiting the historical Jewish District of Budapest during Socialism, there were no organised tours offered for them. They were usually individual visitors from the United States and Canada, who were interested in the place where they parents and grandparents had come from. Since there was no official tour, they were usually led by local family members or by acquaintances. Given the fact that religion was not supported during the Socialist regime, according to the testimony of one of my informants these walks had to be led in secrecy.

After the fall of the Kádár-regime<sup>10</sup> there was a gradual increase in the number of visitors coming from overseas to see the Jewish artefacts of Budapest. Chosen Tour, a Hungarian tour operator was the first to recognise this interest and started to advertise its tours in Northern American press. They had only American clientele. In Budapest the first agency that begun

---

<sup>10</sup> Kádár regime - a period between 1956 and 1988, named after János Kádár, the state secretary of Hungary in those years.

offering tours to the Jewish District was the Hungaria Koncert Kft in 1996. They linked their tours, which involved the visit of the Dohány street synagogue and the Jewish Museum with a concert of the Budapest Klezmer Band. However, there were only limited numbers of tourists participating in their tours, as the Synagogue was not renovated and the klezmer band was very expensive, they soon cut their programme and offered only walking tours to the space around the Synagogue.

Simultaneously with the increase in visitors and the renovation of the Dohány street synagogue local tour operators discovered a business opportunity in the Jewish space. Next to their general tours of Budapest they started to offer special “Jewish Budapest” tours, which were primarily focused on the inner 7<sup>th</sup> district. The Cultural and Tourist Centre of the Budapest Jewish Religious Community was set up, which became the owner of the Synagogue and the building complex around it, furthermore it got the right of controlling all aspects of tourism in its space.

#### **4.2.1.2. The walking tour**

In the context of post-socialist Budapest and of increased interest for the Jewish memories of the city from the mid-1990’s on several walking tours were offered to visitors. Almost all these tours are led in English, although some operators offer the possibility to have it in German, French, Italian, Spanish or Hebrew. Next to choosing among different agencies, the tourists have the option of choosing different types of tours.

The common feature of all the offered walks is that they focus on the space of inner 7<sup>th</sup> District and do not exceed its geographical boundaries. The standard tours include an interior visit to the Dohány street Synagogue, the Heroes’ Garden Cemetery, the Raoul Wallenberg Park and the Memorial Tree and it ends in the Jewish Museum. However, visitors can choose

extensions, such as visit to Rumbach and Kazinczy street synagogues and a walk in some of the nearby streets. The routes are set up by individual agencies, however they tend to focus on the same sites and monuments. They usually walk the territory of the Jewish triangle, which is the space between Dohány, Rumbach and Kazinczy street synagogues. Therefore, the route is framed around these three synagogues, which are located in neighbouring streets. During the walks a stop is usually made at the Carl Lutz memorial and the tours end with an optional meal at a kosher restaurant right next to the Kazinczy street synagogue.

A standard tour starts with asking where the visitors come from and whether they have ever been to a synagogue before. According to one of my informants this part allows the guide to get into closer relationship with the visitors, engage them in the tour and by making them tell their own stories there is a group-feeling created. A general tour in the Synagogue focuses primarily on its architectural characteristics, on its religious aspects and historical importance. Then the tour continues with a walk to the Heroes' Garden Cemetery, with the first mentioning of the Holocaust. Interestingly, there seems to be no consensus about the number of people who were buried there, since in different tours a different number is quoted, ranging from 2000 to 5000. In the Raoul Wallenberg Park the main emphasis is paid to the Memorial Tree and its creation. The story of Wallenberg<sup>11</sup> is told and his heroism is articulated. The tour follows with a visit to the Jewish Museum but with another guide. However, since the new guide is to be met after walking the stairs, the memorial plaque in the name of Theodor Hertz often goes unnoticed. The visitors get an overview of Jewish life at the exhibition, focusing on artefacts, rituals and in the last room on the Hungarian Holocaust.

---

<sup>11</sup> Raoul Wallenberg (1912 - ?), Swedish diplomat in Hungary in times of the Shoah. He arrived to Hungary in 1944 and issued thousands of protective documents for Jewish families. He was arrested in 1945 by Soviet forces and was taken to Moscow. According to official Soviet statements he died in prison due to heart problems in 1947. However, the circumstances of his captivity and death are highly debated.

It is important to note who the transmitters of the knowledge about the Jewish district are. The guides of some of the agencies are not exclusively occupied with leading groups to the Jewish District but they are hired as general tour guides. Their only training is participation in some sample-guiding in the Synagogue. At two of the agencies, it is a prerequisite that the guides have a degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies in Budapest and that they are of Jewish religion. Starting from 2008 in accordance with the decision of the Synagogue's rabbi they are the only ones allowed to lead groups (provided that they have passed a special and very strict additional examination) on the territory of the Synagogue, Memorial Garden and the Museum.

#### **4.2.1.3. The tourists**

According to my findings from the interviews with leaders and guides of tour agencies, the majority of the tourists who participate in the walking tours are middle-aged or old people. Groups of young people are rare, and they come usually as an organised group from educational institutions. Men and women are equally represented among the visitors. It was also ensured by the guides of the Synagogue that the tourists are usually English speakers from the United States, Canada, Israel and Russia. The majority of the visitors are religious Jews according to most of my respondents<sup>12</sup>, who are oftentimes second and third generation Holocaust survivors who set out to visit the place where their ancestors came from<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, they have genealogy in Central Eastern Europe and are interested not only in Budapest or Hungary but the entire region. They usually visit the Jewish Triangle, consisting

---

<sup>12</sup> My respondents were workers of tour agencies, who base their claims on the statistics of the last years. They argue that in comparison with other sightseeing tours of Budapest, such as the Parliament tour, the cruise on the Danube, the folklore evening tour and the like, the participation of religious Jews in the highest in the Jewish District tours.

<sup>13</sup> Taken into consideration that my sample was small, these results have to be dealt with reservation.

of Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Cracow (though some of my tour guide interviewees claimed that only the most religious people go to see Cracow and Auschwitz due to its very tragic and shocking connotations). Furthermore, almost all of the visitors of the Jewish district (both to whom I spoke and according to the account of the tour operators) are interested in general Budapest tours and visits to the countryside.

The reasons why the international tourists decide to visit the Jewish district of Budapest is in the majority of cases linked to identity search. According to my own experiences from the guided tours, in many cases they reveal their identity during the walks and feel the need to talk about their ancestors. As they claim, they are American/Canadian/French etc. but their ancestors were Hungarian Jews. In many cases they know the name of the rural town and village (though they cannot pronounce it) and ask the tour guide (or in cases they knew I was also Hungarian, me) to give more information about that particular location. Many of my respondents among the tour guides claim that the visitors are often in search for their roots and they are very happy to find the culture of their ancestors. There is a symbolic connection made during the tour to the lost relatives (Verdery, 1999). They show amazement and interest about everything they can link to their ancestors and the life they might lived. During the tours they oftentimes become emotional (with tears in their eyes) and nod when the guide tells something about the hardship of the Nazi persecutions and the early period in emigration. By looking at the monuments of the heroes who rescued people (among them possibly their ancestors), they experience a link, a form of identification to the place as well as to the narrated memories therefore the visited artefacts do not only refer to their past but define their present as well.

### **4.2.2. Structure of narratives**

The narration of the tours follows a specific structure and has issues around which the narration is shaped. These issues involve the main monuments (such as the Dohány, Rumbach and Kazinczy street synagogues), the main heroes, the particular history linked to the location and to the Jews, religious specificity and finally the collective memory of the Jews. In my analysis I am following these aspects to show how tourism represents and shapes a particular site and specific memory.

#### **4.2.2.1. Monuments**

The walking tours, as mentioned previously, focus not primarily on a given geographical space but on certain monuments, which are claimed to be the border stones of the Jewish Budapest. All the stories told and events mentioned are in relation to the exact monuments, such as buildings, sculptures and memorials. Other aspects of Jewish specificity (such as shooting people into the Danube during the Holocaust and its memorial, the international ghetto, the Jewish hospital which saved thousands of lives during the war, contemporary active synagogues and Jewish organisations and the like) are all excluded from the touristic Jewish Budapest (both historic and contemporary).

The walking tours neglect to mention such important institutions of the Hungarian Jewry as the Holocaust Documentation Centre (located in the 9<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest). During the tours the Holocaust is linked only to the very limited urban space, the garden of the Dohány street synagogue. With the presentation of the cemetery, the monument of the rescuers, and occasionally with mentioning where the wall of the Ghetto was there is a closed space created for the memories, the historical events and for remembrance. By excluding the existence of

other important artefacts and testimonies of Judaism together with commemorative places of the Shoah, there seems to be an inclusive notion formed around the sold urban space.

#### 4.2.2.2. Heroes

Narration is built around specific people as well, who can be divided into two groups. First, there are the historical heroes, such as Raoul Wallenberg, Carl Lutz<sup>14</sup>, Angelo Rotta<sup>15</sup> and Giorgio Perlasca<sup>16</sup>, who saved lives during the Holocaust.

Secondly, there are the contemporary heroes, such as Estee Lauder<sup>17</sup> and Tony Curtis<sup>18</sup>, who donated considerable sums to Jewish institutions in Budapest. For example:

“Let this table remind the survivors of the Shoah and the generation that already grew up in freedom of the exemplary generosity of Sir Ronald S. Lauder, whose active help and remarkable donation contributed to the establishment of a memorial park named after Raoul Wallenberg, the saviour of thousands of Hungarian Jews.” (Translation by the author of the thesis)

The common feature of all the heroes is that they are all from abroad, more specifically from Western countries and they all showed altruism towards the Hungarian Jewry. In the case of contemporary heroes mentioned previously however, another aspect is emphasised: their

---

<sup>14</sup> Carl Lutz (1895-1975), Swiss diplomat, from 1942 the leader of the Swiss Consulate in Budapest. He was one of the main figures of rescuing Jews during the Holocaust in Budapest.

<sup>15</sup> Angelo Rotta (1872-1965), Roman Catholic high priest. In 1944 he was fighting to persuade the Hungarian government to stop the deportation of Jews. He issued thousands of protective documents, declared numerous houses as protected by the Vatican and rescued many from the death marches.

<sup>16</sup> Giorgio Perlasca (1910 – 1992), Italian businessman, rescuer of many Jews in Budapest. He declared himself a member of the Spanish consulate and issued thousands of protective documents for houses hiding Jews. After the war he lived in poverty and only at the end of his life was he awarded with a honouree degree of the Hungarian government.

<sup>17</sup> Estee Lauder (1906-2004), a successful business woman, establisher of a cosmetic brand. She was born as Josephine Esther Mentzer, the youngest of nine kids to immigrants of Hungarian origin. She, together with her son Ronald S. Lauder donated considerable sums to the Hungarian Jewry for establishing schools, renovating synagogues and the like.

<sup>18</sup> Tony Curtis (1925- ), American actor of Hungarian Jewish origin; Originally called: Bernard Schwartz.

Hungarian origin. Furthermore, there is a tendency to emphasise the fact that among Hungarian Jews who escaped from the Nazi regime, there were numerous Nobel prize-winners (e.g. Eugene Wigner, János Harsányi, György Oláh etc.). The tour guides often “play a game” with the tourists by mentioning the original name of famous people of Hungarian Jewish origin and let the visitors guess their name, how they are commonly known in the world (e.g. Tony Curtis the American film actor was born as Bernard Schwartz, Tom Lantos an American politician was originally called Tamás Péter Lantos and Robert Capa a photographer was born as Endre Ernő Friedmann).

While walking in the touristic Jewish district, one can easily notice that the representation of women is completely missing from the urban space. There are no statues of women, nor are there memorial parks named after them. Neither the official canonised "masculine" history nor the recalled memories that are narrated by the tour guides are mentioned in the space around the synagogue. There is no mentioning of female rescuers, for example the silent heroes (Jews and non-Jews), who hid children, cured the sick and the like. Neither can the visitor find the commemoration of such female heroes as Sára Salkaházi<sup>19</sup>, Hanna Szenes<sup>20</sup> and Margit Slachta<sup>21</sup>, who saved hundreds of people from execution in Budapest. Even though Sára Salkaházi has been recently recognised and even beautified by the Vatican, she is not present in the commemoration sites of Budapest. Recently Hanna Szenes got a memorial plaque, which is placed on the wall of the Heroes Temple, however, it is neither visible nor

---

<sup>19</sup> Sára Salkaházi (1899-1944), Roman Catholic nun, saviour of children. She was captured and killed by the Arrow Cross members in 1944.

<sup>20</sup> Hanna Szenes (1921-1944), Member of the Hungarian Jewish resistance, emigrated to Palestine in 1939 and served as a soldier of the British army. She was sent to Hungary to gather information. She was persecuted by the Nazis in 1944.

<sup>21</sup> Margit Slachta (1884-1974), Roman Catholic nun, the first female member of the Hungarian parliament. She opposed anti-Semitism and fought against deportation of Jews. In 1949 she escaped to the United States from the Socialist dictatorship.

approachable because of the fences. Her story and the existence of her memorial are completely missing from the narratives of all the walking tours. There are different interpretations of this non-presence, one being the Orthodox Jewish narrative, which bans the public graven images of Jewish women (Baumel, 1998). One might raise the question however why the non-Jewish women are not represented, since they do not fall into the category of the religious prohibit. Another narrative explains the absence of women from these monuments by claiming that the Holocaust happened to Jewish victims in general and not particularly to women, men or children (Rittner and Roth, 1993). When at the end of the walking tours and during my interviews I asked the tour guides for the reason of this phenomenon, they often seemed surprised by the question and could not find the answer for it. Usually they replied that because those women were not so significant during the Shoah, they are not talked about now. Some of my subjects, after a while of thinking added that there is a plaque of Hanna Szenes, implying that female heroes are not forgotten even if not talked about and commemorated as gloriously as e.g. Wallenberg is. However, one can conclude that the role of women is silenced and their commemoration is much less present in the studied urban space than that of men.

#### **4.2.2.3. Commemoration and commoditisation**

The narration of historical events yields discourses in the walking tour and rests on three pillars: Hungary is positioned as a victim of the Nazi terror; Hungary and its Jews were rescued by Western European heroes and finally, the neglect of the role of Soviets.

In all the narrations by different tour operators and tour guide there is a common feature of positioning Hungarians, especially Hungarian Jews as the victims of history, who were saved by foreign (mainly Western European) heroes (as discussed in the previous subchapter). It is claimed that during WW2 the German army occupied Hungary, by which they caused a lot of

harm to the country and its people. They are made responsible for the Hungarian Holocaust and for the bombardment of many synagogues. However, the narration neglects to mention the existence and terrible activity of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party (*Nyilas Párt in Hungarian*), which was the main persecutor of deportation and killing the Jewry of the country. It is also overlooked that at the end of the war the German troops (guarding the entrance of the Ghetto) saved the life of the Jews at the big Ghetto, when the Hungarian Arrow Cross soldiers with the aim of preventing the Soviet Army from liberating the Jews planned a massacre (Ungváry, 1998). The generalisation about Hungarians as victims reflects also the canonised history of Hungary, and thus the official state narrative as well.

The second pillar of the narration rests on the memory culture of the rescuers. It is generally accepted and spread that during the Hungarian Holocaust the main heroes were the members of foreign consulates, such as Wallenberg and Carl Lutz. Their positive memory was “discovered” after the democratic changes in Hungary and is frozen in statues, street names, memorial parks as well as legends and myths. It seems that since 1989 there is a new obsession with the memory of foreign heroes, which goes hand in hand with the neglect of local rescuers. There is no mentioning, let alone gratitude to local resistance, non-Jewish people who hid families, fed children and the like. This memory boom started in the times when the country made a lot of effort in re-creating its relations with Western European states. Furthermore, since the creation of memorial parks and statues was partly state sponsored, partly paid by affluent Hungarian Jews in emigration, it reflects the position and the reason for this phenomenon.

In this changing memory culture, however, there is a very debatable issue: the role of the Soviet Army in the Hungarian Holocaust. During the walking tours there is usually no mentioning of the Soviets, unless there is a question from the visitors about them. While

during Socialism, Soviets were the only commemorated heroes and saviours of the Budapest Jewry and their memorial plaques are still visible next to the Synagogue, their memory was pushed in the background. In the official post-1989 Hungarian historiography the Soviet Army occupied Hungary, while in the case of the Budapest Ghetto one cannot claim this. Usually Soviets are claimed to be the liberators of the Ghetto (like they were narrated as the liberators of the entire country before 1989) who soon turned the country into a dictatorship.

As it is seen from the examples, the role of the Soviet Army does not fit into the binary opposition of good and suffering Hungarians and the persecuting Germans. Their position got complicated with the creation and discrimination of narratives about the past, which is a reflection of national politics. The neglect of their role therefore is caused by the old set of narratives, which challenge the contemporary notion of national history. Therefore, the memory of the Red Army is trapped between the socialist and post-socialist notion of what constitutes the past.

Aspects of creating collective memories can also be revealed in the narration of the walking tours. Taking Aminzade's (1992) analysis of history and memory, the Jewish district of Budapest can be viewed as a site of memory, and as such, it has its topography. Memory becomes a circle (Paxson, 2005), since the narration creates a notion of the inclusive “we the Jews”, “they the foreign heroes” and “they the persecutors who made Jews suffer”. These social circles are emphasised to territory, but also to political groupings and economical relations. Mapping the memory to territory can be revealed in the notion of placing and narrating all the monuments in a small urban space (and big parts of them even behind gates, which can only be accessed after security control and only in limited time), as well as shrinking the Jewish Budapest into the space around the Dohány street synagogue (no matter whether it is called the Jewish district or the Jewish triangle). Secondly, memories of social

circles are also emphasised to political groupings and economic relations, which is reflected in the narration of the memory of foreign heroes and the values they represented (such as freedom of religious expression, democracy and humanitarian actions).

#### **4.2.2.4. Simultaneous silencing and emphasising Jewishness**

The narratives about religious specificity of the urban space yield paradoxes. The commentary of the tour guides clearly specifies that the space is linked to Judaism. The visited monuments are artefacts of Jewish life as well. The personal stories of the tourists also refer to Jewish memories, personal histories and identities. However if one reads carefully the texts which are written on the visited memorials, from them it is not obvious that they commemorate Jews, since it mentions a group of people who were sufferers of Nazism. On many of the monuments there is no mentioning of the word “Jew” or “Jewish” there is only a reference made to the time frame and to the victims. For example, on the wall of the Heroes’ Temple it is written: “To commemorate the martyrs of nr. 208/8worker company: 1940-1945” and one from the wall of the Jewish Museum: “In memory of our heroes who died during the world war” (translation by the author). Furthermore, not only in relation to the gated space around the Synagogue but also on the Carl Lutz memorial in the neighbouring street it is written: “In memory of those who in 1944 under the leadership of the Swiss Consul Carl Lutz (1895-1975) rescued thousands from National Socialist persecution”. There is no specification of whom Carl Lutz saved, even though on the memorial plaque there is a quote from the Talmud, which is a clear reference to Judaism.

Given the fact that the Nazis in Hungary persecuted mostly Jews (unlike in Germany, where homosexuals, the mentally disabled and the political opposition were also under torture) and in some cases Roma people, that the monument is in a Jewish space and the monument was

erected in a democratic regime it is interesting to observe why it lacks the clear statement of its subjects.



**Figure 4: Carl Lutz memorial (picture taken by the author of the thesis)**

## 5. Discussion

As seen from the above examples, commercialising and narrating the Jewish district of Budapest yields many paradoxes and discourses. Though walking the streets of the Jewish district and listening narrations about history and memories of fellow tourists, participants in the walking tours become connected to it and sense the urban space as their own place. History and memories are encountered in the streets, synagogues, monuments as well as in stories of the other visitors. There is a dialogic process going on: the tourists are not only remembering but are being reminded. By participating in the walking tours, visiting monuments of the past, believing in discovery of hidden treasures and finding the lost world of the ancestors, a notion of the “Jewish Budapest” is born, to which they all belong. The space therefore is perceived as being communal. The urban space is symbolically transformed from being contemporary to that of the Hungarian-Jewish ancestors. Feelings are recreated by stories to which the ruined and old buildings provide the scenery.

The tourists’ perceived Budapest transforms into a Jewish Budapest, which yields qualities of being Jewish, still representing the life of their ancestors, however it is already democratic, tolerant and recognises human rights and freedoms. From the *space* they create a *place* (de Certeau, 1988), which exists on the top of the existing urban space, and while it utilises some parts of it, it is more connected with their reinforced common memories than with the reality. Different histories and temporalities co-exist and make the walking tour a place-making practice (Richardson, 2005) of Jewish Budapest.

The walking tours utilise a specific narration to emphasise the uniqueness of the District and to reinforce Jewishness and nostalgia. The histories as well as personal memories and family stories that were silenced during Socialism are now highlighted and reconnected to certain sites and monuments. These recollections and connections are however discursive.

As the titles of the walking tours suggest, the tours involve a walk around Jewish Budapest. Given the fact that there are approx. 100.000 Jews in the city (Komoróczy, 1999) and due to time and space restrictions it is highly impossible to walk the entire city, the tour offers more than it can fulfil. Thus, by shrinking Jewish Budapest into a very small area, it distorts the picture of the reality. This statement holds true especially for two of the agencies, who include only a very limited number of monuments and sights in the tour<sup>22</sup>. By this they exclude the contemporary and actively Jewish artefacts of Judaism as well as neglect important Jewish monuments located at other parts of the city. Instead, they create a space where time is frozen and which reflects the values and expectations of the majority of Jewish visitors coming from overseas (Cole, 1999).

Secondly, there is a creation of “happy old days” image, or a type of nostalgia. The urban space of the inner 7<sup>th</sup> district, and more specifically its Jewish District, is sold as a place where the visitors can “find a truly mystical and storytelling corner”, where they can “discover hidden treasures” and where one is able to “experience the olden days atmosphere” (Hidden Treasure Tours Ltd. leaflet of the Jewish quarter, 2007). The tourists who are predominantly from abroad, are being shown the old buildings and are told stories from the times when the Hungarian Jews were all part of a peaceful multicultural society. Issues of anti-Semitism are not treated. Commemoration of very tragic events also gets a positive intake: the rescue is celebrated, giving the Hungarian Holocaust a positive, “happy end” image similarly to the phenomenon that Gruber (2002) and Cole (1999) described about Cracow. This is reinforced by showing the statues of saviours and mentioning the numbers of people they rescued. The old houses are introduced as the old and magical places which talk about the nice secrets of the historical times.

---

<sup>22</sup> These particular walking tours, which are organised under the title of “Jewish Budapest” lead the visitors only to the Synagogue complex in Dohány street: to the synagogue, the museum, and the memorial garden.

Jewish culture and past are represented as if the walking tour was following a pathway in an open air museum. This museum gets a name: the Jewish District of Budapest, which is a metonymy of the Jewish Budapest. Its boundaries are seemingly defined by important monuments. However those specific monuments were selected for a given reason by tour operators. They were picked among hundreds for economic reasons. Since they are located in neighbouring streets and they are all in walking distance from other major tourist sites (such as the Váci street, Saint Stephen's basilica, Andrassy Avenue and the like), they form a good complex for business enterprises without having to invest lot of money in transportation. Other very important Jewish sites, such as the Holocaust Documentation Centre in the 9<sup>th</sup> district, the iron shoes on the bank of the Danube, the small memorial cobble stones of Ráday street, the Wallenberg statue and park in Újlipótváros are all excluded from the tour and are not even mentioned. The inner 7<sup>th</sup> district is now the only "official" Jewish pilgrim site, a display of the past, of memory and of Jewish culture.

Furthermore, the Nazi categorisation is used to sell the "product" of the contemporary tourism, since they often refer to it as "the ghetto of Budapest". This was only one of the many districts where Jews lived in the beginning of the twentieth century and its image is not only linked to the memory of the Second World War. Additionally, in connection to the Holocaust, this district was only one of the ghettos. On the Pest side of the Margaret Bridge, in Újlipótváros, there was the territory of the international ghetto. Cole (2002) argues that the Pest side of the Danube would have been a more true Holocaust commemoration site, since more Jews died there (being shot into the Danube) than in the ghetto of the 7<sup>th</sup> district. Their memory is frozen into a memorial of metal shoes, near the Hungarian House of Parliament.

Another controversy is that, some of the heroes who have recently erected monuments in the Jewish district of the inner 7<sup>th</sup> district never operated in these streets. For example Carl Lutz, a

Swiss consul during the Shoah, who issued tens of thousands of protective documents to Jews as well as made 72 houses protected, never operated in the 7<sup>th</sup> district, where his monument stands now. His work is linked to the international ghetto and to the 5<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest. Even though there are also memorials about him (e.g. his memorial room in the former headquarter building of the Zionist movement in Vadász utca, 5<sup>th</sup> district or in front of the U.S. Embassy on Szabadság tér, also in the 5<sup>th</sup> district) these are not visited by the walking tours of Jewish Budapest. Nor are places in Buda (e.g. the buildings of Red Cross or Vatican, where thousands of Jews were hiding in 1944-45) or other sides of Pest (e.g. 69 Thököly út or 21 Ajtósi Dürer sor, where nuns saved hundreds of lives from the Arrow Cross terror; the protected houses of the Spanish, Swiss and Swedish embassies all over the city, and the hospitals for Jews on Bethlen tér, Columbus utca or Wesselényi utca).

Furthermore, the touristic Jewish district is only a display of contemporary Judaism of Budapest. It is not the gathering place of Jews of the contemporary Budapest. Even though according to the tourist brochure of the guided tour there are three "major" synagogues (Dohány synagogue, Rumbach synagogue and Kazinczy synagogue), they do not serve as the major religious sites for the contemporary Hungarian Jewry. They are big in size and were important in the past; however on a usual Shabbat (except the orthodox Kazinczy synagogue) there are hardly any people at the service in the great synagogue of Dohány street<sup>23</sup>, let alone the Rumbach synagogue, which is in ruins. And even though on the main holidays there are hundreds of people in the Dohány street synagogue, only those go there who want to display their religious affiliation (as mentioned by two of my interviewees, both Jewish and leading tours for many years already). The actively and openly Jewish believers go to small synagogues, located all around the city, which are not included in the walking tour. This fact

---

<sup>23</sup> In fact, it is mostly used for religious purposes only on special occasions.

also proves that the image of the area, as the Jewish district of Budapest is only artificially recreated in order to sell the contemporary "product", the urban space of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The monopoly of guiding also provides an interesting ground for analysis. Given the fact that only those can lead groups in the territory of the Synagogue, Memorial Garden and Museum who are employed by the Jewish Touristic and Cultural Centre and who also have a degree from the Jewish University and passed an additional exam by the rabbi of the Synagogue suggests not only a monopoly over the space but also over narrations. Narrations include all the history and memory frames which are linked to the Hungarian Jewry. Thus, Cole's (2002) notion of ghettoisation of memory has been expanded recently and it does not include only monuments with restricted entrance but also the narration of Judaism as such, together with particular histories and memories.

The sum of all these phenomena resembles the current observable fact in Israel, which involves trivialisation of memories and history of the Shoah (Zandberg, 2006)<sup>24</sup>. By leaving out shocking elements that would emotionally touch the visitors, by creating new heroes who reflect the current political ideology and simultaneously forgetting about others (such as the Soviet Army), who had a big role in the 20<sup>th</sup> century life of the Hungarian Jews and all in the light of serving post-modern tourism might have unexpected consequences. By simplifying Judaism with its history, memory and artefacts to specific selected things that are attractive and in no case shocking, it might affect in emergence of stereotypes. These stereotypes about the Hungarian Jewry will centre on buildings to visit, restaurants to consume at and some

---

<sup>24</sup> Zandberg (2006) analyses the question how Holocaust commemoration turned into a "Holocaustisation" of Israeli life and how this intense presence of Holocaust commemoration in daily life caused its trivialisation.

heroes to remember, such as it happened in Kazimierz, the Jewish District of Cracow, Poland (Cole, 1999).

The reinforced recreation of the Budapest Jewish District is strengthened by Klezmer concerts, kosher restaurants and the annual Jewish Summer Festival. The Jewish District becomes a kind of amusement park (a “Disneyland”?) for international tourists, which yields various qualities and every visitor can choose from its stereotypical offerings. The case of Budapest is not unique; it is rather a part of a Central European phenomenon of the network of the Jewish Quadrangle (Gruber, 2002). The Jewish districts of cities of Vienna, Prague, Budapest and Cracow (and in lesser extent of Warsaw and Bratislava) became participants of a channel that is maintained by multiple users, such as by global tourist industry, pilgrimage, identity search, nostalgia, interest in WW2 atrocities, coming for images of Kafka and Schindler but also seeking leisure in the region. However, the consumption of the Jewish space is paradoxical: the tours do not include visits to active communities or church services, but are occupied by display Judaism of the biggest (non-active) synagogues and other major (non-Jewish) touristic sites of the cities (e.g. castles, markets, baths and the like). This type of tourism yields transnational aspects: visitors experience many places at short time, cross national borders perpetually (Binder, 2004), adopt various tourist experiences (go from church to spa), form a transnational network by interacting with strangers of the same aim, and re-link culture and memory to specific places. Tourism commoditises not only urban landscape (Cohen, 1988) but in order to create a Central European Jewish space, it does commoditise memory, nostalgia and Jewish past by making use of local/global economic resources and by imposing discourses about politics of commemoration.

Even though tourist agencies work for financial profit they practice commemoration. Despite the fact that they practice it through the imposition of commoditised representation, they

provide grounds for recreating and enforcing Jewish identity through walking in a specific urban space and emphasising its memories through monuments, buildings and the like.

## 6. Conclusion

The urban space of the Jewish District is very interesting due to its history, ethno-cultural specificity, recreation of identity as well as contemporary narration. From the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century it has been linked to the Holocaust but depending on the official state politics, differing aspects of it have been emphasised at different points of time. From the celebration of Soviet liberators to the emphasis of foreign heroes and recently the establishment of numerous kosher restaurants the districts has become a ghetto of forced memories and created identity. Being critical of its monuments and raising questions about them might help the visitors to look through its constructed image of forced remembering and see its paradoxes as well. The contemporary Jewish quarter of Budapest is a very important institution of memory on several different levels.

Claiming special memories of the district and identifying it with certain elements and events of Judaism it creates a notion of collective memories in the visitors. Through walking and interacting with other tourists who have similar memories the visitors feel they share a significant part of their identity with others. During the walks nostalgia is created, which generates bond between the idealised life of one's ancestors and the life they lived. It is always envisaged as positive and stabile, where the daily life flows in a harmonic manner. By linking these memories to specific geographic places, such as streets, city squares, buildings and monuments also enhance collective memories, because these frozen objects can become identification points of groups by representing a significant event that had an impact on the life of a community. Thus, monuments in themselves have the power of creating identities (Berger and Luckmann 1980) and simultaneously by defining the past they also define the present.

However, there are controversies in these processes. The remembered events are always influenced by the context in which they are recalled and narrated. Thus, the events that are described reflect as much the past as they reveal the present (Bakhurst, 1990). In the context of post-socialist transformations the memories of the walking tours become all linked to a specific urban space. These memories are however very selective and commemorate only a certain group of people, and in particular the heroes who saved people. The canonised collective memory of the Holocaust (approved by the state and Jewish organisations) is frozen into images, stories and stereotypes during the walking tours. There is a simultaneous reminding and forgetting, commemorating and silencing going on. This dichotomy of remembering and forgetting has interesting features: it tends to be obsessed with memory of selected heroes (R. Wallenberg, C. Lutz, G. Perlasca and the like), while forgetting groups (no exact Soviet heroes are remembered, if they are talked about, they are mentioned as groups). Fixating to one incident or a set of selected events (e.g. the rescue of people, the role of monuments etc.) in narration and commemoration seems as acting in accordance with memories. However this is discursive. Seemingly yes, since we cannot forget about the Shoah and have to learn from it, but in reality there is as much remembering as silencing and forgetting in the commemorative space around the Dohány street synagogue.

Furthermore, these particular memories in the context of the Budapest Jewish District they also become commercialised. Political interests as well as economic considerations shape what and who is remembered and what are the aspects that are silenced. Political interests, such as emphasising the glory of Western European male rescuers while forgetting about the Red Army, furthermore, placing the Hungarian nation in the role of victims neglecting their connotations with the Nazi's in the 1940's while blaming Germans for persecutions coexist

with financial interests, whereby Shoah (or rather its representation) becomes a good business (Cole, 2000).

By walking the streets, narrating the past histories and memories from a specific angle and re-defining and shaping the historical urban space to create a place, more specifically a scenery of sites (Urry, 1990), the urban space is made open to commoditisation and consumption for international tourism. Canonised history is merged with the memories of the tourists in order to generate a bond that makes them tied to the place, identify with it and become part of the special community of memory. However, one might ask the question whose memory is it and is it a real memory? Following Nora's (1996) argumentation that real memories are almost entirely lost, and people need "*lieux de mémoire*" (sites of memory) to replace them, and identify with, furthermore to find their lost relatives in them can one claim that tourists visit the Jewish District of Budapest and are willing to see stereotypical nostalgic elements of the past in order to gain memories, even if those memories are not their own? Furthermore, do they want to hear only the positive stories about the idealised late 19<sup>th</sup> century and about rescue of people in the Shoah to have nice and pleasant memories of their ancestors and simultaneously defending themselves from having to cope with the real events that happened to their family members during the Shoah? Continuing this line of argumentation, by having shared memories of the past and identifying as offsprings of Central European Jews, do their cultural repertoire involve sites that they have to see and thus, they decide to visit the Jewish District of Budapest and also of other cities in the region? Having been in the region, having visited the synagogues, taken photos of the sights and bought souvenirs they collect their own memories, contribute to their own cultural identity as American Jews.

Exhibiting and talking about history is always a constructive act (Stier, 2003). The urban space thus, is not only a record of the past but it intentionally creates and recreates the past

and the present as well. To understand the complexity of histories and memories of the Jewish District of Budapest multiple perspectives have to be taken, as the current study tried to do by utilising methods of qualitative research. Even though there are ambiguities about historical-memory levels (whom to remember, who the “real” heroes were) as well about moral issues (does commercialising of atrocities lead to trivialisation of their memory), this study tries to call attention that various perspectives have to be taken into consideration when talking about collective memories of a certain urban space or a community. Simplifying the concept of the historical Jewish District (with its two hundred year of history) to the idea of nostalgic harmonic life of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the celebration of certain foreign rescuers and linking it to couple of monuments might easily lead to reduce its concept to stereotypical images.

The Jewish District of contemporary Budapest is separate from the living community of Jews because of its transformation into “heritage”. However when asking whose heritage it is, we encounter contradictions. Claiming that it is the heritage of the Hungarian nation seems too broad even if it Jewish culture and the Shoah were important elements in the national history of Hungary. Given the fact that the contemporary Jewish District is not about contemporary Jewish culture (nor about the past one), neither fully about Holocaust commemoration (such as the Iron Shoes memorial or the Holocaust Documentation Centre) one cannot even claim that it is a heritage of contemporary Jewry. However, is it consequently the heritage of Jews in emigration, the second/third generation Holocaust survivors, who do not identify as Hungarian Jews anymore and visit the area as tourists? It is rather the heritage of a virtual Jewish community, which is not linked to temporal frames and spatial locations. It commemorates the Jewish fate in general and mourns the loss of Jewish life in general, not only in particularities. Therefore, by remembering heroes who rescued anonymous people,

they do not focus on Hungarian Jews only but on the entity of Jewish people.<sup>25</sup> The answer is difficult and it is connected to the fact that the Jewish organisation became an entrepreneur in the district, similar somehow to the agencies that I discuss in this study. It can be further claimed that the Jewish organisation is an ethnic entrepreneur, which provides grounds for recreating and enforcing Jewish identity through its emphasis on a specific urban space and its memorials.

Though the current research provided a complex analysis of how tourism shapes the past and present of the Jewish District of Budapest highlighted its main actors and paradoxes, the results cannot be generalised to other Jewish urban spaces of Central Eastern Europe due to the small sample size. A further research is needed to understand the mechanisms of transnational tourism in relation to historical Jewish Districts due to their complexity as social memory sites.

---

<sup>25</sup> As the text on the Carl Lutz memorial suggests, “Whoever saves a life is considered as if he has saved an entire world”, the memorial focuses on a bigger entity than the group of Hungarian Jews, who died during the Holocaust. It commemorates a much bigger group, which also includes the second and third generation Holocaust survivors.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Interviews with the tour guides/coordinators**

- a. General info about them:
  - i. age
  - ii. sex
  - iii. country of origin
  - iv. religion (active/passive)
  - v. Holocaust survivor or not, genealogy in CEE?
- b. Since when do they do this job? Reasons for working there?
- c. Source of knowledge about the Jewish district (resident of the district, from family, in school, special training by the tour agency etc.)
- d. How would you define the Jewish district of Budapest geographically)?

### **Information about the tourists:**

- e. General info about them: age, sex, country of origin, religion (active/passive), Holocaust survivor or not, genealogy in CEE?
- f. Organised tours or individuals
- g. Part of a chain (Central European Jewish triangle/quadrangle) or tourists of Budapest
- h. Reasons for walking: Pilgrimage, memory tourism, religious identity search, interest in WW2, other

### **Information about the tour**

- i. Why there, why that route, those monuments
- j. Narratives: On what is the emphasis?: Personal stories, history, architecture, Holocaust, religious identity?
- k. What is the aim of the tour?
- l. What about other Jewish monuments? Why aren't other things included: e.g. Holocaust Documentation Centre, active synagogues etc.
- m. What are the tourists interested in? Personal stories? Nostalgia? Detailed events of the Holocaust?
- n. Was there an increase of visitors after Kertesz got the Nobel price for Fateless?
- o. Does the gentrification in the Jewish District affect the interest of tourists? If yes, how? More facilities → more tourists or new buildings, lost old atmosphere → less tourists?
- p. Was there a change in the number of visitors in the past couple of years? Reasons?

### **Personal view:**

How would you define the Jewish Budapest today? Did it change after Socialism? How was it back then? What are the reasons for the change?

### **Other comments:**

## Appendix 2

### Interviews with the developers of the tour (the management of the walking tour agency, resp. tour guides)

2. General information about the agency: when was it established, by whom
  - a. What were the reasons for establishing it: commercial profit, commemoration, religious reasons
  - b. Market research: for whom is the tour organised, how often, in which languages
  - c. How was the route set up, by whom was it set up
3. Information about the tourists
  - a. General info about them: age, sex, country of origin, religion (active/passive), Holocaust survivor or not, genealogy in Central Eastern Europe?
  - b. Organised tourist groups or rather individuals
  - c. Reasons for walking: Pilgrimage, memory tourism, religious identity search, interest in WW2, other
  - d. Part of a chain (Jewish quadrangle) or tourists of Budapest (Prague, Vienna, Bratislava, Cracow, Berlin)?
4. Information about the tour:
  - a. Which parts of the city? What is the route? Which monuments are shown?
  - b. Why that part of the city, why that route and those monuments
  - c. Narratives: On what is the emphasis?: Personal stories, history, architecture, Holocaust, religious identity?
  - d. What is the aim of the tour?
  - e. What about other Jewish monuments? Why aren't other things included: e.g. Holocaust Documentation Centre, active synagogues etc.
  - f. Is there a Hungarian tour? If yes, how often? If not, what is the reason for its lack?
  - g. Has the route changed since the agency was established? If yes why and how?
  - h. Has the number of visitors changed in the last couple of years? Why?
  - i. Cooperation with other actors: e.g. local council, religious civil society, state
  - j. Cooperation with other walking tour agencies in Central Eastern Europe
5. What's your personal view of Budapest as a Jewish city today?
  - a. Did this image change since socialism? If yes, how? What are the reasons for the change/no change in your view?
6. Other comments:

## Appendix 3

### Interview with the participants (ensured about anonymity):

- a. General info about them:
  - i. age,
  - ii. sex,
  - iii. country/city of origin,
  - iv. religion (active/passive),
  - v. Holocaust survivor or not,
  - vi. genealogy in CEE?
- b. Why interested in the tour?
- c. Is this the first time or have taken a Jewish walking tour in other parts of Europe?  
If yes, where?
- d. How did they find out about it? Was it organised by a tour operator?
- e. Coming to BP only to see this or also something else?
- f. Satisfied with the tour? What are/were the expectations from it?
- g. Opinion about THE Jewish district (e.g. is/was it mystical etc.)
- h. If remember pre WW2 Jewish Budapest, characterise:
  - i. If remember Socialist Jewish Budapest, characterise
- j. Commemoration and expression of Jewish identity before WW2 and during Socialism:
- k. How do you see the changes if there are any:
- l. What do you think of the recreation of the old Jewish district? Does it have any changes on some processes, people etc. (both local and tourists)
- m. Other comments:

## **Appendix 4**

### **List of analysed/interviewed Tour operators**

1. EUrama
2. CITYRAMA
3. Program Centrum
4. Hungarian Koncert Ltd.
5. Hidden Treasures Ltd
6. Totally Jewish Travel
7. AVIV

## References

### ***Books and articles***

- Aminzade, R., (1992), Historical Sociology and Time; *Sociological Methods and Research*; Vol. 20, No.4, 456-480.
- Asworth, G.J. (2002), Holocaust Tourism: The Experience of Krakow-Kazimierz, *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, Vol.11, No.4.
- Assman, J. (1997). Moses the Egyptian: The memory of Egypt in Western monotheism. *Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press*, pp. 9.
- Bakhurst, D., (1990), Social Memory in Soviet Thought. In: D.Middleton and D.Edwards (eds) *Collective Remembering*, pp. 203-226. London: Sage.
- Bauman, Z., (1996), From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity, In: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. S. Hall and P. du Gay. London: Sage.
- Baumel, J.T., (1998), Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust, *London, Portland: Vallentine Mitchell*.
- Benjamin, W., (1973), Illuminations, *Glasgow: Fontana*.
- Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T., (1980), *The Social Construction of Reality*, [1966]. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer.
- Binder, J. (2004), Travellerscapes: Tourism Research and Transnational Anthropology, *Research Group Transnationalism Working Paper*, No 6, September 2004.
- Bodnár, J., (2001), Fin-de-Millénaire Budapest: Metamorphoses of Urban Life. *Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press*.
- Brockmeier, J., (2002), Remembering and Forgetting: Narrative as Cultural Memory, *Culture and Psychology*, 8(1):15-43.
- Certeau de, M., (1988), The Writing of History, *Columbia University Press*.
- Cohen, E., (1988), Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15, pp. 371-386.
- Cole, T., (1999), Selling the Holocaust: from Auschwitz to Schindler: how history is bought, packaged and sold; *New York: Routledge*.
- Cole, T., (2002), Commemorating "Pariah Landscapes": Memorialising the Budapest Ghetto, 1945-2000, *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, Vol. 11, No. 4., pp.: 368-371.
- Cole, T. And Smith, G., (1995), Ghettoisation and the Holocaust: Budapest 1944, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22, 1, pp.: 300-316.

- Csanádi, G., Csizmady, A., Koszeghy, L. and Tomay, K., (2006), Renewal of Inner Erzsébetváros, *TÉT*, XX., pp. 73-92.
- Durkheim, E., ([1915] 1976), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. London: *George Allen & Unwin*.
- Finkelstein, N. (2000), *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, *Verso*.
- Gantner, B.E., and Kovács, M., (2007), Altering Alternatives: Mapping Jewish Subcultures and the Spatial Aspects of Identities in Budapest, *Anthropolis*.
- Gitelman, Z., (2001), Reconstructing Jewish Communities and Jewish Identities in Post-Communist East Central Europe, in: *Jewish Studies at the CEU: I. Yearbook (Public Lectures 1996-1999)*, edited by Kovacs, Andras, *Budapest: CEU*.
- Gruber, R.E., (1999), *Jewish heritage travel : a guide to East-Central Europe*, *Northvale*.
- Gruber, R.E., (2002), *Virtually Jewish : reinventing Jewish culture in Europe*, *Berkley: University of California Press*.
- Halbwachs, M., (1980), *The Collective Memory* [1951]. New York and London: Harper and Row.
- Hirsch, M., (1997), Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory, *Harvard University Press*, pp.: 242-243.
- Komoroczy, G. (ed.), (1999), *Jewish Budapest. Monuments, Rites, History*, Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Middleton, D. and Derek E., (1990), Introduction, in Middleton, D. and Edwards, D. (ed.) *Collective Remembering*, pp. 1-22. London: Sage.
- Mitchell, J.P., (1998), The nostalgic construction of community: Memory and social identity in urban Malta, *Ethnos*, vol. 63, pp. 81-101.
- Nora, Pierre. (ed.). 1996. *Realms of Memory*. *New York : Columbia University Press*.
- Paxson, M. (2005), Solovyovo - The Story of Memory in a Russian Village; *Kennan Institute*.
- Richardson, T. (2005), Walking Streets, Talking History: The Making of Odessa, *Ethnology* 44 (1): 13-33.
- Rittner, C. and Roth, J.K. (Eds.). (1993), *Different Voices - Women and the Holocaust*, *New York: Paragon House*.
- Rojek, C., (1993), *Ways of Escape: Modern Transformations in Leisure and Travel*, *London: Macmillan*.

- Stier, O.B., (2003), *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust*, *University of Massachusetts Press*, pp.: 110-150.
- Svasek, M., (2006), *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe*, *Berghahn Books*.
- Urry, J., (1990), *The Tourist Gaze*, *London: Sage*.
- Verdery, K., (1999), *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, *Columbia University Press*.
- Voase, R.,(2007), Individualism and the 'new tourism': A perspective on emulation, personal control and choice, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*,. Vol 31(5),pp. 541-547.
- Young, J. E., (1993), *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust, Memorials and Meaning*. *New Haven and London: Yale University Press*.
- Ungváry, K., (1998), *Budapest Ostroma (in English: The Battle for Budapest)*, *Corvina Budapest*.
- Zandberg, E., (2006), Critical Laughter: Humor, Popular Culture and Israeli Holocaust Commemoration, *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 28(4): 561-579.

### **Brochures and leaflets**

- CITYRAMA Sightseeing Tours, (2008), *Sightseeing Tours*, Budapest, Hungary.
- EUrama Sightseeing Tours (2008), *Sightseeing City Tour Budapest 2008-09*, Budapest, Hungary.
- Hidden Treasure Tours Ltd., (2007), *Visit the Jewish Quarter of Budapest*, Budapest, Hungary.
- Program Centrum Travel Agency, (2008), *Budapest Sightseeing 2008/2009: Programmes, excursions*, Budapest, Hungary.

### **Online sources**

- AVIV Travel, (2008), *The Jewish Triangle*, Retrieved April 15, 2008, from:  
[http://www.aviv.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=29](http://www.aviv.hu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=29)
- CITYRAMA Sightseeing Tours, (2008), *Jewish Budapest*, Retrieved April 12, 2008, from:  
[http://www.cityrama.hu/\\_/index.php?module=egyszeru&katid=58](http://www.cityrama.hu/_/index.php?module=egyszeru&katid=58)
- EUrama Sightseeing Tours, (2008), *Jewish Budapest*, Retrieved April 28, 2008, from:  
<http://www.eurama.hu/index.php?module=staticpage&id=25&lang=1>

Hidden Treasure Tours Ltd., (2008), Jewish Quarter Walking Tours, Retrieved March 28, 2008, from: [http://www.greatsynagogue.hu/JQT\\_meeting.html](http://www.greatsynagogue.hu/JQT_meeting.html)

Hungária Koncert Kft., (2008), Jewish Cultural Heritage in Budapest, Retrieved May 3, 2008, from: <http://www.ticket.info.hu/index.php?module=staticpage&id=156&lang=1>

Program Centrum Travel Agency, (2008), Tour of Jewish Budapest, Retrieved April 15, 2008, from: [http://www.programcentrum.hu/hu/programok/budapest\\_nappal/zsido\\_budapest](http://www.programcentrum.hu/hu/programok/budapest_nappal/zsido_budapest)

Jewish Visitor's Service, (2008), Private Guides for Jewish Budapest and Hungary, Retrieved May, 3, 2008, from: [http://www.totallyjewishtravel.com/tours/heritage/item\\_687](http://www.totallyjewishtravel.com/tours/heritage/item_687)