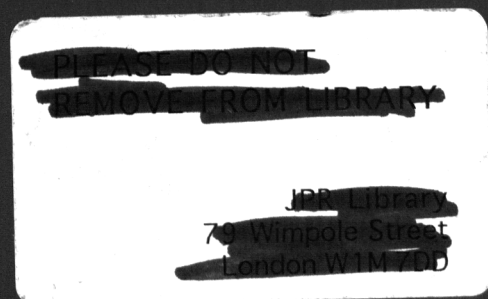


Developing Jewish museums in Europe

'Museums are one of several cultural encounters which play a role in forming and enhancing the cultural identities of minority groups and representing these identities to the wider community. This function is even more relevant in the increasingly multicultural environment of today's Europe.'

David Clark



The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is an independent think-tank which informs and influences policy, opinion and decision-making on social, political and cultural issues affecting Jewish life.

JPR's programme on culture explores the role cultural encounters play in forming Jewish identity, and representing Jews and Judaism to the wider world. The programme also assesses the influence of Jewish culture on the lives of all sections of the Jewish population. Such information will assist the artistic community to reach their audiences better.

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Introduction

In the UK alone approximately 2,500 organizations describe themselves as museums. They attract some 75 million visitors a year and 60 per cent of overseas tourists visit the UK simply because of the lure of its museums.¹

Recently British museums have become headline news. Not since the Museums Act of 1845, which stimulated the growth of so many institutions in the UK, has the sector been faced with so many challenges and opportunities—to name but a few: the impact of the National Lottery; the issue of admission charges; the plight of independent and regional museums; technological innovation; and the arrival of a new government in May 1997. In addition, there are serious policy issues which affect the development of specialist museums.

Museums are one of several cultural encounters which play a role in forming and enhancing the

cultural identities of minority groups and representing these identities to the wider community. This function is even more relevant in the increasingly multicultural environment of today's Europe.

This paper initiates the museum track within JPR's programme on culture. It sets out some of the driving forces and policy agendas relating to the establishment of Jewish museums in Europe. Four case studies are presented as examples of the kinds of policy questions which affect the development of Jewish museums:

- museums in Belgium
- the Jewish Museum in Berlin
- Copenhagen as a site for a Jewish museum
- the Jewish Museum in Prague

The policy issues introduced here are also relevant to the development of museums by other ethnic and religious minorities and interest groups.

¹ 'Museums and gallery statistics', *Cultural Trends*, vol. 7, Issue 28 1995/6.

1 What is a Jewish museum?

Museums in Belgium

One way of defining a Jewish museum is to borrow the definition of Jewish music used by Professor Curt Sachs: music 'by Jews, for Jews, as Jews'.² While many would argue that such a definition is too restrictive, it is useful as a yardstick by which to measure the 'Jewishness' of a Jewish museum.

Such a yardstick might be used in examining the development of a specifically Jewish commemoration of the Holocaust, namely the Mechelen Museum of Deportation and Resistance in Belgium. This project was started 'by Jews, for Jews, as Jews'. The Belgian Association of Jewish Deportees was established in 1956 to provide both material assistance and moral support to those who had been deported because they were Jewish and to initiate a period of collective mourning and remembrance. In the same year the association instituted an annual pilgrimage to the Dossin barracks in Mechelen, the departure point for the transportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the 1970s a project was set up to alter the original aspect of the barracks and the Union des déportés juifs de Belgique (UDJB, Belgian Union of Jewish Deportees) suggested to the mayor of Mechelen that one section of the buildings be set aside to house a museum of deportation and resistance.

However, further alliances, both within the Jewish community and with other governmental institutions, were necessary for the project to come to fruition. As Professor Georges Schnek, a former member of the Belgian Resistance and president of the Consistoire Central Israélite de Belgique (CCIB, the body representing Belgian Jews), writes:

The CCIB responded to the UDJB initiative by approaching the Flemish community with a request to set aside a space within the former Dossin barracks in Mechelen for the creation of a museum. The provincial government authorities at Antwerp and the city of Mechelen joined with the Flemish region in financing the acquisition of this space, which will be dedicated to the history not only of the deportation and extermination of the Jews living in Belgium but also the part the Jews played in the various resistance movements and Allied armies. The museum will also depict the role played by our non-Jewish fellow citizens in saving numerous Jews. In order to realise this project the CCIB has set up a committee, responsible for the creation of

the museum, the Mechelen Museum of Deportation and Resistance Founding Committee, chaired by Mr N Ramet, former deportee and vice president of UDJB and has entrusted the project's co-ordination to Mr M Laub, secretary-general of the CCIB.³

This confirms the assertion of the Israeli museologist Richard Cohen that any initiative to establish a Jewish museum—one that is truly 'Jewish'—must involve the leading Jewish organizational structures if it is to succeed.⁴ This invariably means creating a series of alliances within the Jewish community, often involving mutual representation on various committees.

Three further points arise out of this case study. First, alliances within the Jewish community itself were not sufficient to get the museum off the ground. Representatives of the Jewish community had to establish links with representatives of municipal, local and regional governments in order to secure the site and the financial support required for the project.

Second, the museum no longer focused exclusively on the plight of deportees. Gradually, as more players became involved, each new alliance meant taking on board some of the concerns and agendas of the new recruits. Hence, the initiators of the project had to take on additional concerns, such as the role of Jews in the resistance to German occupation and the role of Gentiles in the rescue of Belgian Jews.

Third, these negotiations, which took place over two decades, gave further impetus to the creation of a Jewish museum in Brussels with a much broader remit.

The project of the Jewish Museum of Belgium began with the establishment of the association Pro Museo Judaico in 1982, with the support of Professor Schnek and the CCIB, together with the Martin Buber Institute of Jewish Studies. The museum, which opened in 1990, is currently located in an old synagogue building in Brussels. Its permanent exhibition aims to portray the history of Belgian Jewry since emancipation and its contribution to European society. A further exhibition section is devoted to the theme of Jewish and Israeli art, whilst numerous temporary exhibitions are mounted each year, such as the exhibition in 1998 entitled 'Between dream and reality: Israel—50 years of artistic creativity'.

3 See the Mechelen Museum's web site, <http://www.cicb.be/shoah/init.html>.

4 Richard Cohen, 'Self-image through objects: Toward a Social History of Jewish Art Collecting and Jewish Museums' in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, Jack Wertheimer (ed.) (New York—Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary 1992), 203-42.

2 Inaugural speech at the International Conference on Jewish Music, 1957.

The Jewish Museum in Brussels falls squarely within the category of a Jewish museum: the initiative to establish it came from within the Jewish community and involves alliances from various sections of the Jewish community, including the main communal organizational structures. Hence it is a museum which was established 'by Jews'.

While the Mechelen Museum of Deportation and Resistance was specifically initiated by Jews 'as Jews'—in a specific and restricted sense, as Jewish deportees—the Jewish Museum in Brussels has a much broader remit. It was initiated by Jews wishing to represent themselves 'as Jews', both to themselves and the wider community. Thus it is simultaneously an expression, a manifestation and a representation of Jewishness.

However, such expression and representation have both an internal and an external audience. The museum is meant to attract both Jewish and non-Jewish visitors; it is therefore 'for Jews' and for non-Jews. Many Jewish museums emphasize the importance of bridge-building and the need to represent and portray Jewish culture, history and religion to the wider society. This is also an important feature of ethnic and specialist museums and a point which is dealt with below (see page 9).

This is where the definition of a Jewish museum differs sharply from Professor Sachs's definition of Jewish music. My definition of a Jewish museum would be a museum 'initiated by Jews, as Jews, for both Jews and non-Jews'.

Moreover, the Jewish Museum in Brussels would probably not have been established in its present form without the support it receives from the Belgian state: the cost of maintaining the premises and the salary costs are provided from public funds. The museum is expected to move in a few years' time to larger and more permanent premises near Brussels's museum district.

Finally, the Jewish Museum is unquestionably a museum with its own collection of objects and artefacts; the Mechelen Museum of Deportation and Resistance, on the other hand, falls within the category of a Holocaust memorial site.

There are implications when Jewish museums rely substantially on public funding for their operational costs. In particular, this might influence the agenda they are expected to adopt. What this sort of arrangement entails is a partnership between the institutions of the Jewish community and those of the wider society.

2 Can conflicting agendas be reconciled?

The Jewish Museum in Berlin

Museums devoted to the culture, history or heritage of a minority group often appeal simultaneously to an internal and an external audience, to members of the minority group and to members of the wider society. This case study assesses some of the driving forces leading to the establishment of a Jewish museum on a symbolic and emotive site, focusing especially on the dynamics in minority group and dominant group relationships.

My main contention is that the establishment of a Jewish museum is a dynamic process which entails the formation of various alliances. Such alliances—both within the Jewish community and with leading administrators and funding bodies in the wider community—are often complex. Invariably such alliances can only come to fruition in a favourable political climate. In the process of forming alliances of this type, however, a Jewish museum can take on varying agendas, agendas which sometimes complement each other and sometimes generate tensions.

In the early stages of negotiations in 1974, when the idea of a Jewish museum was first mooted, leading members of Berlin's Jewish community, including its chairman Heinz Galinski, envisaged a museum which would function independently of any other museum in Berlin. While such a museum would inevitably focus on the history of Berlin's Jews, its agenda and remit were intended to be much broader than the city of Berlin.

Two factors altered this vision. First was the Berlin Senate's offer to house the museum in Berlin's own City Museum. At this stage, the various agendas were sufficiently broadly based as not to be incompatible. A Jewish museum in Berlin was bound to explore the history of Berlin Jewry over the centuries and this was perfectly compatible within the setting of Berlin's City Museum. In addition, the Jewish museum would contain a section on the Jewish religion and its associated customs and rituals. A further section would focus on the life and works of prominent members of Berlin Jewry who had contributed to the life of the city.

Another factor was the realization that the City Museum would have to be extended in order to accommodate the new museum. Consequently there was a competition for a suitable design for the new wing.

The competition was won in 1989 by the

innovative design of Daniel Liebeskind—one of the first 'deconstructivist' visions of a major public building in Europe. It was designed in the shape of a broken, fragmented and re-arranged star of David, compelling the viewer to confront the sharp discontinuities, broken-off bits, jagged ends and missing items. The building also points to continuities, but it is a painful, tortuous path with constant reminders of the gaps in between. The sections of the building commemorating the Holocaust culminate in an empty tower and a section of the museum commemorating the history of exile, leads to a garden of trees planted inside an installation of rows of concrete blocks, symbolizing the Berlin Jews persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime.

Although Heinz Galinski formally represented the Jewish community in judging the architectural competition, he was not involved in further plans for the Jewish museum; nor were other members of the Jewish community involved at that stage. From 1989 until the appointment of a director of the Jewish museum in 1994, the city authorities rarely consulted with the Jewish community about the future of the museum. Indeed, in 1991 the city administration, faced with severe budgetary problems as a result of reunification, abandoned the idea of building the Liebeskind complex altogether. There was such an international outcry at the plan to abandon the project that the city was forced to reconsider and construction work began in 1992.

In 1993 an international jury unanimously chose Amnon Barzel as director of the Jewish Museum. Barzel, an internationally renowned art critic and curator, had been associated with the modern art museum in Prato, Italy, and with similar institutions in Venice and Tel Aviv. He thus began his directorship in Berlin in 1994 with a cosmopolitan perspective and a greater focus on contemporary Jewish art than had been envisaged when the idea of the museum was first mooted in the 1970s.

But time had moved on in other respects as well. Change came about through the more managerialist approach forced upon public museums the world over as a result of financial constraints on public expenditure. In Berlin this led to the reorganization of the city's museum system in 1995 with the amalgamation of its sixteen constituent museums into a single museum structure. This created a centralized structure for the administration of Berlin's museums, with individual museums having less control over the allocation of resources.

This new situation exacerbated the inherent

conflict between the Jewish Museum and the City Museum Foundation, now formally in charge of the Jewish museum. The Jewish Museum was accorded departmental status in the reorganized structure, but its director and leading members of the Jewish community continued to press for increased autonomy. In 1996 the cultural affairs department of the Berlin Senate responded by according 'cultural' autonomy to the Jewish Museum over its exhibition policy, whilst retaining control over resource allocation within the City Museum Foundation.

The Berlin Senate continued to treat the whole venture as a matter for the city and sought minimal input from the Jewish community. As Georg Haber of the Jewish Museum in Vienna notes:

Jewish history and Jewish culture were regarded as pertaining to the past, and could be dealt with quite competently by technical experts from within the city museum department. Issues of contemporary German Jewry, the slow growth of German Jewry after the war and the changing role of Berlin within the post-war German context were all to be ignored.⁵

Such a conception of the role of a city's Jewish museum was not too dissimilar from the narrowly historical documentation approach espoused by the city of Essen, among many others. Clearly the approach taken by the city administration was consistent with that of other municipally-run museums at the time.

Priorities for the new Jewish Museum in Berlin were to be determined by the city administration rather than by the (Jewish) director of the museum or other members of the Jewish community. Indeed, the streamlining of the city's museums was proceeding apace and plans were emerging to devote part of the floor space in the new Liebeskind building to themes other than those associated with the Jewish community. After all, there were ten times as many Turks living in Berlin as the 11,000 or so Jews residing in the city, and certainly as many Italians as Jews—their story should also be told.

It is under these circumstances that Barzel began his office as director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin and found himself increasingly frustrated as his efforts to promote a wider vision for the museum were consistently blocked by the city administration. For example, the head of the City Museum Foundation, Reiner Guntzer, blocked Barzel's plans for an international academic

colloquium on Jewish history, and plans for major exhibitions of Jewish art were constantly downgraded by city officials on cost grounds.

Matters came to a head in 1997. In April of that year, the Jewish community began distancing itself from the whole venture and declared that it would have nothing more to do with the development of the museum until the issue of autonomy was fully resolved.

It should be noted that Jewish communities in Germany were by now taking a more militant stance towards German officialdom. Whilst the immediate post-war period until the late 1970s was characterized by German Jewry's desire to maintain a low profile, matters began to change in the mid-1980s. The post-war generation was beginning to take over leadership roles, to take direct action and protest openly against officialdom.

Barzel, sensing that he now had support from within the Jewish community, became more strident in his demands. He pressed not only for the Jewish museum to occupy the whole of the Liebeskind building complex and for the museum to have full administrative and financial autonomy, but also publicly berated the Berlin authorities. The result was a showdown between the Berlin authorities and the Jewish community. Barzel was unceremoniously dismissed in June 1997 without consultation with the Jewish community.

Obviously the initial coalition between the city administration and the Jewish community, which had led to the joint formulation of a planned Jewish museum, the choice of the winning architectural design and the appointment of the first director of the museum, had now broken down.

Coincidentally and symbolically, it broke down at that precise moment when a new leadership was taking over the running of the Jewish community in Berlin. Andreas Nachama, a forty-five-year-old historian specializing in the Holocaust, took over as chairman of the Berlin Jewish community on the same day that Barzel was dismissed. As the first post-war chairman who did not live through the traumas of the Holocaust himself, Nachama represents the new generation of Jewish leaders within the community. Initially, he publicly lent his support to Barzel and demanded his reinstatement as director, or at the very least adequate compensation for the summary way in which he had been dismissed. Yet, behind the scenes there were manoeuvres to bring about a new coalition and a new set of understandings that would put the Jewish Museum on a new footing.

⁵ *Jüdische Welt*, August 1997.

By the beginning of October 1997, the president of the Academy of Arts in Berlin, György Konrád, was brought in as a mediator in negotiations between Nachama and the Berlin Senate. The confrontational stance between the Berlin Senate and the Jewish community over the previous six months had led to an impasse and only mediation by a third party could help to bring about reconciliation.

Konrád, a Hungarian Jew, proceeded to advocate a wider remit for the Jewish Museum, emphasizing that Berlin was now a major European city and that reunification had brought with it a new national, as well as international, role for the city. Hence a Jewish museum in Berlin should no longer be narrowly defined by the boundaries of the city, but should emphasize a *greater European dimension than envisaged in the 1970s*.

By the end of October 1997 the Berlin senator for cultural affairs, Peter Radunski, announced a compromise solution. Although the Berlin Senate still refused to grant full autonomy to the Jewish Museum, which would continue to be administered by the City Museum Foundation, the Foundation would henceforth have a representative of the Jewish community on its board. Moreover, the director of the Jewish museum, once appointed, would also hold the office of deputy managing director of the Foundation, of which he would also be a voting member; Reiner Guntzer, continuing as head of the Foundation, would lose his voting rights. This proposal was approved by both Nachama and Konrád.

By March 1998 the interim director, Michael Blumenthal, had been appointed. Blumenthal was born in Berlin and later settled in the United States where he served as Treasury Secretary in the Carter Administration. Further negotiations between the director and Peter Radunski, Berlin's senator for cultural affairs, resulted in more concessions to the museum, giving it control in *matters of finance, administration, display and personnel*.

The Jewish Museum is now ready to move forward. It will be open to the public at the end of January 1999.

We can now recapitulate the chronology of events:

- mooted in 1974 of the idea to establish a Jewish museum
- the Berlin Senate's decision in the 1980s to set up such a museum under the auspices of the City Museum
- approval of the Liebeskind design in 1989
- appointment of a director in 1994
- confrontation in 1995-6 over the issue of autonomy
- withdrawal of Jewish communal involvement in April 1997
- dismissal of Barzel in June 1997
- compromise solution in October 1997
- new director and further concessions in March 1998
- official opening in January 1999

Such a chronology can be viewed in the light of the shifting alliances and coalitions over that twenty-three year period. The Jewish community in Berlin at first rejoiced that the Berlin Senate was willing to take on the project and that a brand new building would be devoted to such a venture, but gradually became disillusioned with the attitude of the Berlin authorities.

The case studies in this report show that alliances—both within the Jewish community and with institutions of the wider host society—are necessary to the establishment of a Jewish museum. Yet such alliances may at times break down and have then to be reconstructed on a new basis.

One of the reasons such alliances may break down is the irreconcilable nature of the agendas that each coalition party may bring with them. In most cases some form of compromise will be achieved, but it may take some time for such an accommodation to be reached. This is why there is often such a delay between the initiative to establish a Jewish museum and its actual launch date.

3 Where to locate a Jewish museum

Copenhagen as a site for a Jewish museum

What difference does it make where Jewish museums are located within the spatial context of the city?

Jewish settlement in Copenhagen dates back to the middle of the seventeenth century, though Jews were not given equal rights until 1814. A new synagogue was built in the centre of town in 1833 to replace the one destroyed by fire in 1795. Within walking distance is also a Jewish community centre; this is an eighteenth-century building renovated in the 1960s and opened as a Jewish cultural and youth centre in 1968. Under the same roof the following organizations can also be found: the administrative offices of the Copenhagen Jewish community, the Women's International Zionist Organization of Denmark, the Danish Zionist Federation, the Jewish National Fund and B'nai Brith. The premises also house a *mikvah* (ritual cleansing bath), a day-care centre and a *kosher* canteen.

Clearly, the synagogue and the communal centre provide an important focal point for Copenhagen's Jewish population. However, as in London, the Jewish population has largely moved to the suburbs and is currently widely scattered across the Copenhagen area. Although the main old people's home remains near the main synagogue in the centre of town, the schools and nurseries have moved away from the central area to be closer to the target population.

The main Jewish day school, Carolineskolen, is located halfway between the city centre and the northern/western suburbs where most of the Jewish population has settled. The school has a kindergarten and day nursery attached to it. The offices of the Chief Rabbi have also been relocated to these premises so that they are more accessible during office hours.

There have been concerted efforts to establish a Jewish museum in Copenhagen over the last twelve or fifteen years. There is a well-established Trust Society for a Jewish Museum in Denmark, with existing collections of Judaica and manuscripts likely to form the basis for such a museum. However, there is hesitancy as to where to locate it.

Eventually the central government approved plans to let the Jewish museum have part of the prestigious Royal Library building, once the Royal Library vacates the premises in 1999. The

building is located in central Copenhagen among some of the city's most visited sites, some distance away from the main areas of current Jewish settlement.

The Chief Rabbi, Bent Lexner, who is a member of the committee currently involved in setting up the museum, would prefer to see the museum established on the site of the main day school. Such a move would help to transform the school into a real community centre for the Jewish community.

However, other members of the museum steering committee favour a more central location for the museum. The prestigious location of the Royal Library building would attract a wealthy, well educated, Danish audience frequenting museums and art galleries, as well as tourists. The disadvantage is that it would be less likely to develop into communal space since Jewish community life is already located elsewhere.

A third option suggested for a Jewish museum in Copenhagen is to locate the museum on the site of the old Jewish cemetery. Founded in 1693 and no longer in use, the cemetery lies in central Copenhagen, beyond the area normally frequented by tourists. It occupies historic but not touristic space. An architecture student, who has drawn up plans for a building that could house the museum on the site, argues that the interplay between artefacts of past generations, in the form of headstones, and present-day Danish life outside the cemetery walls, is an excellent illustration of the current tensions of Danish-Jewish life, which is caught between assimilation and ethnic identity. The advantage of locating a museum in the old cemetery is that it would occupy historic space and would attract interest as a result of a triple authenticity, i.e. representing a real place, real objects and real people. It is debatable, however, whether a museum located in a cemetery in a neighbourhood with few Jewish residents could become communal space.

That the resident Jewish community is being asked to invest in the establishment of a Jewish museum in Copenhagen raises a number of questions. Should such investment be directed to creating tourist space, thereby enhancing and reinforcing capital formation and accumulation already established in the historic-tourist area of Copenhagen? Or should such investment be directed at creating communal space centred around the Carolineskolen day school, thereby reinforcing the long-term viability of locating a school halfway between the historic centre of Jewish settlement in Copenhagen and its current suburban settlements?

This is not to deny that the establishment of a museum in areas outside the historic, much visited part of town may not of itself have implications for the gentrification process. Indeed, the placing of the Carolineskolen where it currently resides may in itself have modestly contributed to the gentrification of the surrounding area, if Jewish families actually moved residence to be nearer the school. The placing of a Jewish museum on the school site may well reinforce such gentrifying tendencies by making the area more attractive to Jewish families and reinforcing the coherence of a Jewish communal space.

I would argue that placing a museum in a given area could be seen as stimulating precisely this kind of process. This is clearly evident in the tourist areas of most European cities. Sharon Zukin has written about cultural services being links in the process of capital accumulation and, in general, about the 'spatial embeddedness' of certain kinds of consumption patterns.

To summarize Zukin, city centres have become gentrified through a two-fold process:

- turning city centres into shopping areas for the better-off section of the population, with disposable incomes, who come to the city centre for shopping, entertainment and dining out, thereby turning the city centre into a place of consumption;
- the architectural gentrification of the area in an attempt to restore architectural authenticity to the buildings and so maintain a narrative link to the historic nature of the city centre.⁶

Zukin gives the flavour of what is occurring in many tourist areas in European cities. Such areas are full of historic buildings and sites which are constantly renovated, refurbished and re-adapted

to new uses and increasingly opened up to public view. Large parts of these areas have also been turned over to spaces of consumption with shops, restaurants, cinemas and theatres, and now cater to a mixture of tourists, upper-class gentrifiers, and city dwellers who stroll into the city centre for shopping and leisure.

Thus, the historic and the touristic merges and blends into such spaces of consumption. It is within this context that we need to view the deliberate placing of Jewish museums in pre-existing 'tourist' space. Such a placing helps to reinforce the coherence of such spaces and to create an 'ambience'. Zukin also points out that this apparent coherence is socially constructed. In a 'symbolic quest for authenticity, validation and monumentality', a narrative is created out of buildings. This narrative leads to the myth that a historically preserved enclave represents the 'real' historical city.⁷ Hence the impetus to place Jewish museums in Jewish-historic and tourist space in Toledo and Gerona or in tourist space in Vienna.

It is worth noting that the placing of such museums in historic-touristic space often has the support of central and/or local government. Indeed, without public funding it is unlikely that such museums would have been established on those particular sites in Toledo, Gerona and Vienna. The placing of Jewish museums in prestigious, historic buildings, as with the new Museum of Jewish Art and History in Paris or the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt, also falls into the same category of publicly sponsored reinforcement of the social coherence of such spaces. In contrast, as we have seen, Jewish communities which see the primary purpose of museums as an affirmation of their culture may well prefer such museums to be located at more immediately accessible sites in their residential neighbourhoods.

6 Sharon Zukin, 'Socio-spatial prototypes of a new organization of consumption: the role of real cultural capital', *Sociology*, vol. 24, February 1990, 41.

7 *Ibid.*, 42.

4 Educational aims of Jewish museums

The Jewish Museum in Prague

Virtually all museums see themselves as having an educational role. The distinctive issue confronting an ethnic minority museum, however, is that it is faced with two kinds of audiences—internal and external. The majority of Jewish museums are aware of their importance as a vehicle for explaining Jewish history, culture and religious practices not only to a Jewish audience, but to a non-Jewish audience as well. Indeed, some museums are established with this explicit aim in mind. Other Jewish museums regard education as only one of many functions assumed by the museum. The Jewish Museum in Prague is a good example of the former—a Jewish museum which is not only keenly aware of its educational role *vis-à-vis* a non-Jewish audience (whether non-Jewish Czech nationals or tourists), but which also engages in educational programmes aimed specifically at Jewish audiences as well (in this case Czech Jews and those with some Jewish background, as well as visiting Jews—predominantly Americans and Israelis).

To this end, a new department has been added to the museum—the Centre for Education and Culture of the Jewish Museum in Prague. The Centre was founded in 1996 with the primary goal of conveying to students, scholars, ‘roots-seekers’ and tourists a sense of connection to the Jewish cultural heritage. It aims to facilitate a greater understanding of the unique Jewish experience in this part of the world, ‘in order to reclaim 1,000 years of Jewish history for future generations’.⁸ The Centre intends to use Prague and its environs as a setting for an interdisciplinary approach to education (including music, theatre, legends, storytelling, multimedia presentations and tours of the city).

Much could be said about such an ambitious and exciting educational programme—first and foremost, this holistic and multi-disciplinary approach breaks away from the traditional reliance on the museum’s collection in order to present educational programmes. The delivery of such programmes makes use of both ‘experts’ in the

field and local guides from the Jewish community in Prague.

Undoubtedly the establishment of such a centre has come about as a result of the enormous tourist boom experienced in the Czech Republic since the fall of communism. According to Czech Tourist Authority figures, there are some 13 million tourists to the country each year, 80 per cent of whom actually visit the city of Prague, and some estimates suggest that there may be well over 1 million tourists visiting the Jewish quarter. There is then, no question of the demand for an educational programme to cater to tourists’ needs.

Yet, such an educational programme represents much more than an attempt to service the tourist industry. The Centre for Education is seen by the Jewish Museum and its sponsors (including the Rich Foundation, the Lauder Foundation, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the Joint Distribution Committee, the ORT World Union, and numerous private donors) as a deliberate attempt to aid the process of Jewish revival and Jewish renewal. Indeed, members of the Jewish community in Prague, including the Chief Rabbi, deem its work in this field as essential.

It may also be said that the sponsors of the Centre are not only concerned with Jewish revival in the Czech Republic, but, in addition, are concerned about the Jewish identity and continued ‘Jewishness’ of American and Israeli youth. Hence, they view the educational work of the Centre to some degree as a continuation of the educational and youth work that is going on in America or in Israel. What has been achieved is a change of venue, with the new opportunities that it provides. This could also be seen as an attempt to move away from the post-war bi-polar approach to Jewish renewal—with America and Israel representing the two opposite poles of renewal.

The demise of communism in Europe has created new challenges and opportunities. There is now the potential for a third pole for Jewish renewal to emerge—Europe is becoming an important arena for Jewish culture and Jewish education in a way it has not been since 1939, and international Jewish foundations are waking up to the possibilities this may present.

8 According to the information leaflet sent out by the Centre, 1997.

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