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Jewish heritage tourism in Bucharest. Reality and visions

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Abstract

Heritage tourism linked with past or current cultural diversity and ethnic minorities has become a significant part of the tourism industry. This paper contributes to the discussion about heritage management related to niche tourism development and minority groups' participation. The specific theme of Jewish heritage tourism is analyzed, particularly through the case of the present Jewish community of Bucharest. Study results are presented and discussed in order to understand how this community and the local tourist sector perceive the tourist potential of its heritage and envisions its development. A reflection on the discourse behind the current and possible future management of Jewish legacy can thus contribute to better understand the complexity of niche heritage tourism processes in multi-ethnic sites.

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Minority heritage tourism

Cultural heritage is generally constructed, perceived, interpreted and managed according to an attribution of meanings and values (Ashworth 2011; Graham 2002;

Smith, 2006). The links with the past, either tangible or intangible, are recognized and represented through a selection process related to the demands of the present and the visions of the future (Ashworth et al. 2007; Graham and Howard 2008; Wall 2009). Thus, heritage can be seen as the contemporary use of the past according to current cultural, social and economic realities (Ashworth, 2011), in order to build social identity, legitimize political power, or support tourism development. Values are placed on artefacts or activities by people who interpret heritage through a complex series of lenses, among which: nationality, religion, ethnicity, class, wealth, age, gender, education and personal history (Ashworth et al. 2007).

Tourists are often attracted and motivated by their desire to see and experience things they do not have in their home environment (Cohen 2004). Heritage tourism has thus become a significant part of the tourism industry, characterized by powerful supply and demand motivations (Prentice 1993; Timothy and Boyd 2003). Studies concentrating on tourism marketing consider the impact that cultural diversity, and a corresponding diversity of tourism products and destinations, can have on the evolution of tourism areas (Castro et al. 2007; Hoffman 2003; Krakover, 2012; Ma and Hassink 2013). However, linking officially "authorized" heritage to tourism product marketing and development necessarily raises questions on authenticity, commodification and participation (Halewood and Hannam 2001; Reisinger and Steiner 2006).

While some heritage sites have become major tourist attractions (Richards and Fernandes 2007), countless others tend to attract special interest groups, sometimes as niche tourism products (McKercher 2002; Trauer 2006). Niche tourism can be defined as a subdivision of tourism industry into specific and particular products (MacLeod 2003; Novelli 2005). According to Robinson and Novelli (2005), it is a reaction to the phenomena of globalized mass tourism; hence, "macro-niches", such as cultural or rural tourism, include "micro-niches", such as literary or culinary tourism. Robinson and Novelli (2005) and Dinis and Krakover (2016) observe that the discourse on niche tourism is constructed by the producers of tourism, rather than consumers, as an element of competitive strategy, a means for diversification and a sophisticated approach to marketing. Environmental and social sustainability are often called into the arena of smaller-scale tourism, as well (Novaczek 2010; Scheyvens 1999). Niche marketing can be understood as a concentration on a limited market, generally considered appropriate for small or specialized businesses or territories (Dinis, 2006; Toften and Hammervoll 2009). Current or former multicultural and cosmopolitan contexts, where different national groups marked the landscape and contributed to territorial identity, offer significant opportunities for niche cultural tourism, as heritage can be created, recognized, highlighted, reinterpreted and ultimately sold in order to diversify the image of a certain destination (Caffyn and Lutz 1999; Novelli 2005; Poria and Ashworth 2009; Walder et al. 2006). When a majority group inherits traces of minorities' past or present

presence, three options are possible with regard to their visibility in the tourist image of a specific territory (Krakover 2016):

- a) the minorities' heritage is silenced;
- b) it is tolerated or allowed as an additional heritage coexisting with the dominant one;
- c) it is incorporated within the local narrative to generate a complex, inclusive and pluralized place identity.

In places where minorities' cultural heritage has surfaced in one way or another, the uneasiness of the majority group has been described in terms of cultural dissonance (Olsen and Timothy 2002; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). Recent evidence suggests a significant attitudinal shift with respect to the development of minority heritages from option a) to options b) and c). This shift, with its character, magnitude and driving forces, was studied recently by Ashworth et al. (2007).

Questions about heritagisation, commodification, community participation, social inclusion and the recognition of diversity are called into the heritage arena (Chambers 2005; Lowenthal 1998). Various scholars have identified a number of inter-related barriers that prevent effective local communities' involvement in niche tourism development (Cole 2006). According to Tosun (2000), several internal and external barriers hamper participation, such as lack of financial resources, negligible experience of tourism, heavy presence of international tour operators, ethnic discrimination, etc.

This paper contributes to the discussion on the management of heritage and cultural tourism related to minority groups. It offers insights on the difficult heritage management and promotion that may occur in a former multi-ethnic context, thus dealing with the heritage left by an ethnic group that lost much of its influence, but still asks for participation and tries to have a voice in its management and development. The case of Bucharest will be examined. This case is pertinent to the discussion since it is a historically cosmopolitan city. Actors, discourses and reasons behind Jewish culture management and heritagisation will be highlighted and the reactions, perceptions and suggestions by the various groups involved will be portrayed. Thus, this paper contributes to the discussion about heritage management related to niche tourism development and minority groups' participation. It also considers the intrinsic risk of niche tourism process to paradoxically exclude the community who produced and ran that heritage in the past but is now in a weaker position.

The specific theme of Jewish heritage tourism will be analyzed, followed by presentation of methodology and study location. Next, the case features will be used to illustrate how the present small Jewish community of Bucharest perceives the tourist potential of its heritage and envisions its development. Finally, there is a reflection on the discourse behind the current and possible future management of Jewish legacy and how the case study contributes to a better understanding of the complexity of niche heritage tourism processes in multi-ethnic sites.

The Jewish niche product

Jewish heritage tourism (JHT) is a cultural niche product offered to visitors in many European towns and cities (Gruber 2002; Krakover 2013). It is widely accepted, in the field of tourism development, and especially in niche heritage tourism, that it is not the site that matters but the meaning and values assigned to it (Poria et al. 2004). Despite the wide interest in religious tourism (Timothy and Olsen 2006), including pilgrimage (Swatos and Tomasi 2002), discussion of Jewish heritage as a tourism product is still relatively rare. Ashworth (1996) discussed this topic as an example of dissonant heritage (Ashworth 2003). Gruber (2002) documented the story of the "reinvention" of Jewish-related sites in many European towns and cities, while Krakover (2016) proposed a model of Jewish heritage tourism development in Europe.

Over the past decades, particularly since the fall of communism in 1989-1991, Europe has seen a growth of interest for Judaism, Jews, Jewish culture and the Holocaust, increasingly recognized as part of national histories and identities. As part of this trend, Jewish culture, or what is perceived or defined as Jewish culture, has become a strong component of "heritage" and "identity", even in countries where Jewish communities disappeared, or are reduced to tiny and barely visible minorities. This is a Europe-wide phenomenon, observable in countries whose people were the perpetrators as well as the victims and bystanders of the Second World War and the Holocaust, and even in

countries where antisemitism is still alive. Klezmer festivals, restoration of synagogues, opening of exhibitions and museums, construction of Holocaust memorials, production of films and novels have characterized this trend in most European countries (Valley 1999). Jewish-theme tourism has become a well-established niche in the vast tourist market, developed by private operators and often strongly promoted by state, city, or regional authorities (Gruber 2002). Numerous new Jewish-themed guidebooks, brochures, heritage maps, posters, and other material have been published, and new travel agencies have opened to specialise in Jewish tours. Old Jewish quarters are under development as tourist attractions and Jewish museums have been opened in big cities as well as rural villages in many countries, from Spain to Poland (Gruber 2007; Russo and Romagosa 2010), while Holocaust sites are visited by millions of people every year (Thurnell-Read 2009). Jewish-style shops, galleries, cafes and restaurants have been opened in many cities, in many cases by non-Jews. Jewish-themed souvenirs of various materials and origin are sold in these locations and establishments, to Jewish and non-Jewish visitors alike (Heitlinger 2013). In Prague and Krakow, the most advanced examples, it is not only the synagogues and other physical relics that craft the Jewish experience but also the general atmosphere generated by Jewish-themed festivals and exhibitions, klezmer music, souvenir shops, restaurants offering Jewish cuisine, bars and coffee shops. According to Sandri (2013) and Lehrer (2015), the Kazimierz quarter in Krakow has become a mass cultural tourism destination and Jewish heritage is now

widely seen as a part of Polish heritage. Commodification and commercialization are certainly linked to exploitative and opportunistic business, or to guiltiness about the Holocaust, but in many other cases the rediscovery of Jewish history and culture depends on the metaphorical interpretation and value attribution by non-Jews. This heritage can be variously seen and used as a symbol of survival, hybrid identity, multiculturalism; a symbol of Nazi crimes or communist denial; a symbol of all oppressed peoples and democratic ideals (Young 1993). It can be linked with fascination for world music, nostalgia for a vanished past, admiration for Jewish figures in arts, literature, science (Tuszynska 1998). This phenomenon is manifested on a purely personal level but also as a conscious part of public policies, by local and national authorities as well as by pan-European institutions. In countries such as Spain, Portugal and southern Italy, it is a matter or recreating or reinventing a heritage that was mostly lost and destroyed over five centuries ago. The mainstream recovery of Jewish history and culture as well as Holocaust memory can be used as a means of re-thinking and re-defining both personal identity and national histories, in a process that is both conscious and unconscious (Krakover 2012 and 2016).

Parallel to the development of a non-Jewish fascination for Jewishness in Europe, there has been an internal Jewish rediscovery of roots and heritage, too, particularly since the fall of communism. Indeed, the embrace of Jewish culture by mainstream society has gone on side by side with efforts by Jews themselves to recover or redefine personal

Jewish identities and to revive or enrich Jewish communities, Jewish life, and internal Jewish culture in various countries (Flesler et al. 2010).

Within the broader "macro-niche" of cultural tourism, Jewish heritage sites are characterized by several unique features. First, outside Israel, these sites represent the culture of a minority (Smith and Zatori 2015); second, nowadays this minority is very often absent or is represented by a small group of survivors or descendants of survivors of atrocities (Gruber 2002; Sandri 2013); third, their heritage focal point, the synagogue, is most often housed in a small and unimposing building (Krakover 2013); and fourth, besides the synagogue, there are several other minor monuments or relics associated with Jewish culture such as cemeteries, former Jewish streets and quarters, Holocaust memorials, and significant intangible heritage (Ioannides and Ioannides 2006; Krakover 2013). Krakover (2016) suggests a model outlining a general path of development for Jewish heritage sites, which also appears to be applicable to other heritage sites that might resemble the Jewish heritage niche.

According to the model, at an early stage, the presence of a well-preserved historical synagogue is usually essential; its recognition, restoration, maintenance and promotion favour the encounter of several stakeholders, including the local Jewish community, public authorities, tourist bodies, international Jewry. At this early stage, visits to the synagogue are usually free or by donation. As the synagogue enters the cultural tourism circuit, is listed in best-selling guidebooks and reaches a higher position in Trip Advisor

charts, regular opening times and institutionalized entrance fees are established, and a Jewish-themed museum is usually opened.

At a more mature stage, other Jewish-related cultural sites, such as side streets, cemeteries, memorials, Hebrew writings, receive recognition and enter the circuit, albeit the direct revenue is less relevant compared with synagogues and museums. Promotion of intangible heritage, storytelling, dedicated brochures and maps tend to follow, accompanied by an increasing presence of services for Jewish visitors (e.g. kosher shops and restaurants, appropriate accommodation) and for general tourists (e.g. agencies, souvenirs, festivals). Finally, the international relevance of the destination leads to the inclusion in regional and international itineraries and networks.

Overall, considering the experiences of revitalization and commodification of Jewish neighbourhoods, this process shows both positive and negative aspects (Corsale and Vuytsyk 2015; Gruber 2009). A negative attitude toward the commercialization of the sacred sites in Poland and Germany, among worldwide Jewish communities, is showed by Podoshen and Hunt (2011). On the hand, rehabilitation of Jewish heritage sites in many European cities, and towns turned Jewish neighbourhoods into vibrant urban spaces and boosts to the physical development of once dilapidated and depressed areas (Krakover 2012).

The history and memory that are resurrected are often distorted or codified to suit specific local and personal needs. Heritagisation of past Jewish life and culture can thus

respond to symbolic expectations and cultural demands by non-Jews, and can also feed niche tourism business and destination diversification (Dinis 2012; Robinson and Novelli 2005). However, approaching this heritage without a connection with a living and evolving Jewish dimension raises issues of cultural authenticity, interethnic dialogue, community participation and history interpretation which ought to be analyzed in-depth. Local and marginal Jewish communities are expected to become partners in tourism development related to their own culture, but often lack funds and know-how, and may not always share a compact and unanimously positive view on the tourist option itself. Public authorities or private stakeholders, on the other hand, do not necessarily need the support and involvement of Jewish communities when dealing with a heritage that is increasingly, but sometimes opportunistically, presented as part of a broader local or national identity.

Study methods

The study is substantially based on a qualitative research method and incorporates the three sources of data recognized in qualitative research: observations, interviews and consultation of secondary sources (Merriam 2002; Patton 2002). The field study was made in June 2016, over a period of 20 days. Observations included visits to the main cultural highlights and neighbourhoods related to the Jewish historical and current presence in Bucharest.

The author undertook interviews as informal conversations with key stakeholders from the Jewish community of Bucharest and with tour operators and agencies working in this tourism segment. The main questions of the conversations were how the different stakeholders within the Jewish community envision the management and promotion of Jewish heritage for tourism purposes, and how private tourist operators relate to it. A total of 22 conversations were held; they started introducing the research aims, were held in Romanian and varied in length from 30 to 60 minutes; in most cases, they were taped and subsequently transcribed.

Prior to entering the field, the author undertook a review of literature on heritage tourism and niche tourism, part of which has been reported above, to provide a broad academic context for the research. He also consulted a range of secondary sources, such as historical and recent statistical data on the demography and the economy of the city and the region and materials that directly or indirectly deal with Jewish history and Jewish heritage tourism, adopting a multidisciplinary approach. Brochures, maps and other publications prepared for free distribution by the municipal tourism office were collected and analysed in order to evaluate the coverage of the Jewish-related attractions in the city's printed material. Likewise, this coverage was later examined in the municipal and national official websites. Information collected via these procedures enabled triangulation and validation of data. This allowed understanding how Jewish

tangible and intangible heritage in Bucharest is valued and represented, which permitted interpretation of the discourse behind its management and promotion.

Jewish heritage in Bucharest

The city of Bucharest, first mentioned in 1459, despite its turbulent history and periodical outbursts of violence, hosted, over the centuries, a numerous, varied and active Jewish presence. The economic importance of the Wallachian capital attracted large numbers of foreigners of different origins, which gave the city a traditionally strong cosmopolitan character. The composite background of the Jewish population was evident in its dual organization, as a Sephardic ("Spanish") and an Ashkenazic ("Polish") community existed and developed in parallel. The Ashkenazic element grew larger than the Sephardic one and, during the second half of the XIX century, further split into an orthodox community, centred around the Great Synagogue (built in 1847) and a modernist one, which built the Choral Temple (1867). Yiddish and Ladino were widely spoken by the two communities, with Romanian being increasingly spoken as a first language (Iancu 1996; Waldman and Ciuciu 2011).

The Jewish population of Bucharest grew significantly, from 2,600 people in 1835 (4.3% of total population) to 20,749 in 1877 (11.7% of total population), making Bucharest by far the largest Jewish community in the Romanian territory. By 1930, the city's Jewish population was 76,480 (12% of total population). The heart of the

religious and communal life remained in the South-Eastern districts of Văcărești and Dudești, but Jews progressively settled in virtually all districts of the city, especially in areas where economic growth was fastest, and were active in a variety of fields, working as artisans, workers, merchants, and bankers. The main commercial streets and avenues of Bucharest hosted a large number of Jewish-owned companies, as well as religious, cultural, educational and social institutions (Streja and Schwarz 2009).

The community established several ironworks and foundries; their manufacture of urban ornaments, including streetlamps, fences, balconies and gates, marked the city's urban landscape with features associated with eclectic, art nouveau and art deco styles. During the interwar period, Jewish literature and theatre flourished, and intellectuals, such as Tristan Tzara and Marcel Iancu, boosted renovation in arts and architecture, spreading a taste for rationalism and modernism that changed the face of the city between the 1930's and the 1940's (Waldmann and Ciuciu 2011).

However, antisemitism was a constant threat and violent agitations were frequent. In January 1941, during the rebellion of the Legionary Movement, over 120 Jews were killed in a devastating pogrom that hit the core of the Jewish district and damaged or destroyed several synagogues, homes, shops and communal buildings. In September 1942, approximately 600 Jews were deported to Transnistria, but large-scale deportations were soon stopped by the ambivalent regime of Ion Antonescu and the vast

majority of Bucharest's large Jewish community survived the war and the Holocaust (Wiesel et al. 2004).

Shortly after World War II, Bucharest experienced a great influx of Jews as refugees arrived from concentration camps as well as from several areas in Romania where they continued to feel unsafe. The city's Jewish population grew to 150,000 by 1947. After the first years of the Communist regime and the closing of Jewish welfare and religious institutions, Bucharest continued to be the centre of Romania's Jewish communal and cultural life due in large part to the ability of its chief rabbi, Mozes Rosen, to cope with the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceauşescu. A State Jewish Theatre was founded in 1948 and served as a continued cultural reference. Massive emigration to Israel, however, drastically reduced the number of the Jews in Bucharest. According to the census, by 2002 there were only 2,564 and, in 2011, only 1,333, although estimates by the community's institutions count around 4,000, including partly Jewish descendants and partially assimilated people. There is no significant residential concentration in the former Jewish district anymore, but Jewish communal life still revolves around the area and currently mainly focuses on two functioning synagogues, the institutional administration, a multifunctional community center, a school and the minority's media. The theatre still regularly performs Yiddish plays, as required by law for minority cultural institutions, but its staff and actors are now mainly non-Jews.

Jewish heritage in Bucharest suffered significant destruction during the latest years of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, when a large part of the old districts of Văcărești and Dudeşti was demolished within the "sistematizare" plan, and replaced with wide avenues, standardized apartment blocks and empty spaces. Several temples and synagogues disappeared, including the old Sephardic Spanish temple, along with the characteristic eclectic architecture of the area, and its inns, houses, gardens, winding streets and atmosphere (Leahu 1995; Streja and Schwarz 2009). Three of the main synagogues, with their lavish neoclassical and neo-Moorish architecture, were spared, together with the building of the State Jewish Theatre, and look now stranded among communist blocks and barren areas. In the surrounding districts, however, many winding streets sided with tree-shaded old houses survived the destruction, in spite of their often neglected and decaying state, and valuable buildings once designed or decorated by Jewish architects and artists are spread all over the city. The Sephardic and Ashkenazic cemeteries also survived to the present day, however in a semi-abandoned state. Rampant overbuilding is now quickly filling the underdeveloped areas within the district, or replacing unprotected old houses. Several surrounding streets, with their old bourgeois houses now seriously decaying, are inhabited by very poor families, often of Roma ethnicity, who obtained or occupied them when Jews left. A large memorial monument dedicated to the victims of the pogrom and deportations was recently built by the government in a barely visible area out of the Jewish district, with little

involvement of the community, and currently appears overshadowed and forgotten by both visitors and locals.

Thus, tangible heritage shows elements of both cultural and architectural flourishing as well as neglect and destruction. Intangible heritage, on the other hand, traces its roots back to a rich tradition which includes literature, music, traditions, folklore, food, etc., but has been dramatically undermined by the mass emigration towards Israel and the United States, and the subsequent fading of the formerly unique Romanian-Jewish identity.

Yet, in spite of the currently chaotic and shabby look of the formerly picturesque Jewish district, its rich history and memories, as well as the architectural and cultural jewels it still contains, are clearly recognizable tourism assets (Gruber 2007; Streja and Schwarz 2009; Waldmann and Ciuciu 2011).

The Jewish community of Bucharest, weakened by emigration, assimilation, aging and economic hardships, inherited and manages this rich heritage in spite of its increasing economic difficulties. Three remaining synagogues, one of which still functioning and two hosting Jewish museums, have recently been restored with mixed public and private funds, while a fourth synagogue, located out of the former Jewish area, was recently renovated and acquired by the Chabad community and is almost exclusively managed by that group. The management of the synagogues is a significant financial trouble for this tiny and largely impoverished community. No funds are available for the restoration

and maintenance of the two cemeteries and the remaining ruins of other synagogues and temples. There are no kosher grocery stores or regularly open restaurants in Bucharest anymore, as the reduced size of the community, and its geographical dispersion, critically hampers their profitability. No Jewish-related objects or souvenirs are regularly sold in any of the venues, with the exception of locally-printed books, mostly in Romanian and some in English or Hebrew, intermittently displayed in the internal offices of the communal institutions.

The voice of the stakeholders

According to the interviews done at the Choral Temple and the Great Synagogue, the local Jewish community is well aware of the tourist potential of its heritage, and both sights currently host significant flows of Jewish tourists, particularly Israeli, including former Romanian Jews, while the number of non-Jewish visitors is modest, and local Romanian visitors are rare. At the same time, not all Israeli tourists going to Bucharest, particularly for business purposes, are actually interested in visiting the cultural sites related to the history of the Jewish presence in the city.

The Federation of the Jewish Communities of Romania, based in Bucharest, advocates keeping a central role in the development of Jewish heritage tourism in the city, and proposed a partial reconstruction of the former Jewish district of Văcărești, in the remaining empty areas, clearly indicating the cases of Prague and Krakow as successful

models. Tourism is viewed as a major economic chance particularly for the younger elements of the community. However, pessimism is widespread and related to the ever reducing size of the community itself, the lack of internal funds and the weak interest showed by both public and private stakeholders. Both the poor state of the old remaining houses and the rampant building of new blocks are seen as serious threats for the historical and cultural significance of the former Jewish district, and obstacles for its tourist development, but no solutions are easily recognizable.

The Jewish Community Centre confirms these views adding that the cultural life of the community, in spite of its reduced size, is still active and diverse, and several events have been organized over the years for the Romanian population in order to revive the interest and knowledge on the Jewish world, including music and food venues. Cultural exchanges have also involved other historical minorities living in the city, such as Roma and Armenians. The cost of these events, however, is significant and the community can hardly cover them with sufficient regularity.

The Center for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism in Romania, a local NGO, is also aware of the tourist and cultural potential of Jewish heritage in Bucharest and works on several projects to foster it, including digitalization of cemetery records, to favour genealogical tourism, and multimedia applications to highlight Jewish-related buildings and sights spread all over the historical districts of the city. However, according to the interviewee, lack of public interest and inactivity and fragmentation

within the Jewish community itself hampered the implementation of these projects. Moreover, Bucharest is not generally perceived as a cultural tourism destination, and the memory of the ancient Jewish presence is largely lost among the local people.

The State Jewish Theatre is still formally a significant element of the Jewish identity in Bucharest, but, following the emigration and aging of the community, its staff and audience are now mainly non Jewish. It is managed according to the national law on ethnic and linguistic minorities, thus all the plays must have a connection with Jewish culture, and at least 25% of them must be in Yiddish, making it the last regular Yiddish theatre in Europe. The theatre's ateliers host a wide collection of costumes, sceneries, texts and posters which could easily fill a museum, but the staff indicates lack of funds, weak interest from the institutions and the rundown state of the surrounding area, widely demolished during Ceauşescu's years, as key issues. Under the new direction of well-known actress Maia Morgenstern, the theatre aims at ultimately renovating its cultural offer and introducing plays in foreign languages, in order to attract new local and international audiences.

Other Jewish stakeholders, such as the Centre for the History of Romanian Jewry, the Museum of the History of the Romanian Jewish Community, located in the former United Holy Temple, the Memorial of Jewish Martyrs "Chief Rabbi Dr. Mozes Rosen", located in the Great Synagogue, and the Bucharest Klezmer Band, the only klezmer music players in the city, all showed scepticism on the future of the old Jewish district

but showed confidence on a slowly but steadily growing interest for Jewish culture and history from the Romanian population.

According to Trip Advisor, Bucharest's Jewish sites are well appreciated by visitors, with the three open synagogues placed 34th, 55th and 89th out of 261 listed activities, while the Holocaust memorial received mixed to negative reviews and is placed 146th. The Jewish Theatre is 11th out of 20 show venues. The sights, as well as the cemeteries, are cited in most guidebooks, such as Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, National Geographic and In Your Pocket, as well as the national tourism website (http://romaniatourism.com/jewish-heritage.html#Bucharest), while there is still no dedicated municipal tourism website. The presence of Jewish history and heritage in the brochures, printed materials and websites run by the city's and county's tourist authorities is weak and marginal.

A pilot project of digitalization and promotion of Jewish heritage, also for tourism purposes, was funded by the Romanian government and implemented by the University of Cluj-Napoca, the Spiru Haret University of Bucharest and the National Institute of Historical Monuments, under the direction of Prof. Mircea Sergiu Moldovan, between 2008 and 2011. Two prototypes of digital georeferenced Jewish-themed cultural trails were proposed for Bucharest, one covering 18 existing and former synagogues and another one including 19 interwar buildings designed by Dada architect Marcel Iancu. However, no following steps have been recently recorded.

Given the overall modest interest showed by governmental tourist offices, and a lack of landscape-attentive urban planning in the old Jewish district, private entrepreneurs have started promoting Jewish heritage tourism in effective ways. Four interviewed operators, organizing Jewish-themed guided tours in Bucharest, meet significant numbers of visitors, particularly Israeli and American Jews, followed by non-Jewish tourists, while Romanian visitors are rare. According to the interviewees, one of the main difficulties in developing this segment is the dilapidated look of the old Jewish district, caused by the demolitions ordered by Ceauşescu and the subsequent neglect. It is so difficult for foreign tourists to imagine how the area used to look like, that some of the tour operators feel compelled to bring old pre-demolition pictures, and take the visitors to neighbouring surviving old streets which recall the lost atmosphere of the district. The three central synagogues and the theatre are usually included in the tours. Some of them also include the Chabad synagogue and at least one of the two Jewish cemeteries, according to the customers' interests, and extend the tour to other Jewish sights out of Bucharest, including Transylvania and Moldavia. The Holocaust memorial is usually skipped by all of them because of its remote location and its widely perceived unattractiveness. As already noted, its layout was chosen by public authorities with no effective participation by the Jewish community, who considers it an essentially extraneous element.

According to the interviewees, the old antisemitism, which used to be deeply rooted in the Romanian society, is now largely gone and replaced by widespread indifference. However, the issue of the Romanian contribution in the pogroms and the Holocaust, and the role of Ion Antonescu's fascist regime, is still a delicate and controversial topic, as confirmed by the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (2004). Overall, Jewish heritage tourism in Bucharest is considered, by both the Jewish community and non-Jewish operators, as an important economic opportunity in order to diversify the image of the city, reinforce its cultural attractiveness and spread benefits to some of its marginal districts. The current shabby and unfinished state of the old Jewish neighbourhood is widely indicated as a serious weakness, together with lack of governmental interest and indifference or unawareness towards the historical and current Jewish presence in the city showed by most of the Romanian population. Different histories, traditions and visions by different components and stakeholders within the community also emerged as a hamper. The Jewish community does not view the presence of private non-Jewish operators in negative terms, considering the limited size and power of the community itself and the good level of collaboration and understanding with the involved guides. However, a central role and active participation

Conclusive discussion

in heritage management is still advocated by the community.

Jewish heritage sites in Europe, after several episodes of violent destruction of prolonged neglect, are often characterized by a small non-monumental scale enriched by intangible memories and historical significance. These characteristics tend to appeal to special interest groups of tourists who have some links with or at least curiosity for Jewish culture. Hence, Jewish heritage can generally be considered as a resource for niche tourism. These sites are now often managed and promoted by groups and cultures foreign to the Jewish faith (Howard and Allen 2005; Murzyn 2008). The development of this niche heritage may often raise issues of dissonance with regard to the present-day majority, who may not necessarily perceive its relevance, value and potential (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996).

The city of Bucharest is still in its early stages of cultural tourism industry growth. This situation provides excellent conditions for examining the rise of Jewish heritage tourism as a minority heritage product. Most tourists are still unaware of the Jewish cultural resources and, owing to the diminished visibility of Jewish sights, and the tiny size of the community, this heritage may also not be known to many residents.

According to the model proposed by Krakover (2016) for Jewish heritage tourism development in former communist countries, Bucharest shows discordant signs. Tangible heritage has partially been revived, in particular the main temples and the theatre, while other sights are essentially abandoned, such as the cemeteries, and the old district was wiped-out by Nicolae Ceauşescu and currently presents a rather unattractive

or undeveloped face. The memory and sites of Jewish presence in the rest of the city, including the bourgeois architecture that still marks many central avenues and streets, remains largely unrecognized. Intangible heritage, including literature, music, food, is only seldom given tourist value.

Jewish stakeholders are aware of its weaknesses and its potential, but lack the necessary resources and expertise. The Jewish museums still need an upgrade from their rather traditional models into new formulas able to attract a wider public. The Jewish State Theatre is already moving in that direction. The lack of services for Jewish visitors (such as kosher food and restaurants and religious-friendly hotels) and for non-Jews alike (souvenirs, brochures) is a considerable sign of weakness. Private specialized tour guides already started developing this segment offering both standardized tours to the most visible sights and more tailored proposals, also spanning towards other cities and regions of Romania. A national-level Jewish itinerary, sketched by the national tourism office but not subsequently developed, is thus taking form through private initiatives, principally destined to Jewish visitors.

During the interviews with Jewish community leaders and non-Jewish private tourism operators, most interviewees noted the lack of governmental financial support stemming from difficult economic conditions. Nevertheless, government support has been manifested in the form of restitution of Jewish public assets, financial aid for restoration as well as by declaring some of the sights national monuments.

The sentiment of non-Jewish residents toward the current and potential revival of the local Jewish identity would require further studies. According to Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996), residents may develop a sense of cultural dissonance confronting the revival of an almost wiped-out heritage of a local minority. However, Ashworth (2003) also recorded different reactions based on the case of Polish citizens in Krakow, where Jewish memories and sights largely became part of the city's identity and a solid tourist asset, for Jews and non-Jews alike. Each case being placed in a different social, economic, political and cultural environment, with comparable mechanisms of dissonance or inclusion, further exploring the issue of minority heritage tourism niches will enrich the discussion on cultural diversity in contemporary societies.

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