

## Telektivity = Teleki + Detective + Activity

### Background

*From the last Shtiebel of Budapest*

Hidden away in a courtyard of an apartment building in Budapest's ramshackle District 8, the shtiebel (from the Yiddish word for "little room") at Teleki Square is a center for the renewal of Jewish life in the city. The organizers are a diverse group of people who are passionate about revitalizing this once Jewish neighborhood and unearthing its Jewish history, all this in their free time. The Shtiebel is the last surviving synagogue in Budapest, and is committed to being a user-friendly, open, diverse, and non-sectarian prayer house. Adhering to a Sephardic liturgy, the shtiebel attracts a wide spectrum of young and old worshippers, including non-affiliated and newly religious people. The blend of pre-war religious tradition and individual freedom speaks to a post-Communist generation searching for something spiritual. A group of young shtiebel volunteers is engaged in interviewing the older Shoa generation, filming and archiving these stories, while also strengthening today's living community with its roots and history. It is a continuous educational work of research, documentaries, exhibitions, guided historic walking tours and conferences. We fill a gap by linking nations and generations, by making events where Jewish and non-Jewish communities can express and share their personal and collective memories.



## THE (not-just-a) MUSEUM

**Currently we're in the process of creating the opening exhibition of an Alternative Interactive Jewish Historical Museum and Experience Center that focuses on Hungarian Jewish history, religion and culture.**

We believe that there is more to the story of the Jews in Hungary, than the official Hungarian canon acknowledges. The museum experience will introduce students to the age of peaceful **coexistence** and thriving culture. Displaying the course of the last two hundred years in contrast with only focusing on the happenings of the Holocaust, could add much more to the mindset of future generations. **Reaching out with a positive message** and providing a vision of a possible multicultural world where nations and religions live together peacefully is a very important task as well as highlighting where fear mongering can lead to. Showing a positive example of a multicultural world, while explaining where hatred can lead is a real challenge for committed educators today. This is especially important in Hungary when some popular Hungarian politicians together with other world leaders are once again working on dividing populations.

**Our initial goal with the Teleki '44 research project in 2013** was to specifically research this forgotten, once multicultural but mainly Jewish area of the city. The research is still running. The years of digging in archives, making dozens and dozens of oral-history interviews with never before interviewed **Holocaust survivors** created the first ever collection and archive of stories and artifacts about this special area.

We intend to present the Museum's ideas and collections as an interactive experience, therefore we decided to develop an EDUCATIONAL DETECTIVE GAME as the main educational activity, focusing on the stories of real individuals, families and communities from our oral history research that will bring historical concepts to life.

**This innovative approach will merge drama-pedagogy and the sociologically approved sensitization abilities of *educational detective games* with traditional and interactive museology methods thus creating SOMETHING NEW AND NOVEL in Holocaust education.**

## THE TEAM

The team of the Museum include:

- Educators, artists and actors of the **Detectivity - Interactive Detective Games venture**
- Sociologists and historians of the Teleki '44 Research
- Devoted members of the Teleki community
- Professionals from partnering organizations:
  - Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
  - Centropa Hungary
  - Budapest University of Jewish Studies
  - Sochnut - MiNYanim
  - Open Society Archives

## THE BUILDING

Having the support of the family of our founder, we have a great opportunity to use the century old building of this prominent Jewish family in the neighborhood as the museum. In preparation for the project we visited several Jewish Museums<sup>1</sup> from large and digitally interactive museums to small and homey ones and concluded that the mind is most open in spaces where it is most relaxed and at ease. The old, romantically rundown family house in the *city of ruin bars*, with an atmosphere similar to the shtiebel in Teleki square will be the core of the innovative, interactive historical experience center. It is the perfect place for detective games, to shed light on the “*once was*” and “*what could be again*”.

Apart from the traditional exhibition space and the location of the detective game, the building will house a community space, a kosher café, a gift shop and kosher apartments for rent. Additionally, the Gláser family were a well-known carpenter family, so the traditional carpentry workshop still in the building will once again house carpenters. The workshop will function as a training facility and a showroom, generating knowledge, jobs and income for ones in need from the community and the neighborhood.

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<sup>1</sup>eg. Moscow, Vienna, Odessa, Berlin, New York, Yerusalem etc.

## TIMELINE

The first Detective Game created with the Teleki '44 archive is being piloted in February 2017. It will be available for the public in September 2017. The game itself uses mostly outdoor spaces and is intended to create the buzz needed to prove the legitimacy of the project.

The additional functionalities will be gradually added to the building starting with the end of 2017:

1. Exhibition space / kosher café / community space in the shop area of the building
2. Exhibition space / detectivity space / offices in the living space
3. Detectivity space and community space in the 2 levels of the basement
4. Carpentry showroom and training facility in the workshop
5. Guesthouse in the attic and kosher apartment in a ground floor area

Detailed plans, exact timeline and budget are in the making, estimated availability April 2017.

## CHALLENGES

1. Reaching the necessary level of formal educational involvement

Formal education is utmost centralized in Hungary, teachers and headmasters do not have much room for decision-making regarding programmes. We believe that we need to target decision makers in the municipalities or local governments to be able to reach out to schools.

2. Securing funding to meet schedules to stay sustainable

The central government of Hungary does not seem to support initiatives that challenge the official Holocaust narrative that is based on alternative facts. This is exacerbated by the fact that philanthropy is not part of contemporary Hungarian culture. For these two reasons we are heavily reliant on international financial support on all our projects.

## Pictures

Before and after pictures of the community room in the Teleki Square Shtiebel, 2012/2013

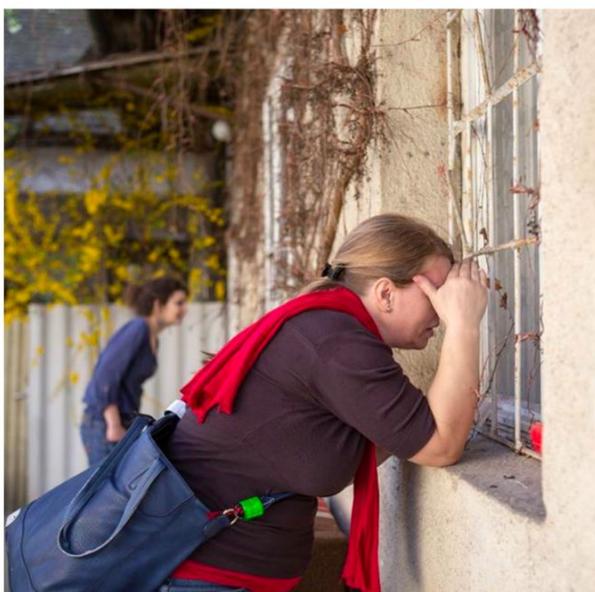
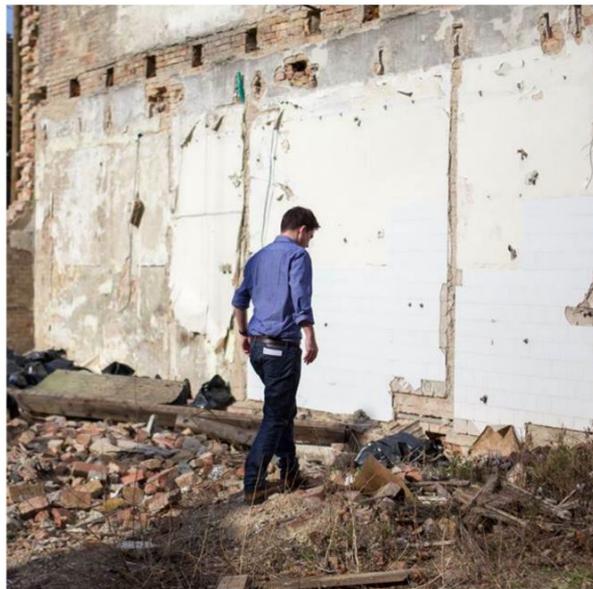


Teleki '44 research project: oral-history interviews, examining community and family archives, collections.



Top left: Oral history interview with a Holocaust survivor in the shul  
 Top right: Gláser family and employees in front of the carpentry workshop, 1930's  
 Bottom left: Future building of the Museum, the furniture showroom with family members, 1930's  
 Middle right: Russian soldier in Köztársaság square (300m from the shul) 1944  
 Bottom right: looking through the Hungarian Jewish Archives

Teleki '44 research project: conference, volunteers and old sites



Top left: Éva Kovács, head of the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences during the first Teleki '44 conference

Top right: Tamás Adler sociologist walks across the ruins of the demolished neighborhood Mikvah

Bottom left: Researchers peek into the only remaining building of the *cheder* that was used as an internment camp in 1944

Bottom right: Researchers' weekly meeting