

The Presence of the Absence – A Walk through Jewish Vienna

A Web Based App for Individual Tours in the Second District

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New medias and digital devices for educational purposes are more and more used in the fields of museums. The debate whether digital offers will intensify the museums visitors exchange with museums or, in contrary, stop them to go to visit museums “in real” is hold with lots of emotions, but without thoroughly made survey that could prove or contradict the prejudices of both sides. Having been the head of the education department in the Jewish Museum Vienna for many years and being the co-author of a tour guide “Jewish Vienna”¹ the question of how to show what is not there any more is an essential question for many projects over the year and was the motivation to write an web based application, using the technique of Muse.run, a technology developed by Shani Ziv from Wandering.²

¹ Feurstein, Michaela and Milchram, Gerhard (2001, 5th Edition 2016), Jüdisches Wien (English Edition: Jewish Vienna), Mandelbaum Verlag, Wien.

² <https://shaniziv100.wixsite.com/wandering-1>

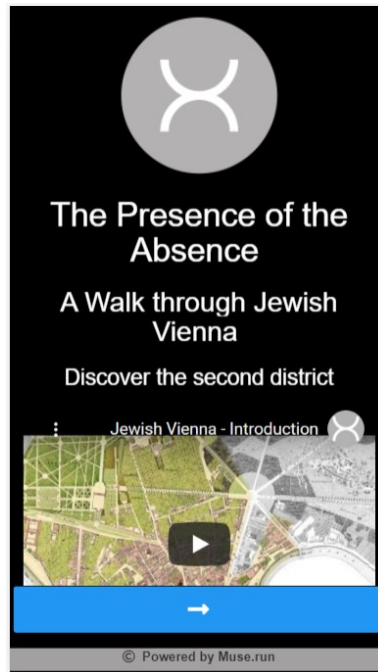


Fig. 1. Introduction page with a introductory video

As the Second District of Vienna is the district with the highest Jewish population, until the Holocaust, but still nowadays, it was evident to start the project in this district, the so called Leopold Stadt. Walking around this district while using any tour guide book – meanwhile there a quite a number of books through Jewish Vienna can be a very interesting but also frustrating experience. One reads descriptions of buildings, institutions, association etc., with lots of information about the once flourishing Jewish community in Vienna and about it's abolition, but the rare things the can be seen now are memorial plaques, signs of the city of Vienna indicating historical landmarks or lots of plaques of the association "Stones of remembrance". Instead of inviting the visitors to use their imagination or to show them maximum one historical picture for each location an application, usable on each visitors own digital device allows to show people more picture, before and after illustrations, audio as well as video files. The advantage of a web based application is that the user don't need to actualize the app, there is no worry about technical outdated and incompatibility.

The target group for the application are young adults (school kids, university students or members of different associations and adults as well; for younger public a more gamified version of the app is planned.

For the moment the app is usable in three different versions, depending of the interest of the individual or the groups. The big advantage of the web app developed by Wandering is that the content for all three versions can be fed from the same database with the content. The game author has only to define which content will be shown in which version of the game.

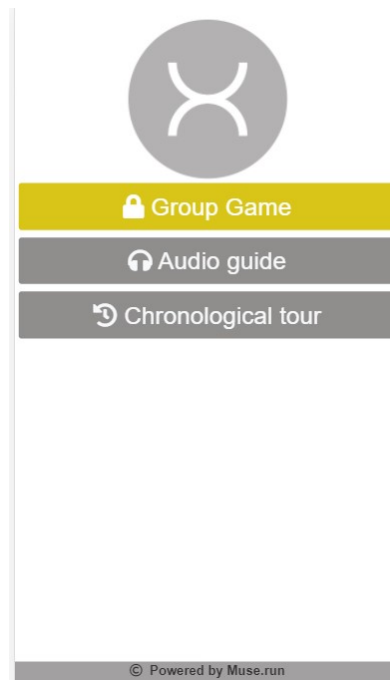


Fig. 2. Screen with the three options of the game

The most sophisticated version of the app “The presence of the absence” is a group game. The game itself can be used by individuals or smaller groups inside a large group. Beside information about the history the players have to answer different questions, either to confirm that they are on the right place or to prove they have understood the game. For each station there is always a question provoking different opinions. The game moderator (teacher, tour guide, group leader) can have a survey of all answers and has therefore the possibility to discuss the different answers later in class, in a group meeting, etc.

The second option functions like an audio guide: Those people who prefer to listen than to read can get an audio version of the app which will offer the most important information about the most relevant locations to understand the history of the Jews in the Second District. The audio guide user will also see historical images, photos, and illustrations on his device. If he decides he can go to deeper level of information where he will get texts and more illustrations.

The third version is chronological for those users preferring a more structured way in getting information, starting with the installation of the ghetto in the 17th century, ending with important contemporary Jewish institutions.

All three versions offer the possibility to collect points by finishing the different stations by answering all questions – so they all have a gaming element.



Fig. 3. Screen with the introduction to the station „Tempelgasse“

What is interesting for institutions, which want to use this app, is the fact that people are very free to change the content, to add pictures, audio or video clips, also to add stations. For museums it is interesting to bring visitors from the museum out in to the city but also from the city in to the museums. Museums with overlapping content could also make overlapping stations, for example the Jewish Museum and the Freud Museum, or the Jewish Museum and the Museum of the City of Vienna. While wandering guarantees to take care of the technical questions in the background for the authors of the app the basic technical questions like how to change the layout, how to insert video or audio file is quite easy to learn. Once the app exists in one language it is very easy to make a twin in any other language.

Muse.run is a system which function very well, especially to make visible what was hidden or destroyed throughout history.