

Formation and Evolution of the Tourism Milieu: A Holistic Approach to Spatial Experience

A turisztikai milió kialakulása és fejlődése: A térélmény holisztikus megközelítése

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This research investigates the formation and evolution of the tourism milieu through a holistic philosophical lens that integrates Kant's focus on knowledge foundations and Merleau-Ponty's insights into perception and embodiment. It emphasizes the significance of reasoning and critical thinking in comprehending destination complexities. The research aims to dissect the interactions among tourists, locals, and their environment, shedding light on the transformative influence of tourism. In this way it offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of destination evolution. The research contextualizes its inquiry within Budapest's Jewish Quarter, a locale rich in cultural vibrancy and urban dynamism. Through a synthesis of theoretical discourse and pragmatic analyses, this study not only enhances our understanding of tourism milieu dynamics but also advocates for the adoption of sustainable development practices within the tourism industry.

Ez a kutatás a turisztikai milió kialakulását és fejlődését vizsgálja holisztikus filozófiai megközelítésben, amely integrálja Kant tudás alapjaira és Merleau-Ponty érzékeléssel és megtestesüléssel kapcsolatos nézeteit, hangsúlyozva az érvelés és a kritikai gondolkodás jelentőségét a turisztikai célállomások komplexitásának megértésében. A kutatás célja a turisták, a helyi lakosok és a környezetük közötti kölcsönhatások vizsgálata, rávilágítani a turizmus átalakító hatására, ezáltal értékes betekintést nyújtani a desztinációk fejlődésének bonyolult dinamikájába. A kutatás helyszíne a budapesti zsidó negyed, amely kulturális értékekben és városi dinamizmusban egyaránt gazdag. Az elméleti diskurzus és a pragmatikus elemzések szintéziséen keresztül a tanulmány nemcsak a turisztikai milió dinamikájának megértését segíti, hanem kiáll az ágazatot érintő fenntartható fejlődési gyakorlatok elfogadása mellett is.

Keywords: Tourism milieu, embodiment, perception, destination transformation.

Kulcsszavak: turisztikai milió, megtestesítés, észlelés, desztináció átalakulása.

1. Introduction

Our interaction with spaces profoundly transforms them into places imbued with human activity's imprints, where the essence of a place is significantly shaped through history by human responses to their environments (LARSEN-JOHNSON 2012). The concept of place extends beyond mere physicality, enriched and defined by human experiences, addressing MALPAS's (1999, 2008) argument for an integrated understanding of place through human experience and embodiment to grasp its true essence. This perspective aligns

with MASSEY's (2005) view on place as a dynamic entity, emphasizing the continuous interplay between humans and their surroundings.

The transformative power of tourism endows destinations with new meanings, altering their essence through the interactions between tourists and locals, alongside narratives crafted by destination managers and marketers. This process signifies a profound evolution in the destination's identity, driven by both immediate interactions and broader strategies implemented by governing bodies (KUMARI et al. 2024). Such transformations underline the complex nature of tourism destinations as vibrant, evolving entities, continually reshaped by tourist encounters, cultural events, and economic developments, challenging us to perceive these places as fluid rather than static (ROGERS-WEISLER 2024).

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Understanding a tourism destination, therefore, involves more than just appreciating its current state; it requires a deep comprehension of its journey regarding how it has changed over time and how it continues to evolve. This understanding necessitates an awareness of the delicate balance between preserving the authenticity and core heritage of the place and adapting to the changing needs and expectations of tourists and locals, as well as the shifting dynamics of the tourism market. Navigating this balance is a complex task. A thoughtful approach for this development is required, one that respects the integrity of the place while embracing innovation and progress. This approach should be holistic, considering the environmental, social, and economic aspects of tourism to ensure sustainable and beneficial development for both tourists and the local community. It is imperative for tourism professionals to recognize the dynamic nature of destinations, crafting strategies and policies that ensure their attractiveness and sustainability. Through a detailed examination of how destinations respond to various influences, we can ensure their enduring appeal and relevance, safeguarding their distinct qualities for future generations.

Investigating the concept of the tourism milieu, proposed by MICHALKÓ and RÁTZ (2006, 2008), is integral to this analysis, as it reflects the ambiance, character, and collective perception of a place. The milieu encompasses not only the physical environment but also the intangible elements such as emotions, cultural values, historical narratives, and social interactions that give a destination its unique appeal (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2008). This complex construct is shaped by the experiences of both tourists and locals, making it a crucial component for a comprehensive understanding of tourism dynamics. Recognizing and taking into account the tourism milieu is paramount for anyone involved in the tourism industry, as it provides essential insights into the character and evolution of destinations (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2008).

Current tourism studies often prioritize measurable outcomes, neglecting the philosophical depths that are vital for truly understanding the essence of tourism destinations. This oversight creates a gap in how philosophical inquiry, with its emphasis on reasoning and critical thinking, can enrich our comprehension of tourism dynamics (BUTOWSKI 2023). By incorporating philosophical perspectives, such as Kant's focus on knowledge foundations and Merleau-Ponty's insights into the embodied nature of perception, we can deepen our understanding of human engagement in

tourism spaces. These viewpoints, along with considerations of ontological situatedness and the anthropology of place, highlights the necessity for a holistic approach in tourism studies that integrates the essence of being, sensory experiences, knowledge formation, and cultural narratives.

In response to this gap, this research centers around a critical question: How do philosophical insights into perception and embodied experiences enrich our understanding of the dynamics shaping the formation and evolution of the tourism milieu? To navigate this inquiry, this study proposes a conceptual framework that situates the Jewish Quarter in Budapest as a case study. The Jewish Quarter exemplifies the complex interplay of cultural vibrancy and urban transformation, making it an ideal setting to investigate and dissect the nuanced interactions between tourists, locals, and their environment (PINKE-SZIVA et al. 2019). The Jewish Quarter's evolution, particularly through its vibrant ruin pubs and historical narratives, encapsulates the transformative power of tourism and the multifaceted nature of urban spaces (MICHALKÓ et al. 2022).

This research brings new insight into tourism studies by situating the experiential and perceptual dynamics at the core of understanding of the tourist milieu, drawing significantly on the philosophical insights of Kant and Merleau-Ponty to illuminate the formation and evolution of the tourism milieu. Through this integrated approach, this study seeks not only to enrich theoretical discourse but also to offer practical insights for tourism management and strategy. The goal is to equip industry professionals with the knowledge to devise strategies that enhance the appeal of destinations while preserving their unique character and ensuring a sustainable future.

2. Evolving concept of the tourism milieu

The concept of the tourism milieu represents a sophisticated and multi-layered perspective in tourism studies, offering a nuanced understanding of tourist destinations that goes beyond traditional metrics (MICHALKÓ et al. 2022). It signifies a shift from viewing destinations merely as physical locations to understanding them as dynamic spaces imbued with personal and collective experiences. The tourism milieu encompasses a range of elements, from tangible to intangible, and from physical settings to emotional resonances (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2008). The term *milieu* is challenging to define due to its complex and ambiguous nature, a complexity driven by the

cognitive intricacies involved in shaping the milieu experience (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2006). It encompasses the sociocultural and geographic environments of humans, intertwined with their subjective interpretations (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2008). The subjective dimension of the milieu is a pivotal and distinguishing feature, as individuals consciously experience environmental dynamics through their own inner filters. As per the most current and widely accepted spatial definition, tourism milieu is the setting in which individuals live, which, in turn, influences their attitudes (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2006).

The formation of the tourism milieu is a dynamic process deeply rooted in the interplay between individual perceptions and collective experiences. It emerges from the gradual objectification of visitors' psychological perceptions, transforming personal impressions, sentiments, and subjective interpretations into a nearly homogeneous factual reflection of a destination (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2006). On one hand, this sphere consists of elements, motion, and subjects, while on the other, it includes historicity, sociality, and culture, all of which impact human perceptions and attitudes towards places (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2008). Viewing the milieu as a network of interrelationships, humans respond individually or collectively, both of which continuously shape the phenomenal sphere. However, one must also consider that the milieu is embedded within the context of a destination and is detachable from physical space (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2008).

Immanuel Kant's epistemological insights offer a profound foundation for analyzing the tourism milieu, intertwining the concepts of innate knowledge (a priori) and experiential learning (a posteriori) to elucidate how tourist destinations are comprehended and experienced. Kant asserts that our comprehension of space and time is built on a priori intuitions, serving as the fundamental structures through which we perceive the world (KANT 1998). Kant's focus on a priori knowledge helps explain how tourists' pre-existing cognitive frameworks influence their perceptions of a destination's physical and cultural landscape, contributing to a collective understanding of the place. However, the unique, lived experiences of each tourist shaped by direct, a posteriori knowledge gained through engagement with the destination add a layer of complexity and dynamism to this collective understanding (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2008).

Kant's transcendental idealism further addresses the subjective nature of human experience, indicating that tourists' interactions with the

tourism milieu are deeply influenced by their personal cognitive frameworks, informed by both a priori intuitions and a posteriori experiences. This blend of subjective and objective elements means that the formation and evolution of the tourism milieu are intrinsically linked to the dynamic interplay between individual perceptions, collective experiences, and the tangible elements of the destination (MICHALKÓ-RÁTZ 2006).

Kant's delineation of knowledge as an interaction between sensation (a posteriori knowledge gained through experience) and reason (a priori knowledge) mirrors the process through which the tourism milieu is shaped. This process involves a continuous exchange between the sensory inputs provided by the destination (the supply-side elements) and the interpretative experiences of tourists, thereby reinforcing the living, ever-evolving nature of the tourism milieu. Just as knowledge is not a static entity but evolves through ongoing interactions, the tourism milieu too is a vibrant, changing construct, continually influenced by the current experiences, perceptions, and cultural trends of tourists.

The philosophy of ontological situatedness finds resonance with Kant's perspective. Kant believed that knowledge necessitates the existence of fundamental judgments, and he emphasized that sensations must be actively seized and logically interpreted (KANT 1998). This alignment highlights the idea that tourists' perceptions and experiences in the tourism milieu are not passive but actively shaped by their encounters with supply-side elements. Kant's emphasis on the role of fundamental judgments mirrors the importance of individual perceptions in the formation of the tourism milieu.

The supply-side elements of a destination play a fundamental role in shaping the tourism milieu. These elements encompass various physical and virtual components that collectively contribute to the overall experience of a destination. According to MICHALKÓ and RÁTZ (2008), the tourism milieu is not solely a product of tourists' perceptions; it is significantly influenced by supply-side elements such as landscape, climate, historical context, flavors, noises, smells, visibility, language, clothing, religion, perceived safety, price level, traffic culture, public hygiene, host-guest relationship, dissonance, and social interactions. These elements provide the tangible framework within which tourists' experiences and perceptions are formed and evolved.

Ontological situatedness refers to the essence of being situated within a specific destination (MALPAS 1999, 2008). It emphasizes that this

situation is not static but continually evolves as tourists encounter and create constantly changing unique situations (MALPAS 2008). The supply-side elements thus directly impact the way tourists perceive and interact with a destination, influencing their sense of being and connection to the place. From an ontological perspective, space is the precursor to the emergence of place, embodying both the physical and social characteristics that human interventions blend into a coherent whole (LARSEN-JOHNSON 2012). This foundational view posits place as a crucial mediator between the natural world and humans, offering a framework for reflection and action that highlights the significance of our daily interactions with our surroundings (HILL 2022). Such an understanding is significant for tourism, as it suggests that destinations are not static but are continuously shaped by human engagement, thereby influencing the tourism milieu through a collective embodiment of these interactions.

3. Embodied experience in the tourism milieu

This section discusses the concept of the tourism milieu through the philosophical lens of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as presented in his seminal work in the 20th century philosophy, *Phenomenology of Perception* (MERLEAU-PONTY 2012). Merleau-Ponty's exploration of embodied human experience and the fundamental role of perception offers profound insights into the dynamic interactions within tourist locales, emphasizing the co-creation of experiences that define destinations. This perspective sheds light on the deep connection between tourists' physical embodiment and the essence of the places they visit, enhancing our understanding of tourism as an integrated, experiential phenomenon.

The understanding of place, within the context of the tourism milieu, is constructed based on different kinds of perceptual experiences in which one might have a causal interaction with the wider world by employing his/her senses, and different methods that have a distinct conscious and phenomenological extension (HILL 2022). Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological insights profoundly extends our understanding of the tourism milieu, moving beyond the conventional view of tourist spaces as static physical locations. His philosophy suggests that these spaces are dynamic, lived environments, co-created through the embodied interactions between tourists and their surroundings (MERLEAU-PONTY 2012). This embodied interaction is not a mere backdrop to the tourist experience but a

vibrant, integral part of it, shaping and being shaped by the perceptions, movements, and engagements of the individual. The active role of perception in Merleau-Ponty's theory challenges us to see the tourism milieu as a fluid, evolving space where physical and intangible elements intertwine. The landscape, cultural heritage, and social atmosphere of a destination are not just passively consumed but actively experienced through a bodily engagement that imbues them with personal and collective meaning. This approach invites a reevaluation of how destinations are designed and marketed, emphasizing the need to cater to the multisensory, embodied nature of tourist experiences.

Further elaborating on the implications of Merleau-Ponty's rejection of Cartesian dualism, his philosophy illuminates the complex relationship between the mind and body in the context of tourism. The embodied nature of perception means that tourist experiences are deeply rooted in the physical, sensorial engagement with the environment. This perspective compels us to consider the tactile, olfactory, auditory, and visual dimensions of tourist spaces as central components of the milieu, rather than mere adjuncts to the visual appeal. By emphasizing the unity of sensory experiences and cognitive processes, Merleau-Ponty's insights challenge us to create tourism environments that engage the whole body, fostering a deeper, more immersive interaction with the destination. This holistic view of tourist engagement highlights the significance of designing tourism spaces that facilitate a rich, embodied interaction, ensuring that destinations offer not just sights to see but worlds to be lived and felt, thereby enriching the fabric of the tourism milieu.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of *being-in-the-world* adds a profound existential layer to tourism analysis, emphasizing how individuals are deeply entwined with the places they visit. This interconnectedness suggests that tourists are active agents in the life of a destination, their presence and actions contributing to its perpetual evolution. The dynamic relationship between tourists and the tourism milieu is inherently co-creative; tourists' perceptions and engagements bring destinations to life, infusing them with new meanings and experiences. This view challenges the notion of static tourist sites, proposing instead that destinations are living entities, constantly reshaped by the myriad interactions with their visitors. This perspective enriches our understanding of tourism as a mutual exchange, where both tourists and destinations are transformed through their encounter, highlighting the significance of designing tourism experiences that foster this deeply interactive and transformative relationship.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of intercorporeality significantly deepens the understanding of the tourism milieu by highlighting how perceptions and experiences within tourist destinations are deeply communal and shared, transcending individual experiences. This mutual intertwining of the perceiver and the perceived suggests that destinations become sites of collective meaning-making, blending the social and material worlds in a rich repository of cultural and personal narratives. Such an intersubjective field showcases the diversity of interactions and interpretations that individuals and communities bring to and draw from their environments, emphasizing the role of destinations as spaces where cultural, historical, and personal dimensions converge and coalesce.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, emphasizing the embodied nature of perception and the intertwining of subject and world, brings a rich array of insights to various fields, including tourism studies. Beyond what has been discussed, Merleau-Ponty's exploration of the pre-reflective, bodily engagement with the world offers a deeper understanding of non-verbal communication, spatial navigation, and the aesthetics of experience, all of which are crucial in the context of tourism. His work suggests that our most fundamental way of being in the world, how we move, perceive, and relate to our surroundings and others, shapes our experiences in profound ways. This has implications for designing tourism experiences that are accessible, engaging, and meaningful on a sensory and emotional level, emphasizing the importance of creating spaces that resonate with the embodied nature of human experience. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty's ideas on the fluidity of perception and the dynamic, ever-changing nature of our engagement with places can inspire innovative approaches to heritage preservation, sustainable tourism, and community involvement, ensuring that tourism development enhances rather than detracts from the authenticity and vibrancy of destinations.

4. Cultural dynamics in the tourism milieu

Ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological grounds underpin philosophical anthropology. Anthropologically, within the context of the tourism milieu, place provides not only physicality but also a profound space for meaning, character, and a connection to culture or identity. It is the rich meaning and the unique vibes that humans attach to a particular place that shape the tourism milieu. The identities and cultural origins of humans become intertwined with the place, creating a complex interplay between the human experience

and the destination. In a continuous process of encoding through interactions with tourists, the place communicates its essence through semiotics, revealing its cultural significance. With the help of these encoded messages, the tourism milieu gains the capability to portray itself through the cultural elements that construct its semantic domains (RANDVIIR 2020).

Adapting from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, the tourism milieu, shaped by the interplay of history, culture, and societal constructs, becomes a space where these complex human narratives unfold. Tourist spaces are not static; they are dynamic, living entities co-created through the embodied interactions between tourists and their surroundings. The cultural identity and heritage of a destination intertwine with the perceptions of tourists, adding layers of meaning and significance to the experience.

A societal construct of place indicates that the physical environment is the product of culture and a particular social moment that molds the humans who construct it as a collective thinking both in the present and throughout history; furthermore, the meanings that are connected to the physical space are also produced via social interaction and culture (VIGIOLA 2022). In the context of tourism, this construct comes to life as tourists engage with the destination's cultural and historical elements. The place becomes a space where history, culture, and personal experiences merge to create a rich repository of meaning.

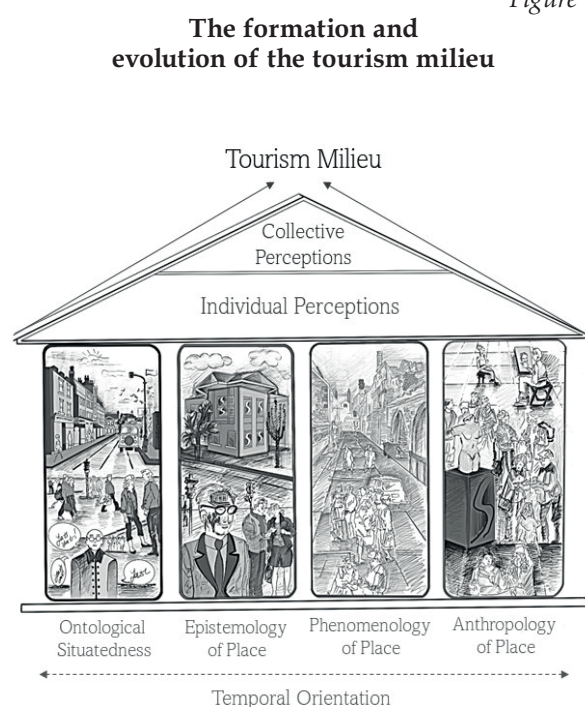
In order to find meaning of place that is interconnected and fluid, it may be necessary to recognize the distinctive juxtaposition and adaptation of the cultural elements that create places and give them their individuality (HARRINGTON 2004). Tourists, as active agents in the tourism milieu, play a pivotal role in this process. Their perceptions, interactions, and interpretations contribute to the ongoing evolution of the destination. The tourism milieu is not a passive backdrop but a dynamic space where culture and identity are constantly negotiated and redefined.

According to HALL (2021), place and its implications do not retain hegemonic power. Place is constantly influenced by the interplay of history, culture, political power, and time. Cultural identity originates from a place with history and belongs to both the past and the future. It is subject to continuous change, just like anything else that has a historical context. The meaning of a place, then, is a mode of production and comprises a journey that is never finished and continues to expand its scope to incorporate new meanings that are additional or supplemental (HALL 2021).

5. Illustrating the tourism milieu – a conceptual framework

The proposed conceptual framework provides a holistic view of the tourism milieu, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between subjective experiences and objective realities in shaping tourist spaces, all within the context of the four philosophical foundations of place. Rejecting the notion of places as static, it positions them as evolving entities deeply intertwined with human existence. Drawing on philosophical insights from Kant and Merleau-Ponty, the framework stresses the importance of tourists' cognitive frameworks and embodied experiences in perceiving and interacting with destinations. Kant's focus on a priori intuitions and subjective experiences underlines the influence of personal perceptions on understanding physical and spatial attributes of places. Meanwhile, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology highlights the significance of embodied engagement with the milieu, advocating for a comprehensive approach that acknowledges destinations as dynamic, shaped by individual and collective cultural narratives. This framework, leveraged by ontological situatedness and the anthropology of place, aims to foster a nuanced understanding of tourist spaces as complex, evolving constructs (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Source: own elaboration. Graphic designer: BAL, Z. Y.

In this dynamic narrative, as tourists and locals engage with a place, progressive elements play a pivotal role in enriching the engagement with destinations and thus, leveraging tourists and locals' experience with the destination. The importance of supply-side elements is acknowledged for their role in shaping the tangible aspects of the tourist experience, allowing for the evolution of perceptions and interactions within these spaces. Ultimately, this framework calls for the thoughtful design and management of tourist destinations to cater to the multisensory and embodied nature of tourist and local experiences. It encourages the creation of environments that foster rich, immersive interactions, transforming destinations into lived and felt worlds rather than mere sights.

According to MASSEY (2005), the tourism milieu may become a reflection of ongoing change and adaptation. It is not only about catering to tourists' desires but also about answering the needs of the local community (MASSEY 2005). Progressive approaches provide an opportunity to establish a symbiotic relationship, ensuring that its positive impact on local culture, environment, and economy is sustainable. This involves individual, collective, and political efforts, including the development of tourism policies and advocacy (MASSEY 2004). This will result in responsible tourism practices, sustainable development, and a focus on the well-being of both the local population and tourists.

By proactively addressing the needs of both tourists and locals in a sustainable manner, the tourism milieu can adapt the changing dynamics of the destination, its cultural evolution, and its responsiveness to contemporary challenges. This dynamism leverages a sense of place, where both tourists and locals feel a deep connection to the destination, knowing that they are part of a progressive journey that respects the past, enriches the present, and looks forward to a sustainable future (MASSEY 2005).

6. Case of Budapest's Jewish Quarter

The Jewish Quarter of Budapest will serve as an illustrative example in this section to demonstrate the practical application of the conceptual model in the analysis of urban tourism destinations. By focusing on this specific urban area, it is aimed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of the tourism milieu within diverse urban settings.

Ontological situatedness, in the context of Budapest's Jewish Quarter, highlights the notion

that both individuals and the Quarter itself are inherently situated within a specific context, and this context can evolve with time. It's not merely people's experiences that transform; the physical environment and buildings, representing the supply-side of tourism milieu, can undergo changes, too. Considering the evolution of ruin pubs within the Quarter, originally, these ruin pubs emerged as organic responses to particular historical and economic circumstances in Budapest, where abandoned and decaying buildings were ingeniously repurposed (ZÁTORI-SMITH 2014). This represents their situatedness within the post-socialist and economic conditions of the early 2000s (SMITH et al. 2022). Yet, as tourists and locals engage with the unique ambiance, they not only contributed to the altering narrative of these spaces but also incited transformations in the physical environment. The increasing popularity of these pubs prompted investments in formerly neglected structures, resulting in renovations to accommodate the surging number of visitors (PINKE-SZIVA et al. 2019). The metamorphosis of the physical infrastructure not only mirrors the changing situatedness of people and place but also exemplifies how the very elements of tourism milieu adapt in response to evolving demands, ultimately shaping collective perceptions. Knowledge about this unique district is actively constructed and evolves over time. One notable example lies in the narrative of Budapest's ruin pubs, such as Szimpla Kert. These venues were initially hidden gems, known mostly to locals who frequented them (PINKE-SZIVA et al. 2019). However, as international visitors began to explore the Jewish Quarter and experience the distinct atmosphere of these pubs, knowledge about them started to spread. It was no longer limited to word-of-mouth recommendations but became widely available through travel guides, blogs and social media (PINKE-SZIVA et al. 2019). Immanuel Kant's distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge finds relevance in the evolving knowledge about the Jewish Quarter. Initially, when ruin pubs like Szimpla Kert emerged, knowledge about them was largely a posteriori which is based on individual experiences and local interactions. These firsthand experiences contributed to the gradual construction of knowledge about these unique spaces. However, as international visitors began to explore the district and the ruin pubs, knowledge transitioned to a more a priori state contribution the collective perceptions. This transition from a posteriori to a priori knowledge aligns with Kant's ideas about the nature of knowledge and highlights the evolution of the Quarter's narrative.

Merleau-Ponty's ideas about perception being fundamentally tied to our bodily experiences can be applied to the multi-sensory and immersive nature of these establishments. When visitors step into a ruin pub, they engage with the environment through their senses, from the tactile experience of touching eclectic decorations to the visual appreciation of graffiti art and the auditory engagement with live music. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy reminds us that our perception of the world is not just a mental process, but one deeply intertwined with our bodily interactions. The diverse ways in which different visitors interpret the space, emphasizing historical, nostalgic, contemporary or artistic aspects, can also be seen as a manifestation of Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the subjectivity of perception. Visitors bring their unique perspectives and embodied experiences into the ruin pubs, influencing how they perceive and engage with the space.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty's concept of the perceptual horizon aligns with the holistic engagement that visitors have in ruin pubs. The perceptual horizon suggests that individuals initially perceive the collective sensory elements, social interactions, and historical context of an environment before breaking down their experience into individual sensations. In the context of ruin pubs, visitors first perceive the overall ambiance, the social interactions around them and the historical context of repurposed buildings. This initial holistic perception contributes to the immersive and engaging experience that ruin pubs offer. Visitors then look into individual sensations, appreciating the historical, nostalgic, contemporary or artistic elements based on their personal inclinations. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy helps us understand the layered and dynamic nature of the perceptual experience in these spaces.

The rise of ruin pubs in Budapest's Jewish Quarter has been a prominent and transformative phenomenon that has significantly redefined the cultural and social landscape of the district over the years. What began as a grassroots and creative response to the urban decay and abandoned spaces in the area has blossomed into a distinctive and celebrated aspect of the city's identity (MÉRAI-KULIKOV 2024). These unique establishments have garnered international attention for their eclectic blend of art installations, live music, and vibrant street food (ZÁTORI-SMITH 2014). They've become a magnet for both local residents and tourists, offering an experience that's far removed from the conventional bar or pub scene. The adaptive reuse of these spaces added a layer

of creative contemporary culture, where the past and the present coexist in harmony (MÉRÁI-KULIKOV 2024).

However, alongside the popularity and unique charm of the ruin pubs, the growing prominence has brought certain negative aspects to the forefront. As these venues attract larger crowds, especially during the nighttime, concerns have arisen regarding overcrowding, noise pollution, and disturbances to the residential areas of the Jewish Quarter (PINKE-SZIVA et al. 2019). This disruption to the neighbourhood's once-tranquil ambiance has raised questions about the quality of life for local residents and the balance between the needs of the community and the appeal of these establishments to tourists (SMITH et al. 2029). This transformation illustrates how tourism milieu dynamics within a place can evolve over time, influenced by a combination of tourism trends and the community's response to them. It brings to the fore, a delicate and often challenging equilibrium between cultural preservation, responsible tourism, and the desire for economic growth that is characteristic of progressive societies. It calls for urban planners, policymakers, and local communities to work collaboratively to find solutions that both safeguard the authentic spirit of the district while managing the negative externalities of its popularity.

In embracing a progressive approach, strategies should focus on sustainability, cultural preservation, local community involvement, and responsible tourism development. By incorporating these elements, tourism milieu can adapt to changing demands, thus contributing to a stronger sense of place for tourists and locals that is both dynamic and enhanced. This progressive approach highlights fostering a harmonious relationship between the community, tourists, and policymakers. This inclusivity extends to the diverse elements that make up the supply-side of the destination, creating a balanced and dynamic experience (MICHALKÓ et al. 2022).

7. Conclusions

This study elucidates the intricate symbiosis between human engagement and spatial dynamics, revealing the profound transformation of spaces into vibrant tourism milieus. Through an analysis grounded in both empirical observations within Budapest's Jewish Quarter and theoretical insights from Kant and Merleau-Ponty, this study highlights the pivotal role of human perception and interaction in the co-creation of place. It transcends traditional spatial conceptualizations

to highlight a dynamic process wherein places emerge as repositories of cultural narratives and perceptual experiences, continuously reshaped by the flux of human activities and the narratives imbued by tourism.

The findings herein contribute significantly to the academic discourse on tourism studies, advocating for a holistic framework that integrates ontological, epistemological, phenomenological and anthropological perspectives in understanding destination evolution. This paradigmatic shift necessitates a reconsideration of tourism management and policy formulation, emphasizing the imperative to foster destinations that are both appealing and sustainable. By delineating the nuanced interplay between preserving the intrinsic essence of destinations and accommodating the evolving demands of tourism, this research offers strategic insights for sustainable tourism development. It foregrounds the necessity for policies that harmonize the conservation of cultural heritage and environmental sustainability with innovative tourism experiences, ensuring the longevity and resilience of tourism destinations.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant transformative potential of tourism, emphasizing its ability to bring about profound changes in the character of places. This research not only contributes to the theoretical aspects of tourism studies but also offers a practical guide for the responsible development of tourist destinations. The future of research in this field should focus on exploring the impacts of technological advancements and the evolving expectations of tourists, with the ultimate goal of promoting sustainable growth and vitality in tourism environments. As the field progresses, it is crucial to maintain a continuous dialogue between theoretical exploration and practical application, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding and responsible management of the diverse and dynamic destinations around the world.

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