The London School of Economics and Political Science

NARRATING THE URBAN IN CONTEMPORARY BUDAPEST

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This explorative study seeks to contribute to an empirically grounded understanding of urban narratives in contemporary Budapest. It argues in favour of the narrative quality of the urban experience and then reconstructs core aspects that affect it: identification with social collectivities, personal memories, the design of the city, and individuals' sense of being at home in it. The thesis shows how these aspects intertwine and jointly shape urban narratives, and in doing so, it argues against the study of any of these aspects in isolation.

The thesis draws on twenty in-depth interviews conducted in 2005 and 2006. Interviewees' narratives not only help identify the above mentioned aspects, but are also appreciated for providing insight into themes that govern their urban experiences in Budapest today. Since the late nineteenth century, Budapest has been subjected to six different economic and political regimes, two World Wars and the 1956 uprising. The city has changed again considerably since the end of state socialism in 1989. From a sociological point of view, these are particularly exciting times: urban changes are likely to challenge habitual ways of relating to the city, and individuals' efforts to re-define their narratives can be expected to reveal a great deal about otherwise less obviously manifest aspects that affect these.

After introducing the methods of the empirical study and an overview of the history of Budapest, the thesis devotes one chapter to each of the four aspects mentioned above. *First*, it discusses narratives that contain obvious references to social collectivities, with an emphasis on status to which almost every other interviewee referred. *Second*, it explores how personal memories affect narratives of Budapest, and pays particular attention to the remembering and forgetting of socialism. *Third*, it addresses Budapest as a site of weak social control and the related level of individual freedom, and then looks at the interplay between urban form and the lived body. *Finally*, the thesis reveals the significance of individuals' sense of belonging to the city, and shows how it has been challenged by Budapest's recent changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Table of Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS

p.146: Photograph taken from www.bparchiv.hu/magyar/kiadvany/bpn/01/k2.jpg, last accessed 23 February 2008.

p.147: Photographs (from left to right): Szabó Ervin Library Budapest, Miklós Déri (received in electronic format from Szabó Ervin Library), Attila Szanto.

p.148: Photograph taken by the author.

p.173: Photograph by Gábor Kapolka, taken from www.gangfoto.hu/index2.html, last accessed 5 June 2010.

p.175: Images taken from www.gozsduudvar.hu/index.php?area=gallery, last accessed 11 May 2009.

p.177: Photograph taken by the author.

p.178: Photograph taken by the author.

p.180: Photograph taken by the author.

p.203: Photographs taken by Rita (interviewee).

Maps

p.223: Map 1 taken from the CD attached to Szabó 2001.

p.224: Map 2 taken from http://mek.niif.hu/00000/00060/html/kepek/budapest-terkep_dka.jpg, last accessed 26 June 2010.

p.225: Map 3 compiled by the author. Boundaries of Budapest added based on maps and descriptions in Szabó 2001, and on contemporary street maps. Background map taken from Google Earth.

p.226: Map 4 compiled by the author. District boundaries added based on contemporary street maps. Background map taken from Google Earth.

p.227: Map 5 compiled by the author. Background map taken from Google Maps.

INTRODUCTION

The present study seeks to contribute to an empirically grounded understanding of urban narratives in contemporary Budapest. It argues in favour of the narrative quality of the urban experience and then reconstructs key aspects that affect it: individuals' identification with social collectivities (for example class, status, nation, or religion), personal memories, the design of the city, and individuals' sense of being at home in it. The thesis shows how these aspects intertwine and jointly shape urban narratives, and in doing so, argues against the study of any one of these aspects in isolation.

The thesis is grounded in the analysis of twenty narratives of Budapest. These narratives were obtained using the technique of the narrative interview, followed by a conversation on topics either introduced by interviewees during their initial narrative, or laid down in advance in a topic list (see Chapter 2). All interviews were conducted between spring 2005 and summer 2006. On the one hand, interviewees' narratives of Budapest will help reconstruct important *aspects* that possibly affect urban narratives in any city: identification with social collectivities, personal memories, urban design and a sense of being at home in the city, as I will argue, affect every urban narrative, regardless of the fact that each of these aspects manifests itself in ways inseparable from the actual city studied. On the other hand, interviewees' narratives will help reconstruct important *themes* that govern their relation to the particular city of Budapest today.[1] These are the two main research questions of the thesis.

The study is distinctly explorative in character. It is not about the experiences of a particular group of urban dwellers, such as migrants, single parents, old people or workers. Nor is it about a particular aspect of the urban experience such as, for example, consumption or individuals' responses to urban change. Nor does it conceive of the urban experience in terms of well established sociological concepts, such as community, class, gender, power, or the inequalities between them.[2] Whether or not the latter are relevant for indi-

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[1] I shall use the terms *aspect* and *theme* to distinguish the first two research questions: *aspect* refers to *aspects* of narrative subjectivity, such as people's sense of belonging to social collectivities. *Theme* refers to *themes* associated with the particular place of Budapest, such as accounts on consumption during socialism or the city's recent change. The distinction between *aspects* and *themes* will be elaborated in Chapter 2.

[2] The aspects mentioned above (identification with social collectivities, personal memories, the design of the city, and individuals' sense of being at home in it) did not stand at the beginning of the present study but represent its results. See Chapter 2 for more detail.

viduals' experiences of Budapest – and if they are, to what extent – can only be established at the end of the study, not at its beginning.

Any explorative study, however, must be grounded both theoretically and methodologically, or openness may become randomness. The thesis, therefore, is explicit about grounding interviewees' accounts of Budapest in the overarching concept of narrative. Given that all aspects of the urban experience seem to be connected to narratives – a claim that will be elaborated in Chapters 1 and 2 – a theoretical and methodological focus on narrative represents a promising starting point for studying aspects and themes that govern individuals' experiences of Budapest.

Budapest as the location of the study

Budapest was created through the unification of the three small towns of Pest, Buda und Óbuda in 1873, and only developed into a metropolis during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The rapid growth of the city into Europe's eighth largest metropolis by 1910 was accompanied by the rise of institutions of urban culture, such as musicals, theatres, cinemas, fairs and festivals, department stores, and coffee houses (Bácskai *et al.* 2000, Gyáni 1998, Szabó 2001). Budapest's *Gründerzeit* is still alive in public discourse where it is commonly referred to as the city's golden era.

Urban growth and cultural diversity came to a sudden end with the First World War and the subsequent collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Horthy's counterrevolutionary regime, in power between 1919 and 1944, was extremely hostile towards Budapest which it denigrated as liberal, cosmopolitan, communist and Jewish. Subsequently, 'purifying the sin city' and transforming 'guilty Budapest' into a 'Christian and Hungarian' city was at the top of the political agenda – opposed by the often violent strikes of the workers' movement (Gyáni 2000, Szabó 2001). This unstable and radicalised political climate combined with economic depression and a massive housing shortage, which the rapid growth of suburbs could not sufficiently mitigate.

During the Second World War, urban life became subordinated to the production of weapons and other goods required to fuel the war machinery, while food and rents became subject to centralised regulation. Jews were removed from influential positions in society; and later many were deported. The Holocaust fully hit Budapest after the city's invasion by the German army in March 1944 and the subsequent terror regime of the Hungarian Nazi

party. After three months of siege, the Red Army took over command over the city in February 1945.

The early years of socialism were characterised by severe housing shortages, economic depression and the consolidation of the new regime, accompanied by terror and politically motivated murder, culminating in the 1956 uprising when, as in the final year of the Second World War, Budapest once again turned into a war zone, but this time witnessing the armed confrontation between the Soviet army and protesters against the regime. However, 1956 also represented a turning point in the history of the country and the city. The events of 1956, above all, led to a radical reorientation of economic politics under the new General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, János Kádár. The post 1956 era saw massive investments in infrastructure, the erection of mass housing developments on the outskirts of the city (Bíró 1994, Demszky 2006, Preisich 1998), and a relatively sophisticated provision of goods for consumption soon to be labelled 'Goulash Communism' (Kovács 2002).

Finally, with the end of state socialism in 1989 and the advent of the market-driven economy, a new era in the history of Budapest began. The years since then have seen the rapid privatisation of the building stock, the much slower and uneven restoration of the inner city, increasing social inequalities and gentrification, the symbolic transformation of the public realm, and the rise of urban spectacles of various scales (Bodnár 2001).

The changes and ruptures in Budapest's history, which will be described in Chapter 3, mark distinguishable phases of urban life that can be expected to be reflected by interviewees in different ways, and to varying extent. On the one hand, these phases and the events that distinguish them offer possible focal points of remembering and identification (and conversely, of forgetting and delimitation) through which we can learn something about the *themes* that govern individuals' relationship to Budapest. On the other hand, these themes may also reveal something about *aspects* that affect individuals' urban experiences in general. In a city that has changed many times throughout the last century, and particularly since 1989, people may be challenged to re-adjust their narratives in one way or the other. From a sociological point of view, these are particularly exciting times: when habitual ways of relating to the city cease to function, people's efforts to re-define their narratives will reveal a great deal about otherwise less obviously manifest aspects and themes that affect them.

In some respect, Budapest shares its complex history with other post-socialist cities such as East Berlin, Prague, Warsaw or Bucharest. However, my knowledge of the city based on my parents' stories who have been visiting the city since the 1960s; my own visits since the mid 80s; my memories of the socialist regime in Romania that I experienced as a child; and last but not least, Hungarian as my native language, made Budapest the first choice for the empirical study. At the same time, due to my living in the West for over 20 years I was distanced enough from Budapest to feel confident that I could discover things that for a native citizen might go unnoticed. That is, I could listen to my interviewees' stories without 'understanding' their meaning too quickly or identifying with their content on the basis of my own access to Budapest. Both mistakes might have resulted in ignoring important themes of my interviewees' narratives, as well as of relevant aspects that constitute their relation to the city.

The impact of the events of 1989 on Budapest is well researched within Hungarian sociology. However, there are few studies on how the recent changes of the city have affected the everyday experiences of its population, and there are even fewer attempts to empirically investigate these experiences in a narrative context. That is, studies have focused on the structural transformations of the city, such as changes in city functions and urban morphology (Bodnár 2001, Csanádi and Ladányi 1992), the privatisation of the building stock and the related redistribution of property (Bodnár 2001, Häussermann and Neef 1996, Szabó 2001), or suburbanisation (Csanádi and Csizmady 2002), yet they generally say little about how these are experienced by people who dwell in the city that undergoes these changes. Yet other studies have looked at structural changes in order to establish the extent to which Budapest is subjected to globalisation or 'modernisation' without showing how these developments are relevant to everyday experience (J.M. Kovács 2002). In summary, studies seem to have focused on the obvious and often spectacular transformations of the city, while they tend to treat everyday experiences as subordinated to structures and institutions and their change – an approach rigorously criticised by de Certeau (1998: 20–21 and 41).

Other Hungarian sociologists have paid more attention to the perception of the city in everyday life. Mester (2005), for example, reconstructed people's cognitive maps of the medium sized town of Pécs in Southern Hungary, with a focus on how new shopping centres are present on (or absent from) the mental maps of different status and age groups. Demszky (2006) studied the perception and social life of Gazdagrét, an ensemble of high

rise buildings erected on the outskirts of Budapest during the early 1980s. While both studies are interesting on their own, they focus on fragments of urban life rather than on the urban experience in general. Furthermore, neither Mester nor Demszky adopt an encompassing concept of urban subjectivity that could integrate different aspects that affect and inform individuals' experiences of their city. The present work adopts a different approach to both issues.

The lack of qualitative studies on the urban experience in Hungary is, on the one hand, an effect of the domestic academic landscape. It is not surprising that some approaches to urban studies are underrepresented in a small country of only ten million citizens. On the other hand, quantitative approaches to social life have always played a dominant role in Hungarian sociology. The socialist state regarded numbers as more reliable indicators of progress in society than individuals' narratives that might reveal their critical attitudes towards the regime.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 argues in favour of the narrative quality of the urban experience. It considers key writings in the field of narrative theory and presents examples from the existing literature as to how one might relate the concept of narrative to the urban experience.

Narratives 'organize places; they select and link them together' (de Certeau 1988: 115) and through this connect them meaningfully to the human subject. These connections are informed by individuals' subjective knowledge of the city; their routinized ways of seeing it and acting in it grounded in past experience; their biographical situation from which they establish the (ir-)relevance of urban phenomena and their usefulness to accomplish whatever they wish to accomplish; and finally, by social contexts in which narratives were once learned or in which they are enacted. The chapter elaborates these points by considering the works of Schutz and Bourdieu, and to a lesser extent of Butler and other feminist thinkers.

Although we appropriate the city by means of our narratives, usually we do not build its places or the uses that these host; nor do we have much influence on who we encounter in public. Furthermore, we will find that some of our envisioned stories lack the adequate resources in the city (the 'right' places, the 'right' uses and the 'right' people) to be accomplished; or these may exist but we are denied access to them. In summary, there are limits

12

to urban narratives imposed by the design of urban places, the allocation of uses across the city and our access to them, the presence of strangers and their power over us, and such like. That is, the city has the power to surprise, irritate, stimulate and alter narratives. In this distinctive sense, the city may be regarded as the co-author of a narrative.

In an attempt to achieve a synthesis between these two positions (the city as the object or stage of a narrative, versus the city as the co-author of narratives), Chapter 1 proposes an extended approach to narratives, which it positions at the intersection of the personal, the social and the physical, and which it regards as being mutually constituted by them. Narratives, as I will argue, integrate aspects that may commonly be perceived as being distinct – personal memories, the social realm, the material city and a sense of belonging to it – and for this reason it is fruitful to address these aspects in an integrated way, within the scope of a single project.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodology of the study, which was conducted with an emphasis on the reciprocity between research practice and the formulation of *aspects* and *themes* that inform narratives of Budapest. Empirical findings were granted the power to identify and to refine individual aspects and themes, which in turn affected decisions about data collection and interpretation. These steps were carried out again and again until the refined set of aspects and themes of narrative urban subjectivity seemed to resist significant change through new empirical data. The outcome of this process is, thus, beyond a mere description of social reality, a set of concepts grounded in empirical research.

In order to identify *aspects* and *themes* that affect urban narratives, the thesis relies on twenty interviews about Budapest, conducted between spring 2005 and summer 2006. Because neither the aspects that shape narrative urban subjectivity, nor the themes that dominate contemporary narratives of Budapest could be anticipated, a method had to be found that would be well suited to the explorative character of the study, while remaining manageable within a PhD project. In-depth interviews with a narrative core was identified as the most appropriate method. In the sample there are people of different ages, different social backgrounds, men and women, people of different faiths, people who were born and raised in Budapest, people who moved to it recently, people who moved away a long time ago yet return occasionally, and people who never lived there but still have a strong relation with the city. Respondents were selected with the aid of the snowball technique.

Chapter 3 introduces Budapest as the location of the study. It gives an overview of its growth into one of Europe's main capitals by the First World War, its development

throughout socialism and finally its most recent change since 1989. This provides a useful context to the narratives discussed in Chapters 4 to 7 and renders them more comprehensible for the reader unfamiliar with Budapest or Hungarian society.

Chapters 4 to 7 comprise one chapter devoted to each aspect identified as affecting people's narratives of Budapest. Chapter 4 discusses narratives that contain obvious references to social collectivities, with a particular emphasis on class and status. As we shall see, references to status (and to a lesser extent to class, nation and religion) represent important themes within almost every other narrative of Budapest, and can still be identified in a number of narratives in which other themes (for example personal memories) predominate.

Individuals' identification with their perceived social status manifests itself as ways of perceiving and acting in the city informed by a habitus, defined by Bourdieu (2002: 27) as 'a system of dispositions, that is of ... long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action'. For Bourdieu, habitus is the product of given and quite durable social or material conditions that embrace people's lives and delimit their scope of action – conditions that they share with others: habitus, thus, grows from 'social experience and education' (ibid: 29). That is, one's social origins and economic circumstances manifest themselves as ways of perceiving and acting that give 'regularity, unity and systematicity to practices' (Bourdieu 1990: 59).

Status becomes public in character as a set of interrelated preferences for certain social practices and aesthetics, that is, for a certain lifestyle that also allows one to distinguish between people who share one's own preferences and those who don't. A sense of status, as we will see, affects how people perceive buildings, places, districts and the entire city; uses, activities and events in public; and how they connect these meaningfully. Respondents who identify themselves with their perceived status typically delimit themselves from others, including their values, activities, consumption habits, places, and sometimes their very presence. People bring a distinction between an 'us' and a 'them' into the city by using its spaces selectively, by mapping Budapest into areas and activities that belong to one collectivity or the other, by mutually confirming these distinctions in interaction with others, or by relating to strangers in certain ways.

Narratives informed by respondents' sense of status suggest that both class (defined by Weber as a market position that affects people's life-chances) and status (the perceived hierarchy between social groups discernible by their consumption habits) have become

more important since 1989. This confirms findings by Hungarian sociologists such as Bu-kodi (2007a), Demszky (1998), Galasi (1998) or Ladányi and Szelényi (1998). In an age of increasing social inequalities, the preoccupation with status has become a pervasive per-spective for many, and as such it deeply affects individuals' relations with Budapest and their sense of being at home in it. However, the chapter will also show that contemporary status narratives have grown away from their less obviously manifest precursors that already existed during socialism.

Chapter 5 explores the role of memory with respect to urban narratives. The relation-ship between memory and place, as we will see, manifests itself in two principal ways: we may remember a past event that elicits memories of the place that hosted it; or we may remember – or visit – a certain place that elicits memories of the events that it once hosted. Memories elicit places, just as places elicit memories; in other words, there is 'an elective affinity between memory and place. Not only is each situated to the other; each calls for the other' (Casey 1987: 214–5).

Places support the recollection of past experiences, as their material details recall the details of past narratives that one only vaguely remembers. To revisit certain places helps refresh memories of both past events and the places themselves: 'we come back to places where we have spent a part of our life to relive and rediscover details that had vanished,' Halbwachs (1992: 199–200) observed, while Ruskin (1880: 178) was convinced that re-membering itself could not be accomplished without the support of places: 'we may live without [architecture] ... but we cannot remember without her.' Boyer joins in by stating that 'memory orients experience by linking an individual to ... specific places' (Boyer 1994: 26). Because the narrative experience of the city is never without the places that stage it, memories themselves must be recognised as containing – explicitly or implicitly – refer-ences to place: the events of a narrative and their settings are remembered together, not least because they were not experienced separately.

The second part of the chapter dwells on the temporal (rather than the spatial) di-mension of memory. It addresses the remembering and forgetting of socialism that inter-viewees often refer to, in particular as they try to grasp contemporary Budapest and its recent changes. In doing so, some emphasise existing continuities between pre- and post-1989 Budapest, while others talk more about what is new, and yet others remember a city that has faded away. These three principal ways of relating to Budapest manifest themselves in most narratives simultaneously, depending on the aspect of urban life in question. As the

city changes, the relationship between memory, narrative and place can become dysfunctional. Habitual ways of narrating may become problematic, as places where narratives used to be lived alter or disappear. New places appear, but people may encounter them silently, without knowing how to incorporate them into their narratives. People may sustain their narratives despite the change of the city, and enact these in increasingly strange places. Memories, referring to far away places of subjective significance, may become abstract and slightly unreal, and incommunicable to others, as the actual sites of perception and enactment fade and disappear over time.

Chapters 4 and 5 show how memory and identification with social collectivities inform individuals' urban experiences. In contrast, Chapter 6 explores how the city itself affects the narratives of its inhabitants. The chapter first addresses the city as a site of individual freedom: the vast majority of people whom one encounters in the city are strangers whose powers to make claims with respect to one's personal identity are limited. Theoretically, this aspect is linked to the work of Simmel (1995 and 2004) who argued that such impersonality of human relationships is made possible by the money economy and its implicit logic of impersonal exchange. A further aspect of Simmel's work that proved to be relevant to narratives of Budapest concerns the intensity of urban life – a vast number of stimuli that challenge one's capacity to respond to them emotionally – to which, as means of protection, inhabitants respond with indifference.

Second, the chapter presents a phenomenological argument on the mutual constitution of the body and place, and then looks at the interplay between urban form and the lived body. We enact narratives as embodied beings and sense places in different ways. For example, we not only see places but also hear, smell or touch them. Furthermore, the succession of events that meaningfully connect to a narrative is accompanied by corresponding bodily states: the position of the body within the spatio-temporal form of a narrative; the configuration of limbs and their movements; the involvement of the senses to changing extents (some places we rather see, others we rather hear, smell or touch); feelings that arise in dependence on the body (such as cold or pain); or feelings that colonise the body (such as fear or excitement).

Narratives turn out differently, dependent on the design and uses of the places in which they are enacted. The chapter addresses this fact by revealing the power of key sites in Budapest to shape, enable or restrict interviewees' narratives. As Sennett argues, it is possible to design places in ways that encourage encounters and interactions between

strangers – places where 'subjective life undergoes a transformation so that a person ... is aroused by the presence of strangers and arouses them' (Sennett 1990: 149). The findings of the study support this assumption.

Finally, Chapter 6 shows that places provide room for a range of different experiences, rather than determining the narratives of its users. Places may influence or restrict narratives, but it is difficult to imagine a place that does not tolerate any 'deviant' narrative at all. Urban experiences are not the product of the city, but occur at the intersection of place, the body, memory, and the social realm, held together in the spatio-temporal framework of a narrative. This becomes obvious within accounts of unpleasant experiences in Budapest that can only be explained by considering, for example, respondents' social status, religious faith or memories.

Chapter 7 argues that urban narratives have a distinct emotional dimension. To narrate means both 'to tell' and 'to know' (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001: xiii), and knowing the city may be recognised as containing the comfort of understanding, that is, the comfort of being familiar with the places where one lives. Therefore, urban narratives may be regarded as acts of home-making. Accounts of a sense of belonging – or of its opposite, a sense of displacement – permeate, and in some cases dominate, every narrative of Budapest. Consequently, the chapter recognises the empirical relevance of belonging and discusses it in the light of the existing literature (Basso 1996; Bell 1999; Casey 1987; Fortier 1999; Leach 2002). Belonging to the city emerges from everyday performances through which we familiarise ourselves with the places where we live: '[t]hrough habitual processes of movement, by covering and recovering the same paths and routes, we come to familiarise ourselves with a territory, and thereby find meaning in that territory' (Leach 2002: 299), until the places involved become spaces of belonging. Belonging thus can 'be understood as an aspect of territorialisation' (ibid.), through which people become 'owners' of the places where they live, which now 'belong' to them, just as they 'belong' to it.

A sense of belonging, as interviewees' narratives suggest, can be found in different times and places: in Budapest as a bourgeois city; a Hungarian city; a metropolis; the city of one's childhood memories; and so forth. Furthermore, some aspects of urban life evoke positive feelings while others induce negative ones: 'Home is ... individually constructed in many different ways and deeply anchored in our emotional life. It is related to biographic experience, current living conditions and future plans, and it is sometimes experienced as problematic' (Mitzscherlich 2000: 88). Just as a sense of belonging to the city emerges as

one becomes familiar with it, and thereby makes 'it one with one's ongoing life' (Casey 1987: 192), so, in the same way a manifest sense of belonging to the city can be contested as the city changes. Many interviewees are challenged by the recent changes of Budapest, and Chapter 7 will reconstruct narrative strategies for coping with it.

The conclusion asks what the discussed narratives may tell us about urban subjectivity in general. It argues that while narratives of Budapest could not be told exactly in the same way anywhere else, they nevertheless allow for certain generalisations. Social collectivities or personal memories, for example, may be uniquely place-bound, but individuals' urban experience will always be affected by their sense of belonging to social collectivities, their personal memories, and the places where they enact their narratives.

The conclusion will also discuss the fruitfulness of the narrative approach chosen for the study, whose findings suggest that the aspects affecting urban narratives do not represent distinct spheres of experiencing, regardless of the fact that for analytical purposes one may discuss each aspect on its own. Individuals' sense of belonging to social collectivities, their personal memories, their sense of being at home in the city, and the city itself jointly and simultaneously affect their narratives. This wholeness of the urban experience has its own theoretical and methodological implications, and the findings of the thesis suggest that theories of, and studies on, narrative urban subjectivity should necessarily reflect this.

1 ON NARRATIVE URBAN SUBJECTIVITY

This chapter argues in favour of the narrative quality of the urban experience. It begins by considering key writings in the field of narrative theory (Section 1.1) and then focuses on a narrative's core feature, namely to connect elements of a person's life-world and to relate these to him or her in a meaningful way (Section 1.2). Drawing on Sections 1.1 and 1.2, Section 1.3 suggests that a narrative is more than a mere subjective story because it necessarily reflects the manifold social and material conditions within which it unfolds – conditions that may be regarded as constituting parts of a narrative rather than their external container.

As the chapter unfolds, aspects that possibly affect urban narratives (such as individuals' belonging to social collectivities, or the design of places) will emerge. I shall point to these aspects briefly, but they will not be discussed at this stage in order to avoid the impression that empirical findings discussed in later chapters are merely illustrating aspects already identified in advance, whereas in reality these aspects emerge from the analysis of concrete narratives of Budapest. For the same reason, the chapter does not review the existing literature on the above aspects but saves their discussion for subsequent chapters that elaborate on these aspects as they emerge from empirical data. However, this chapter does provide a concise discussion of works related to sections 1.1 to 1.3, in particular of works that explore narrative subjectivity in an urban context.

1.1 Subjectivity as Narrative Subjectivity

Structural functionalist conceptions of agency confined to the reproduction of a stable social order (Parsons); structuralist approaches that place subjectivity under the primacy of language (Lévi-Strauss); or the equation of history with institutional change are just some of the theories that have been contested during the past decades by thinkers who share the conviction that subjectivity cannot be reduced to the execution of constraints that people are exposed to in their lives. Whatever may affect one's actions, it does not suspend one's capacity (or the necessity) to interpret the world at hand, and to intervene in it in an active manner.

Exploring the possibilities and limits of agency is not a recent topic but a recurring theme in theory and fiction, from ancient Greek drama to nineteenth century realism in German literature; from theological or philosophical debates about human freedom to the sociological controversy on the relation between agency and structure (on the latter see for example Bourdieu 1977, Elias 1994, Giddens 1984, Simmel 2004). A main characteristic of the more recent 'discovery' of the human subject, however, lies in the manner in which subjective experience itself is approached by those who theorise it. Rather than representing a mere intellectual debate, theorising subjectivity now seems to depart from everyday experience which it regards as an authority to theory: in order to say something about subjectivity one has to descend into the realm of the everyday and to consider the non-theoretical murmur of ordinary people as an essential source of knowledge. To transfer that knowledge into academic discourse, qualitative research methods have been developed in a variety of disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and social psychology. The recent discovery of the subject, as Hinchman and Hinchman (2001: xiv) emphasize, has been to a considerable extent an empirical project.[3]

While it would require another thesis in its own right to reconstruct the strands that add up to this discovery, it is possible to identify some of its cornerstones: Goffman's studies on interaction, for example, reveal the subjective activity involved in appropriating social roles. Agency, he shows, cannot be thought as a mere subordination to others' expectations, a fact captured by his observations on role distance (Goffman 1961 and 1971). Similarly, studies on ethnomethodology and ethnomethodological conversation analysis disclose the agency required to interpret, produce and sustain social order during interactions (Garfinkel 1984, Garfinkel and Sacks 1986). Lüdtke's studies on working class culture, as part of the history of everyday life approach in Germany of the early 1980s, show that the everyday is not simply a function of objective structures and their transformation but constitutes its own sphere of experiencing (Lüdtke 1995). Without considering ordinary people's everyday lives and their interpretation of the world, Lüdtke argues, it is impossible to understand how historical events or institutions are appropriated, and hence to understand how and why structures emerge, function and change. These claims match the broader ethnological argument that foreign cultures (including the foreignness within one's own culture) cannot be understood without the meanings that inform people's actions

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[3] This is not to say that it is not simultaneously a theoretical or a political project. The point I wish to make here is that much of the shift towards subject-centred theories is backed up and inspired by empirical evidence.

(Hinchman and Hinchman 2001: xiv). Yet others emphasise the essential role of agency in constructing one's own biography. For example, Schütze and Rosenthal argue that a subject's biography is not simply a mere succession of events but requires their integration into the subjective story of one's life. To study individual biographies thus requires examining both the actual events of a life *and* the subjective meanings assigned to them (Schütze 1983, Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal 1997). Finally, recent sociological and social psychological writings on individualisation claim that people today must actively construct their biographies and find anew answers to the question as to who they are, for previously established models of life seem not to work anymore (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991, Keupp *et al.* 1999, Kraus 1996).

Similar arguments have been made in the field of urban studies. Concerned with the dialectics of agency and structure, but with an emphasis on subjectivity in the city, de Certeau (1988) juxtaposes subjective ways of appropriating urban space in everyday life with what a place originally was planned for, or as what it is conceived in public discourse. This echoes Lefebvre's distinction between *representations of space* – space as conceptualized by scientists, planners or engineers, and represented in maps, plans, models, etc. – and *representational space* informed by the meanings that inhabitants attribute to it in everyday life (Lefebvre 1991: 33–9).

The rise of narrative theory

Individuals' ability to interpret their world, and to conjoin their lives with the world in which they live in ways irreducible to structural constraints – in short, their ability to tell a story about themselves within a world, through which self and world enter into a meaningful relationship – has gained attention in the humanities and the social sciences since the late 1960s, and is a central theme of narrative theory.[4] While narrative theory has been developed and applied in many different contexts and disciplines such as literary theory, philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology and (social) psychology,[5] most of its protagonists agree on its core qualities (Carr 2001, Crites 2001, Hinchman and Hinchman 2001: xv–xvi, Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000: 58–61): a narrative – in the context of this

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[4] The rediscovery of the subject is told in conjunction with the rise of narrative theory here. This allows for a coherent link to the methodology of the narrative interview applied in the empirical study.

[5] For the range of contexts covered by narrative theory see in particular two collections of essays in Hinchman and Hinchman (2001) and Mitchell *et al.* (1981).

thesis, a story about our lives and the city – places events in a sequential order with a clear beginning, middle and end; makes meaningful connections between events, places and the self; draws a line between what is perceived as important and what as insignificant; and is told in front of a real or imagined audience (ibid: xii). From this point of view, going for a walk or planning a career in the city appear to be parts of narratives; the same might be said about the way we relate to places or strangers during our activities in the city; and, finally, by growing up or living a considerable period of time in a city the latter will connect to the narrative of one's life. In short, if we wish to say something about subjectivity in the city, narrative theory suggests we must investigate the stories that inform our daily activities in the places we dwell.

Verbal narratives inevitably contain an element of fiction. They are told differently on different occasions and address the real or imagined expectations of changing audiences and they might change over time as their teller changes. Events that do not fit into a narrative may be marginalised or ignored; or, for dramaturgical reasons events may be presented in a non-chronological order.

The narrative quality of (the urban) experience

While the concept of narrative has seen an unceasing interest in the social sciences, there have been controversies about its nature, in particular about its relation to experience. In the light of a narrative's obvious fictional qualities, some protagonists of narrative theory, such as White and Ricoeur, suggest that narratives, though inevitably an important part of our identities, nevertheless misrepresent real life. These theorists believe that experience does not possess narrative qualities: narratives speak of individuals' attempts to conjoin otherwise fragmented events of their lives. If we were to accept this view, narrating would appear to be a retrospective activity that belongs to the realm of fiction:

> Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see 'the end' in every beginning? Or does it present itself more in the way that the annals or chronicles suggest, either as a mere sequence without beginning or end or as sequences of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude? (White 1981: 23)

White answers his rhetorical question: 'The notion that sequences of real events possess the formal attributes of the stories we tell about imaginary events could only have its

origins in wishes, daydreams, reveries' (ibid.). A moderate version of this view is presented by Ricoeur, who like Husserl (1964) whose work he cites, conceives of experience as being rooted in temporality (1981). That is, in every moment of experience a sense of past and future are present in the form of protention and retention, memory and anticipation: 'Memory and anticipation, the present of things past and the present of things future, are tensed modalities of the present itself' (Crites 2001: 38). For Ricoeur, there is a reciprocal relationship between temporality and narrativity: 'I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent' (Ricoeur 1981: 165). On the basis of this, he concludes that narratives belong to fictional or non-fictional stories, not to immediate experience: 'The ideas of beginning, middle, and end are not taken from experience: they are not traits of real action but effects of poetic ordering' (Ricoeur, cited in Carr 2001: 10).

It is important, however, to put the above arguments into context and thereby clarify their significance for this study. Firstly, while it is indisputable that verbal narratives are fictional in so far as they represent the *subjective* truth of their tellers, we should not ignore the fact that the singular event or place – or the collection of disconnected events or places – is a fiction too. This is not only true of stories that people tell each other, but also holds with regards to lived experience that knows no fragmented 'brute' events but only events and places that link in space and time to it. If we misconceived of events and places as being point like, distinct, disconnected, all rejoining activity inevitably would become doubtful and added to an otherwise originary, 'real' experience.[6] However, as the phenomenological inquiry (see in particular Section 1.2 and Chapter 6) reveals, neither events nor places exist independently of the experiencing subject who dwells in their midst (Casey 1996: 36, Merleau-Ponty 2002: 82–3; Prechtl 2006: 77) and connects these meaningfully to his or her life.[7]

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[6] In claiming that annals or chronicles represent a more truthful account of history than narratives, White seems to generalise a historian's dilemma of dealing with fragments of the past whose integration into the *historian's* narrative indeed seem to be problematic. This leads him to the assumption that the places and events of everyday life would present themselves to oneself in the same disconnected way.

[7] Narrative theory shares core assumptions of phenomenology, and many of its protagonists have engaged with the works of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty extensively. Affinities to phenomenology include, for example, a stance in favour of the temporality of experience (*cf.* Husserl 1964), the teleological character of action, and the more general theme of *withinness* derived from the phenomenological concept of intentionality (Husserl 2001): 'In order to be told, a story must be set within a world' (Crites 2001: 31). Links to phenomenology will be occasionally made throughout the thesis (in particular in Chapter 6), but an in-depth discussion of the phenomenological foundations of narrativity cannot be achieved here. It

23

The second clarification related to the presumed discontinuity between narratives and subjective experience concerns the temporal structure of experience, in particular the teleological nature of actions that, as Carr maintains,

> derive their sense from the projected end they serve; our surroundings function as sphere of operations and the objects we encounter figure in our experience in furtherance of (or hindrance to) our purposes. Indeed, in our active lives it could be said that the focus of our attention is not the present but the future ... [and] the elements and phases of action, though they unfold in time, are viewed from the perspective of their having been completed. (Carr 2001: 15)

In every moment of experience we embrace a larger temporal context that stretches from the past to an imagined future: an envisioned state or event and – implicitly – an envisioned place to host it. Yet to speak of an envisioned future presupposes the existence of a, however vague, plan as to how to accomplish it, including the means to be applied and the intermediate steps to be taken. The temporality of experience, therefore, seems to be necessarily embedded into the more far-reaching temporal structure of a narrative.

Temporality and narrativity should not be confused with each other. The former refers to the modality of consciousness that maintains a sense of past and future in every moment of experience, while the latter refers to the more far-reaching temporal structure of our actions that may encompass and connect distant events, such as, for example, childhood memories with the activities of our adult life, or our present activities with a long term goal to be achieved far in the future. Ricoeur (1981: 165) seems right in attesting a reciprocal relationship between temporality and narrativity; however, because neither of them can be thought of in isolation (immediate experiences become legible in the context of the larger spatio-temporal framework of narratives, while narratives depend on temporality as the basic modality of consciousness), it seems somewhat misleading to associate the former with 'real' action while regarding the latter as merely fictional. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, interviewees often strongly identify with their narratives and experience them as very real; conversely, temporality may be regarded as fictional in the sense that it imposes a temporal structure upon our experience of the world that, as Kant argued in *Critique of Pure Reason*, is not inherent in the world itself.

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would seem worthwhile, however, to save the question as to what extent the study of narratives may be regarded as applied phenomenology, for future investigation.

The third clarification concerns the question as to which of the two: temporality or narrativity, better represent *subjective experience* from the point of view of the *subject of experience*. Isn't the pain I experience at the dentist more real *to me* than the narrative that started with the cracking of my tooth at lunch? While it is not possible, and perhaps not fruitful either, to engage in a philosophical debate here, it seems nevertheless possible to come to a practicable answer with regards to the present study. A narrative may not be consciously given to the human subject in the moment of immediate experience, but it is nevertheless indispensable for *understanding* that experience. This is not confined to the retrospective reflection on the events and activities of one's life (their 'poetic rendering'), but has a prospective element to it. This leads to the fourth clarification.

The fourth clarification concerns the qualities common to both lived and told narratives (see in particular Carr 2001). Like fictional stories, lived narratives not only connect events and places meaningfully, but also *produce* these to a large extent. For example, validating a ticket cannot be considered a fragmented act when I take the tram to work, and the presence of other passengers or the steps leading to the platform will hardly surprise me. Tram, ticket, steps and passengers are meaningful parts of a larger story: going to work. This small narrative, in turn, may be part of a number of a larger ones: building a work career in the city, paying the mortgage for my house, and such like.

Lived narratives and fictional stories have in common that they select events and places that are supportive of them (and, conversely, suppress those that pose an obstacle to them). Of course, lived experience does not match the well formed plot of fiction, for it lacks the narrator's complete authority with respect to events. Compared to fiction, lived narratives are less coherent, and they are always exposed to the unforeseen: 'Sometimes we must change the story to accommodate the events; sometimes we change the events, by acting, to accommodate the story' (Carr 2001: 17). Nevertheless, we have some control over what we encounter in the course of a lived narrative and apply effort to reduce the 'noise' that inevitably occurs.

Finally, both lived and told narratives are similar in so far as they are performed before an audience. My narrative of going to work, part of the larger narrative of building a career, may be observed by several audiences with their specific expectations that I need to consider to some extent. To my relatives I may emphasise the aspect of repaying the mortgage; I may refer to my workload to explain why I seldom meet my friends; I may understate my career ambitions in a chat with colleagues; and I may dress less elegantly when I

take the tram instead of the car. Last but not least, I may tell yet another story to myself in an attempt to balance work with other aspects of my life.

The narrative quality of the urban experience has been prominently advocated by Michel de Certeau. Narratives, as he argues, 'organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories' (1988: 115). Urban narratives are performed in the space of the city; they connect urban phenomena (places of various character, uses, strangers) in subjective ways; and they produce subjective 'geographies of actions' (ibid: 116). That is, urban narratives blend the city (its physical structure, its uses, its representation in official discourse) with the subjective landscapes of meaning that people attach to it. By selecting places, and by linking them together within a spatio-temporal framework, narratives found the very places that stage them, in the sense that they carve them out from the much bigger realm of possible places and their possible meanings (de Certeau 1988: 122–9). In this context, de Certeau makes use of the analogy of language: just as one appropriates language in the course of speaking, one appropriates the city in the course of narrating (here, de Certeau speaks of 'pedestrian speech acts' (ibid: 97)).[8]

Sennett too has advocated the narrative quality of the urban experience, with a particular focus on how urban design may help people overcome the blasé attitude that Simmel (1995) regarded as a major characteristic of city life. Sennett envisions an urban life enriched by ephemeral encounters between strangers who, despite a lack of mutual knowledge of one another, begin to relate to each other in an unprejudiced way. A place that – by virtue of its design and the complexity of its uses – encourages strangers to become aware of one another beyond sociological stereotypes is what Sennett calls *narrative space* (1990: 189–202). These places, Sennett hopes, make a difference to people's narratives and help

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[8] "Language" and "text" have been often used as metaphors for urban life. For example, the discourse on urban planning and activity of building (as well as discourses on a given place that seek to establish its meaning) can be regarded as acts of writing that produce the city as some kind of text (Donald 1992, Kovács *et al.* 2005, Frisby 2002). Correspondingly, the appropriation of the city as text may be thought of as reading (Fritzsche 1996, Pile 1996). Reading, in turn, can be conceptualised as the reading of the city as a map (Lynch 1960), or more literally as a reading with the detached attitude of the observer, of which the flâneur is the paradigmatic example (Benjamin 1969, 1983, 1999a and 1999b, Parsons 2000, Tonkiss 2005: 122–6). While reading in the above sense emphasises the primacy of a text *out there* to be deciphered, urban narratives can also be compared to speech acts (de Certeau 1988; Barthes 1997, Tonkiss 2005: 135–7) that connect places and events according to people's subjective intentions. One may push the analogy of language further by emphasising the aspect of interpreting (as associated with reading) or improvising (as associated with speaking); or by pointing to the fact that texts are sometimes written while being read, or read in unconventional ways and impossible to be grasped as a coherent whole. Sennett's (1990) concept of narrative space could be seen as an example for the latter (see Chapter 6).

them 'confront fixed, sociological pictures routinized in time ... [so that] people can see others as if for the first time' (ibid: 201).

Sennett writes from a flâneur's perspective and develops his concepts based on his own critical observations. At least in the above cited book, *The Conscience of the Eye*, his voice seems to override the voices of the individuals he observes, and it is unclear whether the latter would share *his* view of *their* experiences. Similarly, de Certeau's request to acknowledge everyday life as an own sphere of experiencing (rather than to regard it as ornamental to theory) represents in itself a theoretical argument that can only precede, not substitute for, an empirical inquiry into urban narratives.

Some authors have paid more attention to the performative character of (urban) subjectivity, without necessarily emphasising its narrative character. This is true of a number of studies by feminist thinkers who investigate how people's spatial practices are affected by their sense of class, gender, ethnicity, and such like – and how spatial practices in turn contribute to the genesis and reproduction of individuals' social identities (see, for example, Bell 1999, Duncan 1996, Fincher and Jacobs 1998a, Nast and Pile 1998, Probyn 1996, Tonkiss 2005). While some of these studies will be discussed in subsequent chapters, they cannot serve as a basis for the present inquiry. From the explorative point of view of the thesis, any premature decision in favour of a social collectivity must be rejected: whether gender, class or ethnicity (or any other collectivity) are relevant in shaping individuals' narratives of Budapest can only be the result (and not the point of departure) of the empirical study.

In recent years, the study of narratives has become widespread in Hungarian sociology. For example, Kovács and Vajda (2002) show that narratives of Jews have changed significantly since 1989, related to new possibilities to found religious institutions and to publicly live their faith. Kovács and Melegh (2004) show how the narratives of recent migrants to Hungary are gendered at the same time. More recently, Kovács and others (2008) have sought to reconstruct how narratives of the Kádár era are affected by respondents' membership of ethnic groups. Unfortunately, none of the domestic studies so far focus on how individuals' narratives are attached to the city where they live. Consequently, a more complex picture of people's relation to Budapest has yet to be drawn.

Two conclusions for the present study can be drawn at this stage. Firstly, because of the unquestionable connection between lived and told narratives, as well as between temporality and narrativity, it seems reasonable to assume that through the study of *verbal*

narratives we can learn a great deal not just about *lived* narratives, but also about the more immediate aspects of the urban experience. Therefore, while this study is mainly about narrativity (that is, the larger spatio-temporal aspects of the urban experience, the larger picture that makes fragments of experience intelligible), it is not blind towards the immediacy of the urban experience. Indeed, subsequent chapters will discuss many narrative accounts of these.

Secondly, it is important to recognise the power of immediate experiences to alter the trajectory of narratives. The unpredictability of many aspects of urban life means that our narratives often turn out differently than we may have imagined them initially. That is, we should appreciate narratives not only in their aspect of structuring the urban experience, but also in their ability to adapt to the unforeseen. Urban narratives are often rewritten whilst enacted, and the immediacy of the urban experience is not only the smallest unit of narratives but also 'the moment of decision within the story as a whole' (Crites 2001: 39). Narratives are not to be confused with the clarity of the plot: 'Story is ceaseless emergence; it is the interruption in which is put forward the possibility of experience' (Ferguson 2009: 4).

Does urban subjectivity always assume the form of a narrative?

Aside from the question whether one should conceive of the urban experience primarily in terms of its narrative character (as opposed to its rootedness in temporality), there is a genuinely sociological question related to the conception of subjectivity advanced here. What possible aspects of subjectivity could go unnoticed once one took a theoretical stance in favour of narratives? Wouldn't sociologists be better advised to adopt a focus on power as it affects (an historically grown) subjectivity, both from *without* and from *within* (and consequently embrace the work of Foucault, of radical geographers, of feminist thinkers)? Shouldn't sociologists always examine subjectivity as embedded into the social collectivities of class, gender or ethnicity, and subsequently pay attention to the inequalities between them? Or address contemporary issues such as urban migration and citizenship? What about interactions in public that produce social order on the go (as addressed by Goffman, or by ethnomethodologists such as Garfinkel or Sacks): do they assume the form of narratives?

I would like to suggest that a focus on narratives is not blind towards these questions. On the contrary: neither social collectivities nor power relations manifest themselves out-

side narratives, for they unfold as ways of doing (of perceiving, acting and feeling), and of negotiating daily activities, that are connected within the spatio-temporal framework of a narrative. Likewise, interactions in public become intelligible only through their being anchored in wider spatial and temporal contexts, which too is a form of indexicality. These aspects of the urban experience are not ornamental to narratives but inherent in them: if we subtracted them from the urban experience through an act of imagination, what would remain that we could call a lived narrative? Since all aspects of the urban experience seem to be connected to narratives, there is some hope that a theoretical (and methodological, as I will argue in the next chapter) focus on narratives[9] is fruitful in revealing a great deal about them. That is, narratives represent a promising starting point to capture different aspects of the urban experience – a fact that is more than welcome within the explorative inquiry that this thesis represents. As we will see in the discussion of narratives of Budapest, it is not difficult to identify the extraordinary and challenging hints of social collectivities, inequalities, power, fears and dreams, etc. in the everyday experience of the city. To remind the reader, however, that the thesis is on *narrative* subjectivity (rather than on subjectivity in general), I will use the term *narrative urban subjectivity* (rather than urban subjectivity) in subsequent chapters.

A final clarification at this point concerns the term *subjectivity*. Ferguson makes an important point in reminding us of the two meanings of the concept: on the one hand, subjectivity refers to the individual as the subject *of* experience, who creates his/her experiences according to his/her imagination. On the other hand, subjectivity also refers to the individual subjected *to* his/her own experiences, a fact that is often ignored in contemporary studies (Ferguson 2009: 23–4). Both aspects will be considered throughout the thesis, and the fact that individuals are subjected *to* their own experiences will become obvious in their accounts of unwanted aspects of urban life, related to urban change, irritating encounters with strangers, and so forth. The urban experience is constantly exposed to the unexpected to which it has to respond. More importantly, individuals are subjected to their habitual ways of interpreting and responding to the city. As we shall see, it is this aspect (rather than the very encounter with a particular urban phenomenon) that affects their urban experiences in the first place.

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[9] To be sure, focussing on one aspect necessarily means to lose focus of the other. This dilemma is inherent in any decision on research questions and methodologies.

By means of narratives, lived or told, people relate themselves meaningfully to the city. This implies that the elements of the city thus connected were known to the subject sufficiently in advance; that is, their meanings were given to the subject to a significant extent prior to acting. The pre-given familiarity with the everyday world at hand – precon-ceptions about its nature and meaning – affects how a concrete situation is interpreted and acted upon. This section elaborates this argument and applies it to the realm of the city.

The stock of knowledge at hand in the city

The city constitutes a taken for granted field of everyday experience for the majority of people living in the West. Paradoxically, albeit historically grown, socially produced and culturally formed, and hence the work of others, the city appears to the human subject as the given, concrete environment of his or her actions – as *his* or *her* city. From a phenome-nological perspective, the city cannot be said to exist in and of itself; rather, it appears to people as the object of their perception and the site of their enactments. As Schutz has it: 'I, the human being, born into the social world, and living my daily life in it, experience it as built around my place in it, as open to my interpretation and action, but always referring to my actual biographically determined situation' (Schutz 1990: 15).

Urban narratives do not connect randomly urban phenomena. Rather, they are in-formed by people's knowledge of *their* city; by their routinized ways of seeing it and acting in it grounded in past experience; by their concrete biographical situation from which, based on their subjective knowledge, they establish the relevance or irrelevance of urban phenomena and their usefulness to accomplish whatever they wish to accomplish; and finally, by social contexts in which they were once learned or in which they are performed. To know the city, in turn, means to have an idea about the meaning of its phenomena, that is, what they are, where they are and how they can be used in the course of a narrative. As Schutz (1990: 7) says,

> All interpretation of this world is based on a stock of previous experiences of it, our own or those handed down to us by parents or teachers; these experiences in the form of 'knowledge at hand' function as a scheme of reference. To this stock of knowledge at hand belongs our knowledge that the world we live in is a world of more or less well circumscribed objects with more or less definite qualities, objects among which we move, which resist us and upon

which we may act. Yet none of these objects is perceived as insulated. From the outset it is an object within a horizon of familiarity and pre-acquaintanceship which is, as such, just taken for granted until further notice as the unquestioned ... stock of knowledge at hand.

The *stock of knowledge at hand*, in conjunction with individuals' intentions, affects how the city is perceived, and how urban phenomena are regarded as (ir)relevant. Such knowledge includes knowledge about the city's geometrical layout, which in turn facilitates orientation (Lynch 1960); it also includes preconceptions about the city's social geography, that is, the allocation of social groups and their activities across the city (Kracauer 1995; Simmel 1997c). It is by means of our knowledge of the city that we subdivide it into areas of *typical* activities; areas that we visit (or avoid) for that reason. In this way, the stock of knowledge at hand affects both how we see the city and the narratives that we perform in it.

The stock of knowledge at hand is necessarily intersubjective in character. As we have seen, a basic quality of narratives is that they are performed before an audience. Sometimes audiences are literally present in the form of others – friends, colleagues, relatives, strangers – who watch or listen to our stories; who eventually judge it and expect us to act in a certain way; and finally, with whom we interact and thereby negotiate our narratives to a significant degree. At other times, audiences may be physically absent, but nevertheless 'there': if somebody (or indeed, we) were to ask what we were actually doing, we would know what to reply. Urban subjectivity, thus, always addresses others, either directly or indirectly. Moreover, intersubjectivity is not confined to the notion of audience, but informs the genesis of our knowledge of the city from the very beginning: 'my knowledge of it [the world] is not my private affair but from the outset intersubjective or socialised' (Schutz 1990: 11; on socialisation that generates the world as subjective reality see Berger and Luckmann 1967). To know what urban phenomena mean and how one can make use of them, and to know how to interpret situations and the behaviour of those involved in them, points to the existence of others: 'People do not just exist in their own little worlds ... [but] learn a shared picture of the world (Pile 1996: 12). Similarly, Schutz argued:

> Only a very small part of my knowledge of the world originates within my personal experience. The greater part is socially derived ... I am taught not only how to define the environment ... but also how typical constructs have to be formed in accordance with the system of relevancies accepted from the anonymous unified point of view of the in-group. This includes ways of life, methods of coming to terms with the environment, efficient recipes for the use of typical means for bringing about typical ends in typical situations. (Schutz 1990: 13–4)

The intersubjective character of urban subjectivity will be addressed in Chapter 4, which presents a number of narratives informed by references to the social collectivities of class, status, religion or nationality. As we will see, individuals' sense of belonging to any of these collectivities manifests itself as ways of perceiving and acting in the city informed by a *habitus* of class, status, religion or nationality. Bourdieu defined habitus as 'a system of dispositions, that is, of ... long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action' (2002: 27; see also 1977, 1984, 1990). Habitus is the product of given and quite durable social or material conditions (Bourdieu terms these objective structures) that delimit individuals' scope of action – conditions that they share with others: habitus, thus, grows from 'social experience and education' (ibid: 29; see also Meier 2004: 64). Crucial to the concept is that one's social origins and economic conditions manifest themselves as ways of perceiving and acting, which give 'regularity, unity and systematicity to practices' (Bourdieu 1990: 59).[10]

The concept of habitus emphasises the immanent logic of practices over their observable enactment. In contrast, other authors have paid more attention to the performative character of (urban) subjectivity. In questioning static notions of identity – identity as something given, as a kind of script that produces our actions – Butler (1993, 1999)[11] and others have suggested that it is our (inter-)actions that constitute our identities: 'Identity is the effect of performance, and not vice versa' (Bell 1999: 3). As a consequence, social categories such as gender, class or ethnicity appear to be essentially constituted and sustained by their being performed – an insight that supports their eventual re-constitution by performative means.

In urban studies, the concept of performativity has been used to theorise the practices of different social groups, and to explore how their performances contribute to the genesis and reproduction of their social identities. In a study of an Italian community in London, Fortier (1999) shows how gender roles are enacted and reproduced through religious rituals performed in urban space. In a study of working class women in Worcester, Massachusetts, Pratt shows how class *and* gender are reinforced through the distribution of jobs in the city (Pratt 1998; Hanson and Pratt 1995). Other studies look at the mutual constitution of ethnicity and place (E. Anderson 1990, K. Anderson 1998, Jacobs

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[10] Bourdieu does not speak of narratives but of practices. By contrast, the concept of narrative emphasises their embeddedness into the larger temporal structure of a subjective story.

[11] On the similarities and differences between Bourdieu and Butler see Meier (2004) and Reckwitz (2004).

1996), or the relation between sexuality and the city (Knopp 1998, Bondi 1998, Tonkiss 2005). A feature common to these works is that they conceive of urban subjectivity not only in terms of its performative character, but also in terms of its situatedness at the intersection of social collectivities, urban places and the lived body. Other authors (Fincher and Jacobs 1998b, Fortier 1999, Pratt 1998) suggest not conceiving of performativity as one-dimensional: gender *and* class, or gender *and* religion, or class *and* ethnicity may mutually constitute urban subjectivity – and provide room for a variety of different experiences in the city.

The concept of performativity provides theoretical arguments and empirical evidence suitable for questioning seemingly fixed identities. While this is one of its strengths, with respect to our inquiry it is also one of its weaknesses. Above all, the studies mentioned above do not assign equal weight to various possible co-constituents of subjectivity. Instead, they focus on those aspects that have an immediate effect on the reproduction of gender, class or ethnicity – or their re-definition in line with political values regarded as desirable. However, from the perspective of our inquiry, such approaches seems inappropriate because they proclaim the primacy of social categories with regards to subjectivity, which is presumed to be gendered, classed, or sexed. Consequently, the above studies do not look at other possible aspects that, from time to time at least, may have a greater effect on subjectivity than some well established social categories.

Cities of difference

The knowledge available in a given situation depends on the human subject's unique sequence of past experiences; experiences that were themselves informed by a corresponding sequence of social, material or biographical contexts. Moreover, people apply this knowledge in concrete situations that possess their particular social and material characteristics; situations that have a specific biographical relevance and an envisioned outcome. Because narratives are performed at the intersection of subjective knowledge, biographical contexts, subjective intentions and external conditions, no two urban narratives can be *exactly* the same: 'people create personal geographies, which are separate personal worlds of experience, learning, and imagination' (Pile 1996: 12). The countless possible manifestations of the ingredients of a narrative result in a variety of possible narratives in the city. Different biographical contexts, subjective intentions, external conditions, and the actual stock of knowledge at hand manifest themselves as differences between the narratives of different

33

(groups of) individuals who may inhabit the 'same' physical space but nevertheless attach different meanings to it.[12] As we shall see in Chapter 4, some narratives of Budapest are deeply affected by people's sense of status. In contrast, other interviewees expressed a deep sense of patriotism; yet others seemed to relate to Budapest as a city in which their religious beliefs can be practiced. Yet others, as we will see in Chapter 5, expressed a weak sense of belonging to social collectivities and talked about Budapest as related to their personal memories or important, sometimes traumatic biographical experiences.

Different narratives are linked to different ways of knowing the city: 'spatial stories can be written in numerous ways even as they unfold across the same territory' (Tonkiss 2005: 123). Therefore, each narrative addresses, and likewise each subject knows, only a small part of the city: compared to the realm of possible experiences and to what can be known about the city, a narrative appears to be highly fragmented and selective. It is based on a stock of knowledge at hand that, albeit it provides the individual with the sense of having a city that is sufficiently complete to be perceived as coherent, is nevertheless carved out of a far bigger realm of knowledge that the human subject does *not* possess. The indisputable fact of the relativity of the urban experience can be taken to legitimate radically different ways of living the city. Such a promotion of difference has been a prominent agenda of feminist theory (Fincher and Jacobs 1998b; Pratt 1998).

Difference also pervades an individual's urban experiences. Narratives turn out differently dependent on whom they address as their audience. People play a variety of social roles and act in accordance with them at appropriate times. They are, as Simmel (2001 and 2006) noted, at the intersection of different social circles, and the participation in each makes up for different narratives. Goffman empirically reinforced this insight in his writings on role behaviour and role distance (Goffman 1961 and 1971). Finally, narratives turn out differently in the course of one's life and change as people change: new experiences affect subsequent ones; new narratives may emerge while established ones fade away. At other times the city changes, and thus change narratives. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this theme is paramount in the narratives of Budapest – a city that, as I shall sketch in Chapter 3, changed abruptly many times during the twentieth century.

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[12] On the diverging network of relevant social relations and their geographies in a 'community' of people who inhabit the same physical space, see Martin Albrow's (1997) concept of socioscape, developed along an empirical study conducted in the London Borough of Tooting.

Social and biographical factors, as suggested above, affect how we make sense of the city and project meaning onto it. However, we barely reflect upon this fact in our daily lives and believe instead that the city exists for its part in the way it appears to us. Husserl (1983, part II, chapter 1) described this unquestioned belief in a solid external world as the *natural attitude*, an attitude that Leach regards as mistaken: 'In the hermeneutic moment one tends to read that projection as though it were a property of the object. And yet in reality ... all kinds of content are merely projections. Buildings ... do not have any inherent meaning. They are essentially 'inert' and merely 'invested' with meaning' (Leach 2002: 305–6). Similarly, Basso maintains that the 'experience of place is inevitably a product and expression of the self whose experience it is'. The urban experience, therefore, 'is shaped at every turn by the personal and social biography of the one who sustains it' (Basso 1996: 55). In other words, we should recognise the close relationship between the human subject and the city, 'and we must understand how, paradoxically, there is *for us* an *in-itself*' (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 82–3, emphasis in original; see also Prechtl 2006: 72–6).

To project meaning onto the city – meaning that it does not possess inherently – means to *imagine* the city in a certain way, and thereby to transform the city as it *appears* to oneself into a meaningful place connected with one's values, view of the world, future plans, and so forth. Therefore, strictly speaking, we do not relate to the city as such, but to the city made meaningful by acts of imagination. Consequently, lived narratives must be recognised as means towards this end; narrating and imagining are inseparable: 'Our imagination is inherently narrative' (Donald 1999: 123). To imagine the city means to blend the city as it appears to oneself with one's narrative; that is, to 'impregnate' (Lindner 1999: 289) it with one's sense of belonging to social collectivities, one's memories, subjective plans and so forth until the city's 'physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination' (Basso 1996: 55). It is through imagining that individuals 'constitute their [urban] landscapes and take themselves connected to them' (ibid: 54) – landscapes of meaning, of use, and of identity.

In theorising imagining as the imagining of *meaning*, I have implicitly adopted the perspective of humanistic geography. By contrast, behavioural geographers would conceive of imagining in a different way. Adopting the phenomenological method of eidetic variation, Lynch for example, reconstructed individuals' images of the city, in essence their mental

representations of the city's geography consisting of paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. He regarded imageability as the quality of the built environment and requested that it should be enhanced by urban design (Lynch 1960: 2).[13][14] A legible city, he believed, would make it easier for people to orientate themselves and hence increase their scope of action. In making a similar argument, Norberg-Schulz (1980 and 1985) regarded orientation as a core aspect of the urban experience. However, in focussing on legibility or orientation, as Sennett has argued (1990: 33–6 and 152), one loses theoretical access to the social dimension of narratives and the meanings inherent in them, let alone to notions of power.

This section argued that the way in which the city is appropriated by means of narratives is inseparable from creative acts of imagining; and that imagining, in turn, is a social activity. It has become clear that, rather than representing a field of enactment external to the narrating subject, the city appears to be genuinely interwoven with the human subject, impregnated by an imaginary landscape of subjective meaning. The next section approaches this issue from a different angle. Rather than asking how the city is impregnated by imagination, it asks how narratives themselves are affected by the city that, albeit narrativised, seems to retain an element of 'wildness' (Casey 1996). In an attempt to achieve a synthesis between these two questions, and to ground subsequent chapters, the section will propose an extended approach to narratives.

1.3   An Extended Approach to Narratives

So far, I have argued in favour of the narrative quality of the urban experience. By emphasising the role of agency, narrative theory offers an antidote to the *objectivist mistake*, that is, the mistake of regarding subjectivity as the mere function of external conditions, for example of forms and uses of the city, material and economic constraints. However, there is something about the presence of the city that should not go unnoticed. Although events and places in the city are events and places *for* an experiencing subject who conjoins them

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[13] By means of eidetic variation, phenomenologists seek to identify the characteristics which are necessary for a thing to be recognised as a particular object (see Husserl 1983). What shape, size, proportion, material, etc. must, for example, a thing have in order to be recognised as a chair? What should a building look like to become a landmark? How should spatial elements relate to each other in order to allow for a legible image of the city?

[14] See Pile (1996) for an overview as to how behavioural and humanistic geography conceive of imagining the city.

by means of a narrative, the former are not merely 'locked' within the spatio-temporal structure of a narrative: 'I left the office at noon and arrived home late at night. Usually, it would be a 20 minutes walk but people were shooting all around and I had to run for shelter all the time. I was zigzagging on side streets, and it took more than half a day until I reached home (Erzsébet)'

The above account of a walk in Budapest during the 1956 uprising, remembered by 89 year old Erzsébet, reveals a peculiar dimension of the city with regards to experience. This dimension is quite obvious in the above example, but I argue that it is present in the most ephemeral events of everyday life too. The city, it seems, has its own presence that affects a narrative in sometimes unforeseeable ways:

> [P]lace retains a factor of wildness, that is, of the radically amorphous and unaccounted for, something that is not so much immune to culture as alien to it in its very midst, disparate from it from within. We sense this wildness explicitly in moments of absurdity – and of 'surdity,' sheer 'thisness' ... In the very heart of the most sophisticated circumstance is a wildness that ... exceeds the scope of the most subtle set of signifiers, despite the efforts of painters to capture it in images and of storytellers to depict it in words. (Casey 1996: 35)

Although we appropriate the city by means of our narratives and in accordance with our subjective plans, usually we do not build its places or the uses that these host; nor do we have much influence on who we encounter in public spaces. We may use urban places in uncommon ways, but there will be obvious limits to our narratives if we do not want to get into conflicts with any of our audiences. Furthermore, we will find that some of our envisioned stories lack the adequate resources in the city (the 'right' places, 'right' uses, 'right' people) to be accomplished; or these places, uses or people may exist but we don't know where to find them – or we are perhaps denied access to them. In summary, there are not only *internal* limits to urban narratives (such as the stock of knowledge at hand) but also *external* ones imposed by the design of places, the allocation of uses across the city and our access to these, the presence of strangers and their powers over us, etc. It is for this reason that 'place retains a factor of wildness' (ibid.): appropriated by means of a narrative, events and places in the city partially escape narrativisation at the same time. Consequently, the city represents an authority over narratives and has the power to surprise, irritate, stimulate and alter them – an insight that is key to the works of Jacobs (1992) and Sennett (1990) who have written extensively on how the design and social life of urban places affects the narrative experience of the city, and may influence the narratives of its inhabitants in desir-

able ways. I shall address this issue in more detail in Chapter 6. At this stage we can sum-marise the above discussion by concluding that, in a peculiar sense, the city can be regarded as the co-author of a narrative – a point I will elaborate on in the following sections and further support with empirical evidence in subsequent chapters.

While narrative theory helps avoid the *objectivist mistake*, understanding how the city affects narratives helps avoid the *subjectivist mistake* of regarding individuals as the sole crea-tors of their experiences, as if these were unaffected by the places in which they dwell. The next section attempts to integrate both perspectives.

Revisiting the relation between the human subject and the city

Narratives connect – and separate – urban phenomena meaningfully: 'In the immedi-ate as well as the symbolic sense, in the physical as well as the intellectual sense, we are at any moment those who separate the connected or connect the separate' (Simmel 1997a: 171). Simmel points to a paradox here:

> By choosing two items from the undisturbed store of natural things in order to designate them as 'separate', we have already related them to one another in our consciousness, we have emphasized these two together against whatever lies between them. And conversely, we can only sense those things to be related which we have previously somehow isolated from one another; things must first be separated from one another in order to be together. (ibid.)

For this reason, Simmel suggested, 'the human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and cannot connect without separating' (ibid: 174). Crucially, con-necting and separating phenomena are activities of mind: no matter which of the two activities we emphasise, our mind is inevitably involved in the meaningful structuring of the city that we live in. That is, connectedness and separation are not objective qualities of the external world.[15]

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[15] Simmel (1997a: 171) claimed that distant places could be connected objectively, for example by a path or a bridge – a point I disagree with. Without interpreting a path so that it allows two places to be con-nected, there is no connection between them but only the co-presence of phenomena: place, path, place; bank, bridge, bank. A path ceases to exist as a path (or a bridge as a bridge) as soon as there is no one to use it and to interpret it accordingly. That is, the words 'path' and 'bridge' refer to the meaningful activi-ties of crossing, not to the inherent qualities of phenomena: the meaning of the thing, as Wittgenstein suggested, is the use to which it is put (see Frisby 2001: 180–3). No doubt, once I want to cross a river, the bridge guides me. Yet the 'objectivity' of the bridge thereby still remains *dependent* on my intention of crossing.

As the discussion so far suggests, the city *that* we see, as well as the city *as* we see it, is inseparable from the stock of knowledge at hand; the sequence of experiences that add up to one's biography; the social contexts in which a narrative is learned or enacted; and one's creative acts of imagining the meaning of the city and one's own future in it. At the same time, however, the city retains an element of wildness, meaning that it resists its complete narrativisation. How might we begin to relate all these aspects to each other?

Without a narrative, there is no meaningful city *for us*, yet without the city there is no basis for a narrative either. The (embodied) subject of experience, the city and a narrative mutually depend on each other; they constitute each other and serve as the basis of mutual confirmation. People do not exist outside the places in which they enact their narratives. Furthermore, as the above discussion indicates, narratives themselves are imbued by a number of social and biographical contexts, by individuals' sense of belonging to social collectivities, and by their personal memories.[16] Most importantly, for human subjects neither *their* city, nor *their* memories, nor *their* social and material conditions, nor *their* sense of belonging to social collectivities exist *outside* their narratives; rather, these are reflected *within* them, that is, they are inherent rather than external to them. In the narrative experience of the city, 'these various divisions enter into a deconstructive meltdown – or more exactly, they are seen to have been nondiscontinuous to begin with' (Casey 1996: 36). In borrowing Casey's words used for analysing place, we may say that a narrative is 'deconstructive of oppositions that it brings and holds together within its own ambience ... I am thinking of such dichotomies as subject and object, ... mind and body, inner and outer, perception and imagination (or memory)' (Casey 1996: 36).

Locating the urban experience at the intersection of the social, the personal and the physical makes it necessary to adjust the concept of narrative presented at the beginning of the chapter. In particular, the reduction of the urban experience to any of the above aspects (or of a narrative to a mere subjective story) appears problematic. *Instead, we should think of urban narratives as (inter-) subjective acts that alter a given configuration of the social, the personal and the physical over time.* Yet because all of these aspects co-constitute narrative subjectivity, they are an authority with regards to it. We might even say that they are co-authors of a narrative, in

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[16] These aspects (and writings related to them) will be discussed in subsequent chapters where they will be grounded in the empirical findings of the study.

the sense that they affect and inform it in various ways.[17] The social, the personal and the physical belong inseparably together in so far as they co-constitute every single moment of the urban experience. This in turn justifies their study in an integrated way, within the scope of a single project.

The task of the following chapters is to identify core aspects that inform and co-constitute narrative urban subjectivity in the particular city of Budapest. Chapter 4 discusses narratives that contain obvious references to social collectivities, with a particular emphasis on social status to which about every other interviewee referred. Chapter 5 explores how personal memories affect the perceived meaning of places and the narratives that people perform in them. The chapter pays particular attention to the remembering and the forgetting of socialism. Chapter 6 looks at the role of the city in affecting narratives. It addresses the city as a site of weak social control and the related increase of individual freedom, and then looks more closely at the interplay between urban form and the lived body. Chapter 7 reveals the significance of a sense of belonging to the city that represented an important theme within the majority of narratives. A sense of belonging, as we will see, is rather brittle and may turn into a sense of displacement, a fact that the chapter will link to the rather abrupt transformation of Budapest since 1989.

To prepare the reader for the presentation of the empirical findings, Chapter 2 presents the methodology of the study. Chapter 3 introduces Budapest as the location of the study. It gives an overview of its growth into one of Europe's major capitals by the First World War, its development throughout socialism and finally its most recent changes since 1989.

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[17] Interestingly, in everyday experience the city appears as being *simply there*, rather than as being intertwined with oneself in inscrutable ways as part of an ever shifting configuration of personal memories, the lived body, the social realm and place that would require disentangling prior to acting. For example, when I'm leaving home to buy bread I assume the inherent existence of bread, of the bakery, as well as of the act of buying. Furthermore, I take for granted that the person who is leaving the house is identical with the person who will be buying bread and eating it thereafter: *it is me*. The sense of a coherent body and a coherent self in time seems to accompany the urban experience: when interfering with the city we don't think that our body changes as the composition of the body-place-continuum shifts. Likewise, we believe that it is we who will have accomplished a task in the future, despite the myriad shifts within the force field of body, place, memory and the social realm that occur on the go.

2   METHODOLOGY

The present empirical study serves two purposes. *Firstly*, it contributes to an empiri-
cally grounded understanding of narrative urban subjectivity by identifying main aspects
that affect it. As subsequent chapters reveal, these aspects are: a sense of belonging to social
collectivities, personal memories, forms and functions of the city, and a sense of having a
home in the city. In order to reveal these aspects, the thesis relies on twenty narratives of
Budapest – particular narratives of a particular place, embedded into the larger social, eco-
nomic and political context at a given point in time. The narratives obtained, therefore, not
only help explore *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity; but also are appreciated for provid-
ing insight into narrative *themes* that govern people's relation to Budapest some 16 years
after the events of 1989. This is the second research interest.[18]

In-depth interviews with a narrative core

In order to identify key aspects and themes that affect narrative urban subjectivity, an
appropriate method had to be found first. Questionnaires, for example, could not be re-
garded as a suitable tool for accomplishing this task: they allow for gathering information
on aspects assumed to be relevant prior to conducting a survey, but they are not designed
to reveal aspects not anticipated. By contrast, qualitative methods are better suited to dis-
cover aspects of social life that were not, or could not, be anticipated (Bohnsack 2000,
Patton 2002).

To address the two research questions mentioned above while maintaining openness
towards possible findings – neither the *aspects* that shape narrative urban subjectivity in
general, nor the *themes* that dominate contemporary narratives of Budapest could be simply
anticipated– a method had to be found that delivers rich results with respect to both re-
search questions while remaining manageable within a PhD project. In-depth interviews
with a narrative core were identified as the most appropriate method. The first reason for
choosing this method is its strength in exploring a field whose conceptual cornerstones are
only vaguely known. In this context, the use of in-depth interviews in general, and of narra-

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[18] See the Introduction for a more detailed explanation of research questions. The distinction between *aspects*
of narrative subjectivity and narrative *themes* associated with the particular place of Budapest was briefly
explained in the Introduction and will be further elaborated upon below.

tive interviews in particular, is widely acknowledged in the literature (Bohnsack 2000, Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000, Kohli 1978, Maindok 1996, Patton 2002): 'The underlying assumption is that the perspective of the interviewee is best revealed in stories where the informant is using his or her own spontaneous language in the narration of events' (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000: 61). As already stated, *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity could not be anticipated, and first clues as to which aspects may be significant were far from being concrete. Nor could particular *themes* that might dominate narratives of Budapest be known in advance.

As Jovchelovitch and Bauer summarise, 'the idea of narrative interviewing is motivated by a critique of the question-response schema of most interviews. In the question-response mode the interviewer is imposing structures in a threefold sense: (a) by selecting the themes and topics, (b) by ordering the questions and (c) by wording the questions in his or her language' (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000: 61; see also Schütze 1977 and 1983). In the context of this study, these characteristics of quantitative methods would pose an obstacle to uncovering the meanings that individuals associate with the city, and it is unlikely that we would learn anything about aspects and themes of narrative urban subjectivity. By contrast, the verbal narratives elicited by help of the chosen method could be expected to offer particularly rich accounts of subjective experiences and their contexts. The main reason for this is that respondents become entangled in three particular constraints in the course of narrating: 'the constraint of closing gestalt, the constraint of condensing, and the constraint of detailing' (Flick 2006: 175):

> The first makes narrators bring to an end a narrative once they have started it. The second requires that only what is necessary for understanding the process in the story becomes part of the presentation. The story is condensed not only because of limited time but also so that the listener is able to understand and follow it. The narrative provides background details and relationships necessary for understanding the story. Through these narrative constraints, the narrator's control, which dominates in other forms of oral presentation, is minimized to such an extent that awkward topics and areas are also mentioned (ibid.).

In sharing a core assumption of interpretative social research (Bohnsack 2000), the study treats human subjects as competent in uncovering what might be relevant in shaping their relation to the city. That is, instead of adopting sociologically approved variables used to describe a society's social structure (such as class, status, religion, gender, ethnicity or age), any aspects that interviewees presented as affecting their relation to the city

were accepted. Here, the narrative interview offers a particular advantage because it grants interviewees the freedom to structure their response and to decide what should be included within it. In agreeing with de Certeau's critique of scientific discourses that often marginalize subjective experience as they transfer it into a conceptual space (either because the concepts often precede the experiences that they represent, or because they are treated as more real than these experiences), I wish to invert this relationship by considering theoretical concepts and preconceptions as subsequent to urban narratives (de Certeau 1988: 20–21 and 41). Interviewees were recognised as competent in telling a story about their everyday lives in Budapest, and their narratives are appreciated as the empirical basis for the present inquiry.[19]

The second reason for choosing in-depth interviews with a narrative core as the method of inquiry relates to the narrative quality of urban experience as discussed in the previous chapter. What could express this narrative experience better than the narrative generated within an in-depth interview? To accept this means to accept a continuity or translatability between a lived narrative and a verbal narrative obtained in an interview; a continuity that eventually could be extended to include the sociologist's narrative, that is, his or her interpretation of the field studied. One protagonist of the continuity argument, David Carr, has been discussed already in support of this claim. His work points to manifold formal and structural similarities between the narratives of everyday life and the verbal stories people tell about them. Similarities include a narrative's beginning-middle-end structure, the fact that both lived and told stories are directed towards a real or imagined audience, and the narrator's selection of relevant places and events that are supportive of his or her narrative.

A further argument on the continuity between lived experience, its narrative account and the sociologist's interpretation of the field can be found in de Certeau's work. In relying on Kant's reasoning in *Critique of Judgement*, de Certeau suggests that there is a structural analogy between verbal narratives, (scientific) thinking and the practices of everyday life: at the micro-level, all three depend on myriad acts of judgement that differentiate a *before* from an *after* and thereby sustain a dynamic equilibrium between the subject of experience and the elements of their world (de Certeau 1988: 72–6). Narrative accounts of everyday ac-

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[19] This neither means that narratives were adopted without being subjected to critical analysis (see the below section on the interpretation of narratives), nor that empirical data come before everything else. Indeed, narratives would not have been identified as the object of interpretation without theoretical assumptions having been made about the narrative quality of the urban experience.

tions, de Certeau maintains, rely upon the same formal principles that both everyday actions and theory building do: 'If the art of speaking is itself an art of operating and an art of thinking, practice and theory can be present in it' (ibid: 77). That is, verbal narratives mediate between non-verbal actions and their theorisations, and 'the same practices appear now in a verbal field, now in a field of non-linguistic actions' (ibid: 78). For this reason, de Certeau concludes, a verbal narrative does not have 'the status of a document that does not know what it says ... On the contrary, it is a know-how-to-say ... exactly adjusted to its object, and, as such, no longer the Other of knowledge; rather it is a variant of the discourse that knows and an authority in what concerns theory' (ibid: 78).

Because of the structural similarities between lived experience, its narrative account and the sociologist's interpretation of the latter, verbal narratives can be reasonably expected both to represent lived experience and to provide a starting point for extracting and theorising aspects and themes that govern it. In this sense, verbal narratives may be regarded as *linguistic sculptures* produced within the social context of an interview. Just as sculptures contain references to the materials and tools used, and the skills and intentions of the sculptor, in the same way narratives can disclose aspects and themes that inform individuals' relationship with the city.[20]

At the same time it is important to recognise that the interview itself constitutes a social context for verbal narratives which it therefore inevitably influences. However, such an influence is not problematic in itself. As we have seen in the previous chapter, narratives are always performed before an audience whose perceived expectations they reflect. Therefore, one could argue that it is precisely because of the intersubjective character of subjectivity that information must be elicited in a social context, rather than in the artificial and isolated situation of surveys (Hollstein 1998). Data collected through qualitative methods acknowledges that subjective truth cannot be elicited other than through the normal opacity of interaction. Mindfulness of this opacity is an essential ingredient of interpretation: researchers should critically reflect on their own input to the empirical data obtained, and consider it in the process of interpretation. This will make their interpretations of social phenomena, and the conclusions that they reach, more plausible to their readers.

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[20] This is not to say that all aspects and themes that affect a lived narrative will necessarily manifest themselves within a verbal story. As I have argued in Chapter 1, a theoretical and methodological focus on subjectivity as *narrative* subjectivity inevitably produces its own blind spots that may hinder the discovery of certain aspects of urban subjectivity.

Learning is a social process; and learning about aspects and themes that affect urban narratives presupposes an appreciation of interviewees as an indispensable source of one's understanding. That is, understanding narrative urban subjectivity grows from an openness to listening to others' stories. 'Qualitative inquiry', as Patton (1990: 7) notes, 'cultivates the most useful of all human capacities – the capacity to learn from others'.

The dialogue between emerging concepts and data selection

The study was conducted with an emphasis on the reciprocity between research practice and the formulation of aspects and themes that inform narrative urban subjectivity. Empirical findings were granted the power to identify and to refine individual aspects and themes, which in turn affected decisions about data collection and interpretation. These steps were executed again and again until the refined set of aspects and themes of narrative urban subjectivity resisted significant change through new empirical data. The outcome of this process is, thus, beyond a mere description of social reality, a set of concepts *grounded* in empirical research. This method, known as theoretical sampling within grounded theory is summarised by Corbin and Strauss as follows:

> Unlike conventional methods of sampling, the researcher [engaged in theoretical sampling; AS] does not go out and collect the entire set of data before beginning the analysis. Analysis begins after the first day of data gathering. Data collection leads to analysis. Analysis leads to concepts. Concepts generate questions. Questions lead to more data collection so that the researcher might learn more about those concepts. This circular process continues until the research reaches the point of *saturation*; that is, the point ... when all the concepts are well defined and explained. (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 144–5; emphasis in original)

This implies that the research questions presented above were in fact not worded in exactly that manner at the beginning of the study. Rather, they emerged after a number of interviews had been conducted and analysed. That is, the study commenced with rather open questions on narrative urban subjectivity, while the research questions that conceive of it as being informed by various aspects already represent a *result* of the study. This is even truer for individual aspects that affect narrative urban subjectivity, such as memory, social collectivities, urban design and people's sense of being at home in the city. Some of these aspects were vaguely anticipated, while others were not considered at all prior to conducting the study.

The dialogue between research practice and the formulation of concepts contributed to identifying aspects that inform narrative urban subjectivity. For example, the aspect of belonging had not been considered in advance and was added to the agenda after the first interviews had been analysed. However, once recognised to be relevant, successive interviews were conducted with an awareness of it; that is, whenever the aspect of belonging (or its opposite: displacement) emerged during an interview it was explored in detail. As a result, the aspect of belonging could be better conceptualised in the course of the study.

The actual interview

Each in-depth interview commenced with the same question to stimulate a narrative: 'Tell me about Budapest from the moment you came to know it until today. You may tell anything that comes to your mind – any details are interesting to me. I won't interrupt you while you are talking, but I will make notes for later questions.' In accordance with the instructions given in the literature (Hermanns 1995, Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000, Maindok 1996), interviewees were not interrupted until they communicated that their narrative had come to an end: 'When the narration starts, it must not be interrupted until there is a clear coda, meaning that the interviewee pauses and signals the end of the story' (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000: 63). The purpose of this is to allow the beginning-middle-end structure of a narrative to unfold, into which interviewees can accommodate places, events and contexts that they consider important, and thereby also clarify how these relate to each other. While narrating, interviewees were encouraged to keep on talking by a conscious application of sounds and gestures (nodding, confirming sounds) signalising attentiveness and my interest in their stories: 'During the narration, the interviewer abstains from any comment other than non-verbal signals of attentive listening and explicit encouragement to continue the narration' (ibid.). Mindfulness was required to distribute sounds and gestures evenly, so that interviewees would not interpret them as judging particular contents of their narrative, but rather as welcoming their narrative as a whole.

Once a narrative has come to an end, follow-up narratives were stimulated based on topics that emerged during the initial narration. The decision as to which themes should be explored further was based on two criteria: on the impression whether a supposedly relevant aspect of a person's relation to Budapest had been presented in sufficient depth during the initial narrative (sometimes themes were touched briefly only and signalled that there

was something more to be revealed) and on my ad-hoc interpretations during the initial narration, which I wanted to test. Questions on both under-explored themes and ad-hoc interpretations were translated into words and phrases that respondents had used in their initial narrative, in order not to impose my own language on them: 'The exmanent questions of the interviewer are translated into immanent questions using the language of the informant to complete the gaps in the story' (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000: 64).

Narratives and follow-up narratives occupied about half of each interview and were followed by a conversation that further explored previously mentioned themes. Within this phase, other questions could be asked to further my understanding of an individual case, for example about a respondent's biography. Sometimes, I asked questions to elicit clear statements or justifications: 'So far, every interviewee has talked about the Heroes Square. Why is it that you did not even mention it?'

Follow-up narratives and the subsequent phase of conversation also helped cover a couple of themes laid down in advance in a topic list. These included consumption and leisure activities, cultural institutions, the perception of the nineteenth century urban fabric, vestiges of the socialist past, Budapest during socialism, recent urban change, and the perception of strangers. The purpose of the topic list was to increase the richness of each narrative as well as to provide a loose basis for comparison between individual cases.[21] However, with growing confidence in the method employed, and in the rich material obtained through the initial narrative and follow-up narratives, I became more flexible in applying the topic list. This is not to say that the above themes were not covered any more, but this happened increasingly *en-passant* during the follow-up narratives, or during the phase of conversation. For example, if somebody did not talk about symbols or monuments of the Hungarian nation or history, or did not mention or indicate a deep sense of social class or status in his or her narrative, I did not insist on exploring this topic. The topic list became more important again when, occasionally, the initial narrative and follow-up narratives were rather short, requiring me to take a more structuring role throughout the interview. Interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. Some were conducted in interviewees' homes, others at their place of work, yet others in the researcher's flat, and one

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[21] I use the term *topic list* instead of *interview manual*, because no precise questions were worded prior to the interview. A topic list served as a reminder of themes to be covered, with no order of themes set up in advance.

interview in a public library. All interviews took place in a friendly atmosphere, and all informants were open to telling their story of the city.

Complementary research methods

During the pre-test phase, which consisted of five interviews, photography and mental maps were considered as additional methods to in-depth interviews. However, both methods were then abandoned for reasons explained below. Furthermore, initially I had considered focusing my research on the inner city district of *Terézváros* [hereafter Theresatown] rather than on the entire city of Budapest.

The initial reason for choosing Theresatown as the site of research was, on the one hand, its central location that would ensure that all respondents knew it well and thus could talk about it. On the other hand, the district hosts a complex mix of populations and uses, and parts of it have undergone significant transformation since 1989. Therefore, I assumed that through eliciting respondents' relation to this single district I could learn about themes that inform contemporary narratives of Budapest as a whole, while, through directing narratives towards a spatially confined area I could compare individual narratives more easily. However, the first five interviews revealed that it is problematic to try directing narratives towards a single district of the city. From a methodological point of view, this would contradict the core principle of the narrative interview, namely to allow interviewees to structure their own response and decide what they wish to include in it. From a practical point of view, none of the five interviewees confined their response to the district of Theresatown but quickly transcended its boundaries to talk about Budapest as a whole. I accepted this, and from then on I asked interviewees to talk about Budapest in general. Because they addressed Budapest as a whole, three of the five initial narratives were included into the final sample (the other two were not used purely because of poor quality sound recording).

As mentioned above, photography and mental maps were considered as additional methods initially. Within the discipline of anthropology photography is a well established method. The range of visual material used for research purposes includes interviewees' existing images (typically their family albums), images that they are asked to take as part of the research process, or pictures taken by the researcher (Pink 2001, Rose 2001). Usually, images are hereby not so much subject to discourse analysis but introduced as means of

generating narratives during an interview, that is, they induce a dialogue between interviewee and researcher. It is about 'how to build meaningful interviews around the photographs by shifting from the specific photograph to the general emerging description, and then back to the specific' (Tomaselli 1993: 211). Photographs may add aspects otherwise not articulated within the verbal narrative. Interviewees' attempts to translate what they see into language (including a justification why they had taken a specific image) can provide further interesting insight in their making sense of their world. As Pink puts it:

> images are made meaningful through the subjective gaze of the viewer ... [E]ach individual produces these photographic meanings by relating the image to his or her existing personal experience, knowledge and wider cultural discourses ... It is not simply a matter of asking how informants provide 'information' in 'response' to the content of images. Rather, ethnographers should be interested in how informants use the content of the images as vessels in which to invest meanings and through which to produce and represent their knowledge, self-identities, experiences and emotions. (Pink 2001: 67–8)

However, although almost every interviewee possessed one or several family albums, hardly anybody had photographs of Budapest to hand. Budapest as the given site of everyday activities seemed, with a few exceptions, not worthy of depiction. Nor could I ask interviewees to take images prior to the interview: to depict only a few sites of Budapest would have clearly exceeded the time limit that respondents would be willing to invest. The remaining possibility – using my own photographs of Budapest – did not deliver particularly rich results either. With the exception of one newcomer to Budapest (Rita, whose case I will discuss in Chapter 7) it led to the reproduction of statements already present in the initial narratives.[22] In yet another case images proved to be an obstacle to a verbal narrative.

At the end of the first three pre-test interviews, interviewees were asked to draw a map of Theresatown. Although this method was somewhat useful for keeping people talking whilst drawing, these accompanying stories did not reveal themes not mentioned previously. The drawings favoured geographical aspects of interviewees' images of the city, such as paths, edges, nodes and landmarks (cf. Lynch 1960) and their arrangement in space, without revealing much of their relation to everyday practices and the meanings

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[22] During the first five interviews I asked respondents to look at my photographs of Budapest prior to the interview, but it was left entirely to them how to integrate them into their narrative.

respondents associate with places in the city. The very method of mental mapping encourages people to 'concentrate especially on one particular visual quality: the apparent clarity or 'legibility' of the cityscape' (Lynch 1960: 2). Yet while Lynch associated a positive value with clarity and suggested that urban planners accomplish it by design (ibid: 2–3), reducing the urban experience to the aspect of legibility can hardly be expected to provide a truthful representation of the urban experience: a map, after all, is not a narrative.[23] For these reasons, I did not take the use of photographs or mental maps any further forward in this study.

Selection criteria and sample size

The heterogeneity of the sample was the main criterion when selecting interviewees. Cases that differed significantly from each other were expected to lead to very different narratives. This in turn, I assumed, would not only help identify different *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity, but also reveal different *themes* that dominate individual narratives of Budapest.

The first interviewees were selected along variables such as class, age or gender. Once their narratives were analysed, the knowledge of the field acquired helped identify other relevant variables that in turn helped decide whom to further include into the sample, and so on. By taking this approach, I relied on the guidelines on theoretical sampling (Corbin and Strauss 2008, Glaser and Strauss 1967, Merkens 2000, Strauss and Corbin 1990, Wiedemann 1995) that advise selecting cases that have a conceptually rewarding relation to research questions. The circle of selecting interviewees, analysing their narratives, identifying narrative aspects and themes, and considering these when selecting further interviewees was carried out until a saturation point with regards to both research interests was reached. This approach also provided the solution to what Bauer and Aarts describe as the *corpus-theoretical paradox*: representations, although at the core of research interests, are intrinsic to the field studied and cannot be anticipated. Therefore, it is not possible to determine the constitution or size of the sample in advance: 'qualitative researchers face the corpus-theoretical paradox. They set out to study the varieties in the themes ... and practices of

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[23] Nevertheless, mental maps may reveal more than the geographical image of the city only. Consider the example of a middle-class citizen who draws an area of dense cultural activities while leaving predominantly minority inhabited residential areas blank.

social life. However, as these varieties are yet unknown, and therefore also their distribution, the researchers cannot sample according to a representativeness rationale ... [but] conceive the corpus as a system that grows' (Bauer and Aarts 2000: 31).

The findings presented in the following chapters are based on twenty in-depth interviews, conducted between April 2005 and May 2006. In the sample there are people of different age (between 20 and 89), different social backgrounds (working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class), men and women, people of different faiths, people who were born and raised in Budapest, people who moved to it recently, people who moved away a long time ago yet return occasionally, and people who never lived there but still have a strong relation with the city. The distinction between degrees of familiarity with Budapest (conceptualised as a distinction between newcomers, emigrants, frequent returnees, and long time residents) is a tribute to the first empirical findings that identified a sense of belonging at the core of interviewees' relation to Budapest. This is an example for applying the basic idea of theoretical sampling, namely to reflect the emerging concepts when including further cases into the sample.

Interviewees were selected by help of the snowball technique (Flick 1995: 76, Patton 2002: 237). At the end of each interview I asked respondents to suggest possible further interviewees among their acquaintances. If the person recommended in this way appeared to be 'interesting', I asked interviewees to contact them. In this case, I asked interviewees not to disclose the nature and questions of the interview; all that prospective interviewees needed to know was that a young Hungarian sociologist studying in England was interested in their views of Budapest. In fact, most people agreed to participate assuming that I desperately needed their help to accomplish my studies. Participating with the intention to help me proved to be beneficial for eliciting their narratives.

The snowball technique made it easy for me to identify a number of possible interviewees in a city where I hardly knew anybody and being contacted by a friend or acquaintance (rather than by me) ensured that future interviewees were from the outset sympathetic towards being included into the sample. This approach was further suggested by the fact that many Hungarians are suspicious towards surveys of all different kinds, as Demszky noticed during her research in a middle-class residential district on the outskirts of Budapest: 'Criminals sometimes pass themselves off as market researchers or sociologists. The fear of blacklegs and burglars is so pervasive that, without exception, interviewees barri-

caded themselves beyond multiple safety locks, double doors, fences and other barriers' (Demszky 2006: 54).

Within the snowball technique the requirements of theoretical sampling were considered. Through respondents' recommendations I was able to obtain initial information about potential interviewees, and this in turned helped me decide whether the recommended person – judged by the emerging conceptual framework of the study, and dependent on whom I had interviewed already – was the right person to be interviewed. The table on the next page gives an overview on interviewees included in the sample.

Data gathering was terminated after the twentieth interview. By this time the *aspects* that inform narrative urban subjectivity had clearly emerged and could be refined to a degree that further interviews were not expected to make a significant contribution. Further, a variety of major *themes* had been identified that inform people's narratives of Budapest. Although more interviews could have revealed new *themes*, or added manifestations of existing ones (think of the manifold possible manifestations of themes like class, religiosity or sexuality alone), the search for additional themes was not pursued further since such an aim was seen as subordinate to the first research interest, namely to identify *aspects* that inform narrative urban subjectivity in general. *Aspects* and *themes*, in turn, happened to be often closely related. For example, a sense of belonging to a social collectivity, which the empirical study identified as one *aspect* of urban subjectivity, could manifest itself as different *themes* that refer to the collectivities of class, status, nation or religion. The conceptual relation between themes and aspects will be elaborated in the next section.

Interpretation of individual cases

Qualitative social research regards social reality as intersubjectively constructed, with no substantial difference between individuals' interpretations of their world and sociologists' interpretations of individuals' interpretations. In this context, Schutz's (1990a) distinction between first and second order constructs might be consulted: first order constructs belong to the realm of everyday life and serve as a basis for second order constructs by sociologists. Between the two constructs there is only a gradual difference: it is the reflection of construction criteria and their explication that distinguishes scientific constructs from those of everyday life:

Interviewees included into the sample

	Name, Age, Profession	Biography & Budapest
1	Éva, 58, chemist	Grew up in Cluj, Romania, migrated to Munich in 1985, visits Budapest regularly
2	Hajnal, 27, sales representative	Grew up in a town in rural Hungary, has lived in Budapest for four years
3	Attila, 27, waiter	Grew up and lives in Budapest
4	György, 29, head of customer service at a construction company	Grew up in a town in rural Hungary, has lived in Budapest for four years
5	Márta, 24, student	Grew up in Cluj, Romania, has lived in Budapest for two years
6	Rita, 20, waitress	Grew up in a village in rural Hungary, has lived in Budapest for two years
7	Miklós, 24, employee at Hungarian Railways	Grew up and lives in Budapest
8	Tamás, 30, editor of a Catholic newspaper	Grew up and lives in Budapest
9	Zsófia, 27, employee at Telecom Hungary	Grew up and lives in Budapest
10	Erzsébet, 89, retired	Grew up in rural Hungary, has lived in Budapest since 1941
11	Gábor, 35, photographer	Grew up in rural Hungary, has lived in Budapest since 1992
12	Lea, 83, retired	Grew up in a town in rural Hungary, deported to Auschwitz, has lived in Budapest since 1946
13	Róbert, 58, locksmith	Grew up and lives in Budapest
14	Helén, 54, runs her own travel agency	Grew up in rural Hungary, moved to Budapest in 1962, has lived in rural Hungary since 1979
15	László, 53, cantor of the Great Synagogue	Grew up and lives in Budapest
16	Ádám, 38, self-employed book binder	Grew up in a town in rural Hungary, moved to Budapest in 1987
17	Andrea, 36, hair-dresser	Grew up and lives in Pesterzsébet, a rural-like district on the outskirts of Budapest
18	Margit, 58, hair-dresser	Grew up and lives in Pesterzsébet, a rural-like district on the outskirts of Budapest
19	András, 56, taxi driver	Moved to Budapest in 1960, then to rural Hungary in 1973, then back to Budapest in 1985. Lives in Visegrád, commutes to Budapest daily
20	Vera, 79, retired	Grew up in Budapest, migrated to Zurich in 1956, visits Budapest twice a year

The thought objects constructed by the social scientist refer to and are founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thought of man living his everyday life among his fellow-men. Thus, the constructs used by the social scientist are, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene, whose behaviour the scientist observes and tries to explain. (Schutz 1990a: 6)

To control the interpretation of empirical material (in our case, the interpretation of the first degree constructs expressed within individuals' narratives of Budapest), qualitative procedures of text interpretation have been developed. To make the findings of the study plausible to the reader, the individual steps of the research process, from case selection to the interpretation of findings, should be made transparent.

Narratives were analysed in five steps. The steps will be illustrated through the case of one interviewee, László, the cantor of the Great Synagogue. The inclusion of this concrete example will help explain the distinction between *aspects* and *themes*. As mentioned above, *aspects* refer to aspects of narrative subjectivity (as associated with the first research interest), such as a sense of belonging to social collectivities, memory, forms and functions of the city, and a sense of belonging to the city. *Themes* (associated with the second research interest) refer to narrative themes associated with the particular place of Budapest, such as for example memories of socialism or recent urban change. The individual steps of analysis and their relation to research questions are summarised and illustrated in the figure on page 56.

First, each interview was transcribed.[24] Transcripts included notes on slips of the tongue, pauses and emphasised words. The accuracy of the transcript helped preserve the information of the verbal narrative, which is an important precondition for its analysis. To gain an overview on *themes*, transcripts were divided into sequences and given codes to summarise their content (the second step): 'Coding ... disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments' (Schwandt 2001: 26). Corbin and Strauss have termed this step open coding employed for 'breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data' (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 198). In the case of László, themes that emerged during the interview included accounts of places and activities associated with the everyday life of the Jewish community, of experiences of discrimination in public, of the perceived attributes of being Jewish, of events that

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[24] Transcribing is, strictly speaking, not yet part of data analysis but a preliminary to it.

strengthened a Jewish identity, and such like. At this early stage of analysis, codes to signify sequences within the transcribed interview text adopted words and phrases used by interviewees. This helped maintain openness towards findings which could not be anticipated, and fulfilled the requirement explained above, namely not to foil the richness of interview data by quickly imposing one's own language and theoretical interests upon it.

Then, in the light of emerging concepts, codes became increasingly abstract until they finally signified the *themes* of an individual narrative and/or the *aspects* that inform narrative urban subjectivity (the third step). In the literature, this step is described as *axial* and *selective coding*, subsumed under the concept of *theoretical coding* (Böhm 2000; Flick 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Wiedemann 1995). The term *theoretical* reflects that coding is an important step of data analysis that mediates between an individual case and the emerging theoretical concepts. Thereby, the difference between *axial* and *selective* coding is a gradual one. From the variety of themes identified through open coding, 'those are selected that seem to be most promising for a further elaboration. These axial categories are enriched with as many passages as possible' (Flick 2006: 301; see also Corbin and Staruss 2008: 198–9; Böhm 2000: 478–81; Wiedemann 1995: 443–4). Selective coding, then, 'continues the axial coding on a higher level of abstraction' (Flick 2006: 302; see also Böhm 2000: 482–3; Wiedemann 1995).

In László's case, the themes that had been identified through open coding were integrated into the concept of a religious narrative, recognised to be the *core theme* of his accounts of Budapest. At the same time, identifying core themes accomplished my interest in the second research question. From the perspective of the first research question, the core theme of religiosity was identified as a sub-aspect that, with other sub-aspects such as respondents' sense of class, status or nationality, constitutes one major aspect of narrative urban subjectivity, namely individuals' sense of belonging to a social collectivity. That is, core themes (as associated with the second research interest) were simultaneously seen as sub-aspects (as associated with the first research interest). In this way, aspects and themes happened to be closely related. Once individual aspects of narrative urban subjectivity were identified, variation within each aspect was not so much achieved through a search for new cases but through a re-reading of already existing ones in the light of a newly emerged aspect.

The fourth step consisted of the reconstruction of individual cases, based on themes and aspects identified under the previous step. Interpretation started with assumptions about the meaning of the transcribed interview, usually formulated along individual sequences. These preliminary interpretations were then read against other parts of the same narrative by which these interpretations were strengthened, modified or dropped. That is, the gradually emerging meaning of a transcribed interview text, the emerging themes of narratives of Budapest, and the emerging aspects of narrative urban subjectivity were constantly related to each other and were granted power to modify each other.

Axial and selective coding helped identify core themes, sub-aspects and aspects, and this in turn affected the axial and selective coding of subsequent interviews. Sometimes, already coded interviews were re-coded in the light of a newly emerging theme or aspect. Interpretation is not a straightforward linear process, but circular and often intuitive. Therefore, the above presentation of steps of interpretation and the distinctions made between them should be recognised as being mainly illustrative in character.

Schematic representation of the relationship between *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity, *themes* of narratives of Budapest, and steps of *coding*, illustrated along the example of a religious narrative.
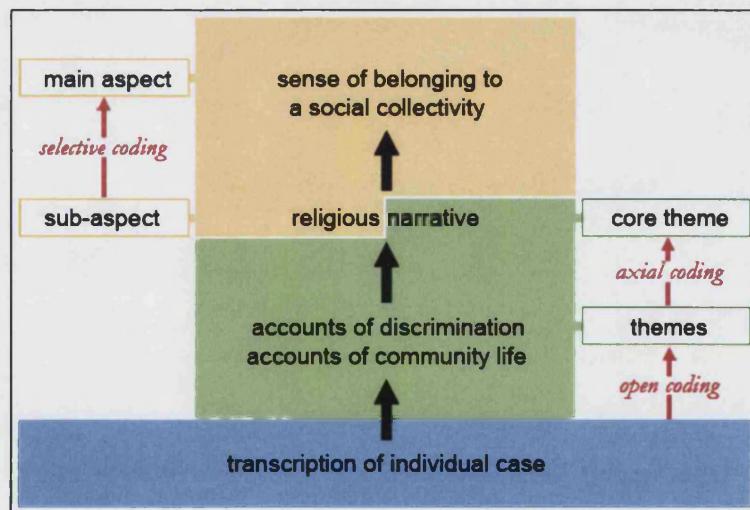
Once interpretation had come to an end, individual cases were summarised (the fifth step). Each summary consists of a 'thick description' (Geertz) of the most essential themes and aspects of a case. Thick descriptions, as Patton puts it, 'open up a world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places ... in such a way that we can understand the phenomenon studied and draw our own interpretations about meanings and significance' (Patton 2002: 438).

A case summary, however, is not simply the summary of an interviewee's narrative. Rather, it is the researcher's narrative of the interviewee's narrative. As the researcher interprets a narrative, he or she necessarily condenses it in accordance with the questions that guide the research: As Denzin states, '[i]t is the researcher who decides what is the case's own story' (Denzin, cited in Demszky: 85). It is the researcher's responsibility, however, not to overly distort an initial narrative and to ensure that a case summary represents the original narrative of the interviewee. To achieve this, I proceeded as follows:

In order for a certain theme to be identified as informing a narrative of Budapest, a set of related practices subsumable under a common concept had to be identified first. For example, a religious narrative may integrate various interrelated practices: accounts of churches and places of the religious community; a mapping of the city according to districts where the community lives; a favouring of places where one is likely to meet fellow church members; accounts of the narrator's religiosity and its display in the public realm; memories of events that formed or contested a religious identity; and such like.

Second, in order for a narrative to be seen as informed by a certain theme, a person's identification with the corresponding set of practices had to become obvious. Thereby, the object of identification had to be the *collection* of practices *perceived as belonging together* – a simple identification with each of the individual practices in isolation was not regarded as sufficient. In the above example, the mere presence of individual practices – such as going to church or favouring the places of the religious community – would not have justified identification of the theme of religiosity, unless the narrator's *sense of religiosity*, that is, his or her identification with the totality of corresponding practices became obvious.

By applying these two criteria, I favoured themes presented as being relevant for somebody's relation to Budapest above the mere presence of structural constraints and objective attributes, such as a person's class, gender, religion or ethnicity – unless these were implicitly or explicitly reflected within a narrative. In doing so, I share Fincher and Jacobs's view that 'describing, or ... mapping identities as if based around stable and pregiven categories of distinction is problematic. Critical studies of difference must instead chart the varied processes by which difference is constituted' (Fincher and Jacobs 1998b: 6).

In each narrative only a limited number of themes come into play, some more dominant than others. Case descriptions focus on the more dominant themes, that is, on *core*

themes[25] through which we can understand the most about an individual's relation to Budapest. Similarly, although all aspects that inform narrative urban subjectivity are present within every narrative to some extent, usually one aspect dominates. Case descriptions thus usually focus on a small number of core themes in their ability to illustrate one *aspect* of narrative urban subjectivity.

Core themes and aspects are typical core themes and aspects

Apart from being the analytical condensation of an individual case, core themes and aspects should be recognised as associated with the social world whose structural characteristics they reflect. In this sense, core themes and aspects are *typical* core themes and aspects that cannot be considered the exclusive property of a single case: 'Things that happen within an individual case are, if they ought to be interpreted by the sociologist, always of a universal nature. An individual case tells us about what is socially "determined" ... in fact quite as much as a collective does' (Honer 1991: 325; see also Honer 1993). In contrast to quantitative approaches, qualitative research does not provide an objective representation of social phenomena, in the sense that it would quantify their frequency or establish statistical correlations between them. Rather, qualitative research aims at 'typifying the varieties of representations of people in their life world' (Bauer and Aarts 2000: 32).

To typify, firstly, means to reconstruct, along the lines of one's interest in the matter, an individual case and its basic characteristics, in conjunction with the social context in which they emerged or to which they are directed (Honer 1991, Kohli 1978). This enhances understanding of both the individual case and its social context, and how these mutually affect each other. To typify, secondly, means to see an individual case in conjunction with other cases that can be expected to display similarities due to the structural similarities of their contexts. Therefore, typifying abstracts from an individual case in order to say something about a group of individuals, and about society as a whole. To typify, thirdly, means to examine an individual case in order to reconstruct its most characteristic features. This echoes Weber's concept of the ideal type that emerges 'by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according

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[25] The use of the term is inspired by Keupp's concept of biographical core narratives (1999, chapter 4).

to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct' (Weber 1949: 90; emphasis in original).

Weber regarded the construction of ideal types as a heuristic tool of the social scientist; a tool that serves as a means to explain and to understand social phenomena, but '[i]n its conceptual purity, this mental construct ... cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*' (ibid.; emphasis in original).

The presentation of findings

The findings of the study are presented in Chapters 4 to 7. Chapter 4 looks at narrative urban subjectivity as being informed by individuals' sense of belonging to social collectivities, most notably their sense of social status. Chapter 5 addresses the importance of memory for relating to the city. Chapter 6 investigates forms and functions of the city in their capacity for co-authoring urban narratives. Finally, Chapter 7 examines the aspect of belonging. All four aspects are developed from, and presented through, one or several individual cases that illustrate their empirical relevance and their concrete manifestation particularly well.

The presentation of cases also covers the second research interest. Individual narratives provide an interesting insight into contemporary perceptions of Budapest in everyday life, including manifold accounts of the city's recent change. Through this, we can understand something about the general theme of transformation that – with significant local differences – has affected and challenged the lives of people in Eastern Europe since 1989. Furthermore, individual cases provide powerful examples of different ways of relating to the city. People who inhabit the 'same' physical space attach different meanings to it and use it in different ways.

As the empirical findings reveal, core themes of different narratives may not have much in common: sometimes it is class, at other times nation or religion that shapes somebody's relation to Budapest the most. Sometimes, personal memories or important biographical events provide more powerful insights into this relationship than well established social categories. At yet other times, the city as metropolis seems to have shaped a narrative more than anything else. In the case of one narrative, Budapest is largely absent, suggesting

that certain aspects of one's life may substitute a relation to the city almost completely. In conclusion, *there is no meta-narrative that would pervade different stories of Budapest.*

Ethical issues

Any qualitative research raises its own ethical issues. The method of in-depth interviews involves close personal interactions and may bring about delicate situations as regards to confidentiality and anonymity. Due to the narrative constraints of *closing gestalt, condensing* and *detailing* (see above), interviewees may talk about sensitive topics that, under normal circumstances they would cover with a stranger.

Prior to the interview, respondents were informed about the general topic of the research and the identity of the researcher. They were told that their stories would be read by a small group of people initially (supervisors, examiners and colleagues) who would treat them confidentially, and would be published and presented at conferences eventually. In the latter two cases, interviewees were given the promise that their responses would be anonymised. A written consent form was not presented, for this would have appeared unusual and might even have raised suspicion about the possible hidden motives of the researcher. All respondents agreed with these conditions, so that the overall requirement of an informed consent, given voluntarily (Flick 2006: 49; Patton 2002: 405–8) was fulfilled.

The method of the narrative interview requires allowing interviewees to structure their response. Sometimes, however, I had the impression that a respondent was touching upon a delicate theme that he or she then quickly changed. When this happened, I sought to return to the topic in question during the phase of follow-up narratives to see whether it was potentially relevant for explaining a respondent's relation to Budapest. On these occasions I tried wording my questions sensitively, leaving the decision about exploring the theme in question entirely to the interviewee. The only really delicate situation arose during an interview with a Jewish lady who survived deportation to Auschwitz where the rest of her family had been murdered. While recollecting her traumatic experience, she had tears in her eyes again and again. Fortunately, I was able to respond to her story by mentioning my Jewish grandfather, and this made her feel that we shared something. A relationship of trust was established without which the interview possibly would have ended prematurely.

With the aim of identifying main aspects of narrative urban subjectivity, Budapest was chosen as the location of the empirical study – a place that has changed quite radically within the past decades and in particular since 1989. In a place of transition, I thought, people will be challenged to incorporate the obvious change they face by re-adjusting their narratives in one way or the other. From a sociological point of view, I assumed, these would be particularly exciting times: when habitual and largely unreflected ways of relating to the city cease to function, individuals' efforts to re-find and to re-define that relation will reveal a great deal about otherwise rather hidden or less obvious aspects of narrative urban subjectivity.[26]

The next chapter introduces Budapest by sketching its history and its recent transformation, with the intention to establish a basic level of knowledge that will help the reader put the narratives of its inhabitants into context. That is, Chapter 3 attempts to provide a useful *context* to the *text*[27] of narratives which it renders more comprehensible for the reader unfamiliar with Budapest or Hungarian society.

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[26] See the Introduction for more reasons why Budapest was chosen as the place of the study.

[27] On the relevance of context for the interpretation of text see Gadamer 1989.

3   INTRODUCING BUDAPEST

The urban history of Budapest is fairly short. By the eighteenth century, the small towns of Buda, Pest and Óbuda, due to their advantageous position at the banks of the River Danube, developed into the country's centre for crafts and commerce, but it was Bratislava that, at the behest of the Habsburg conquerors, hosted the institutions of the Hungarian state. At that time, most of the area that constitutes today's inner city was located outside the boundaries of Pest on the flat Eastern bank of the Danube. The area crossed by an arm of the river consisted of one storey houses with gardens for growing vegetables, animal farms and agricultural land. Further to the east were the hunting grounds for the aristocracy (Bácskai *et al.* 2000). In 1777 the area to the north and north-east of Pest was named Theresatown after the Habsburg monarch Maria Theresa, while the southern part was called *Józsefváros* (hereafter Joseph Town). Despite the area's moderate population growth it preserved its rural character until the mid 1850s, and it took another two decades until it became an integral part of the urban fabric.

Since the eighteenth century, Hungary had formed part of the Habsburg Empire. It encompassed territories that are governed today by Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. After three decades of rigorous oppression following the events of 1848, Hungary attained autonomy from Vienna in 1867. Intent upon increasing political stability within the multi-ethnic eastern part of the Empire, the Habsburgs recognised the possible integrative role of a strong centre, for which the already significant towns Pest and Buda were predestined.

3.1   Budapest between 1873 and 1914

Budapest was created through the unification of the three towns of Pest, Buda und Óbuda in 1873; it developed – later than other European capitals like London or Paris – into a big city during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1800, less than 50,000 people lived in Budapest. 1850 figures show a significant growth of the population to 150,000, and by 1910 the city's population further increased to 880,000 (Bácskai *et al.* 2000: 91 and 142), making it Europe's eighth largest city at that time (Gyáni 1998: 51; see Maps 1 to 3, pp.223–5). The city typically consists of three to five storey buildings; in the inner city

areas of Pest typical densities were above 50,000 inhabitants per square kilometre and remained high throughout the twentieth century, with 30,000 inhabitants per square kilometre living in the district of Theresatown in 1996 (Szabó 2001: 165).

Pest's lowland geography facilitated the construction of buildings, industries and infrastructure, and its tradition in agriculture, crafts, commerce, industrial production, education and arts made it predestined to incorporate the massive urban growth in the late nineteenth century.[28] It was especially between 1860 and 1910 that Budapest developed into a modern metropolis, becoming the home of a socially and ethnically diverse population in which, like in Hungary as a whole, Hungarians formed only about half of the population. In terms of native language, in 1880 only about 55 percent of the city's population were Hungarians, while one third spoke German and a further 6 percent spoke Slovakian. By religion, 13 percent of the population were Jewish, but some sources see this figure increase to over 20 percent by 1910 (Bácskai *et al.* 2000: 143; see also Komoróczy 1999, Kovács 1995).

The impressive growth of Pest's urban fabric was fuelled by speculation and resulted in high densities, and – compared to other European cities – an undersupply of parks and open spaces (Hanák 1998: 34). The growth of the city was supported by the *Körút*[29] (hereafter Ringstrasse), built between 1872 and 1896, which serves as the backbone of the inner city down to today (see Map 2, p.224). Vienna's Ringstrasse served as a model for its construction, yet in contrast to the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in Budapest practical functions (housing and retail) rather than representative ones predominated. Although often the same architects and companies would design and erect buildings in both Budapest and Vienna, the two cities were also competing with each other. For example, Budapest has three boulevards that radiate from the old town to the outskirts, whereas Vienna has none. The most prestigious of these, the Andrássy Boulevard, connects old Pest with *Hősök Tere* [hereafter Heroes Square] and the town park behind it, passing the State Opera and Oktogon Square. It received its name after Prime Minister Andrássy who promoted its construction after having spent a couple of years in Paris where he became inspired by Haussmann's plans. At its north-eastern edge close to the town park and the Heroes Square, the Boulevard is flanked by prestigious villas, once the homes of the haute bourgeoisie.

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[28] In this respect Pest significantly differs from hilly Buda on the west bank of the Danube.

[29] Places whose names are underlined are marked in Map 5, p.227. Place names are only underlined when introduced for the first time.

The beginning of
Andrássy Boulevard,
around 1900

The Ringstrasse at
Oktogon Square, 1900

Western Railway Station
on Theresa Ringstrasse,
by August de Serres and
the Paris based Eiffel
company, completed 1877

With the rapid growth of the city and its population came institutions of the nation state (most prominently the Parliament by the banks of the Danube, facing the Castle on the other side) and urban culture: musicals, theatres, cinemas, fairs and festivals, department stores (see Bender and Schorske 1994). The inner city district of Theresatown (located on either side of Andrássy Boulevard) became the centre of these developments: in 1890, more than 500 restaurants, pubs and coffee houses were operating in the area, and 13 of Budapest's 57 brothels could be found there (Szabó 2001: 21; on mass culture in Budapest at the turn of the century see Gyáni 1997). Coffee houses and beer gardens not only provided popular destinations for citizens but also became institutions of the public sphere: it was here that literary and political groups met and debated, and political demonstrations often commenced (Gyáni 1995 and 1998: 85–97).
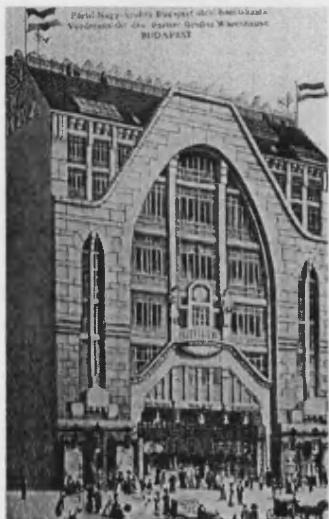
Paris Department Store on Andrássy Boulevard, 1911

The State Opera, built between 1875 and 1884 after the plans of Miklós Ybl.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Budapest's citizens became spectators of the exploding urban scenery around them; participants in a variety of spectacles previously unknown to them, such as solemn public funerals that made use of representative public spaces, political demonstrations, or large festivities like the Millennium Festival in 1896 (celebrating a thousand years of Hungarian settlement in the region), for which Heroes Square was built. At the turn of the century, countless large representative buildings, coffee houses, department stores, the Western Railway station (1877), mainland Europe's first electric underground (1896) and many more attractions emerged one after the other. It is this spectacular growth of the city – and the expansion of the bourgeois lifestyle and the

Heroes Square accommodates the statues of the Hungarian leaders at the time of land-taking in 896, placed around a column with Archangel Gabriel on its top. A gallery of 14 kings and leaders flanks the edge of the Square. Heroes Square is one of Hungary's most symbolically leaden places. It hosted the festivities of 1896 and many political, religious and cultural events throughout the twentieth century.

places associated with it – that has shaped the image of Budapest to the present day. This is what many people still refer to as Budapest's 'golden age', which they sometimes also take as a desirable model for the present time.

As the Hungarian historian of everyday life Gábor Gyáni (1995 and 1998) shows, these new developments became popular destinations – sites of pilgrimage – for many Budapesters who were excited by the urban splendour around them. In echoing Simmel's (1995) claim that the stress of urban life causes people to develop a blasé attitude towards strangers and events in the city, Gyáni suggests that the visually exciting yet increasingly complex urban scenery has become the cause of a rather detached attitude towards the city. Individuals in the late nineteenth century happily accepted the ever increasing offers of distraction and entertainment, but they typically indulged in them in the midst of a visible crowd of strangers whose identities they knew little about. In this context, Gyáni (1995: 76–84) shows how new words found their way into the Hungarian language, referring to individuals' attempts to cope with the emerging new city. Some of these words related to attempts to guess the identities of strangers through the visible attributes of their presumed economic success, and the paramount importance of the monetised economy as the impersonal medium for exchange (*cf.* Simmel 2004) is further illustrated by countless new names for money that became part of the urban vocabulary at that time.
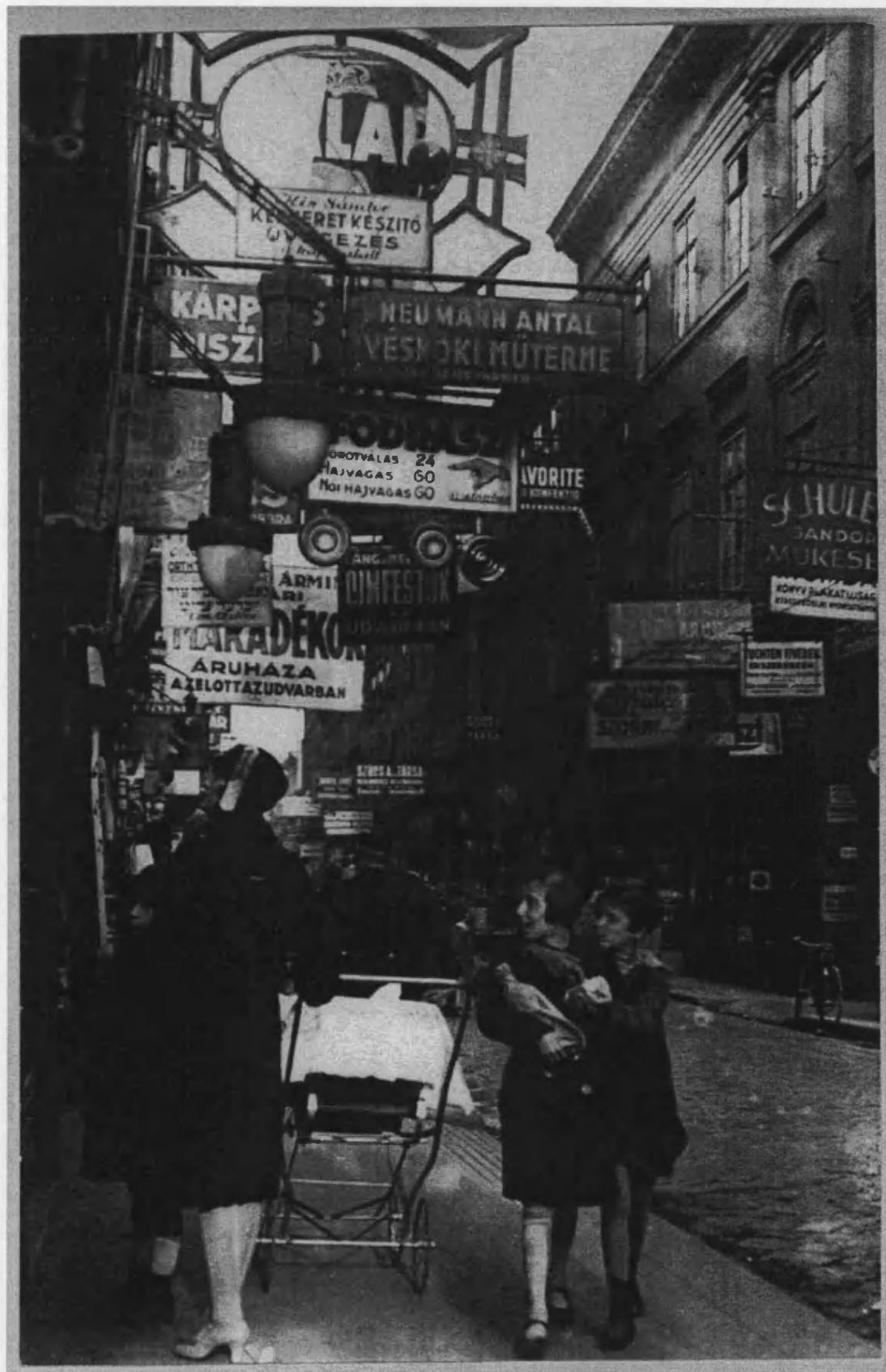
Király utca [hereafter King Street], parallel to Andrássy Boulevard, during the 1920s.

During and between the two World Wars, Budapest was the stage for various political and often violent events. While demonstrations during 1914 and 1915 were predominantly in favour of the First World War, the massive increase of the city's population combined with poverty and famine led to a change of the political climate and the radicalisation of the public. In November 1917, 100,000 workers gathered in the town park to express their sympathy with the Bolshevik revolution (Bácskai *et al.* 2000: 211). From early 1918 onwards, workers' demonstrations requesting the state to tackle poverty, to grant the right to vote, and to stop the war, became more frequent and increasingly violent, finally bringing down the Government on 31 October 1918. A couple of months later the Councils' Republic was proclaimed (ibid; see also Szabó 2001: 64). Following the 1919 Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost 71 percent of its territory (Kovács 1990: 111). Budapest, the former centre of the multi-ethnic eastern part of the Habsburg Empire, became overnight the

In the era of the Councils' Republic, the Millennium memorial underwent a distinct symbolic metamorphosis. First, the statues of Habsburg emperors were removed (while the Hungarian kings were kept). Then, for 1st of May 1919, the gallery was wrapped in red cloths, thus turning into a red wall. The column at the centre of the Square was converted into a red obelisk, around which the white statues of Marx, a metalworker, and a miner were placed.

In the early years of socialism, the so called 'House of Faith' on Andrássy Boulevard – once the headquarter of the Hungarian Nazi party – became the headquarter of the much feared Political Police, and later of the State Security Service. The building, initially the property of a Jewish painter, is known as the <u>Terror Háza</u> [hereafter House of Terror] today and hosts an exhibition on the crimes of the institutions that used it.

capital of a small sized country that had lost most of its economic and political power, together with 66 percent of its population (ibid.).

The communist revolution of spring 1919 lasted 133 days only and was followed by the Horthy era that in turn lasted until the final year of the Second World War. Horthy's counterrevolutionary regime was highly negative towards Budapest which it denigrated as liberal, cosmopolitan, communist and Jewish. Subsequently, 'purifying' the 'sin city', transforming 'guilty Budapest' into a 'Christian and Hungarian' city was part of the political agenda (Bácskai 2000: 214; Szabó 2001: 64; Gyáni 2000): 'The period between the two World Wars was characterised by the antagonism between the official politics of Christianity and nationalism and the activities, resistance and strikes of the workers' movement' (Szabó 2001: 64) carried out openly in the public realm of Budapest. This unstable and radicalised political climate combined with economic depression and a massive housing shortage, which neither the densification of areas located outside the Ringstrasse, nor the rapid growth of suburbs could sufficiently mitigate (Bácskai *et al.* 2000: 219–24).

During the Second World War, the entire city became mobilised. Most of the factories on the outskirts were involved in the production of weapons and goods required for

69

fuelling the war machinery. At the same time, food, rents and other goods became subject to centralised regulation. Furthermore, Jews were first removed from more influential positions in society and later many were deported to concentration camps. The Holocaust fully hit Budapest (initially, deportations took place from rural Hungary only) after the invasion of the city by the German army in March 1944 and the subsequent terror regime of the Hungarian Nazi Party that lasted between October 1944 and February 1945 when, after three months of siege the Red Army took over the city (ibid: 237–45).

3.3   Budapest during Socialism

The early years of socialism were characterised by severe housing shortages, economic depression and the consolidation of the regime, accompanied by terror and politically motivated murder, culminating in the 1956 uprising when, as in the final year of the Second World War, Budapest's public realm once again turned into a war zone, this time witnessing the armed confrontation between the Soviet army and protesters against the regime. However, 1956 also represented a turning point in the history of the country and the city. Above all, it led to a radical reorientation of economic politics under the new General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, János Kádár. The post 1956 era saw massive investments in infrastructure (for example, the construction of two underground lines), the erection of mass housing developments on the outskirts of the city (Bíró 1994, Demszky 2006, Preisich 1998) and – compared to other socialist countries – a relatively sophisticated provision of goods for consumption that both in the East and in the West was soon labelled 'Goulash Communism' (Szilágyi 2002).

By the early 1950s, over 90 percent of buildings in the inner city had been nationalised (Szabó 2001: 179–82), yet were completely neglected during succeeding decades (Bodnár 2001:71). Most apartments located in the fin-de-siècle buildings were in a desolate condition; many lacked hot water and central heating; individual apartments were subdivided and shared by several families; and many individuals could rent a bed only (Szabó 2001: 178; Demszky 2006: 133–4). The lack of adequate housing was so immense that it represented a threat to political stability, in particular after the events of 1956 (Bodnár 2001; Demszky 2006; Iván 1996). Consequently plans to erect one million homes within 15 years were announced in 1960.

Between 1960 and the mid 80s a large number of new housing estates were built, predominantly on the outskirts of the early twentieth century city (ibid: 66; for a detailed account see Preisich 1998). These high rise blocks may look cheap and unattractive to a Western eye today, but it is important to realise that such a view was hardly shared by their inhabitants. Young couples and families happily moved away from their low comfort homes to flats in the newly erected concrete buildings that provided hot water, central heating, toilets, bathrooms and green open spaces. Since there was no free housing market in socialist Hungary, some people had to wait for up to ten years until they were given permission to move, and as Demszky (2006: 160) shows in an empirical study, many still refer to their moving to their new homes as one of the happiest events of their lives.

New high rise developments were not only meant to alleviate existing housing shortages but also to construct the socialist society that, according to the official rhetoric, had to be 'built'. Housing developments were meant to glorify the achievements of socialism and to guide the lives of their inhabitants in desirable ways (Bodó 1998; Demszky 2006: 126–35). Through architecture, socialist urban planners wanted to influence the lives of inhabitants: 'Architecture is capable of educating society and supporting the cultivation of man' (Abraham, cited in Demszky 2006: 168). In the housing developments of the '60s and '70s, this endeavour is reflected for example in the provision of communal facilities, in conjunction with the design of individual flats:

> It is not detached housing that represents the socialist *communitarian way of life* but *large housing developments* ... According to the ideas of that time, [in these new developments; A.S.] not only individual kitchens but also individual bathrooms were considered for replacement by collective facilities such as canteens, public libraries, laundries, or the provision of facilities for children. (Demszky 2006: 132; emphasis in original)

One obvious aim behind these attempts was to marginalise the private realm of the family and to simultaneously increase control over individuals in public spaces, and to make citizens accessible to surveillance and the transmission of ideology.

As well as significant investments in housing and infrastructure, the second obvious characteristic of the Kádár era was the relatively sophisticated provision of goods for consumption, which, after four decades of deprivation, called to mind Budapest's splendour before the First World War. The section that follows seeks to give a brief overview on this.

With the exception of town centres, which were meant to demonstrate the achievements of the regime (Bíró 1994), urban design in socialism reduced the public realm to its functional aspect, such as the flow of traffic. Etele Square on the outskirts of Budapest.

Large scale housing developments in socialism were meant to be merely residential. Streets are poorly defined, and there is no retail at ground level. Kelenföld, built on the outskirts of Budapest in the 1970s.

'When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character' (Marx, cited in Habermas 1989: 128). In a society without classes, the role of individuals is no longer defined through their position in capitalist production but through their participation in the collective production of necessary goods. Being in the public realm thus becomes – in theory – a private affair. However, *in reality*, being in the public realm of socialist Budapest was not merely a private affair for two particular reasons: firstly, it was always placed under the paramount presence of symbols that represented and glorified the Workers' State or the Soviet Union through street names, statues, monuments, parades and organised festivities. Also, being in public could be political in a peculiar sense: streets and squares were places of potential surveillance and spying, in which light-hearted interaction with strangers was potentially dangerous. Furthermore, a supposedly 'private' being in public could also be politically motivated: confidential political discussions in entrances to buildings, during walks in the streets or excursions to the nearby hills of Buda were safe from recordings by the state security service – they could be observed eventually, but they could not be intercepted. All this may suggest that one of the legacies of the nineteenth century, namely the blasé individual in midst of a spectacular urban life, became strengthened further in socialism: if a wrong word at the wrong time could put one's life in danger, inner emigration seems to be the appropriate answer.

To pacify the crowd after the events of 1956 (and to demonstrate the achievements of the socialist regime), from the 1960s onwards mass consumption became a key characteristic of the Hungarian society (Szilágyi 2002). It represented a sphere of the everyday and provided an opportunity for inner migration tolerated by the state. That is, consumption was not perceived as politically dangerous (Valuch 2008) but rather as stabilising the regime. As Szilágyi emphasises, after 1956 loyalty to the regime no longer had to be proven by the 'proper' political conviction; rather, regime and population agreed upon a 'non-aggression pact': 'Who is not against us, is in favour of us' was a main slogan of the Kádár era (ibid: 40). Unlike in other socialist countries, consumption and enthusiasm for commodities was an everyday practice in socialist Budapest, and the Hungarian special way of making available a relatively sophisticated supply of goods (including a moderate level of foreign trade and the introduction of free market elements in the form of privately run

small businesses in the service sector; see Gábor 1989), and a relative freedom of speech (again, as compared with other socialist countries) came to be known in the West (and begrudged in the East) as Goulash Communism. Businesses on the Ringstrasse (named Lenin Ringstrasse at that time), on <u>Váci Street</u> or on Andrássy Boulevard (named People's Republic Street until 1990) flourished again.

Clothes and fashion constituted a major sphere of consumption. From the second half of the 1950s, the state owned department stores opened new sections to provide a larger variety of clothing (Simonovics 2007). Department store chains included the Centrum (selling clothing for the masses), the Úttörö (named after the youth organisation of the Communist party, selling fashion for the youth), the Csillag (Star) and the Verseny (Competition). Some places such as the <u>Fashion Hall</u>, the <u>Skála</u> or, most notably, the <u>Luxury</u> department store, selling high quality clothing and clothes produced for export, became literally sites of pilgrimage during socialism. As the presentation of the empirical findings reveals, for the generation over 50 these places still elicit positive memories of socialism, regardless of their position in society: for the middle-classes they provided a (limited) opportunity to continue displaying a bourgeois way of life, while for workers the same places

The Fashion Hall (former Paris department store) on Andrássy Boulevard and its interior. The banner on the top gallery translates as 'Kids' Section', the banner on the bottom as 'Long Live Comrade Stalin'.

74

symbolised their fragile inclusion into a society whose citizens were meant to be equal. Moderate income inequalities and the regulation of prices by the state meant that even workers could, occasionally, buy in places such as the Luxury department store.

Despite this, consumption in Hungary could hardly be compared with consumption in the West. The supply of goods was relatively limited and, most notably, it was orchestrated by the state. In the case of fashion, almost everything that could be bought had been previously designed and officially approved by the National Association of Artisans' Collectives and the Clothing Industry Design Company (renamed in 1968 as Fashion Design Company, and yet again in 1974 as Hungarian Fashion Institute), and the state-approved taste that was to dominate the shop windows during the next season was proclaimed in the 'Pester Fashion', the magazine of the Fashion Institute (Pirityi 2008).[30] Furthermore, prices were not established by a free market, but were fixed by the state, leading Szilálgyi (2002) to ironically define socialist Hungary as a place of consumption without commodities. People often had more money in hand than were goods they could buy.

The limited choice of bulky products made to last 'forever' could hardly satisfy individuals' demand for variety, entertainment or aesthetic quality, and people kept looking enviously towards the West. *Burda* magazines by the West German publisher of the same name, presenting the latest fashion in the West together with their patterns for sewing, were circulated between friends as precious items, and clothes received from relatives from the West, or purchased on the black market, were worn with pride.

In a study of individuals' mediation between their private sphere and the public sphere of state authority, the anthropologist Bodó (1998 and 2000) gives important clues towards understanding the link between consumption and inner emigration in socialism. Bodó shows that the rigorous expectations of the regime with respect to individuals' behaviour at festivities (from how to wave a flag to 'spontaneous' applause) or during political instructions at school – with the expectation of arbitrary punishment of deviant behaviour – over time made people retreat into the 'parallel universe' of their private sphere.[31] Above all, people engaged in delimiting their private sphere from state control, and as a result social micro spaces purified of official symbols emerged. In this respect, Bodó's work suggests a tendency to regard consumption as a non-sanctioned part of individuals' private

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[30] Changes to the name of the Institute seem to reflect the broader shift from the industrial production of necessary goods that dominated the early years of socialism towards a more tailored, fashion-driven approach to clothing, and the shift towards a more fashion-conscious customer implied within it.

[31] A similar claim – yet without empirical evidence – was made by Hankiss (1983, 1986).

Blaha Square in 1986.

'parallel universe'; as a means of delimitation and inner emigration that devalued the public realm as a sphere of experience in its own right.

One of the striking continuities between fin-de-siècle Budapest and its later socialist successor, as Gyáni's and Bodó's works suggest, lies in the paramount importance of consumption, defined as the symbolically *and* emotionally charged relationship between the human subject and the realm of objects which appear to possess qualities that in reality they do not: 'In order to be consumed an object must become a sign first' (Baudrillard 1996): *New York* coffee house, *Paris* department store, *Rakéta* vacuum cleaner, *Tuscany* residential garden. Despite the obvious political and economical differences between Budapest at the end of the nineteenth century and during socialism, what seems to have resisted change is the relation of individuals – detached from strangers and reluctant to engage in official discourse – to buildings, events and commodities in the city, and their excitement about them. Chapter 5 will further elaborate this issue.[32]

Social class and ways of life

Studies on social stratification in socialist Hungary differ with respect to the concepts used: some authors emphasise the concept of class, others that of status or lifestyle; some ground their findings empirically whilst others do not.[33] However, there is consensus in conceiving of Hungarian society during socialism as being structured vertically. Furthermore, empirical findings suggest that different social groups could be associated with, and distinguished by, their lifestyles, in particular their patterns of (cultural) consumption.

In a study conducted between 1971 and the mid 1980s, Szelényi found that despite a two-decade break in business activity the grandchildren of entrepreneurs of the pre-war era were more likely to risk starting up a business than others, as soon as the regime permitted it. The spirit of entrepreneurship, he concluded, survived times when the political environment would not permit it (Szelényi 1988: 146–59). Based on his findings, Szelényi proposes the simultaneous existence of two hierarchically structured class societies in Hungary: a redistributive-bureaucratic order based on loyalty to the socialist regime – extending from party cadres on the top of the hierarchy, through less influential intermediate positions accessible through party membership, down to workers in factories or agricultural collec-

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[32] For an elaboration of the continuity argument in the context of Budapest see Szanto 2004.

[33] For an overview on the literature on social stratification in socialist Hungary see Demszky 1998: 56–99.

tives. Parallel to this, Szelényi argues, a second class hierarchy existed – a market-based hierarchy of inequalities – extending from part-time peasants-workers at its bottom to new (small) entrepreneurs at its top (ibid: 61–120, esp. 71). In the 1970s and the 1980s, the socialist state increasingly permitted a controlled expansion of the private sector, recognising its contribution to economic wealth. In the course of this expansion, the marginalised second class hierarchy gained in significance.[34]

While Szelényi outlines the cornerstones of a class society, and (partially) supports his argument with empirical evidence, he does not elaborate on more subtle differentiations between social groups within any of the two hierarchies, or on aspects such as prestige, lifestyles or eventual mechanisms for distinguishing between them. These questions, in turn, were central to Utasi's study on lifestyles in the early 1980s.[35] With the aim of identifying social groups that shared similar ways of life, Utasi suggested distinguishing between the lifestyle groups of a) elites, b) intellectuals, c) imitators (seeking to attain the status and lifestyle of elites or intellectuals), d) object centred people (to whom the possession of goods symbolises social advancement), e) family centred people (placing the education and upward mobility of their children above their own living standards), f) people who work in both the first and the second economy to achieve a modest living standard, g) people who work very hard and still find it difficult to make ends meet, and h) those living in deprivation (Demszky 2006: 84–99).

According to Utasi, members within each of these groups shared *both* similar socio-economic conditions *and* lifestyle preferences. That is, the above groups can be integrated into a hierarchically structured class society based on people's economic conditions – with economic constraints and scarcity particularly affecting groups f, g and h. Simultaneously, class positions coincided with status and prestige, with a concern for the latter being more pronounced in groups a and b (whose members sought to distinguish themselves from others by means of their consumption habits), and in the potentially upward mobile groups c, d and e. However, Utasi also revealed that people with similar economic conditions could opt for more than one lifestyle, suggesting that lifestyles were not simply a function of class position but (partially) accessible for individual choice (ibid.).

Whether the result of choice or necessity, and whether the expression of class or status, lifestyle groups, according to Utasi, could be distinguished through their ways of life,

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[34] On the rise and course of the Hungarian second economy between the late 1960s and 1989 see Gábor 1989.

[35] The following summary of Utasi's study is based on Demszky 2006: 84–99.

particular their consumption preferences. That is, lifestyle as consumption was an obvious and visible expression of individuals' membership of a certain social group. This can be illustrated particularly well in the example of clothing and fashion, and its associated sites. The supply of clothes reached a relatively sophisticated level by the late 1960s, at least in comparison to the early years of socialism (Valuch 2007). From the late 1950s, state owned department stores opened new sections to provide both a larger quantity and a greater variety of clothing (Simonovics 2007), thus creating a real opportunity for choice. As a result, existing economic inequalities as well as differences in lifestyles became more public in character. Those with higher income and/or a higher position now had a (limited) opportunity to express their wealth and status by means of consumption and, by the same token, to distinguish themselves visibly from those who were lacking such opportunities.

Silk costume of Mrs Kádár (Specialty Salon of Female Costumes), silk evening dress (Budapest Fashion Salon), evening dress (Specialty Salon of Female Costumes).

Clothing and fashion, like other spheres of production in socialism, were subject to central planning and control. All department stores were owned by the state, and everything on display had been previously designed and officially approved by the National Association of Artisans' Collectives and the Fashion Institute. Although, as we shall see, there were a number of exceptions to this, the structure of the clothing sector was nevertheless simple rather than diversified – with existing differences being all the more revealing. Centrum department stores were selling clothes for the masses and the less wealthy. Those who could afford better quality clothes of a more distinctive taste, could shop, for example, in

the Fashion Hall on Andrássy Boulevard or, most notably, in the Luxury department store where high quality clothing, exclusive small series articles and clothes produced for export to the West were available for purchase. People with a more 'ambitious' taste could opt for the state owned boutique chain 'Ruházati Bolt' that offered small series collections, such as the label 'Pique Dame' (Simonovics 2007b). From the 1970s, people could also choose to shop in a limited number of privately owned boutiques that offered tailor-made clothes in line with western fashion, but customers often had to supply the desired textiles themselves. Party cadres in leading positions, their wives, famous actors or diplomats were in a privileged position. Their clothes were tailor made in one of the capital's special boutiques, the temples of socialist haute-couture: the *Budapest Fashion Salon* and the *Specialty Salon of Female Costumes* whose directors travelled to fashion shows abroad several times a year, buying exclusive textiles for the domestic elites such as Mrs Kádár, wife of the General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (ibid.).

3.4   Budapest Since 1989

With the collapse of state socialism in 1989 and the advent of a market-driven economy, a new era in the history of Budapest began. In this last section of the chapter I shall briefly sketch the recent transformation of the city by focusing on aspects such as the privatisation of the building stock, the uneven restoration of the inner city, increasing social inequalities and gentrification, and the symbolic transformation of the public realm.

By the late 1990s almost the entire inner city housing stock (about 95 percent of which had been previously owned by the state and later by local districts) was privatised (Izsák 2008: 336; Szabó 2001: 182). Tenants were given the opportunity to acquire their homes at prices well below their market value, depending upon the condition in which they were at the time of purchase (Bodnár 2001: 41). However, due to a lack of Government programmes to encourage the restoration of buildings – and new owners' lack of financial resources – more than a decade after the events of 1989 large parts of the inner city were still in a desolate condition: in some parts of the 8th district, for example, over 30 percent of flats still lacked toilets (ibid.).

As the state withdrew from the housing market, urban restructuring was almost entirely in private hands, where it was exposed to the financial resources and economic interests of owners. Unlike in many Western cities, there is no comprehensive urban agenda to

date that would set out wide-ranging and enforceable criteria for developing Budapest. This is in turn an unintended side effect of the 1990 reform of the administration: with the intention of overcoming centralised forms of government, political power lies predominantly with the 23 districts today (see Map 3, p.225), while the Mayor's authority is weak. Urban renewal and urban restructuring are thus the affair of private capital; projects of any scale are commonly negotiated between private actors and individual districts, which are often played off one against the other. It is on the basis of this constellation that Bodnár claims that in the post-socialist context 'privatisation of formerly state-owned dwellings is the principal means of urban restructuring' (Bodnár 2001: 56).

Some of the now privately owned buildings have been refurbished, but restoration has been partial, occurring at uneven speeds. Prime locations, such as the 1st and the 5th districts, central parts of the 6th, 7th and 8th districts, the Andrássy Boulevard and parts of the Ringstrasse where rents are high, have been quickly restored (Lichtenberger *et al.* 1995, see also Csanádi and Ladányi 1992). Many apartments have been converted to office or retail use there, and more office space (and, to a lesser extent, high quality dwellings) have been created through in-fill developments on derelict sites located between nineteenth century buildings (for an attempt to quantify these developments see Szabó 2001: 184–7). Alongside location, other factors that influenced the financial return and hence the pace of restoration were the quality of existing buildings and more generally the reputation of an area, based on representative streets and buildings or its association with the bourgeois way of life. An area that fulfils these criteria but whose restoration also represents a special case is the so-called Jewish Quarter located in the central part of the 7th district, close to the Great Synagogue, the largest ever built in Europe. Since 1990, many Jews who had previously left the country have returned to buy their former homes. Many of them come regularly to Budapest, and as a result of this there is now a lively Jewish community in the area, supported by an increasing number of kosher shops and restaurants.

The influx of capital into parts of a rundown urban environment – whether in the form of wealthy dwellers, the conversion of apartments to office or retail use, or high quality in-fill development – is known in the literature as gentrification, in the course of which the existing rather poor residential population is displaced by the more wealthy (Bodnár 2001: chapter 4, Smith and Williams 1986, Smith 1996). What is distinctive about Budapest is the speed at which gentrification occurred: 'Unlike that in London or New York prior to the 1970s ... Budapest gentrification did not begin as a largely isolated process
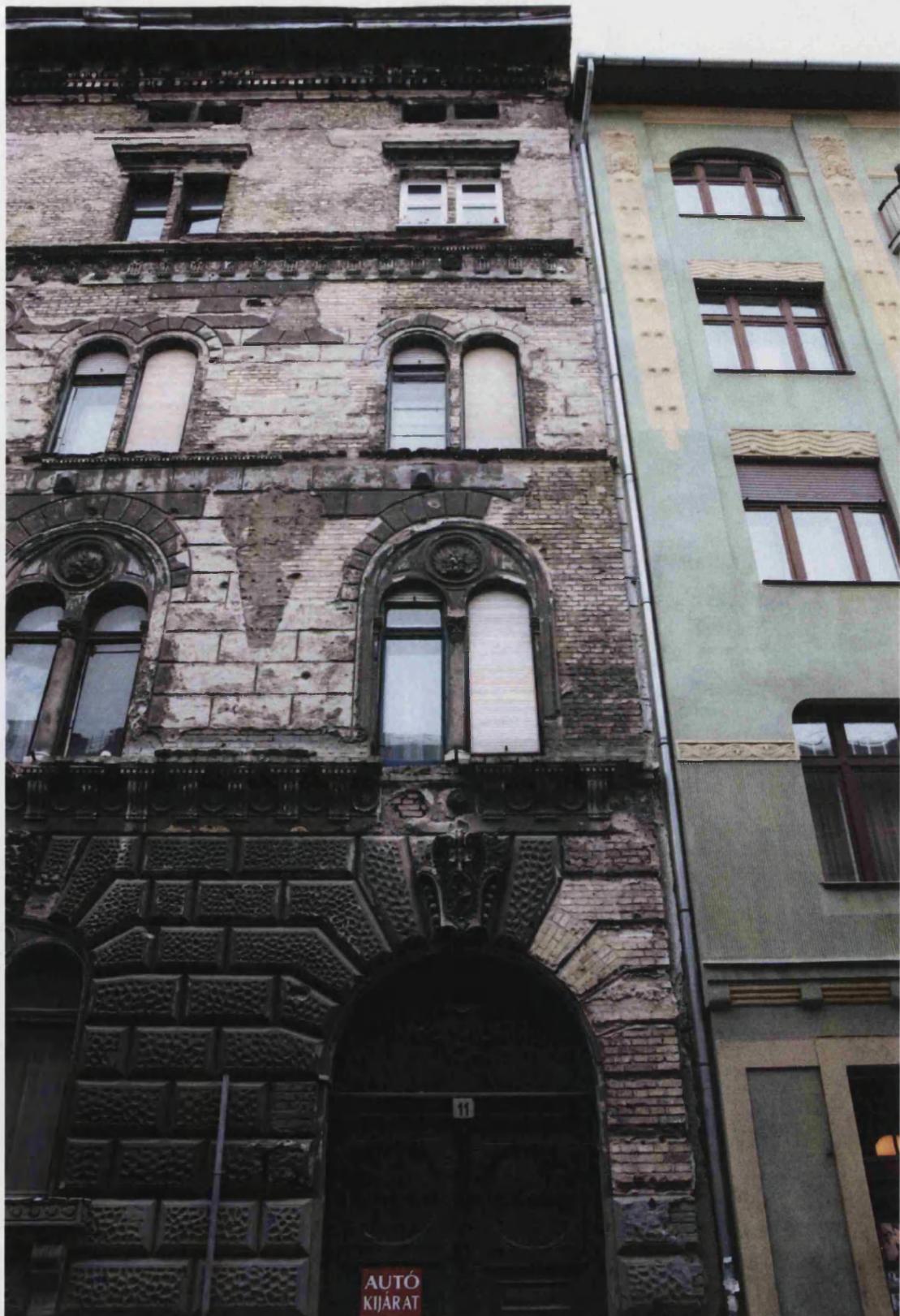
Gentrification of the inner city: restored building with ground floor converted to retail use, next to building with shotgun holes on the façade from the 1956 uprising. Mikszáth Street in the 8th district.

in the housing market, but came fully fledged in the arteries of global capital following 1989' (Smith 1996: 174; see also Weclawowitz 1998). Larger in scale, yet equally shaping the city's new uneven geography, are medium (sometimes large) scale residential developments for the middle-classes, commonly marketed as residential gardens. Those built in the inner city districts are required by regulation to respect the existing street pattern, but their (symbolic) green spaces – the 'gardens' – tend to be located in the inner private or semi-private courtyards. The preference of the more wealthy to withdraw from the city becomes yet again more obvious in the case of gated communities built in the traditionally middle- and upper-middle class populated hills of Buda (Bodnár 2001: 157–61).

In contrast to these developments, large inner city areas are still in a desolate condition, and evidence of poverty and misery in urban space is paramount: in Budapest, poverty and disintegration are the experience of a large number of the population. Following the collapse of the socialist workplace guarantee and the erosion of the welfare state, the city's public realm bursts with provoking encounters. The exclusion of a vast number of individuals – in particular Gypsies and low-skilled workers – from access to wealth is revealed as Darwinism in public spaces. As a sort of inverted social hierarchy, those who are excluded often exercise power over wealthier people in the streets. This is not a matter of ghettos that one could simply avoid – although there are areas in the city that do qualify as such, for example, the outer parts of the 8th district, Hunyadi Square in the 6th district (Szabó 2001: 188) and the area around the Eastern Railway Station. Rather, it infiltrates the city at many different points: homeless and drunk people populate almost every underpass, beggars ask for money at traffic lights, and at the entrances to major underground stations

A rundown inner city courtyard in the 8th district ...   ... and two of its Gypsy inhabitants.
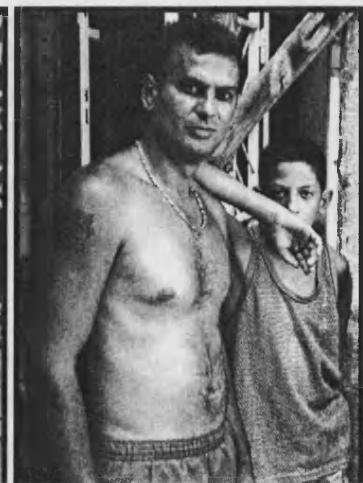
there is a small black market where Gypsies sell fruit and vegetables, flowers, cheap sweets and clothes. Accounts like the following by the art historian Sármány-Parsons represent recurring themes within the majority of narratives of Budapest:

> The majority of the local people have become increasingly despondent. On public transport, passengers are more irritable than earlier and signs of poverty are everywhere ... [The] atmosphere of the near-Latin life-style of the town, so typical in the 1980s, has all but vanished ... [V]isitors from abroad and ... the most passionate local patriots experience the city very differently. The visitors notice a more hectic, even feverish rhythm of street life; more cars, more shops with western products – even if the majority are selling down-market trash. A sense of dynamism is in the air, but underlying there is a nervous, tense malaise, not evident to the non-native speaker. The changes caused by the transition to a capitalist free-market economy ... have produced unexpected results, not to say traumatic side-effects ... [T]he way in which strategic parts of the city, the 'nodes', have changed ... has caused both irritation and dismay. At the major metro-stations ... [t]he homeless hang around ... and alcoholics seek temporary refuge ... [E]astern tourists and 'occasional tradesmen' sell cheap textiles and smuggled goods, a colourful and lively addition to the scene that resembles the periphery of a Mediterranean flea market, although lacking the easy-going charm of the latter. (Sármány-Parsons 1998: 219–20)

Mirroring social inequalities and the deprivation that many have experienced, there is an obvious polarisation of uses today. Large high quality Western style shopping centres stand next to second hand shops and Chinese retail outlets selling cheap, poor quality clothing. Where the rich shop, the poor linger – or make a detour in order to avoid the painful confrontation with their own economic limitations. Shopping centres represent a new type of semi-public spaces previously unknown in Hungary. By price level and design (and the presence of security personnel), they target the middle-classes, but the less wealthy often come to look and occasionally to buy something. For the lower-middle class in particular, plaza hopping has become a common leisure activity symbolising a marginal sense of inclusion in consumer society. Vernacular Hungarian calls this type of visitor *plázacica* (plaza cat) or *plázakutya* (plaza dog).

Poverty and social inequalities

The transition from state socialism to capitalism has been accompanied by unemployment, declining real wages, increasing social inequalities and status uncertainties. By1994, the number of unemployed increased by 1.4 million, a dramatic figure given Hun-
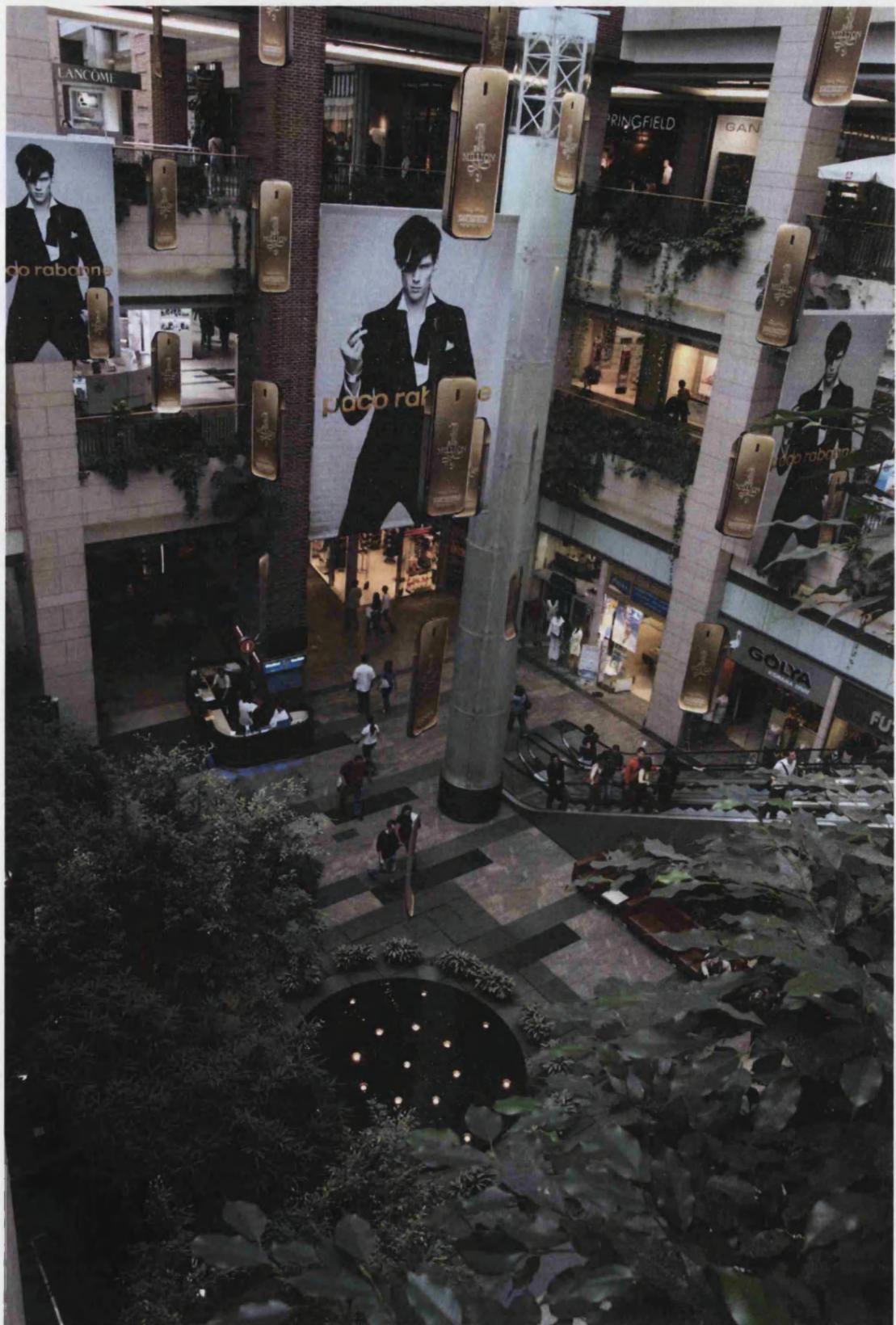
Inside the <u>Westend City Shopping Center</u>. Completed in 1999, the centre was the largest building project in Hungary since the late nineteenth century, and is the largest shopping and entertainment centre of central and eastern Europe. It accommodates over 400 retail units, 12 cinemas and a three storey high replica of Niagara Falls (Bodnár 2001: 146–7; Szabó 2001; www.westend.hu).

gary's overall population of only ten million: 'more jobs disappeared in the first half of the 1990s than had been created during the four decades of state socialism' (Galasi 1998: 1).

In 1992, 22 percent of the Hungarian population lived below the subsistence level, and by 1995 this had increased to 30-35 percent (Andorka and Spéder 2001: 150); 42 percent lived below the subsistence level in at least one of the years 1992 to 1994 (ibid: 156), meaning that almost every other citizen was affected by poverty at that time. Using another poverty measure, Galasi (1998) shows that about one-third of the population were at least once within the bottom quintile of income distribution between 1992 and 1996. Molnár and Kapitány (2006: 10) show that real income and expenditure of households dropped by more than 20 percent between 1993 and 1997, and reached 1993 levels again only in 2001. In a move away from the socialist workplace guarantee, 8 percent of employable adults were without a job during the third quarter of 2008, and unemployment rate was highest at 21 percent among young people aged 16 to 24. Fifty percent of those who are unemployed have been without a job for more than 12 months (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2008: 1).

At the same time, income inequalities have increasingly widened (Galasi 1998: 4–9). In 2003 average income within the top decile was over eight times higher than in the bottom decile (Mozer 2006: 107) – a sharp contrast to rather moderate inequalities during socialism, where the average pay of the top 10 percent was less than three times higher than of the bottom 10 percent in 1979 (Beskid and Kolosi 1983: 111; see also Andorka and Kolosi 1984). In addition to income inequalities, there has been a significant level of income mobility, too. Between 1992 and 1996, more than half of the population in the middle three quintiles changed quintiles between years (Galasi 1998: iii–iv), suggesting that downward mobility and status uncertainty since 1989 were fairly high:

> The population, so full of hopes and expectations after 1989, has had eight difficult and contradictory years behind it. The changes brought by rapid privatisation, and the radical restructuring of the industry, have also brought unemployment and impoverishment to many, wealth only to a few. Many layers of the middle class and many white-collar workers have seen severe reductions in their previous living standards and can no longer afford leisure activities, such as concerts, opera, theatre and eating out. For many of the blue-collar workers, the change has brought only unemployment and the weakening of the social net. (Sármány-Parsons 1998: 219)

The above cumulative figures correspond with individuals' views and worries. In a 1994 survey of young people aged 18 to 35, four out of five believed that Hungary's eco-

nomic situation had worsened in recent years, while in 1992 'only' 44 percent believed this. 91 percent believed that living standards were decreasing (Gazsó 2001: 339). In a supplementary survey to the Hungarian Household Budget Survey, conducted among adults in 2003, 30 percent of respondents felt that income and wealth inequalities in Hungary had increased since the mid 1990s, and a further 54 percent even believed that inequalities had increased *considerably* (Molnár and Kapitány 2006: 42). 40 percent stated that the financial situation of their family had declined in the same period, while only 16 percent said that it had improved (ibid: 43). Likewise, 40 percent of respondents stated that they were very concerned about themselves or a member of their family losing their job, and a further 28 percent were fairly concerned (ibid: 41). Looking at people's satisfaction with their situation, Molnár and Kapitány (ibid: 8) assert that the 'level of individual subjective well-being in Hungary is much below ... that of Western Europe' (*cf.* Lengyel and Toth 2001).

Although unemployment rates have risen, real wages declined, and social inequalities and status uncertainties increased, Hungary has seen a massive transformation and expansion of its retail sector since the early 1990s. Whereas under socialism consumption was restricted to a limited number of available goods, there is now an abundant choice of commodities. As the country's only large city, these developments are particularly evident in Budapest, and they are probably best symbolised by the numerous Western-style shopping centres that have been erected in the inner city and at traffic nodes between central Budapest and the predominantly residential outer districts since 1989, accompanied by several large scale retail parks within 20 minutes driving distance from the city. Due to the massive expansion of the commodity world and the increase of income inequalities, opportunities for distinction have increased, too. 'Since the collapse of communism', Bukodi (2007a: 114) asserts, 'Hungary would appear to have moved more towards a Western-type stratification system' based on status rather than class: 'lifestyles including their cultural aspects may be expected to correspond closely with rank in the status hierarchy' (ibid.; see also de Graaf 1991). Molnár and Kapitány believe that what people want 'depend[s] on what other people have ... This attitude is much stronger after transition and in a competitive pressure situation, where people are strongly driven by the desire 'to keep up with other people" (Molnár and Kapitány 2006: 6). At times of change, when a society's social and economic coordinates are shifting in unforeseeable ways, in addition to representing a means for expressing one's status through distinction, consumption also seems to provide a means of self-assurance.

Alongside the obvious yet uneven restoration of parts of the inner city, the symbolic landscape of Budapest has changed too. Since 1989, the public realm has been largely purified of vestiges of the socialist regime. Statues and memorials that once stood at every important street or square in the city were quickly removed after 1989 and moved to an open-air museum on the outskirts. This in turn paved the way for a symbolic refurbishment of the public realm. For example, streets with a connotation with the socialist era were renamed shortly after 1989 and serve as reminders of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy that many people refer to today as Budapest's golden era: in 1990, Peoples' Republic Street became Andrássy Boulevard, Lenin Ringstrasse Theresa and Elisabeth Ringstrasse, November 7 Square Oktogon Square, and Marx Square Western Square – the list of examples could fill a whole chapter (see Búza *et al.* 1998; Kasza 1999). However, attempts to revitalise the imagery of an idealised non-democratic, yet marketable and 'warmth-giving' past have

The statue park 'opened in 1993 with fifty-eight towering figures of Marx and Lenin, generic worker-heroes, Soviet soldiers, and obscure Hungarian communists' (Espenshade 1995: 72). Kovács (2003) points to the ironic form of remembering that the park encourages. The grotesque dance in which the exhibited figures engage makes the visitor smile – and reflect on the crude ideological message that they embody.

gone further than this since then. Images of national and historic greatness, or memories of the fin-de-siècle bourgeois city, it seems, have survived the socialist era and can fully unfold in the present time. Last but not least, such excavated images are suitable for supporting processes of place marketing today.

Another major development in Budapest since 1989 has been the spectacularisation of urban life (*cf.* Debord 1994), which in the case of Western cities has been theorised in terms of the postmodern city (Boyer 1994, Harvey 1987, Soja 2000). While I do not wish to discuss the literature on its origins here (such as for example new forms of capital accumulation, globalisation or individualisation), I would like to suggest that trends towards urban spectacles and their marketing by various actors, and for various groups of potential consumers, can only be understood in conjunction with individuals' predisposition to consume the city through images projected upon it. This predisposition, in turn, can hardly be considered new; rather, it can be traced back to the nineteenth century city dweller's excitement about the spectacular urban environment emerging at that time. What characterises urban spectacles and their consumption today, as compared to the nineteenth century city or the centrally orchestrated spectacles in socialism, is their scale (not only single products or buildings, but entire districts or even whole cities are being marketed), their everydayness and their pervasiveness: the world of images becomes paramount and affects more and more aspects of everyday life, inviting people to participate and to enjoy: 'proximity and participation replace distance and contemplation as the communicative style of the object' (Banham, cited in Boyer 1994: 57). The trend towards the spectacularisation in everyday life is attested to by many examples in Budapest.

'Tuscany Gardens, the charm of Italy in the 9th district.' Image marketing an in-fill housing development in the inner city.

89

Various new festivals (Budapest Parade, Sziget Festival, Spring Festival, Autumn Festival, Jewish Summer Festival, Fringe Festival, the annual air rally between the Danube bridges, spectacular fireworks on national bank holidays, and such like) promote an image of Budapest as a thriving city of culture and entertainment. Some of these festivals existed already before 1989, but their meanings have changed significantly. Today, festivals no longer represent occasions to exhibit hidden forms of expressivity beneath the official culture; rather, they have become events with little political meaning, but where consumption and entertainment predominate.

Another example of place marketing is the so-called Broadway Project that seeks to revitalize images of the Nagymezö Street and its surrounding areas' past as a theatre, musical, and leisure district. Within the Broadway Project, plans have been made and partly executed throughout the last 20 years, attempting to turn central parts of the 6th district into Budapest's main culture and tourist district (Szabó 2001: 65). Theatres have been reopened or refurbished, and once famous pubs have been re-opened. There are also plans to raise statues of the district's famous personalities and to take contemporary celebrities' footprints to create a domestic 'Walk of Fame' (ibid.).

In the nineteenth century buildings around Jókai Square, many tea houses and organic food shops have opened since the mid 1990s that market themselves as close to 'Eastern' culture: the tea house *Red Lion*, for example, runs an esoteric bookshop, and the restaurant *Wabisabi* claims to bring an harmonious Eastern food culture to Budapest (*Ezo tér* 2003(1) and 2004(2)). The joint monthly magazine of tea houses, organic food shops and esoteric bookshops is *Ezo tér*, first published in December 2003 carries a mixture of advertisements, book reviews and naïve introductions to Eastern philosophy. The spelling of the word 'ezotéria' (esoteric) as *Ezo tér* is a play of words: 'tér' is the Hungarian word for both place and space. Thus *Ezo tér* can be read as the inner space of spiritual growth, yet also as the economic niche occupied by the esoteric profile in Budapest's economic life. Yet does the word 'tér' also refer to physical space? According to Zoltán Balázs, owner of the *Red Lion* and co-founder of the magazine, it is the aim of *Ezo tér* to promote the area around the Jókai Square as an 'esoteric island' in Budapest.

Perhaps the most successful recent attempt of place marketing, because it attracts both tourists and the Hungarian middle-classes, is the revitalisation of images of the nineteenth century coffee house culture through the opening of new coffee houses in the inner city (most prominently in Ráday Street and on Liszt Square), the restoration of pre-

Inside the ambitiously restored New York, re-opened 2006 within a five star hotel of the same name.

viously famous coffee houses to their initial interior design, and an endless list of publications that reconstruct the history of the coffee houses and their role in famous personalities' everyday lives (Erki 1995, Gyáni 1996, Saly 2005, Vadas 1996, Zeke 1996). Most of the city's coffee houses are members of the so called Coffee House Association and advertise themselves jointly. A competition to establish the best coffee house in the city is held every year.

Budapest, the City of Coffee. In the illustration announcing the 2007 competition of coffee houses, the 'Spirit of Freedom' (part of the <u>Liberation Memorial</u>, see p. 147) holds a coffee bean instead of a palm leaf above her head.

Matching the rediscovery of the city centre as a destination for leisure, culture and tourism, the inner city's heritage has been increasingly addressed in public discourse, both as an object of identification with Hungarian history or the bourgeois way of life, and as a marketing tool for attracting visitors, culminating in the declaration of the Andrássy Boulevard and its surrounding area – the Heroes Square with the Millennium Memorial and the <u>Museum of Fine Arts</u>, the Opera, the <u>Liszt Music Academy</u>, and the Millennium Underground – as a UNESCO world heritage site in 2002.

The remaining chapters discuss aspects identified as affecting individuals' narratives of Budapest. Chapter 4 analyses narratives that contain obvious references to social collectivities, with an emphasis on status to which almost every other interviewee referred. Chapter 5 explores how personal memories affect narratives in Budapest, and pays particular attention to the remembering and forgetting of socialism. Chapter 6 addresses the city as a site of individual freedom, and then looks at the interplay between urban form and the lived body. Chapter 7 reveals the significance of a sense of belonging to the city and shows how it may be challenged, a fact it links to the change of Budapest since 1989.

4   SOCIAL COLLECTIVITIES

This chapter presents narratives of Budapest that contain obvious references to the social collectivities of status, class, nation or religion. As we shall see, references to status (and to a much lesser extent to class, nation and religion) represent important themes within every other narrative, and can still be identified in a number of narratives in which other themes (for example personal memories) predominate. In the context of this thesis the *themes* of status, class, nation and religion represent examples of narratives imbued by individuals' sense of belonging to social collectivities, which was identified as one of the *aspects* informing narrative urban subjectivity (alongside personal memories, the forms and uses of the city, and a sense of being at home in it). That is, reconstructing the themes of status, class, nation or religion fulfils both research interests simultaneously.[36]

Individuals who identify themselves with a social collectivity typically delimit themselves from people – their values, activities, appearances – perceived as *not* belonging to the same collectivity; furthermore, narrators carry the distinction between an 'us' and a 'them' into the city, for example, by using its spaces selectively, by mapping the city into areas, sites and activities that belong to one collectivity or the other, by welcoming certain aspects of urban change while rejecting others, or by relating to strangers in particular ways. The chapter reconstructs these issues from narratives informed by respondents' references to status, class, nation and religion. Findings engage in a dialogue with existing theories, most notably Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1990 and 2002) concepts of *habitus* and *field*.

4.1   Narratives of Status and Class

A sense of status or class represents a major theme within nine of the twenty interviews included in the sample, and was identified as a minor theme within a further three narratives. This section analyses and presents three of these nine narratives, in each of which the themes of class and status manifest themselves in different ways: Éva's narrative of Budapest is informed by her sense of belonging to the middle-class and reveals the association between status and patterns of consumption in urban spaces. Furthermore, her

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[36] See the Introduction and Chapter 2 for an explanation of research questions, and the distinction between *aspects* and *themes*.

narrative also reveals a strong sense of being Hungarian. *Tamás*'s narrative is informed by his sense of belonging to the educated middle-classes. He expresses a strong affinity with high arts, culture and the bourgeois lifestyle, which he applies as a measure for judging strangers and recent urban changes. His narrative is further informed by his strong sense of being Catholic. *Margit* originates from a lower middle-class background, yet has experienced social decline since 1989. Her narrative reveals her difficulties in coping with recent changes, yet also allows for an interesting insight into class perceptions of Budapest during socialism, and the fragile sense of inclusion that she then experienced.

The narratives discussed in this chapter reveal respondents' patterns of consumption in the city, but they hardly contain accounts of joint activities with others, or a recognition of the political potential of one's class position. Therefore, it is helpful to recall Weber's (1968: 302–7 and 926–40) distinction between class and status here. In *Economy and Society*, Weber distinguishes between class and status as related, yet different forms of social stratification. A class structure, as Chan and Goldthorpe (2007: 513) summarise, is 'formed by the social relations of economic life or, more specifically, in relations in labor markets and production units', and individuals' position within the class structure, representing a structure of inequality, affects their life-chances, for example their income or risks of unemployment (ibid: 518). In contrast, status refers to the ranking of individuals or groups of individuals in terms of their 'perceived social superiority, equality and inferiority' (Bukodi 2007b: 4). Thereby, status is neither independent from class, nor simply its product. Commonly, it derives from a person's education, income and occupation, but as Chan and Goldthorpe (ibid.) argue, it is the latter that is most significant. A sense of status manifests itself, and thereby becomes public in character, as a set of interrelated preferences for a certain lifestyle that, on the one hand, is grounded in one's position in the economy but still, on the other, allows one to distinguish between people who share one's own preferences and those who don't. People of different status 'display different patterns of ... taste and consumption – and also of distaste and aversion – as part of their characteristic lifestyles' (Bukodi 2007b: 2).

While I shall revisit the concept of status and also discuss consumption as a means of distinction (e.g. Bourdieu 1984) further below, I wish to give more weight to the empirical data at this stage, to which these concepts relate as useful tools of analysis rather than as means of interpretation chosen in advance.

Éva

Éva, 59, grew up as a member of the Hungarian minority in Romania and lived in the town of Cluj until 1985 when she migrated to Germany with her husband. She visited Budapest in 1965 for the first time, together with her father who had studied there for a while: 'I was nineteen when I saw Budapest for the first time. I had just finished my first year at university, and it goes without saying that I was very, very curious about Hungary and Budapest.' It was both Éva's first ever trip abroad and her first journey to a big city. She spent one month at her relatives' flat in the inner city, and her father showed her his favourite places in the city:

> I had the opportunity to get to know Budapest intimately during that month. It was my fa-
> ther's wish to introduce me to the city as he got to know it during his university years ...
> which meant that we were walking from morning to night so that I became acquainted with
> every little corner of the city.

Éva remembers her first visit to Budapest as one of the happiest holidays in her life. She recalls several aspects of the city, such as representative buildings or monuments, the cleanliness of streets, elegantly dressed strangers and the splendour of the commodities on display. The latter made a particular impression on her and occupies a large part of her narrative: 'It goes without saying that as a 19 year old girl I was not only interested in statues or monuments but also in shops,' says Éva at the beginning of the interview: 'they revealed a completely different world to me.' Unlike in other socialist countries, mass consumption has been an everyday practice in Hungary since the 1960s. The Hungarian special policy of making available a relatively sophisticated supply of goods (including a moderate level of foreign trade and the introduction of free market elements in the form of privately run small businesses in the service sector), came to be known in the West – and begrudged in the East – as Goulash Communism. Moreover, the splendour of the commodity world that Éva enjoyed in the Hungarian capital was incomparable to that which she had experienced in Romania: whereas the first department store in Cluj opened as late as the mid 1970s, there were several department stores and department store chains in Budapest as early as the 1960s, some of which were located in representative nineteenth century buildings that had previously hosted department stores in the late nineteenth century. The combination of ornate historic buildings and the (aesthetic) quality and variety of the goods displayed made a particular impression on Éva:

On Andrássy Boulevard there was ... the Fashion Hall ... It was a great pleasure for me to go there, and I remember ... its parquet floor and the warmth of wood ... The fact that these big stores were located in old palaces meant that you could buy everything within an intimate atmosphere, an atmosphere of warmth. [37]

Éva recalls shops and shop windows 'decorated with love and good taste.' The quality of clothes, she claims, was excellent, and compared to Cluj 'there was diversity and abundance.' Her narrative contains a number of detailed descriptions of shops and shop windows, as well as of clothes that she had bought and then wore for many years. In recalling the splendour of socialist Budapest, Éva indicates at every turn of her narrative that shops and the city in general have changed in an unfavourable way since then: 'Shops were much nicer than today. There wasn't nearly as much wealth as today, yet nevertheless shops were decorated with love and good taste ... All goods were made in Hungary: there were no imported items ... and their quality was good, I would say much better than today.'

For Éva, consumption in socialist Budapest represented an ideal mixture of choice and (aesthetic) quality, embedded in the nineteenth century cityscape, that added up to a city that radiated solemnity and elegance. At the same time, certain characteristics of the capitalist society, foremost its immanent logic of accelerated consumption, were absent:

> Socialism was not a consumer society where everything is about buying new things all the time ... People used to buy but ... you did not purchase clothes or shoes for just one season. On the contrary, their quality was excellent and you could wear them for years. At the same time, fashion did exist, and Budapester fashion has always been famous. There were boutiques, that is, it was a completely different world, the so called Goulash Communism, and there were small private businesses already. I remember, once I bought something close to Margaret Bridge. It was in 1974 that I bought a really nice apple green jersey costume, and after migrating to Germany in 1985 I still wore it for years. Later, I gave it to somebody because I got bored of it, but its quality and style were immaculate.

While Éva favours boutiques, shops and department stores in the nineteenth century fabric of the inner city where shops and historic buildings mutually upvalue one another, she also expresses a strong interest in buildings, history and craftsmanship that stands on its own:

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[37] Éva, like some other interviewees, refers to the more representative historic buildings on Andrássy Boulevard and the Ringstrasse as palaces.

The beautiful palaces made a great impression on me. I appreciated their architectural style, the generous layout of streets, the beautiful buildings, the Opera, the Ballet Institute, all of which I had read about before, and then, finally, I had the opportunity to see them in reality ... You can walk for kilometres [on Andrássy Boulevard or the Ringstrasse], and one palace is lined up next to the other.

Éva's excitement about ornate historic buildings is informed by her appreciation of craftsmanship and the beauty that was created in the past: 'today no one could create such beautiful things as hundred years ago, or earlier. I have always appreciated old things and have always admired the works of old craftsmen.' Éva is excited about buildings such as the Liszt Music Academy: 'It must be wonderful to study in a place like the Music Academy ... It is a great honour to study in such an historic building.' Such excitement about ornate buildings, history and culture, in turn seems to be related to Éva's place of residence. Living in Romania during the Ceausescu era meant that it was difficult, if not impossible, to visit places of cultural or historical significance abroad. There was no freedom of travel, and when people wanted to obtain a visa to visit a neighbouring socialist country, they were required to engage in an elaborate application procedure. Having at last the opportunity to visit places abroad thus represented a special event in people's lives.

While the appreciation of shops and ornate buildings occupies a significant part of her narrative, Éva also talks in detail about other aspects of socialist Budapest, such as its overall appearance or the impression that strangers made on her. Here, she once again indicates that both the city and its population have changed in an unfavourable way in recent years: 'everything was very civilised, very clean, both people and streets,' Éva claims. 'Budapest, in particular Andrássy Boulevard and the Ringstrasse ... was tidy and beautiful':

Women in Budapest were dressed very tastefully ... When I visited Budapest in 1965 for the first time, women used to wear white gloves on weekend walks. I will never forget a lady whom I once saw wearing a white costume, red shoes and a red purse – I would certainly not come across such a phenomenon today.

For Éva, boutiques and department stores, commodities, historic buildings, elegantly dressed strangers and the cleanliness of the city added up to a coherent whole, jointly contributing to her excitement about socialist Budapest. At the same time, her enthusiasm for unique ornate buildings, the Andrássy Boulevard with its representative 'palaces', the Opera and the Music Academy, history, arts and culture, department stores in nineteenth century buildings decorated with wooden floors, choice of goods of a distinct (aesthetic) quality,

clean and tidy streets, and tastefully dressed strangers point to her preference for a bourgeois environment. As we shall see, Éva gets more and more explicit about this in the course of her narrative as she highlights recent developments that have changed Budapest in an unfavourable way.

Éva married in 1969 and until the late 1970s she and her husband András visited Budapest every other year:

> It wasn't easy since we always came without money. You couldn't buy Forint in Romania, so unfortunately you couldn't come over for a holiday and enjoy the city right away but had to earn some money first. So whenever we came for two weeks, the first week was about going from one place to the other in order to sell the goods that we had brought with us so that we could afford seeing an exhibition or a movie.

'Both of us hated hawking but we had no choice.' However, such efforts were worthwhile since they allowed Éva to participate in the splendour of urban life that barely existed in her hometown Cluj. 'It was a particular pleasure for us to see ... the latest movies' that would barely find their way to cinemas in Romania, or to go to the theatre. The *Authors' Bookshop* on Liszt Square was another attraction where Éva could buy the works of Hungarian authors as well as Hungarian editions of foreign works of literature that no bookshop in Cluj would sell: 'whenever we managed to get there we invaded the place and bought tons of books. It was a great pleasure, and unlike nowadays everybody could afford to buy books then.'

Éva's visits to Budapest depended on the good will of the Romanian state, and the rare opportunities to see the Hungarian capital seem to have intensified her appreciation of the city. Budapest not only resonated with her excitement about the splendours of the bourgeois city, but also allowed for relief from discrimination that the Hungarian minority in Romania was increasingly exposed to in the 1970s and 1980s. Budapest provided Éva with a place to be a Hungarian for the duration of a holiday: 'We visited Hungary every other year and ... this felt very special to us, perhaps because we really yearned to be Hungarian, that is, to come over as Hungarians.' Both aspects manifest themselves as Éva recalls how proud she was when a Romanian friend expressed her admiration of the Hungarian capital:

> It was in 1971 or '72 when the mother of a friend of mine joined her husband, a professor, on a trip through Europe. They were in Belgium, in London, in Paris, in all major capitals, but

when she returned – she who was not Hungarian but Romanian – she said that she hasn't seen such beautiful and tasteful shops as on the Ringstrasse anywhere, ... not even in Paris.

Heroes Square equally illustrates Éva's enthusiasm for being a Hungarian: 'I liked Heroes Square ... so much so that even today my heart is ... beating faster any time I walk across it ... I climbed next to almost every statue and my father gave titles to photographs [taken in 1965] like 'Éva and the Seven Leaders''. 'Heartbeat' indicates an emotional relation to the square, while the title 'Éva and the Seven Leaders' creates continuity between her and the kings and leaders, thus integrating her into the one thousand year old Hungary. I repeated the word 'heartbeat', and she continued:

> On Heroes Square you feel as if you were in a huge church with ... a tall cupola that always attracts your eyes or makes a certain impression on you ... Both in communism and since 1989, the country's or Budapest's major events took place on Heroes Square: Imre Nagy's remains were laid out there [the former prime minister's exhumation and reburial in 1989 officially rehabilitated the initiators of the 1956 upraise; AS], big concerts were given there, ... [and] it was there that the history of Hungary was presented through images. There is not a single inhabitant of Budapest who wouldn't know about the significance of the Square ... Whatever social class somebody belongs to, whether a person is an intellectual or a worker, everybody knows about its importance or meaning ... Those who know the history of their country know about its meaning. You know, it was built in honour of Hungary's 1000ᵗʰ anniversary ... It could even be Budapest's central square. I don't mean its city centre, but in terms of importance ... The statues are placed in a semicircle and it is as if you raised your eyes to God. That is, they are placed above you ... and you are forced to raise your eyes and to look up to them ... The Square has a spiritual significance ... a national significance.

In 1980, Éva's sister visited Italy on a tourist visa, but did not return to Romania. In 1981, Éva and her husband applied to leave Romania permanently. Having a dissident in the family or wishing to migrate to the West had serious consequences for any citizen of a socialist country. Individuals affected were often treated as *persona non grata*. Between 1980 and 1985, Éva and her husband were frequently 'invited' to the local office of the State Security Service where they were intimidated in many ways. It goes without saying that obtaining a tourist visa to Hungary was unthinkable in such circumstances: 'we didn't get a visa anymore, so whenever friends came I kept asking them questions about Budapest.'

In June 1985, Éva and András finally managed to leave Romania. On their way to Germany they passed through the Hungarian capital – and spontaneously decided to interrupt their journey for a short holiday:

Instead of going straight to Nuremberg [the arrival town for migrants; AS], our journey co-incided with András's birthday, so we spent two days in Budapest for which we were later criticised by the German authorities: if we really wanted to go to Germany why did we stop in Budapest?

It took another two and half years before Éva and András were allowed to travel abroad: 'on our first trip after we got a [German] passport we went to see Budapest.' Suddenly, Budapest became accessible at any time, and Éva made frequent use of her freedom of travel, still considering Budapest her favourite place: 'that is, we were excited about Budapest and its beautiful inner city not only when we came over from Romania but also when we came over from Germany ... We still felt that this place speaks to us.' Despite the fact that Éva could now travel to any European capital, Budapest preserved its uniqueness for her. 'I remember our trip to Paris [in 1989]. Paris is beautiful, but on a postcard to our friend Feri [who lives in Budapest; AS] I wrote: Paris is beautiful, but my heart beats for Budapest.' For Éva, Budapest of the late 1980s still held comparison with western cities that sometimes even increased its perceived beauty: 'The Opera is marvel-lous. It is not as big as the one in Paris or Munich, yet there is a solemn ... warm atmos-phere inside. It is an impressing palace when seen from the street, but on the inside you feel like in a family.' And then 1989 came, inducing a radical change of Éva's relationship to Budapest: 'Budapest attracts me less and less since the regime has changed. There is no longer the same cleanliness or orderliness, and somehow the population's appearance and composition have changed. The city has lost its old and pretty ... character as they now try to imitate the West.'

As we have seen, Éva values consumption in the inner city of Budapest, as long as the goods displayed are of a distinct (aesthetic) quality, surrounded by ornate old buildings, monuments and cultural institutions, tastefully dressed people and an overall clean and orderly appearance of the city. Yet precisely her appreciation of such a bourgeois urban environment has been contested in many ways, and in her narrative she repeatedly ex-presses a concern about this. That is, Éva judges Budapest's recent urban change according to whether it poses a threat to the places and environments that she favours. One obvious threat to the bourgeois city has arisen in the form of Western style shopping centres that have been erected in the inner city since 1989. Like the increase in car traffic, they run counter to the calmness and elegance of the nineteenth century urban fabric, while as places of mass consumption they also disturb the exclusive shopping experience:

The Westend [shopping centre] is architecturally absolutely impersonal. This huge something, I don't even know why people go there. Not to mention that in places like these you find awful mass produced goods ... It doesn't fit at all into the environment. There is the old station building next to it – they should have built it somewhere else ... You can't imagine a city without shopping centres nowadays, but I would have a careful look as to where such a building fits. I certainly would not place it between historic buildings. ... Shopping centres like the Westend are absolutely misplaced in Budapest. They completely destroy its historic cityscape.

A second aspect of the city's recent change that irritates Éva's enthusiasm for beauty, greatness, arts, culture, and uniqueness is related to the rapid increase of social inequalities and their visible presence in the inner city. Poverty, dirt and deprivation, as we have seen in the previous chapter, have become omnipresent in the city's public realm since the change of the regime: 'Unfortunately, there are homeless people everywhere on the benches. One feels sorry for them, but they make a horrible impression. You can't appreciate or enjoy the beauty of a street when you see ... drunken, unfortunate people.'

Other developments that support a bourgeois narrative by providing appropriate environments to it are welcome. For example, Éva appreciates new coffee houses in nineteenth century buildings, or the new National Theatre that establishes a successful link to the past: 'I am touched by the new National Theatre ... particularly by the replica of the façade of the old theatre [demolished during communism] exhibited next to it. Seeing this gives me the creeps.' Yet despite some positive aspects of urban change, Éva feels that Budapest has lost the charm that it used to have during socialism when 'everything was very cultivated, very clean, both people and streets.' She still appreciates the city, but this appreciation is now mixed with ambivalence: 'I still consider Andrássy Boulevard as Europe's most beautiful street. I particularly like the bit between the St. Stephan Basilica and Oktogon Square, with the cafés and restaurants on Liszt Square that create a very pleasant atmosphere, but I would never live in Budapest.'

The difference between her present experience of Budapest and how she came to know it in the 1960s has become unbridgeable, and as a consequence Éva has largely withdrawn from the city: 'It is nice to come for a day, but I don't find much of the atmosphere of the late 1960s, the 1970s and even the 1980s. Almost everything has changed ... This is not the old Budapest any more.'

Tamás, 30, studied theology at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest, and works as an editor for *Új Ember (New Man)*, a weekly Catholic newspaper. He grew up in Hüvösvölgy, a wealthy district located in the hills of Buda, in a family committed to 'classical, traditional values.' His parents introduced him to museums, theatres and opera when he was a small boy, and he has regularly attended classical concerts since he was five or six: 'a seed seems to be planted in our family, and it has grown over time.' His family possesses a considerable library that has been handed down from generation to generation, and one of his early childhood memories relates to being entertained through listening to Hungarian troubadour music: 'once you taste these things a bit, they take you with them ... When you love music, arts or literature – it is like a stone thrown into the water: the circles are getting bigger and bigger.' Tamás is passionate about opera, classical music, theatre and museums. At the age of nine he joined the State Opera's boys' choir. Later he also joined the Wagner Society and became a member of its board for a while.

'A basic fact that you should know about me is that as far as my memory stretches I have always been an urban person', says Tamás in the very first sentence of his narrative, by which he mainly means affection for high culture:

> Opera, concerts, theatres ... classical music, museums. These positive values of urban life have always been essential for me. And the inner city is clearly a part of this, as it is here that most of our cultural life is happening ... The Andrássy Boulevard and the inner city ... clearly mean culture for me.

In his narrative, Tamás depicts Budapest as a stage for cultural life. The presence of high-brow culture at a level of excellence that matches that in other European capitals such as Vienna, Paris, London, Barcelona or Rome, is vital for him. High-brow culture and the places associated with it, Tamás believes, is an essential ingredient of the 'liveable city' and represent values that Tamás himself terms *bourgeois*.

> Speaking of the hierarchy of values, and of liveability, I have that sense of comfort in mind, that kind of ... bourgeois environment which is a bare necessity for me, simply a vital necessity. I like to open a cultural magazine and find at least five things a day worth going to ... Or to sit in a coffee house for breakfast and read the newspaper ... Or to take my lunch to the park as one can in London ... [and] to enjoy the elegance of the bourgeois milieu. Not like here [in Budapest]. I think here you think twice before you sit down on a bench.

Perceiving the inner city as a stage for cultural life, and longing for places where the bourgeois way of life can unfold is at the core of Tamás's narrative. He returns to this theme frequently and elaborates upon it in the course of his narrative. At the same time, viewing the meaning of the city in this way provides Tamás with a measure by which to judge urban phenomena, including cultural institutions, strangers or the city's transformation since 1989.

> Like many of us, I am very biased towards Budapest's inner city, its cityscape ... but I am very dissatisfied with it at the same time. I am desperate about the present lack of cultural excellence in the capital. As a local patriot it hurts me so much that I could even say I feel personally offended by the fact that ... Bucharest or Bratislava have surpassed our city with respect to its general appearance and its cityscape to an extent that it is getting a bit embarrassing for those who are living here.

Tamás identifies the source of the lack of excellence in the provincialism of the city's cultural institutions, the lack of specialised shops (for example those selling rare recordings of classical music) as well as in the city's general appearance that Tamás depicts as dirty and desolate:

> The strange thing about Budapest is that somehow everything, in particular negativities, get exaggerated ... Concerning various illnesses, alcoholism, suicide, whatsoever, generally concerning negative things we tend to lead the statistics. If I were to apply this to our urban life I would have to say that I often feel that all the negative aspects of a big city can be found here, while truly positive things exist at best as seeds, but very often they are not present at all.

Because of the city's lack of (cultural) excellence, and 'because we don't even realise that, in this aspect too, we have been surpassed [by other European capitals] by far', Tamás insists that Budapest cannot be considered a metropolis: 'to be regarded as a metropolis ... certain necessary conditions need to be fulfilled', first and foremost leadership in culture, which would be accomplished when 'you don't need to go to Vienna for culture because the domestic one has become excellent too'. As mentioned earlier, Vienna and Budapest have been competing with each other since the late nineteenth century in the fields of architecture and cultural life. In assessing the present condition of the Hungarian capital, citizens of Budapest sometimes refer to the former centre of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy even now:

For example, the question as to who might become the director of the Strauss Opera in Vienna is one of political relevance. That position is socially acclaimed, and people are so proud of their institution that it is absolutely an acknowledgement of high status to get there. Or let's take the Covent Garden in London, or the Metropolitan in New York, or the Grande Opera in Paris, or the Scala in Milan ... These operas represent a high status everywhere.

A concern with cultural excellence, Tamás laments, is absent in Budapest. He is dissatisfied with the state of Hungarian high-brow culture, and to support this view he makes many comparisons between Budapest and other European capitals. Interestingly, Tamás is the only interviewee in the sample who refers to Hungary having joined the European Union in 2004 – a fact that for him, encourages comparisons between European cities: 'now that we have become part of the European Union we need to face the fact ... that we are occupying a mediocre position.' This ordinariness goes beyond the sphere of high culture and applies for example to new architecture that in Tamás's view tends to be unambitious both by design and by the quality of construction work, as well as disrespectful towards the city's architectural heritage. Tamás goes as far as to define cultural excellence as the core attribute of a European city: 'as long as I don't get the quality that I get in Vienna I cannot help but regard Budapest as mediocre, as not really European.'

But why is Budapest lacking excellence? Tamás blames the city's population for this, whose composition has changed dramatically during socialism: 'The class that represents the bourgeois way of life is incredibly thin. That's why. Board a bus or go out into the street ... Even in the centre of the city you will see people who go to a park or a wall for peeing or defecating.'

In Tamás's view, the city lacks excellence because it lacks citizens: 'the majority of people who live here are simply not citizens ... They don't belong here. They form a kind of disoriented class.'[38] Under socialism, people could not freely choose where to live or work. Tamás is referring to newly erected factories on the outskirts of Budapest, where people from rural Hungary were asked to move to. Newcomers to Budapest, apart from their place of work, often had no particular interest and also no history in exploring the possibilities of urban life, and even less interest in participating in high-brow culture to which they could hardly relate.

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[38] Citizen translates as *polgár*, whereas the adjective *polgári* translates as *bourgeois*. Through this, in Hungarian language, *citizen* and *bourgeois* are always related: a citizen is somebody who is living a bourgeois way of life.

Something that I personally don't like at all, and this may be the heritage of the past forty to fifty years, is the fact that during communism the regime was very much concerned with initiating a kind of population exchange between rural areas and the cities. And this is the biggest problem: most people who live here are not local patriots. They came from rural Hungary for whatever reason, because they were looking for a job or because they were resettled.

In Tamás's view, to be a local patriot means to have a strong sense of belonging to the city. For him, this necessarily implies an interest not only in the institutions of high-brow culture, but also in the history of the city and of particular buildings. Consequently, Tamás would like to see more emphasis being given to local histories and myths:

> Our historically relevant or myth-laden places should be made more accessible to everyone, not only for those who live here but also for visitors ... I am speaking of the production of myths in a positive sense of the word, in order to make the area a bit more interesting ... For the past 150 years, most of the big names in cultural life have been to this city ... There have been premieres of works of Liszt ... and Brahms in Budapest, and Mahler's First Symphony was first performed in Budapest. These are names that should be better ... mobilised, also as means of marketing place.

Given that high-brow culture and historic buildings are intimately related to the country, its history, as well as to language, Tamás's excitement about the bourgeois way of life effortlessly encompasses the Hungarian nation as a whole: 'my love of culture embraces everything that is included into it ... I try to melt everything in the same pot ... I don't see the city merely as a city, but as a place full of history.' Living the life of a bourgeois becomes concrete in the relationship to historic buildings, cultural institutions and a favouring of certain places in the city, but at the same time it is embedded into 'softer', spatially less concrete modes of belonging to language, history and nationality. While Tamás is explicit about this, he shows little sympathy for people who don't share his way of life. Indeed, Tamás denies the less wealthy and those who are less interested in arts and culture, their moral right to the city:

> Most of these individuals are not local patriots but simple city dwellers. They are dwellers rather than citizens ... I don't even understand why these people are living in a city at all ... It is worth living in Budapest if you are longing for all those things [high-brow culture; AS] that a bourgeois needs for living. Otherwise, you are just vegetating.

For Tamás, these people are 'dwellers rather than citizens' – they are 'vegetating' instead of living the life of a bourgeois. In this context, Tamás reports his rejection of the First of May festivities during socialism where, after the official parades, workers and employees in low-skilled jobs used to gather in parks and other open spaces for a barbecue in public, thus juxtaposing the 'tranquillity' and 'elegance' of the bourgeois city with their own way of life: 'I still remember these sausage and beer folk festivals that, unfortunately, have continued to exist until today. By their very nature, they make me feel distaste for them.' Preferring high-brow culture above popular taste, Tamás declares the bourgeois way of life – based on refined pleasures made possible by his abundant possession of cultural capital – as the measure of good taste to which people of apparently lower status must aspire. Lifestyle preferences 'are opportunities to experience or assert one's position in social space, as a rank to be upheld or a distance to be kept' states Bourdieu (1984: 57), suggesting that '[a]version to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes' (ibid: 56).

Amongst the positive aspects of Budapest's recent changes, Tamás mentions the disappearance of socialist aesthetics characterised by 'terribly unambitious shop windows and neon ads.' Because virtually all street names with a connection to socialism have been removed since 1989, 'it was very easy, thank God, to successfully forget' the recent past: 'The fact that the *socreal*[39] appearance of many shops has disappeared is really good.' Likewise, Tamás welcomes the revival of the coffee house culture that he views as an expression of the bourgeois lifestyle. Coffee houses replace the socialist aesthetics with a more ambitious design but, as Tamás insists, they often also oppose the fin-de-siècle atmosphere of the inner city:

> I really appreciate Liszt Square or Ráday Street that by their appearance and the presence of coffee houses remind me of Paris. But at the same time I think that these coffee houses are somewhat over-designed. That is, they don't invoke the fin-de-siècle atmosphere.... For sure, they radiate some sort of quality but at the same time I feel that we often overdo things in a way that contradicts the atmosphere of the environment.

Despite such positive aspects of urban change, the continuing lack of cultural excellence and the manifold contestations to the bourgeois way of life make Tamás feel ambivalent about Budapest: 'On the one hand, there is a positive feeling that I love it, and that it is

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[39] The Hungarian word *socreal* is the abbreviation of *socialist realism* and denigrates the perceived chunky, unambitious, poorly built or rundown character of objects, buildings, places, etc. made during socialism.

good to be here. On the other hand, there is a constant discontentment that we still haven't got anywhere ... This is an eternal dilemma for me.' At the same time, other European cities – apart from revealing Budapest's mediocre position – also represent sites of positive imagination and occasional escape. Tamás frequently travels to them, and during these trips he enjoys the opportunity to live a bourgeois' life more freely. 'London, Barcelona or Rome are very close to me. That milieu or the present state of those cities ... comes very close to the values that I consider as important.' That is, the universality of the bourgeois lifestyle provides Tamás with a sense of home in places other than Budapest: 'I love my city but at the same time ... I feel at home in Europe too.'

In addition to the appreciation of the bourgeois city, Tamás's relationship to both Budapest and cities abroad is informed by his religious faith:

> Concerning its history, Budapest is pervaded by memories and buildings related to Christianity. I can't imagine that anybody who lives here would ever raise a single doubt about the continuous presence of this culture ... I realised this when I was in Rome recently: in Budapest we are on the grounds of the Roman Empire. We are absolutely part of Christian Europe!

Just like the bourgeois way of life, the Catholic faith can be found in cities across Europe and around the world, providing Tamás with a sense of home in places otherwise unknown: 'After all, the history of Europe, with all of its negative and positive aspects, is intimately related to Christianity.' Moreover, due to the global presence of Catholicism, Tamás's religious faith gives him a cosmopolitan's confidence: 'Wherever I may go, churches are places of religious belief and Christian history ... It is a feeling of comfort even when I am on the other side of the globe.' In Tamás's narrative, a sense of Catholicism, cosmopolitanism and domination (as a felt right to the entire Christian world) meet:

> Christianity provides you with a sense of cosmopolitanism. Whatever European city I may visit ... I experience a sense of comfort there ... When I enter a cathedral I do so with a sense of comfort. I don't enter as if it were merely a work of art but see it as an important architectural foundation of faith, life, history and the history of the Church.

Bourgeois and Catholic cosmopolitanism meet in the idea of a Christian Europe with whose history and values Tamás strongly identifies. For him, Catholic faith and the bourgeois lifestyle come together and are grounded in an overarching notion of culture. Tamás's love of culture includes Christianity as an essential ingredient, while Catholicism as the dominant religion has affected the history of Budapest and Hungary for a long time. Such

an overarching view of culture provides Tamás 'with a sense of comfort in the city, the country, Europe and the world. Part of this comfort is the fact that I am part of this culture, to which faith and religion have been essential for a thousand or two thousand years.'[40] Christianity, history and culture in turn become manifest in buildings, churches and cultural institutions, and this explains why Tamás's attachment to the former coincides with an attachment to the latter. At the same time it seems that culture, with all its religious, historic and national overtones can be best appreciated and lived when it becomes integrated into the bourgeois way of life that, as habitus, precisely encompasses a preference for arts, culture, history, refined aesthetics, and such like.

Margit

Margit, 58, grew up and lives in Pesterzsébet, a rural-like district on the outskirts of Budapest: 'I have always loved this area very much, the gardens, the silence, the animals.' Margit spent her entire childhood in Pesterzsébet: her school and her friends were all in the same neighbourhood, and the only time she would engage with the nearby city was on the occasion of rare excursions to Gellért Hill or the Fisher's Spire on the Buda side of the Danube.

Things changed at the age of fourteen, when Margit began to study at the Hairdressers' College in the Buda district of Krisztinatown. Commuting to college, about ten kilometres from Pesterzsébet, required Margit to walk four hours a day, five times a week, crossing the very centre of Budapest: 'it was then that I left the world of Pesterzsébet for the first time.' Yet, surprisingly, it is not the memory of urban life – traffic, crowds, shop windows, restaurants, and such like – that Margit recalls in her narrative, but the tunnel under the Castle that connects the Chain Bridge with Krisztinatown, the River Danube, or Gellért Hill: 'fathers were sledging with their children on Gellért Hill, and on the way back from school we sometimes borrowed their sledges and had a go ourselves.' At that time, it seems, Margit perceived the city as a site for excursions, whose destinations could have been located outside the city as well. 'The Danube is streaming under your feet and you see it. And you see it in the winter as ice floes move down on it. And you absorb all of its tiny movements.'

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[40] While *two thousand years* refers to the history of Christianity, *thousand years* refers to the history of Hungary, Christianised by King Stefan in A.D. 1000.

Upon completing her education in 1963, Margit started work in a hairdresser's shop on Üllöi Street, located half way between Pesterzsébet and the city centre. She has been working in the same shop for 42 years. Margit's husband has been employed as a locksmith in several factories in the industrial district on Csepel Island. They have a 35 year old daughter who trained as a hairdresser too, and is working in the same shop on Üllöi Street.

The family's difficulties in making ends meet – both during socialism and since 1989 – occupy a significant part of Margit's narrative. She and her husband worked very hard to save money in order to pay the mortgage for their house, which they were finally able to buy in 1981 with the support of Western relatives. Given their modest family income, the purchase of the house required great effort and deprivation. Margit's husband often worked very long shifts, and there was very little time and money to visit the inner city just for pleasure:

> Our life hasn't been too sweet ... we never went out to have fun ... *my dear*, we missed it! Sometimes, my husband was working from six until midnight, and I came home after 2pm, quickly cooked him lunch and carried it in a box to the factory so that he could have a hot meal. I can't tell you anything about parties ... We had no choice, *my dear*. We had to choose between having fun, which would have meant that we would have had to pay rent for the rest of our lives, or saving money to buy our own home ... It wasn't easy but it was worth doing it.

Margit is dissatisfied with the fact that she has never lived under good conditions. The manner in which she repeatedly emphasises the words 'my dear' sounds like an accusation: perhaps to some extent against me who had asked whether she and her husband had fun in Budapest as a young couple, yet more profoundly against their economic circumstances that did not allow for participation in urban life. Although the centre of Budapest is less than ten kilometres away from Pesterzsébet (and just a 30 minutes walk from her place of work), Margit seldom went there as young woman. 'I can't tell you much ... We live in Budapest ... but when our daughter was young we took her ... for skiing or sledging ... in any case to places outside Budapest.' Usually, the family spent their weekend in the countryside, and when they visited Budapest they treated it as a site for excursions too: typical destinations included the Buda hills or the park on Gellért Hill from where the Danube and the inner city can be seen: 'I've always liked romantic places. Nice panoramas. I never wanted to see the city from within ... I climbed on Gellért Hill many times ... From there I could see everything: the parliament, the Fisher's spire, the basilica. I never wanted to explore Budapest in detail.'

What Margit expresses as an aesthetic preference – the romantic panorama – might equally be seen as a coping strategy. Within the panoramic view, disengagement and the illusion of participation meet. The view itself is inclusive because, apparently, everything can be seen, yet exclusive at the same time, because it requires a distance between the viewer and the viewed.[41] In turn, detachment from the city avoids possibly unpleasant confrontations with one's economic limitations that are a barrier to participating in urban life.

Indeed, Margit recalls such unpleasant experiences. Some of the rare excursions to Budapest led her to the department stores on Váci Street, the main shopping street in the city centre that during socialism had an almost mystical reputation in Hungary and beyond, representing something like a site of pilgrimage for consumption. 'It was hard to see beautiful shop windows or clothes whilst not being able to afford them,' Margit remembers. But then, after a couple of years of work experience, Margit finally had more money to buy things occasionally so that these places were not entirely out of reach for her any more.

> But then, there was a time ... when I could go to Váci Street or the Luxury department store: *Great! Luxury!* Well, you know, price gaps were much smaller than today when one dress costs 100,000 and another 5,000, so you could afford things more easily. It was lovely to walk around and marvel at clothes there.

Such occasional excursions to the Luxury department store were not without a gender dimension. Margit went shopping with female colleagues only. Her visits to Váci Street, she says, were not for men, especially not for her husband: 'He is a man. He gets bored quickly. He is not that kind of person anyway.'[42] Shopping on Váci Street served the purpose of dressing up at work, and Margit remembers how much she was pleased about male clients' compliments. Gender played an important role again later, after Margit gave birth to her daughter Andrea in 1970. In the years to follow, her life became more centred around work and family, and commuting between home and work left little time for visiting the city.

Likewise, consumption was not without the imprint of Margit's economic limitations. Despite a modest rise of income, Margit still did not earn enough to make regular pur-

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[41] On the (architectural) history of the panorama and its association with the modern metropolis, see Boyer (1994), Oettermann (1997).

[42] The male equivalent to such gendered appropriations of the inner city is revealed by Róbert's narrative who recalls his Sunday visits to Café Anna on Váci Street during the 1960s. On these occasions, he would dress smartly, drive to Váci Street on his motor bike, sit on the terrace with his friends and watch women.

chases, and often she would go window-shopping only: 'even when I didn't buy anything, I still went to keep track of fashion.' Consequently, she was well aware of a boundary beyond which clothes became too expensive or too exclusive in taste to suit her: 'I was a pretty woman and I always liked to dress up nicely. I went about once a month to buy what was within reach for me. But I never wanted to own a swan feather dress.'

Margit's narrative reveals a great deal about the sense of inclusion that members of the lower classes could experience in socialism – an inclusion that, however, was never really complete. I asked Margit whether she felt proud of Budapest's old buildings:

> Of course, that's my country! Especially when I was young I knew this feeling of comfort – when we were still equal. Those who were poor and those who were rather rich were equal. [!] A rich man earned 10,000 and you had 1,800, but there couldn't be such a big difference between people ... Of course I was proud [of buildings], but not any more.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, income inequalities have indeed increased significantly since 1989: in 2003 average income within the top decile was over eight times higher than in the bottom decile (Mozer 2006: 107) – a sharp contrast to rather moderate inequalities during socialism, where the average pay of the top 10 percent was less than three times higher than of the bottom 10 percent in 1979 (Beskid and Kolosi 1983: 111). At the same time, real wages have declined during the 1990s, leaving those at the bottom of the income ladder with less money in the midst of an obvious display of potential wealth. In this context, the above quote is interesting in many ways. It reveals Margit's awareness of income inequalities during socialism, but at the same time it suggests that, in her perception, these were not too extreme to threaten her sense of comfort in the city. Margit's sense of comfort or belonging, in turn, allowed her to be proud of Budapest: being proud of the city, it seems, depends on the sense of *having* a city – something that Margit has lost with the experience of social decline and the corresponding estrangement from places that she once could access (*cf.* Harvey 2008, Isin and Wood 1999, Lefebvre 1996, Mitchell 2003). I shall elaborate this theme below.

The panoramic view that combines inclusion with detachment, and the limited participation in the pleasures of consumption are just two examples that illustrate Margit's sense of inclusion during socialism, while simultaneously revealing its fragility. A further narrative strategy to express 'inclusion' is to quote places and people that by wealth or reputation may be perceived as being positioned above oneself on the social hierarchy. In the aura of these places and people the illusion of inclusion emerges, while the subtle im-

prints of social status – manifested as a sense of displacement, a subtle suspicion that the inclusion experienced may not be real – never disappears. For example:

> I've been working for 42 years in Üllöi Street, known for its beautiful trees ... Vizi Szilveszter, the president of the Academy of Sciences used to come to me for a haircut. I'm sure you have seen him on TV. He is a good looking guy who always wears a red bow tie ... Until today he tells the story of the Üllöi Street trees ... whose beauty brought him back from America where he had been offered a job ... Yes, I was part of it: I also saw their beauty.

Here, a sense of inclusion is achieved by the co-perception of a commonly appreciated urban environment and further strengthened by the authority of a famous person. The president of the Academy of Sciences and Margit could see the same trees. Moreover, and more importantly, they could interact with each other – a small example of a lived inclusion that could mitigate inequalities of class or status during socialism.

In a second example, Margit refers to the 1970s when she taught a class at the hairdresser's academy. The academy building is located next to the parliament, to whose canteen Margit and her students had access: 'It was an elite place that not everybody could go to, but our former president [of the hairdressers' association] ... liked his employees. He thought we deserve this recognition. It was an honour ... sometimes we gave a tip to waiters so that they could feel good, too.' In this example, inclusion is achieved through being given access to an exclusive place, and is further strengthened through giving tips to the waiter by which the donor places him/herself above the receiver.

In a third example, Margit portrays the jovial co-presence of social classes and professions at a time when inequalities and the spatial segregation that accompanies them were less obvious than today: 'You could go to a café and ask somebody how he or she was ... People were happy and cafés were crowded. Doctors and professors lived their lives there ... It was a different world. You could laugh a lot, people were in a good mood and they would give their lives for a good joke.'

Margit's narrative unmasks the socialist ideology of equality, yet also reveals that a fragile sense of inclusion nevertheless existed for her: the inequalities of class and status, although by no means absent, were not unbridgeable. Ephemeral encounters between strangers of different social status were perceived as worthy of remembering, suggesting that they were not commonplace, but the important point here is that they were nevertheless possible. Whether this was the effect of the socialist rhetoric of an inclusive society, of

modest income inequalities, or simply of a lack of possibilities for the rich to distinguish themselves from the poor, cannot be established here.

Encounters between people of different class or status at times lead to situations that are both revealing and absurd – a fact illustrated by Margit's astonishing account of her relatives' visits to Hungary. Mr Prinzhorn, a rich Austrian capitalist, was the best friend of Margit's father-in-law, a German soldier who died in Budapest during the last days of the Second World War. Out of solidarity with his friend's only son, Mr Prinzhorn remained in contact with the family throughout his life and supported it in many ways, for example through contributing to the house that they purchased in 1981. Mr Prinzhorn's annual visits to Hungary during the hunting season produced remarkable encounters between the Austrian haute-bourgeoisie and the Hungarian working-class that Margit recalls as if she remembered the visit of aliens:

> He used to come during the hunting season. He stayed now in this hotel, now in that one. Now you should know ... that it is the most honourable gesture when a hunter gives you his prey as a present. That is a big, big thing: it is fantastic! Now, imagine, you dress up, you put on your most beautiful clothes to welcome that Prinzhorn guy, and he arrives in his dirty, scabbed boots on the beautiful stairs of the <u>Margaret Island</u> Hotel. Mud is running down his legs, he radiates dirt in all directions. Then, he walks over to his Porsche, opens the boot, takes off six pheasants bound together by their neck and gives them to you as a present. This scene got repeated every year. *Every year!* And I say to myself: 'Fuck!' I walk down Margaret Island with six dead pheasants in my hand, and it happened more than once that the police stopped us asking where those pheasants came from ... You know, there are pheasants all over Margaret Island, and we had to convince them that we did not shoot them. And then we had to find a taxi driver who would take us home ... Christ, we were as poor as church mice, trying hard to save money for a house. If he had given us five Dollars or Deutsche Mark, we would have been better off than with his stupid pheasants!

Margit's narrative reveals a fragile sense of inclusion that she could experience during socialism – and that allowed for participating in the city's splendour to a certain extent. How did the recent change of the city affect her relation to Budapest? Since 1989, Margit has become more and more detached from Budapest. The polarisation of places of consumption into cheap shops (for example second-hand shops or Chinese outlets that sell cheap clothes of a very poor quality) and rather expensive boutiques or Western-style shopping centres aimed at targeting the middle-classes (and nothing quite in between) left Margit without a place that she could appropriate. Ordinary shops that during socialism

nevertheless represented a certain standard regarding the quality of displayed goods, while being affordable for the less wealthy, have largely disappeared:

> Look at [shop windows] on <u>Ferenc Ringstrasse</u>, or look at an ABC [a Hungarian grocery chain; AS]. Look at butcher's shops! ... In the past you would stop before them and look at their windows and what you saw made your mouth water ... You stopped and felt that you must enter. Shop windows were attracting you to enter. There are no such shop windows anymore.

Today, Margit can only afford to purchase low quality goods in cheap shops. 'Do you know where I buy clothes, my dear?,' she asks with an angry voice. 'At rummage sales. I go to second-hand shops ... That's it, that's it! I go to second-hand shops and buy a pullover or a shirt for 500 Forint [equals £1.50; AS].' Buying in these places, however, confronts Margit with the fact that, in contrast to earlier times, better places in Budapest have become out of reach for her. Buying in boutiques or shopping malls has become unthinkable. With a rather fierce voice Margit says of the latter: 'I've never been, my dear. Don't even ask me. I don't have the money to buy expensive things ... I don't know them, my dear! I have no clue as to what a plaza looks like.' Moreover, plazas don't match Margit's shopping habits because they are more complex than the places she was accustomed to:

> It gets on my nerves that they want to determine where I should go. You can't go straight-forward just to buy biscuits and leave. *No*, you need to go upstairs and then downstairs again. You are forced to look at everything and if you have 3 Forint with you they will want to take it from you. That's fairly aggressive ... [and] not what a true working Hungarian needs. *No.* What he or she needs is to be allowed to walk in just to buy a bottle of milk.

Margit has responded to the polarisation of urban spaces, in the course of which places where she could maintain a fragile sense of inclusion have become out of reach, by withdrawing from the city almost completely. She is explicit about her economic limitations for participating in urban life; however, she also seems to justify her withdrawal by accentuating the dirtiness of the city: 'I cannot be proud of walking on Váci Street in the midst of dirt ... Budapest is very, very dirty. There is no reason why one could be proud of it anymore.' Paradoxically, Váci Street is one of Budapest's prime shopping destinations, and as such it is well maintained. Nevertheless, Margit continues complaining about it: 'Shop windows disappeared many years ago ... it used to be important in the past to display what was nice and beautiful ... All this has gone by now.' Perhaps, Margit is confusing the overall

dirtiness of the city, or the disappearance of shops that she once used to visit, with places such as Váci Street that in fact have undergone renewal since 1989. Yet such claims may also represent her unconscious strategy to mitigate the experience of social decline by declaring places that have become out of reach for her as not worth visiting anyway.

With regards to this aspect, there is a remarkable similarity between the narrative of Margit and that of her daughter Andrea who reproduces her mother's negative view of contemporary Budapest as a dirty unattractive place not worthy of visiting. Another interviewee, Róbert, who too has experienced a decline in social status since 1989, blames car traffic for avoiding the city. Withdrawing from the city seems to be a common strategy to mitigate the experience of social exclusion, but the real causes of withdrawal are obscured by a distorted view of the city as an inherently unattractive place.

Ironically, in the midst of responding to the experience of deprivation by turning away from the city, Margit was forced to start a new chapter of her relationship to Budapest at the age of 58. In the late 1990s, the building on Üllői Street was sold, and with the aim of replacing it with a modern office building the new owner gave notice to the hairdresser's shop in 2005, leaving Margit and her daughter without a place to work. The family responded to the new situation by opening a business, and with the help of the family's savings, modest support from their German relatives and a mortgage, they decided to open their own hairdresser's shop some six hundred metres further up Üllői Street. Some fifteen years after the change of the country's political and economic regime, Margit has involuntarily become a small entrepreneur.

> You can work very hard, but you still cannot make ends meet, make yourself a home. This lack of perspective makes me really sad. Imagine, I am 58 years old, and ripe for retirement ... But I had no choice other than to do something that I was never longing for. I am desperate about this. Imagine, I who have always been positive about life, enjoying myself and laughing a lot: *I am desperate!* I am desperate about what I was compelled to do, forced to do by life: to start a business at the age of 58 ... But you know, my daughter, she has life still ahead of her.

At the time of the interview, the new shop was still under refurbishment. In the meantime, one of Margit's former colleagues chose a similar strategy to escape unemployment and rented a place close to Margit's. With an already existing third hairdresser's shop within walking distance, the success of the new family business is anything but certain.

Éva, Tamás and Margit distinguish between social collectivities by referring to aes-
thetic preferences and patterns of consumption rather than to income or the possession of
capital. They are preoccupied with status rather than class, and it seems that they already
were before the regime changed. Even when they speak of workers, they do so 'in ways that
make it apparent that they in fact refer to distinctions of status' (Chan and Goldthorpe
2007: 515) rather than of class.

Éva, Tamás and Margit delimit themselves from people perceived as *not* belonging to
the same collectivity, and they map the city into places and activities that belong to one
social group or the other. This distinction between an *'us'* and a *'them'* holds either way. Éva
and Tamás, who consider themselves middle-class, distance themselves from places and
activities of lower classes. In this context, Tamás uses the term *'bourgeois'* to legitimate a
certain way of life taken to be desirable. In the emotionally laden and highly polemic politi-
cal discourse in Hungary, being a bourgeois has become synonymous for being upright,
Christian and Hungarian (and conversely for *not* being Gypsy, Proletarian or Communist).
Finally, Margit who considers herself a 'true working Hungarian' feels excluded from places
and activities of the middle-classes, and employs narrative strategies to justify another way
of life in order to avoid negative experiences.[43]

Status becomes public in character as a set of interrelated preferences for certain so-
cial practices and aesthetics, that is, for a certain lifestyle that allows one to distinguish
between people who share one's own preferences and those who don't. Éva, Tamás and
Margit identify with some practices while they reject others, and sometimes the latter is
paired with 'disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick-making') of the tastes
of others' (Bourdieu 1984: 56), occasionally of their very presence in the city. Éva and
Tamás distinguish themselves from those 'below' and take their lifestyle as the measure of
'good taste': 'For Weber, lifestyle is the most typical way through which members of differ-
ent status groups, even within the purely conventional and relatively loose status orders of
modern societies, seek to define their boundaries – that is, to establish cues or markers of
inclusion and exclusion' (Chan and Goldthorpe 2007: 522).

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[43] The discussion of status narratives must remain incomplete here in order not to compromise the discus-
sion of narratives dominated by other themes and aspects. It is for this reason that György's and Miklós's
narratives have been omitted from analysis, despite the fact that they provide interesting insights into the
urban experience of two socially upwardly mobile individuals and their attempts to secure their newly
acquired status.

Expanding on this insight, Bourdieu (1984) emphasises the importance of (cultural) taste and consumption as expressions of lifestyle, that allow the wealthier to distinguish themselves from people of apparently lower status, based on taste and aesthetic preferences rather than on economic inequalities or an explicit expression of one's own sense of superiority. However, the latter may happen as we have seen in Tamás's narrative who explicitly distinguishes between bourgeois *citizens* and non-bourgeois *dwellers* of Budapest.

Status manifests itself as ways of narrating informed by a *habitus*, defined by Bourdieu as 'a system of dispositions, that is of ... long-lasting ... schemata or structures of perception, conception and action' (2002: 27; see also 1977, 1984, 1990). Habitus grows away from social and material conditions that embrace individuals' lives, without necessarily becoming the object of reflection. It stands for 'a practical mastery without theory, without theoretical mastery of practical mastery' (Bourdieu 2002: 32): it is a way of doing and narrating that both conceals and cites the conditions involved in its emergence.

Status narratives cite social and material conditions that embrace individuals' lives and constitute environments to their actions. By virtue of their relative stability, these conditions suggest similar personal strategies to be mastered – similar not only to the strategies of individuals who share the same conditions but also to one's previous enactments that proved to work. That is, status narratives cite both material constraints (or the lack of these) in relation to urban life, and intersubjectively established and controlled ways of interpreting them and acting in their midst. Finally, status narratives also cite one's own previous enactments, adding an element of self-referentiality to the urban experience.[44]

However, status-driven narratives may become problematic at times of urban change. This accounts for respondents' sensitivity to Budapest's recent transformations: if the city changes, people must adapt to it, and their narratives might be challenged. One way of coping with urban change is to focus on those aspects of urban life that reinforce a status-driven view of the city and the self. If places supportive of a certain lifestyle are seen to resist urban change, corresponding narratives can be maintained easily. As we have seen, new places supportive of the bourgeois lifestyle were highly welcomed by Tamás and Éva. Another way of coping with change is to reject developments that, although they do not

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[44] The citational character of agency is central to the work of Judith Butler (1993, 1999) and has been further developed within feminist theory where it is used to question established ways of theorising identity (Bell 1999, Fincher and Jacobs 1998a, Probyn 1996). Butler's work, in particular her concepts of *performativity* and *belonging*, will be discussed in Chapter 7. On the similarities between Bourdieu and Butler with regards to theorising the social character of agency, see Meier 2004, Murphy and Throop 2002, Reckwitz 2004).

question a status-driven view of the city, nevertheless threaten one's right to it. The increase in spaces of the middle-classes (for example, of Western-style shopping centres) marginalises those who are excluded from them by virtue of their financial circumstances or their subjective limits to dealing with the complexity of the commodity world, as Margit's narrative reveals. Finally, the increase in spaces of the poor (rundown buildings, streets and districts populated by workers or Gypsies) irritates the wealthy who cannot claim these areas their own, and where their safety might be in danger, as the narratives of Tamás and Éva reveal. The third way of 'coping' with urban change, if it exceeds a subjective degree of tolerance, is to withdraw from the city (almost) entirely, as the narratives of Margit, and to a lesser extent of Éva reveal.

Narratives of Budapest contain little evidence for what has been claimed by some authors to be increasingly typical of Western societies, namely individuals' identification with milieu or lifestyles, as referring to a horizontally rather than vertically structured society. Such claims have been made for example by Beck and Schulze for (West) German society. Beck (1983 and 1992) argues that the lack of a sense of class and status is the cumulative effect of better education, higher incomes, the welfare state, and the decrease of weekly working hours increasing leisure time, resulting in the pluralisation of patterns of consumption on a *horizontal* scale. Similarly, Schulze argues in his book *Erlebnisgesellschaft* (2005) that milieus constituted by patterns of experience and consumption have become a better measure for individuals' position in society than their economic conditions or their membership in status groups.

However, findings like these may not be simply applied to the Hungarian society where inequalities are large and obvious, and where, instead of enjoying relative wealth, one third of the population lived below subsistence level in 1995 (Andorka and Spéder 2001: 135). On the contrary, the narratives discussed suggest that both *class* as a market position that affects people's life-chances (Weber 1961: 181–3), and *status* as the perceived hierarchy between social groups (ibid: 186–7) discernible by their consumption habits (Bourdieu 1984) have become more important since 1989. This is in line with findings by Bukodi (2007a), Demszky (1998), Galasi (1998), and Ladányi and Szelényi (1998). For almost every other interviewee, Budapest represents a place where their sense of status is displayed and reinforced. In an age of increasing social inequalities, the preoccupation with status has become a pervasive perspective for many, and as such it deeply affects their relation to the city and their sense of belonging to it. While contemporary inequali-

ties and uncertainties possibly explain the importance of status as a structuring principle of urban narratives in Budapest, it is important to recognise individual's sense of status as it already existed during socialism. Contemporary status narratives have grown away from their less obviously manifest precursors.

4.2   Other Social Collectivities

The cases analysed above represent examples of narratives informed by the *themes* of class or status. However, from the perspective of the first research interest (identifying *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity), class or status appear as one possible example of narratives informed by individuals' sense of belonging to a social collectivity.

Alongside class and status, the narratives presented above revealed the themes of religion and nationality as potentially informing narratives of Budapest. Like status, these themes refer to and construct their own collectivities. Two interviewees expressed their religious beliefs: Tamás, whose case was presented above, and László, the cantor of the great synagogue. In each of the two narratives the theme of religion manifested in different ways. In Tamás's story, religion appeared as a minor theme compared to his preference for the bourgeois city. His sense of *Catholic* cosmopolitanism represented an overtone to his sense of *bourgeois* cosmopolitanism, conquering the space of the Catholic world for him: 'Wherever I may go, churches are places of religious belief and Christian history ... It's a feeling of comfort even if I'm on the other side of the globe.' By contrast, László's sense of religiosity represents the core theme of his narrative. His faith does not open up a space as vast as Tamás's, but structures his relation to Budapest through accounts of places and activities of the Jewish community, of experiences of discrimination in public, and of events that strengthened a Jewish identity.

Although status and religion refer to different social collectivities, narratives informed by these themes also reveal similarities. Like status narratives, religious narratives inform the perception of buildings and places; and of uses, activities and events in the public realm. Religious narratives draw a map of Budapest that connects places of worship with the life of the religious community and its places, such as the parish hall, neighbourhoods where the community lives, buildings inhabited by fellows, or restaurants where one is likely to meet them. Eventually, a sense of religiosity may even turn the entire city into a meaningful place: Tamás regarded Budapest as part of Christian Europe, located on the grounds of the

Roman Empire. Furthermore, those who express their sense of religion tend to distinguish themselves from people of other faiths. For László, such distinctions are often imposed by others: his religious identity was strengthened by experiences of discrimination in public; indeed, it arose in part as the effect of others' significations. He has internalised such negative experiences and now protects his religious life by delimiting it – spatially or socially – from places where it is likely to be contested.[45]

A sense of being Hungarian does not dominate any of the narratives included in the sample, but it is nevertheless present in about every other narrative. It ranges from the perception of the city through symbols of the Hungarian nation or history to a more subtle sense of home that manifests as an attachment to Hungary in general and to Budapest in particular, without crystallizing along specific monuments or places in the city. Hungarian narratives of Budapest may include pride of Budapest's splendour (its historic buildings, its cultural life, its panorama) compared to other (middle) European cities; a concern with Budapest's attractiveness for visitors; an appreciation of symbols and monuments of Hungarian history; an interest in stories and legends linked to places and buildings in Budapest; the rejection of recent urban change as Westernisation; pride in famous Hungarian scientists or athletes; or an appreciation of Hungarian arts, culture, and language.

The reader familiar with Anglo-American literature might be surprised not to find gender among the themes presented in this chapter. This is because there is no narrative in the sample dominated by the theme of gender: gender sometimes manifests as a way of consuming, embedded into a class or status narrative (Éva, Margit, Róbert), or as fear of entering certain streets or districts at night (Rita and Hajnal).[46] The only exception to this is the narrative of 89 year old Erzsébet who has been a housewife throughout her life. Erzsébet's life has centred on the domestic life of the family and short encounters with the neighbourhood related to buying food. While her narrative is clearly related to her gender (and possibly status), it has not been discussed here because Budapest is almost completely absent from it.

Perhaps, the theme of gender would be more apparent if I had interviewed more people; however, the fact that the theme of status is present in almost every narrative while gender is not, is striking. Certainly, this does not mean that gender lacks a spatial dimension; nor that space could not be thought of as *gendered* space.[47] Why people hardly refer to

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[45] Out of consideration for the length of the chapter, László's narrative will not be discussed here further.

[46] See the discussion of Rita's narrative in Chapter 7.

[47] For the relationship between gender and place see, for example, Bell (1999), Massey (1994), Tonkiss (2005).

gender cannot be fully answered here. Perhaps, gender has not become problematic in the same way as status in an age of increasing social inequalities and associated status uncertainties. Perhaps, the lack of distinctly gendered narratives is the effect of the ideology of gender equality under socialism. Perhaps, none of the interviewees encountered particular conflicts related to gender roles or their sexual preferences. However, the thesis is not on gender, and from the point of view of the first research interest gender and status are interchangeable: both represent examples of narratives informed by a sense of belonging to a social collectivity.

Yet other collectivities are too subtle to be uncovered easily. I am thinking of collectivities into which *everybody* is included, so that the corresponding narratives – because they lack an outside to be put into context – go unnoticed. Crites termed such narratives 'sacred stories', because they are too deeply interwoven with our identities to become the object of reflection: 'sacred stories ... seem to be allusive expressions of stories that cannot be fully and directly told ...: they form consciousness rather than being among the objects of which it is directly aware' (Crites 2001: 30). De Certeau seems to address the same issue when stating that '[t]he figures of movements ... characterize both a "symbolic order of the unconscious" and "certain typical processes of subjectivity manifested in discourse"' (de Certeau 1998: 102). Our historically grown sense of self (Elias 1994, Ferguson 2009, Foucault 1991, Taylor 1989) and body (Foucault 1978, Sennett 1994); the pervasive logic of individuality and individualisation (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991); the panoramic gaze that conjoins understanding with detachment (Boyer 1994); the language and meanings available to a society; and such like could be regarded as examples of 'hidden' social collectivities that affect urban narratives. Due to the chosen methodology such subtle themes cannot be further examined here.

4.3 Conclusion

The *themes* of class, status, nation and religion are examples of narratives imbued by a sense of belonging to a social collectivity. Two out of three narratives of Budapest reveal a deep sense of belonging to one or more of these collectivities, and we have seen how this affects individuals' perceptions of buildings, places, districts and the entire city. Interviewees who identify themselves with a social collectivity delimit themselves from activities and places used by members of other collectivities, and they sometimes reject their very presence.

Chapter 1 argued that narrative and place mutually depend on each other. This chapter provided some empirical evidence for this claim. It showed how narratives depend on places where they can unfold, and whether or not these exist (or can be accessed easily) necessarily affects the urban experience. Narratives always reflect their environments.[48] Éva's and Tamás's narratives, for example, depend upon places that are supportive of a bourgeois lifestyle, and we have seen how both try avoiding encounters with places and strangers that represent a threat to their way of life. Similarly, Margit's fragile sense of inclusion during socialism depended on the accessibility of places of consumption associated with the lives of wealthier people, and we have seen that she has largely withdrawn from the city as these places became increasingly out of reach for her.

Class, status, nation or religion manifest themselves as a set of meaningfully related practices held together within the spatio-temporal framework of a narrative. These narratives require the existence of environments that one is familiar with to a significant extent. Bourdieu calls such environments *fields* and defines them as the objective structures that represent an immediate context for practices (Bourdieu 1990: 58, 66–8). He considers habitus as related to an environment in which it unfolds as a particular practice, or a set of related practices: 'habitus must not be considered in isolation. Rather, it must be used in relation to the notion of *field* which contains a principle of dynamics by itself as well as in relation to habitus' (Bourdieu 2002: 31; my emphasis). These structures are not objective in the sense that they exist in and out of themselves; rather, their 'objectivity' is related to, and dependent on, narratives which they support or restrict: from the point of view of subjective experience, fields cease to exist when the correspondent habitus (and the narratives that it generates) disappears (Meier 2004: 64). Such interdependencies between narratives and the city represent recurring themes within the thesis and will be elaborated in subsequent chapters.

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[48] These findings are similar to those of other authors. For example, Pratt studied how narratives of class and gender are reinforced through the distribution of jobs in the city (Pratt 1998; Hanson and Pratt 1995). Others have looked at the mutual constitution of ethnicity and place (E. Anderson 1990, K. Anderson 1998, Jacobs 1996), or the relation between sexuality and the city (Bondi 1998, Knopp 1998, Tonkiss 2005).

5 REMEMBERED PLACES, EMPLACED MEMORIES

This chapter explores the role of memory with respect to urban narratives by focussing on two issues. Section 5.1 looks at memory in its capacity for unlocking the meaning of places that stage a narrative. It asks more specifically what is contained within memory, and finds that these are both places and events related to past experiences. Consequently, the section dwells on the interdependent relationship between memory, narrative and place. Based on the arguments developed in Section 5.1, Section 5.2 addresses the remembering and forgetting of socialism. Both issues will be reconstructed from narratives of Budapest and supported by a number of key writings in the field of (urban) sociology, history and phenomenology, such as de Certeau's (1988) work on *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Casey's (1987) book on *Remembering*, Boyer's (1994) and Halbwachs' (1992) works on collective memory, and the contribution of the Hungarian literature to this topic.

Section 5.2 differs from Section 5.1 with regards to how it makes use of individual narratives. The theme of remembering and forgetting socialism will not be discussed through entire narratives of Budapest; rather, relevant sections from several narratives will be drawn together and considered for analysis. This approach can be justified by the fact that memories of socialism are crosscutting to whatever theme(s) may dominate a narrative: they are present in a number of narratives, but they seldom dominate them. Therefore, it is helpful to consider more than one narrative in order to reconstruct this theme.

5.1 Memory, Narrative and Place

This section presents three narratives of Budapest: *Lea*'s story – a 83 year old Jewish lady who survived deportation to Auschwitz where her family was murdered – reveals how the memory of a single traumatic experience can inform somebody's relation to the city, which, in the given example, becomes a site for stabilising a damaged identity; *Helén*'s narrative – guided by her memories of deprivation that she could leave behind – provides a less extreme example of how memory functions to unlock the meaning of the city. Helén's narrative differs from Lea's not only in so far that it represents a less painful example of how memory affects the urban experience, but also with regard to reiteration: while Helén repeatedly engages in enjoyable activities that themselves turn into positive memories of the

city, memory works in a very different way for Lea. For her, it is the memory of a single experience – that of surviving the Holocaust – that establishes Budapest as a place of fragile meaningfulness. Finally, the section presents the narrative of 79 year old *Vera* who left Budapest during the 1956 uprising yet keeps returning to it regularly in order to cherish her pre-1956 memories of the city.

Lea

Lea was born in the small town of Ózd in north-eastern Hungary in 1923 and moved to the outskirts of Budapest with her husband in 1946. In the same year, she gave birth to a son 'who unfortunately soon was found to have certain health problems' – a disability that Lea did not further specify. Out of consideration for her son's needs, the family moved closer to the city centre, 'since it was in Budapest where we had access to the hospital, doctors and people who could help.' Lea and her husband were able to purchase a small flat from the local council, located in a war-damaged building that the residents had to restore themselves prior to moving in. Their home was in immediate proximity to their son's kindergarten, so that Lea 'could hear when he was shouting or crying' and go over to calm him down.

At that time, Lea's husband used to work in the Paris department store on Andrássy Boulevard, where he could trade various goods for food. This helped the family make ends meet during the years of post-War deprivation: 'I can't remember that we have ever lacked food ... We always had enough to eat, we even had coffee, which was a big deal at that time.' Nevertheless, his modest income was not enough for supporting the family that grew with the birth of another child. First, Lea found work in a nearby factory, but compulsory night shifts made it difficult for her to care for her son. 'And then, I was very fortunate. I saw a job offer ... applied for it, and was immediately employed': Lea became a café manager in the <u>House of Technics</u> – an institution of strategic importance, out of which the country's 24 industrial sectors were centrally directed. There, Lea managed the café for twenty-five years: 'This was recognised as an *excellent* job at that time ... There was a beautiful restaurant with a coffee bar, and I ran the latter. I was making coffee for the country's elite, even for [the General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party; AS] Kádár.'

In the first part of her narrative, whose structure the above summary adopted, Lea recalled key events of her life in Budapest in chronological order, up to and including her retirement from work in 1985. In fact, she was telling the story of her life, rather than

offering a narrative of Budapest, and the city is present only to the extent that all human activity is bound to place. But when I asked Lea why she moved to Budapest after the War, the nature of the interview changed dramatically:

> I am going to tell you, but please keep it for yourself. I was deported. I was in Auschwitz, where not a single soul from my family survived. So we [Lea and her husband; AS] did not know what to do there [in rural Hungary] any more. With these memories. You can't imagine, my dear. I had a twin brother who did not – [sentence stops here; AS]. We came to Budapest to live, after all, amidst humans, among better people ... Don't be surprised to see me cry.

If I had not asked Lea why she moved to Budapest after the War, I would have most probably missed the key dimension of her relationship to Budapest. Lea had tears in her eyes again and again during the interview. Fortunately, I was able to respond to her revelation by mentioning my Jewish grandfather; this made her feel that we shared something. A relationship of trust was established without which the interview could soon have come to an end.

Lea's traumatic experience provides the key for understanding her narrative of Budapest. Heavily charged with meaning, the city became a place for re-establishing normality after the experience of the Holocaust. This task could not be achieved in Lea's hometown from where she had been deported, and it also required the invention of Budapest – from where deportation from rural Hungary in fact had been organised – as an uncontaminated place where things could finally go well, and where a life 'amidst humans, among better people' could be risked. But soon, such longing for normality was put to the test during the 1956 uprising that Lea was compelled to experience at close quarters: 'I remember it very well, and I have haunting memories ... My memories of the deportation were still very alive then ... We were scared, we were really scared. We were scared as they were shooting at <u>Hay Square</u> just from the park above.'

Lea's home on the Buda hill above Hay Square was in the firing line, as the Soviet army and protesters were fighting each other. The family did not leave the house during these events, and Lea recalls the solidarity among neighbours: 'We shared food and lived like a family during the siege.' Those who were living in the flats above moved into her flat that was more secure from direct fire. The families shared their food reserves, while a doctor who lived in the same building, and was escorted to and from hospital in an ambulance daily, supplied the inhabitants with bread.

As I argued in Chapter 3, the post 1956 era saw massive investments in infrastructure and housing, and a relatively sophisticated provision of goods for consumption. The Kádár era brought about a basic level of normality and stability, and allowed citizens to live relatively free from state terror and economic deprivation for the first time in more than four decades. This change in the orientation of the regime resonated with Lea's longing for normality after the experience of the Holocaust – a life 'amidst humans' – and helps explain her positive memories of the early socialist regime that, at least prior to 1967, radically opposed any form of anti-Semitism. It is for this reason that Jews generally adopted a positive attitude towards the regime. As Lea says, Jews 'felt closer to the party than to their own community' – a view confirmed by another Jewish interviewee, László, the cantor of Budapest's Great Synagogue. Vajda (2008) reaches the same conclusion in her study of the biographical narratives of the survivors of the Shoa. Lea confirms this positive attitude by stating:

> I had no problem at all with Kádár! I had a quiet life, to be honest. I didn't earn a lot of money, but I got tips at work. We had no problems; we had no problems at all. We had no problems; I had no problems at all. *At all* ... I was glad to have a good job, and I was happy for being recognised and accepted.

The socialist attitude of caring for loyal citizens may have played an important role in this context, and furthered Lea's sympathy for the regime:

> They educated my [disabled] son, who had grown adult in the meantime. They gave him a job immediately after he had finished school ... They cared both for me and for him. We didn't lack anything. Don't put these words down: I know that nobody likes to hear these things nowadays, but it was like this.

In contrast to her sympathy for the socialist regime, Lea's relationship to being Jewish has remained problematic ever since her deportation. She avoided contact with the Jewish community for a long time after the War, and only 'discovered' it quite recently:

> To be honest, unfortunately, I did not engage with the community, simply because I did not have the time to do so. Somehow, I did not find the time to engage with it. How shall I put it?: I denied my belonging to it. Not that I denied God or my faith ... but I thought somehow that this is nothing but an old-fashioned habit.

Before I had time to realise that declaring the Jewish community – where Lea would be inevitably confronted with her painful memories of deportation and murder – irrelevant or even non-existent may be a technique for repressing the unbearable past, Lea continued the above statement by asking: 'If something like this can happen, as it happened to us, where is God then?' For survivors of deportation, as Valent (1995: 85) noted, 'it was difficult to reconcile a moral Jewish God and the Holocaust.' It is in this context that Lea states that Jews felt closer to the communist party than to their own community, finding more protection in the former than in the latter. She supports this view by referring to the Jewish wives of party cadres who she met in the House of Technics, and who felt the same way: 'Just as I don't understand it, so they didn't understand how this [the Holocaust] could have happened. How could this happen? Until today, I still don't understand how this could happen.'

The inability of people with such experiences to make sense of what happened to them, that is, to find a narrative for an event that caused emotional shock, is a main characteristic of traumatic experiences: 'The Holocaust presents an incomprehensible catastrophe that undermines the very possibility of coherent narrative' (Kirmayer 1996: 175; see also Antze and Lambek 1996). One possible response to it, amongst others, is its repression: survivors of the Holocaust, as Valent (1995: 84) notes, coped psychologically with their experiences by 'repressing past memories and feelings and thinking of the past as irrelevant.' Not only was the past ignored as a seemingly unimportant phase of one's life, but with it also the social contexts that could contest such a view, above all the religious community. While this silence at times may represent a coping strategy necessary for survival (Valent 1995: 84; Misztal 2003: 141), it is vulnerable to unveiling at the same time. The repressed may unexpectedly surface into the conscious self (Misztal 2003: 140), and the city, like the human body (see Young 1996), can become an agent of such painful disclosure. At this stage, however, we can conclude that Lea's traumatic experience seems to have lost some of its intensity over time, so that it has become more accessible to reflection. 'Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites ... for the healing of individual victims' (Herman 1994: 1). With growing temporal and emotional distance from a painful past, Lea has found ways to gradually confront herself with it:

> Now I feel much more that I belong to it [the Jewish community], since there are only a few of us alive who were out there [in concentration camps]. Now, somehow, I find more time to deal with it ... but back then I thought that being Jewish is just some sort of habit. That is, I

didn't understand, and I still don't, how those things could happen ... I didn't engage with the community because I didn't feel that it could protect me.

'The fundamental stages of the recovery', Herman argues, 'are establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community' (ibid: 3), while Valent believes that '[s]urvivors needed the perspective of age, the security of rebuilt lives, the security of their children ... to reconsider their traumas. Perhaps it was necessary to find new meanings to their lives, other than the frozen meanings of their traumas' (Valent 1995: 84).

While a traumatic experience represents a special case of the forces that affect an urban narrative, the point I wish to make here is that it is often our invisible past – painful or not – that guides our experiences of the city by affecting our narratives and its accompanying emotional states.[49] As de Certeau noted, '[p]laces are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body' (de Certeau 1988: 108).

Inherent in any spatial story, memory affects narratives and the meaning of places or events connected through them. Crucially, this meaning is invisible to others: memory belongs to the experiencing subject, not to official discourse,[50] and may ignore or run counter to it. Narratives represent subjective accesses to the city that potentially bypass what urban planners envisioned happening there. 'Within the structured space of the text, they [people] thus produce anti-texts, effects of dissimulation and escape, possibilities of moving into other landscapes' (de Certeau 1988: 107):[51] 'Below the level of visibility ordinary inhabitants enact their own maps of the city' (Tonkiss 2005: 127). That is, memories elicit and shape narratives that produce their own geographies within, but not necessarily

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[49] Chapter 7 will address the latter issue in more detail.

[50] There are official discourses on remembering or commemorating of course, and people may identify with the deeds of their ancestors. Yet once this happens, the individual acquires some ownership over a past event that cannot be fully subsumed under its conception in official discourse. Likewise, the city itself can be regarded as a storehouse of memories (on this aspect see Boyer 1994) that eventually becomes the object of discourse. However, such a discourse is typically confined to certain interested parties (planners, politicians, scholars, parts of the media, and a few interested citizens) and seldom reaches the "ordinary" person. I shall not dwell on these aspects but focus on remembering as a subjective activity instead.

[51] I shall not address the politically subversive dimension of urban narratives here (of which the narrative of the suicide bomber represents the most radical example). Rather, I shall focus on the role of memory in establishing the subjective meaning of place.

conforming to, the city as conceived by planners, politicians, economic actors, or the media: 'a migrational, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city' (de Certeau 1988: 93), transposing the experience of the city into 'another spatiality' (ibid.) opened up by memory: 'Memory mediates spatial transformations. In the mode of the "right point in time" *(kairos)*, it produces a founding rupture or break. Its foreignness makes possible a transgression of the law of the place. Coming out of its bottomless and mobile secrets, a *"coup"* modifies the local order [of visible space]' (ibid: 85, emphasis in original).

Lea's traumatic experience informs her narrative of Budapest in many ways. It can be detected in the avoidance of the Jewish community; in the emotional proximity to the socialist state out of gratitude for its rejection of anti-Semitism or its caring attitude towards loyal citizens; and in the perception of political change. With anti-Semitism becoming more common during late socialism,[52] Lea welcomed the events of 1989, hoping that discrimination against Jews would finally disappear: 'We were very happy about it [the change of regime]. I even fasted for things to change for the better. I hoped that finally people would be treated equally. I hoped that the distinction between Jews and non Jews would finally disappear. But it didn't happen.' With increasing social inequalities and insecurities, anti-Semitic tendencies in Hungary (as in Eastern Europe in general) have become stronger since 1990. During my stay in Budapest I witnessed acts of anti-Semitism several times, such as graffiti, verbal abuse, or articles in the country's largest conservative newspaper, the *Magyar Nemzet (Hungarian Nation)*.

Lea's traumatic experience also surfaces on occasions when she is unexpectedly confronted with her past by events and encounters in the city. In one example, Lea recalls how she met a former school teacher in the late 1950s: 'We were crying in each other's arms and had to leave the grocery. People next to us could not understand what was happening. She was Jewish, too. Neither of us had expected that the other had survived.' To the present day, Budapest has remained a precarious place for Lea: not being far away from the town of Ózd, from where she had been deported, the city sometimes transforms – through the tiniest detail or a minor incident – into a topography of pain that utterly brings back her memories of deportation and murder against her will: 'Operating only in fragments, mem-

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[52] As a consequence of the 1967 Six-Day War, Hungary suspended diplomatic relations with Israel, and the official condemnation of Israeli politics translated into an increasing anti-Semitism at home, which grew further during the 1970s and 1980s.

ory ... is formed on the tactics of surprise, ruptures, and overturnings that reveal its true power ... over the spectator's imagination' (Boyer 1994: 68). Memory, as de Certeau (1988: 86–7) states, 'is marked by external occurrences and recalled in specific situations (like a flash repartee) external to it'. An example of how the city can stir up the wounds of the past that the individual is compelled to confront anew, whether or not he or she wants to, can be found in Lea's account of a visit to the <u>Holocaust Museum</u> in Budapest: 'Suddenly, I didn't know where I was. Right at the entrance there were two large photographs, and one of them showed my dear little brother. You should have a look at it [the museum], but please take a tranquilliser beforehand.'

A truly tragic aspect of Lea's narrative lies in the fact that those who deported her belong to the same nationality with which she strongly identifies. By faith, Lea considers herself Jewish, yet her sense of being Hungarian is equally strong: 'We have always been Hungarians ... Whenever the radio played the national anthem during Sunday lunch my father asked us to rise ... I feel like a Hungarian until today. My eyes grow damp any time I see the Hungarian flag.'

Lea's identity as a *Hungarian* Jew finds its symbolic expression in the form of an amazing object in her living room: a small menorah with a tiny Hungarian flag braid between its arms. Yet although the most horrible experience of her life was caused by Hungarians, in a country that she has always called her home, it is paradoxically her sense of being Jewish that has become problematic, while her sense of being Hungarian has not suffered despite the country's active involvement in the Holocaust. Lea's narrative does not allow us to say why this is so – I can only imagine that she had to make a (most probably unconscious) decision after the War: rejecting those who had deported her family and leave the country, or rejecting the Jewish community for not protecting her, and staying in Hungary. She opted for the latter and invented Budapest as an uncontaminated place where a life 'amidst humans' could be risked – but through this decision she also compelled herself to face various consequences brought about by it.

Memory, as Lea's narrative indicates, is the *presence of absences* (Esbenshade 1995) in urban space: it relates to things, events and people who are distant in time and space so that only the human subject can 'see' them. Yet it is from this remoteness that past events and places, or people who have long passed away, claim their presence as they inform a narrative, the meanings associated with urban places, or the feelings evoked by them. An obvious example for this is the bench on Queen Elisabeth Road where Margit's father-in-law

was shot and buried during the final days of the Second World War. This bench may appear as ordinary to most citizens of Budapest, but for Margit and her husband it is clearly not.

In what follows, I will look further at the relationship between memory, narrative and the city by presenting two narratives that lack the tragic dimension of Lea's.

Helén

Helén, 54, was born in Ecsegfalva, a village in eastern Hungary. She was eight years old when her mother died, and she saw Budapest immediately thereafter for the first time. The two events are connected in so far as Helén's distant relatives, living in the outer city district of Újpest, had offered to take care of her during the summer holidays in order to help her cope with the tragic situation. Helén does not talk about the loss of her mother (of which I know from another source), but recalls her first impression of Budapest instead:

> To be honest, I didn't know anything about Budapest then, and all I was interested in was the tram. There were these old-fashioned trams, and the woman at whose place I was staying was a tramway conductor. So we were travelling by those old-fashioned, shaking tram all the time ... To be honest, I wasn't interested in the city then. I was interested in the zoo, the fun fair, in things that kids get excited about.

A couple of years later, when Helén was twelve years old, other relatives agreed to care for her, and so she moved to Rákoskeresztúr, a district of rural character on the outskirts of Budapest. During the first years in Budapest, Helén went to school in Rákoskeresztúr and did not see much of the nearby city. Her foster parents were poor, which meant that Helén was living in deprived conditions comparable to that in Ecsegfalva, with the only difference that she now had a more stable family life: 'That wasn't a big step forward compared to rural Hungary. At that time, I hardly knew anything about Budapest. In Rákoskeresztúr, we lived as if in the village ... We were poor and hardly went to the city, unless we had to visit somebody in hospital.'

It was during her college years that Helén gradually became acquainted with Budapest. Initially, the inner city represented an area for her that had to be crossed during her daily journeys to school: 'The Ringstrasse, it meant nothing but travel to me.' From time to time, however, Helén made excursions to the city centre just for pleasure. On these occasions, she and her best friend visited places such as Andrássy Boulevard, Oktogon Square, Heroes Square or the town park, all of which were connected through the city's only un-

derground line at that time: 'Every now and then we went to ... Heroes Square just to take the underground ... Occasionally, we got off at Oktogon Square, which was a kind of attraction for us.' Gradually, shop windows, and in particular department stores such as the Luxury department store or the Fashion Hall became further destinations of these excursions. All these places are embedded into the nineteenth century fabric of the city (see Chapter 3) that Éva or Tamás, for example, closely associated with a bourgeois lifestyle.

During the early years in Budapest, Helén lived amidst the splendour of the inner city without being able to participate in it. It is a Cinderella-like story: 'we went to the Fashion Hall without buying anything. We just walked in to enjoy the building from the inside – it was spring-like and really nice.' On other occasions, Helén met her friends on benches inside the Western railway station where they could spend time together for free: 'We couldn't go to a café, no, we didn't have the money.' Helén describes ornate buildings and department stores decorated with wooden floors and iron balustrades as 'spring-like' and 'warmth giving', and thereby she seems to refer to their role as a warmth giving shelter that, we may assume, contained the promise of a better life. At the same time, the places that she mentions are, and already were at that time, *bourgeois* sites: department stores in ornate historic buildings, Andrássy Boulevard flanked by representative buildings and villas, the Opera and the Liszt Music Academy, embedded in the nineteenth century urban fabric of the inner city.

In 1979, shortly upon receiving her university degree in chemistry, Helén moved to Veszprém, a small town in western Hungary, where she now owns and manages a travel agency. She is married to the manager of the internationally successful Veszprém handball team. Helén visits Budapest regularly, where one of her two daughters lives. It is also in Budapest where she embarks on trips to foreign countries several times a year, in order to examine destinations that she promotes as a tour operator. Since her early years in Budapest, Helén has experienced massive social advancement that catapulted her from the deprivation of village life into an upper middle-class position. How is the trajectory of her life reflected within her narrative of Budapest?

Today, Helén can afford to shop in places that she could only dream of in the past. Her wish for a better life has been fulfilled, and the contentment about this fact occupies a significant part of her narrative:

> The fact that I went to department stores as a schoolgirl just to marvel at exhibited goods, that's one thing. Yet later, whenever I really wanted an elegant costume, an elegant coat, or a

pair of shoes, ... whenever I really wanted to buy fine things, I went to Fashion Hall or to Luxury department store. These places had been out of reach for me before ... Yet later, whenever I bought something there, it felt as if a life dream comes true.

Shopping in places like Luxury department store or Fashion Hall, or in small boutiques on Andrássy Boulevard, demonstrate to Helén that she has finally escaped the deprivation of her early life. Participating again and again in the splendour of the inner city through consumption, thus, may be interpreted as a joyful reassurance of a past left behind. In this way, Helén's memories of deprivation inform her narrative of Budapest: 'Yet later, whenever I bought something there, it felt as if a life dream comes true ... That's what I was longing for, and I never get disappointed. Yes, that's what I was longing for, and that's what I got.'

Helén's memories of deprivation manifest themselves, negatively, as the *joy of absence* – the absence of unpleasant conditions that did not allow for participating in the splendour of the city, in particular for participating in the joys of consumption. Positively, the joy of absence finds its expression in Helén's appreciation of the bourgeois lifestyle and her preoccupation with social status. For example, Helén prefers small and expensive boutiques or department stores located in historic buildings that exude exclusivity, and where irritations to the joys of consumption are less likely to occur:

> There is a beautiful shoe shop next to the Opera that sells famous brands ... It doesn't mean that I always go there, but I do go regularly, and it happens that I buy something ... There is an exclusive silk shop at Oktogon Square. I don't go often, but [*with an excited voice:*] one or the other scarf made of real, pure silk ... It is a beautiful shop with wooden floors and patina.

Helén likes historic environments that are unique, even when compared with other European cities. At the same time, she rejects places of mass consumption such as shopping centres designed to meet the taste of the many. In Helén's terminology, mass consumption is attributed to the lower classes. In this context, she expresses her concern about Andrássy Boulevard, that it may become a destination for them: 'I would like Andrássy Boulevard to remain as it is. After all, it has always been an elite place ... and I very much appreciate shops that you can visit; lovely shops that radiate quality.' Later in the interview, Helén repeats this worry: 'It is not crowds that walk into elegant shops. You walk around to have a look [at boutiques], and after that you sit down for a coffee. And I like this. I hope it [the Andrássy Boulevard] won't turn into a place of mass consumption.'

Helén's appreciation of unique buildings and historic environments that satisfy the aesthetic preferences of the more wealthy is paired with a repeatedly expressed concern about the contestations to such environments that can occur in different ways. For example, Helén complains about the fact that expensive hotels have lost their distinctive character: they may be located in historic buildings, but since 1989 their interiors have been redesigned in a way that they became similar to each other: 'if you look at the [interiors of the] Four Seasons or the Royal, you will hardly notice any difference!' Shopping centres or modern office buildings that are disrespectful towards the nineteenth century urban fabric, or that could be found in any city, are not welcome either. That is, Helén judges Budapest's recent urban changes according to whether they pose a threat to her favourite places and environments.

Another point of concern – partly linked to the transformation of the city since 1989 – is the poor condition of large parts of the inner city, especially when it is paired with the presence of the poor. 'I don't want to offend anybody, but somehow the whole area [around the Western station] has become quite shabby. It is really rundown, it is bad smelling – well, its population, the homeless – it is different from how it used to be.' What makes the presence of the poor, or of Gypsies, particularly irritating to Helén is that they can be encountered in the midst of environments that she prefers, sharply contradicting her expectations regarding a desirable city: 'There are villas, ... embassies [in Theresatown], while on the other side, to be honest, well, there are these Budapester Gypsies ... gypsy traders ... who barter with questionable goods.'

> It can be really exasperating sometimes ... We were going to the theatre one evening and were looking for a car park ... [*with an angry voice:*] And right there they stood, ready to take our money. We were in a car park that resembled a construction site, standing and sinking in mud, and paying a horrible sum. I despaired when seeing this in the very midst of the inner city – and the Gypsy was taking money for this!

In rejecting the display of poverty and the presence of the poor, Helén's narrative suggests that the 'true' Budapest would be a city rid of them. For example, about the inner city district of Theresatown she says: 'you will find the very bottom of society there ... Therefore, I can't say of Theresatown that it is the core of Budapest. Unfortunately, there are all kinds of social classes there, from the very bottom to the elegant ones.'

While the preoccupation with social status is obviously important for Helén, it nevertheless seems to represent an overtone to her memories of deprivation – memories that

translate as the joy of participating in the splendour of the inner city. That is, her narrative of Budapest is simultaneously informed by a concern for social status *and* her memories of an unpleasant past. In the light of this, social status appears not just as a means for distinguishing oneself from the poor, but also as a delimitation in disguise from the past. In Helén's narrative of social status, her memories of an unfavourable past are both transcended and preserved.

This assumption helps explain two recurring themes of Helén's narrative of Budapest. Firstly, it seems that she has preserved her lower middle-class roots and the associated experience of deprivation in the form of habits of consumption that contain a residue of modesty. This may sound cynical at first, in particular in the light of the poverty displayed in the public realm of Budapest, yet the silk scarf mentioned above can be seen symbolically: although made of an exclusive material, it is small in size and only purchased occasionally. Likewise, Helén visits the shoe shop next to the Opera regularly but she buys there only occasionally – although she could afford to buy a pair of shoes each time.

Secondly, Helén's life story may partly explain her attachment to buildings, department stores and other places in the inner city, and her repeatedly expressed wish that these places be preserved in their original shape and function. While this wish may in part be interpreted as a bourgeois' affection for places that support the bourgeois lifestyle, in Helén's case there seems to be more to this. Helén came to know these places as a poor girl, and in these places she dreamt of not being poor any more. To revisit these places and to be able to enjoy them by affording the commodities that they display confirms that she has left her difficult past behind.

Memories, as we shall see, need to be grounded in places, real or imagined, in order to remain accessible for the human subject. This is because 'the order of the places will preserve the order of the things [to be remembered]' (Cicero, cited in Casey 1987: 183). That is, places that do not change much over time support the recovery of memories whenever one revisits them. For Helén, as we have seen, places like Andrássy Boulevard and adjacent boutiques and department stores evoke positive associations. If these places altered or disappeared, her memories could not unfold in the same way and hence her narrative would have to be rewritten (*cf.* Marinescu 2003, Marinescu and Fearns 2007).

Memories, as Lea's and Helén's narratives reveal, 'unlock' the meaning of the city for the human subject. They affect how the city is perceived and lived, and this relationship, in

turn, is never without emotional overtones.[53] In this way, urban narratives are intimately connected to past experiences. In the above examples, memories manifested themselves as a longing for normality (Lea) or as a joyful forgetting of an unpleasant past (Helén), and as such they produced their own particular effects on both Lea's and Helén's narratives of Budapest. Furthermore, each of the two narratives revealed a specific relationship between memory and place. In Lea's narrative, this relationship was a general one: it involved the invention of Budapest as a pure place where a life 'amidst humans' could be risked. In Helén's case, place does not refer to the entire city but to well-defined sites such as Andrássy Boulevard or Fashion Hall. These sites used to confront Helén with her poverty, while they also served as objects of reveries that contained the promise of a better life. Today, the same places symbolise her social advancement. The following narrative reveals an even denser, and also very concrete, relationship between memory and place.

Vera

Vera was born in Budapest in 1926 and lived there until December 1956. Her father was the general director and co-owner of a hemp factory and placed great emphasis on his daughter's education. He employed an Austrian housemaid when Vera was five years old, so that his daughter could learn German: 'We always spoke German to each other, and given that my grandparents were from Vienna I could say that German, rather than Hungarian, was the language of my childhood.' When Vera was ten years old, her father employed a French housemaid who stayed with the family for seven years. In her, Vera not only found a qualified language teacher but also a good friend, and only two years later, she says, her French was as good as her Hungarian. When the French housemaid returned home, Vera's father employed an English lady who had previously served a noble family in England. From her, Vera learned English, so that by 1942, at the age of eighteen, she could speak three foreign languages fluently. 'This was during the darkest years of the War. I really wanted to go to university, but despite the fact that I was excellently qualified, I was not accepted because I did not qualify as an Aryan.' One of Vera's grandparents was Jewish, and although this did not mean much to the family, it meant something to the authorities.

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[53] Chapter 7 deals with this aspect in detail.

Vera's father, once again, found a solution to deal with this adverse condition. He arranged for his daughter to study at a French college on Andrássy Boulevard, directed by nuns. There she was educated as a French and German speaking secretary, but her father paid the English teacher at the college to train his daughter in English too. In 1944, Vera received three diplomas from the College:

> But then, we had a really difficult time that we somehow had to survive. My father did not survive – he died in Germany where he was deported to after the Germans had occupied the country in 1944. They immediately arrested the thousand most wealthy tax payers, and my father was one of them. He never returned. He was 52 years old.

After the war, Vera was first employed as a secretary by her father's company. After she gave birth to a son, she changed her employer twice, and finally was employed by the state owned Hungarian Freight Shipping Company. There, she coordinated the domestic business activities of the Swiss based company Interfrigo – a fact that would become important later.

Vera's life in Budapest, to the extent that it is related to issues of education and profession, was rather difficult. First, she was not allowed to study at a university as she 'was not Aryan enough, despite being a Catholic who had absolutely no clue about other religions.' Only a few years later, the ideological reasons for her difficulties changed while the difficulties encountered remained essentially the same: 'I was really fed up with the situation. I hardly escaped [difficulties arising from Jewish ancestors; AS] when, with the advent of the communist regime, I was suddenly treated as the daughter of a capitalist. My dear God! I really had no prospects.' While Vera did not lose her job under the new political regime, she was exposed to ongoing discrimination due to her social origins. The country had just declared the victory of the proletariat over the forces of fascism and capitalism, and the expropriation of the former economic elites was underway. Such actions not only resulted in the removal of former elites from important positions in society, but were also accompanied by the denigration of the bourgeois lifestyle in general. People holding intermediate positions in the party or the economy were nervous about adhering to the official ideology, while nobody really knew how the official party position translated into codes of conduct in everyday life:

> I was a beautiful young woman, and while I couldn't afford anything, I always had money for polishing my nails. So what! The party secretary responsible for operational safety ordered

me to a meeting every week. He was in despair, asking me to be considerate of his [vulnerable] position and to remove the red polish from my nails.

Given her negative experiences with the authorities, both during and after the war, Vera knew what to do in the aftermath of the 1956 uprising:

> I left on the 6th of December [1956] ... After the revolution had been put down, rumours spread about open borders [to Austria]. And then a very good friend of mine, the husband of a friend, came to see me ... and said: "Vera, we are leaving tomorrow. Join us, I have arranged everything, we are leaving the country" ... And, indeed, I took my son by the hand and left.

From Vienna, Vera rang the Swiss based company Interfrigo whose representatives she knew well from their business visits to Budapest. They immediately offered her work, so that 'when I finally arrived in Basel, a desk at Interfrigo was already prepared for me.'

A significant part of Vera's narrative is occupied by an account of her integration into Swiss society. She recalls her son's initial difficulties in developing a sense of home there, as well as challenges at work. However, it becomes obvious that her emigration to Switzerland turned into a success story. It is there, and in particular in the city of Zurich where she moved to in the early 1960s, that Vera feels at home. Later she moved to a small town located in the hills above Zurich where she is enjoying the crispy air of the Alps. Zurich, Vera states, is her 'true home', and it is there where her son and grandchildren live.

> I got assimilated in Zurich very soon. After a while I started to love Zurich just as much as I love Budapest. Yet Zurich is different, nevertheless, because it is my true home. God beware of living here [in Budapest] all the time. I love Budapest very much, but my true home is Zurich ... Budapest is a kind of parallel thing for me.

It is this 'parallel thing' that I wish to focus on here. Upon emigrating, Vera applied for a Swiss passport, but it took a long time until she received it. During this period she could not leave the country, but she was able to stay in contact with her mother and friends by formally inviting them to Zurich. On one of these occasions, her friend Anna accompanied her husband, a state secretary, on an official visit to Switzerland. When Vera met her, the Swiss secret service took notice of it, and this significantly delayed her naturalisation. When Vera finally received a Swiss passport in 1968, her first trip abroad took her to Budapest. How does she remember that visit?

It was terrible! ... I remember our first visit very well. I remember the heavy armed border guards at Hegyeshalom [the border crossing between Austria and Hungary; AS]. I thought to myself: My dear God, did I take leave of my senses when I left [in 1956]? Stumbling, fleeing afoot across the green border in the middle of the night, with a small child in my arms. How could I dare to return? What if I can't leave the country ever again?

In the years to follow, Vera and her husband visited Budapest regularly, and on these occasions they usually stayed in exclusive hotels like the Gellért or the Körszálló – hotels that were not too expensive for Westerners. With the detachment of a person who had left the adversities of socialist everyday life behind, Vera recalls her encounters with socialism during the 1970s in the form of anecdotes that reveal her emotional distance from the large and small tragedies of domestic life. It is this distance that sometimes enables her to see the funny side of things:

It happened that we drove back to the hotel where we were told [*she imitates the bumptious voice of the hotel guard*] "You cannot drive into the car park madam, because the delegation from Moscow is on its way!" ... [*with irony*] Delegation! That was very important of course! And then ugly black limousines arrived at the hotel, full of dubious passengers.

Sometimes, her husband's friends came to the hotel, among them members of the opposition who had previously been sentenced to years in prison. 'We sat in the hotel lounge, and all I could see is that he [their friend] gives strange signs underneath the table, whose meaning I could not immediately grasp. And then he asked us to go for a walk' to be safe from the ears of the state security service. Later during her narrative, Vera recalls how an inventive plumber once replaced the tap in her mother-in-law's bathroom, although no such tap could be purchased anywhere in the country: The plumber walked over to the four star Budapest Hotel and detached a tap in one of the bathrooms there!

Since 1972, Vera has been visiting Budapest regularly. On her trips, she is often accompanied by her husband, an exiled Hungarian who earns money by referring Swiss patients to dentists and plastic surgeons in Hungary. The two live in their own upmarket dwelling near the town park. Vera visits Budapest twice a year, for about one month each time. Yet what is it that keeps her returning?

Memories play a crucial role in this. Whenever I returned for a visit [in the 1970s], I went to see the Szilágyi secondary school. I went to class reunions to meet people with whom I grew

up. Ballrooms where I used to dance were particularly dear to me, so I went to see them ... I visited the places of my youth, and this meant very much to me.

In Vera's narrative, the places of her youth occupy a central position. She revisits them because they are associated with positive memories, and it is in these places that her pleasant memories of events that once took *place* there come to life again:

> As a teenager, I adored the <u>Városmajor</u> [the large park between Krisztinatown and <u>Rose Hill</u>, one of the most exclusive residential areas of Buda; AS], located just between my secondary school and my home ... I used to go there to play football when I was a child, and I kept going there for kissing as a girl. I have always adored the park, and a thousand memories connect me to it. There were engraving on benches, such as "István and Vera", and things like that. It has always been a favourite place of mine.

Memory, Tonkiss writes, 'is not a means to access the past but the medium for its experience' (Tonkiss 2005: 121). Places too assume such a mediating role: sites that once staged a particularly memorable event support and intensify the act of remembering: 'memory and place reinforce each other' (Casey 1987: 203). Places support the recollection of past experiences, as their material details recall the details of past narratives that one only vaguely remembers. To revisit places helps refresh memories of both past events and the places themselves: 'we come back to places where we have spent a part of our life to relive and rediscover details that had vanished,' Halbwachs (1992: 199–200) observed, while Ruskin (1880: 178) was convinced that remembering itself could not be accomplished without the support of places: 'we may live without [architecture] ... but we cannot remember without her.' Boyer (1994: 26) joins in by stating that 'memory orients experience by linking an individual to ... specific places.' Similarly, Vera admits that 'myriads of memories tie me to the city.'

As places evoke intense memories of past events, people who were involved in them also reappear, even if they passed away a long time ago. For example, it is in the theatre where Vera recalls her memories of her parents: 'We always had a season ticket for both the Opera and the Varieté, and I went almost every weekend, either with my father or my mother. These are very dear memories for me, too ... I keep returning to these places in search of them.' Vera returns to Budapest in order to relive past experiences, and as her memories emerge intensely, new details surface: of events themselves, of places that staged them, of people involved in them. Sometimes, it seems to be tiny details rather than the

'whole picture' in which past experiences crystallise. These fragments store and connect the places, events and people of a narrative – and feelings too. Vera's memory of raspberry juice served on Sundays, like Bachelard's (1994) odour of raisins drying on a wicker tray, is one example of a memory fragment in which the spatial and emotional landscapes of one's youth are preserved:

> My father was keen on making excursions to the Buda hills on Sundays ... and on these occasions I could invite my friends to join. Later I could also bring my boyfriends. And then we were all invited for a snack with sandwiches and raspberry juice. I loved these excursions very much, and they are all dear memories for me.

In all these examples, '[t]he city appears ... not simply as the background to events in a life, but as an agent of memory, a store of meanings that belong as much to the place itself as they do to the individual' (Tonkiss 2005: 114). Urban narratives, to adopt Benjamin's essay on Hessel, are an echo of the stories the city has told oneself over time (Benjamin 1999: 262). Places, Casey (1987 and 1996) says, gather memories which they release in our presence; and they hold memories securely over a long period of time:

> Gathering gives to place its peculiar perduringness, allowing us to return to it again and again as *the same place* and not just as the same position or site. For a place, in its dynamism, does not age in a systematically changing way, ... only its tenants and visitors, enactors and witnesses ... age and grow old in this way ... From it [place] experiences are born and to it human beings ... return for empowerment. (Casey 1996: 26)

Vera's narrative is particularly revealing with regards to the relationship between memory and the city, because her memories dominate her narrative of Budapest to a great extent: they are the main reason for visiting the city, just as they are the main rationale behind the activities that she pursues there. Apart from being the echo chamber for her own memories, there is not much that Budapest could offer her:

> Shops [on the Ringstrasse] don't mean anything to me. I find them rather annoying: they tend to be crowded and dingy, and represent an *Eastern style* [this expression is used pejoratively in Hungarian; AS] ... I am used to better places ... There are many ugly beggars or homeless people in the most prominent places ... And one can see drunk people all the time ... who would not even be allowed to board a bus in Zurich.

With respect to quality of life, Vera maintains, Zurich is superior to Budapest: neither the cleanliness of the city, nor its inhabitants, nor places of consumption, nor the rudeness

of the political debate culture have the power to attract her. On the contrary, they rather repel her. Vera is left with her memories, which are, however, important enough to provide a reason for returning. And because these memories refer to a rather distant past, they seem to remain largely unaffected by the changes of the city that have occurred during the last five decades. As Halbwachs noted, a 'group in a sense takes with it the form of the places where it has lived. When it returns after a long absence ... even if the appearance of these places has changed, it seeks them and finds, at least in part, the material frame of which it has preserved the imprint' (Halbwachs 1992: 203).

Although the above quote refers to Halbwachs' study on the relation of Christian believers to the city of Jerusalem, the ability to preserve a specific configuration of memory and place despite the change of the city over time seems to apply to the individual too. This is possible because the remembered city is a peculiar type of object: located in the external world and in the internal world of the human subject simultaneously.[54] As long as the transformations of the city are not too extreme, the subjective landscape of memory can remain intact, and hence be imputed on the city. However, the narratives of some people may be more vulnerable to urban change than that of Vera: for example, Margit's memories of participating in the pleasures of consumption could not translate into continuously lived narratives once the places where she used to experience a fragile sense of inclusion disappeared (see Chapter 4). Similarly, Helén's narrative requires particular places to remain more or less unchanged, for the reasons set out above.

Having presented the narratives of Lea, Helén and Vera – three narratives that significantly differ from each other – I shall now attempt to summarise their common features. Through this, we shall arrive at a more structured understanding of the relationship between memory, narrative and place. This in turn will offer a framework for dealing with a special aspect of remembering in Section 5.2, related to Budapest's socialist past.

Memory, narrative and place: conclusions

Urban narratives and the places in which they are enacted are intimately connected with each other. While it is the task of the next chapter to explore the nature of this relation in detail, in particular the question as to how places affect the narratives that they host, it is sufficient to recall at this stage that the dependent relation between narrative and place

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[54] As I argued in Chapter 1, we relate to the city as a thought object, that is, as image and representation, not just as a place of brute materiality.

arises from the very fact that experience itself is necessarily always emplaced. That is, every single event of a narrative has its own setting that stages it.

Because the narrative experience of the city is never without the places that stage it, memories themselves must be recognised as containing – explicitly or implicitly – references to place that, as Casey (1987: 184) observes, 'serves to situate one's memorial life, to give it ... a local habitation.' The events of a narrative and their settings are remembered together, for they were not experienced separately either: 'As embodied existence opens onto place, indeed takes place in place and nowhere else, so our memory of what we experience in place is likewise place-specific: it is bound to place as to its own basis' (ibid: 182). Similarly, Boyer notes that '[e]very memory ... unfolds in a spatial framework', and it is therefore 'in the arrangement of cities and places that remembrance will re-emerge' (Boyer 1994: 68); 'memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported' (Casey 1987: 186–7).

'[T]he relationship between memory and place is at once intimate and profound' (Casey 1987: 183) and manifests itself in two principal ways: we may remember past events that elicit memories of places that hosted them; or we may remember – or visit – places that elicit memories of the events that they once hosted. Memories elicit places, just as places elicit memories; in other words, there is 'an elective affinity between memory and place. Not only is each situated to the other; each calls for the other' (ibid: 214–5). For example, Éva's memories of her visit to Budapest, undertaken together with her father in 1965, elicit a number of places that made a particular impression on her: Heroes Square, Andrássy Boulevard, the 'palaces' on Ringstrasse, Fashion Hall, and such like. Margit's memories of a time when she felt more included in society come along with her memories of places that symbolise that inclusion: the trees on Üllöi Street, the Luxury department store, or coffee houses where members of different social classes could interact with each other. Helén's memories of her youth elicit places where she used to dream of a better life. Vera's memories of her youth evoke a number of places associated with particularly memorable events – and these memories are so intense that she embarks on a trip to Budapest twice a year.

The relationship between memory and place is not as linear as the above examples may suggest. When observed more closely, the apparent causal relationship between memory and place implied within the above examples seems to be a product of my own descriptive efforts, rather than an accurate description of Éva's, Margit's, Helén's or Vera's experi-

ences. If we invert the relationship between memory and place for the same examples: Heroes Square, Andrássy Boulevard, the 'palaces' on Ringstrasse or Fashion Hall – whether remembered from afar or actually visited – elicit Éva's memories of her visit to Budapest, undertaken together with her father in 1965. The trees on Üllöi Street, the Luxury department store, or coffee houses where members of different social classes used to interact with each other elicit Margit's memories of a time when she felt more included into society. Places where Helén used to dream of a better life – and where she can afford to shop today – elicit her memories of an unpleasant past left behind. Finally, as Vera revisits places of biographical significance, these elicit intense memories of the events that they once hosted.

Memories of past experiences elicit places, just as places elicit memories, and it is often difficult to establish which of the two comes first. Do memories of past events elicit memories of their places? Do memories of places (or their being visited anew) elicit the events that they once hosted? Or do memories simultaneously elicit places and events in a manner that makes any attempt for a chronological, causal ordering of the relationship between memory, place and events impossible? What can be discerned easily on the level of theoretical concepts is less distinguishable in subjective experience: 'In actual experiences of remembering, the spatiality and temporality of the mnemonic representation are often correlated to the point of becoming indissociable. The "when" and the "where" are inextricably linked' (Casey 1987: 70).

If Vera had only remembered a pleasant episode of her youth without remembering its setting, how could she make her way from Zurich to Budapest? And had she only remembered a specific place without remembering the pleasant experience that it hosted, why should she have travelled so far? She travels from Zurich to Budapest twice a year because she remembers both the city and her pleasant experiences there simultaneously, and because she knows that revisiting Budapest will elicit intense and pleasant memories of the past: 'memory and place ... reinforce each other' (Casey 1987: 203). That is, Vera knows from her own experience that 'place ... serves to contain – to shelter and protect – the items or episodes on which the act of remembering comes to focus' (ibid: 188), and to release these events in her presence: 'Places ... gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts. Think only of what it means to go back to a place you know, finding it full of memories and expectations, old things and new things, the familiar and the strange' (Casey 1996: 24).

I do not wish to argue that places and events are *necessarily* remembered simultaneously. Sometimes, there is a clear sequence: we may remember an event but cannot say where it took place, or we may find ourselves in a place that suddenly reminds us of a past experience. Benjamin elaborated on this theme in *A Berlin Chronicle* – a chronicle of his youth whose vaguely remembered events may surface into the conscious self as one revisits places of biographical significance, 'with the same uneasiness that one feels when entering an attic unvisited for years. Valuable things may be lying around, but nobody remembers where' (Benjamin 2005: 606).[55] As Lea's account of her visit to the Holocaust Museum reveals, places sometimes remind us quite brutally of out past, and often there is nothing we can do about it.

Based on the understanding of the relationship between memory and place achieved so far, the next section addresses the remembering and forgetting of the socialist past. Prior to looking at the corresponding narratives, however, it may be helpful to briefly reconstruct the physical change and symbolic transformation of the city since 1989 – and the associated discourses on remembering and forgetting. This will render narratives more comprehensible for the reader unfamiliar with Budapest.

5.2 Memories of Socialism

Since 1989, the public realm of central Budapest has been largely purified of vestiges of the socialist regime. Statues and memorials that once stood at every important street or square in the city were quickly removed after the change of regime and relocated to an open-air museum on the outskirts of the city. Such 'ritual act[s] of removing the past' (Kovács 2001: 80) paved the way for a symbolic refurbishment of the public realm. Street names associated with the workers' movement, state institutions, or key personalities of the history of socialism were renamed shortly after 1989 and usually recall the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy today (*cf.* Pittaway 2003).[56]

Andrássy Boulevard illustrates the turning points of the country's history particularly well: the initial street prior to the nineteenth century growth of city was named Kömüves Street (Bricklayer) in 1787; then renamed Maurer Street (Bricklayer in German); then Ellenbogen Street (Elbow); then Könyök Street (Elbow in Hungarian); then Radial Street in

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[55] For a discussion of Benjamin's work on urban memory see Tonkiss (2005).

[56] See Chapter 3 for a more detailed account on this aspect.

1871; Sugár Street (Radiant in Hungarian) in 1877; Andrássy Boulevard in 1885; Stalin Street in 1949; Boulevard of the Hungarian Youth during the 1956 uprising; and People's Republic Street in 1957 (Búza *et al.* 1998: 62–3; Kasza 1999: 23).
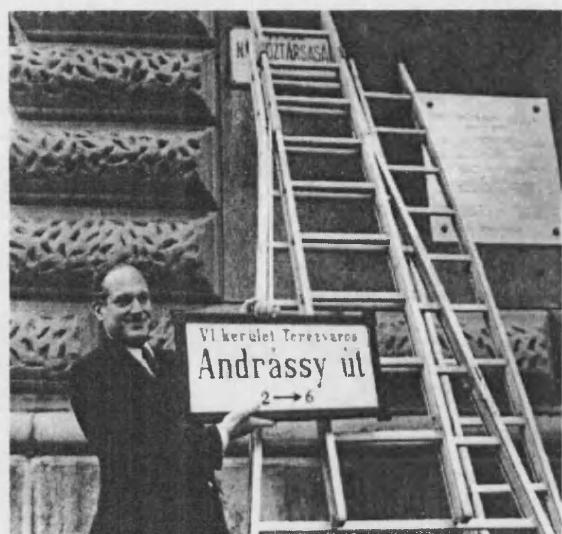
Renaming Andrássy Boulevard in 1990, for the eleventh time in two hundred years.

If it is true, as Halbwachs claimed, that street names do not primarily 'render homage to ... great speculators or administrators who served the public interest ... [but] are signs of origin' (cited in Rossi 1984: 141), then we still need to ask why certain origins are considered more important than others. That is, we need to identify the discourse that establishes what is publicly remembered, or publicly forgotten. In this context, the act of renaming a street or a statue represents a symbolic act of forgetting that, paradoxically, is itself a negative form of remembering. Statues and names removed from public display and public discourse continue haunting both the private and public imagery as 'nonevents, nonproblems, nonpersons' (Rév 1995: 25) until they may or may not disappear completely. Or, they may disappear just to be 'reactivated in a different guise, in the context of a different, inorganically re-created narrative' (ibid.) of the postmodern city. Such remembering, then, may be better considered as an act of forgetting, given that it distorts or manipulates the remembered past as it transposes it into the present.

In Budapest, many attempts have been made since 1989 to revitalise the imagery of the nineteenth century bourgeois city, but excavated images tend to idealise the past by reducing it to aspects that evoke positive associations, and make the city more attractive to inhabitants and visitors. *Lenin* Ringstrasse became *Theresa* Ringstrasse, but it hardly reminds
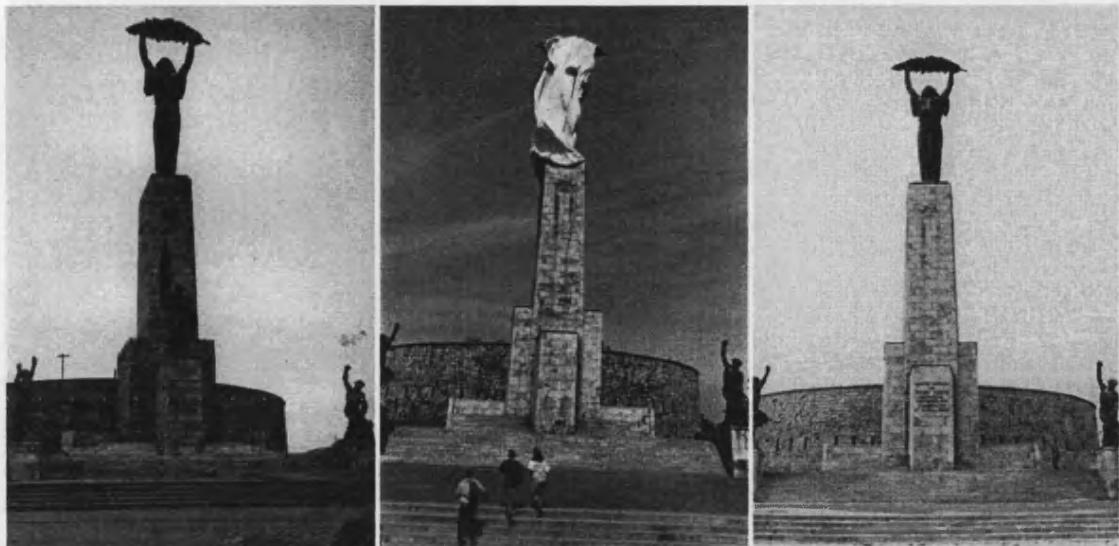
The symbolic act of forgetting: the picture to the left shows the Liberation Memorial on Gellért Hill, erected by the Soviet conquerors in 1947. With the change of regime 1989, the flag carrying soldier and the red star were removed from the assembly. Later, during the withdrawal of the last Russian soldiers from Hungary in 1992, the central figure, the 'Genius of Freedom', was wrapped in white cloth and thereby renamed 'Spirit of Freedom'. The image to the right shows the memorial today.

people of the oppression under the reign of the Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa; images of national greatness are not meant to evoke memories of dependence on the Habsburg rulers who created Great Hungary in order to increase political stability within the multi-ethnic eastern part of the Empire (see Chapter 3); and, finally, while images of nineteenth century coffeehouses correctly depict these as institutions of the bourgeoisie – hosts of literary circles, political debates and the free press (Gyáni 1995, 1996 and 1998; Habermas 1989; Sennett 2002) – they do not disclose the fact that these images are little more than a shadowy simulacrum of the past, connected to current economic or political interests rather than to the everyday life of the contemporary bourgeoisie. In conclusion, contemporary discourses reproduce collective images of the nineteenth century city kept alive throughout the twentieth century, and often locate these in places used for different purposes in the past.[57] [58]

In the light of these developments, the symbolic transformation of Budapest's public realm might be interpreted as a two-fold act of forgetting that intentionally erases (or at least attempts to do so) the memory of the recent socialist past, while it also replaces

[57] Here I adopt Halbwachs' (1992: 234) argument on the symbolic appropriation of Jerusalem by the universal Christian community at the time of the crusades, and apply its core statement to the city of Budapest.

[58] For example, there were no coffee houses on Liszt Square in the nineteenth century, whereas since 1990 literally all buildings have been converted to coffeehouses or restaurants at street level – and are marketed as examples of a thriving coffee house culture kept alive throughout the twentieth century.

any accurate memory of the nineteenth century city with the deceptive clarity of the image. The recent transformation of Budapest thus recalls Halbwachs' distinction between memory and history. According to Halbwachs, memory and history are opposing terms – the former intimately connected to lived experience, the latter disconnected from it: '[c]ollective memory must be distinguished from history' (Halbwachs 1992: 222). For Halbwachs, as Boyer notes, 'memory was based on lived experience, something that reached out of the past and seized the individual in the manner of naïve and immediate knowledge. Memory had to be linked to lived experience; otherwise it was reduced to "history," becoming abstract or intellectualized reconstructions, debased or faked recollections' (Boyer 1994: 26).

As soon as lived memories fade, 'becoming abstract or intellectualized reconstructions,' the past reinserts itself into the present in the form of 'debased or faked recollections' – as a collection of fragmented images prey to manipulation by political or economic actors. Alternatively, the past inserts itself into the present through being exhibited or hidden away in museums that cannot resolve the paradox of showing and bringing into present a past detached from lived experience (Boyer 1994). The recent transformation of Budapest provides examples for both ways of becoming alienated from the recent past.

A proud Hungarian worker, liberated by a brave Soviet soldier. Statue Park, Budapest.

Rossi believed that 'the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like the memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory.' (Rossi 1984: 130) Yet when certain symbolic places in the city disappear as they

get crushed by discourses on remembering and forgetting – and the associated distortions, idealisations, manipulations, inventions, and simulations – the question arises whether similar processes occur at an individual level too. How is the socialist era remembered or forgotten, present or absent, in contemporary narratives of Budapest? For the remaining part of this section I shall briefly sketch what narratives within the sample reveal about this.

Presences and absences, relief and melancholia

Most interviewees above thirty refer to Budapest during socialism. Éva and Helén recall the splendour of department stores, supported by a calm, well-maintained and distinctive nineteenth century urban fabric – and lament that much of this has gone in recent years. Margit too, refers to department stores where she could afford to buy items and thus experience a fragile sense of inclusion – and withdrew from the city as these places disappeared. Tamás recalls First of May festivities, sausage and beer festivals, and socialist aesthetics – and welcomes the fact that they have largely disappeared since 1989. Lea and András recall the caring attitude of the socialist state that provided jobs and protection from discrimination for loyal citizens – and respond to the disappearance of these provisions with melancholia. Attila reports how he once wanted to buy a Russian dictionary, but was unable to find one in the city.

Interviewees frequently refer to the socialist city, in particular as they try to grasp contemporary Budapest and its recent changes. Some emphasise existing continuities between pre- and post-1989 Budapest, whilst others talk more about what is new; yet others remember a city that has faded away. These three principal ways of relating to Budapest manifest themselves in most narratives simultaneously, depending on the aspect of urban change in question. Furthermore, each of these ways of narrating urban change is accompanied by acts of assessing and relating to it emotionally. The range of emotions includes disgust of dirt and the poor (Éva, Tamás, Helén), relief about the disappearance of vestiges of socialism (Tamás) or regret about aspects of urban life that have disappeared (Éva, Helén, Tamás, Lea): 'Constant comparisons between the present and the Kádár era are an essential part of contemporary nostalgia for the past,' claims Gyáni (2008: 62), although – as both he (ibid.) and Vásárhelyi (2005) observe – nobody wishes to literally re-establish the socialist past.

While different ways of relating to urban change are closely related to a person's so-
cial class, status, religious faith, important biographical events, and such like, the aspect that
I wish to emphasise here is that during times of accelerated urban change remembering
itself loses its well-established modalities: 'it seems that at every rupture point between the
moderns and the traditionalists [or, generally, between two political or economical regimes,
one may add; AS] there occurs a memory crisis – ... a problematization of the normal rela-
tionship of the present to the past' (Boyer 1994: 26). As the city changes, the relationship
between memory, narrative and place can become dysfunctional. Habitual ways of narrating
may become problematic, as places where narratives used to be lived alter or disappear
(Margit). New places appear, but people may encounter them silently, without knowing
how to incorporate them into their narratives (Margit). People may sustain their narratives
despite the change of the city, and enact these in increasingly *strange* places (Vera, Éva).
Memories referring to far away places of subjective significance may become abstract,
slightly unreal and increasingly incommunicable to others as the actual sites of perception
and enactment fade and disappear over time (Margit). For Halbwachs, 'memory always
unfolded in space, for when memories could not be located in the social space of a group,
then remembrance would fail' (Boyer 1994: 26). As sites of subjective remembrance disap-
pear, memories degrade to individual fantasy, resembling more a hallucination than an
intersubjectively confirmed truth: 'As buildings and space configure forcefields of memory,
significance spills over into locales and districts ... Extensions, changes of use, transforma-
tions of status, growth, decay, and gentrification ... all resonate with ways of memorializing
existence' (Curtis 2001: 63).

All this may be associated with a disturbing simultaneity of different times: nostalgia
for the past that alienates the human subject from the present, the unpredictability of the
future, a lack of a sense of continuity, constant shifts between (and repulsion from) posi-
tive and negative aspects of the past and the present. Moreover, as Esbenshade (1995)
notes, events and phases during socialism have always been remembered differently –
both before and after 1989. For example, dependent on one's political conviction, the
1956 uprising can be regarded as revolution or *counter*-revolution, and to the present day
narratives and *counter*-narratives, memories and *counter*-memories exist alongside each
other (ibid: 73–5). The following section looks at ways of relating to key historical events
that occurred during the past decades.

The silence of historical events

Only three interviewees mentioned the 1956 uprising: Lea, Vera and Erzsébet. All three were close to the events (but not actively involved in them) to a degree that at times their lives were in danger. Nobody else mentioned 1956, and this finding is interesting in so far as it contrasts with the omnipresence of 1956 – and its ongoing exploitation by national and conservative circles – in public discourse, peaking around the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising – the year when most of the interviews were conducted. This confirms Vajda's findings: 'The first surprising fact for the researcher who wishes to study how elderly people incorporate the events of the revolution into their life narrative is, that the majority of them does not mention the events at all' (Vajda 2008: 2). Likewise, there were no accounts of oppression, surveillance or state terror during socialism, and nobody mentioned the Soviet army either, although it had a massive presence in Hungary until 1992. Similarly, only one interviewee referred to the fall of the Iron Curtain and the proclamation of the Republic in 1989: Ádám, whose narrative I shall present in the next chapter. Finally, only one interviewee – Tamás, whose narrative I presented in the previous chapter – paid attention to Hungary having joined the EU in 2004.

In conclusion, events that assume a prominent position in public discourse, and that can be found in every book on Hungarian history, are largely bypassed by the interviewees in the sample. There is a silence of narratives. While this does not mean that these events are irrelevant (most interviewees reflect upon, and react to, Budapest's recent change), it nevertheless seems that lived experience operates within its own timelines. It is, perhaps, less focussed on special events – on moments when history is written – but adapts more silently to gradually changing urban contexts in subsequent years.

Sometimes, however, narratives may be reluctant to adapt to the change of the city, in particular when they rely upon aspects of urban life that are themselves persistent to change. The next section makes such an argument for the continuity of the everyday.

The continuity of consumption

While it is important to describe and explain urban change, it is equally important to contrast the strikingly new with what already exists. If Budapest had changed radically and completely since 1989, most of its inhabitants would have been severely confused, finding themselves in a city rendered illegible to them. No doubt, people may continue enacting the

same old narratives in changing urban environments, but there are obvious limits to such (mis-) readings of the city. Therefore, I wish to suggest that Helén's, Éva's, Tamás's, Lea's and Vera's memories of the socialist city can only keep informing their lived narratives in contemporary Budapest because there are profound similarities between socialist Budapest and its capitalist successor that allow for continuities of perception and experience.

One of these continuities seems to lie in the paramount importance of consumption. Despite the obvious political and economical differences between socialist and capitalist Budapest, what seems to have resisted change is the human subject's excitement about the commodity world at hand.[59] This excitement represents a principal continuity that should not be overlooked in the light of the changing aesthetics of commodities and the level of choice between them. It is this excitement that allows people to enact the 'same' narratives in the 'same' city. This continuity, it seems, does not require the uninterrupted existence of concrete places of consumption, but is sustained by the human subject's habitualised way of relating to commodities as such.[60] Consumption, one could argue, represents a form of *'habitualised memory'* (Connerton 1989: 72–105) stored in the unreflected routine actions of the body and the perceptive gaze. It levels out, and survives, the transformation of the city, so that below the level of obvious urban change, habitual ways of perceiving and acting, that is, of narrating, may continue to exist. These everyday narratives reflect and ignore the city's transformation at the same time. The everyday, as de Certeau (1988), Gyani (1995) and Lüdtke (1995) argue, constitutes a sphere of experiencing that cannot be reduced to the sphere of material production, historical events or institutional change.

Éva, for example, welcomes the coffeehouses on Liszt Square, or the refurbished Opera, as aspects of urban change that are supportive of her long established bourgeois narrative. At the same time, she rejects irritations to the bourgeois lifestyle that occur in the form of dirt, stench, and the presence of Gypsies or workers. Helén succeeds in maintaining her bourgeois narrative because certain places continue existing, a fact illustrated by her

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[59] Commodities depend upon the belief that things possess inherent (symbolic) qualities. In this reading of the term, the existence of the commodity does not presuppose the free market of capitalist society.

[60] Even when the city changes rapidly, 'the force of habit soon renders people who remain in a place insensitive to [it]' (Halbwachs 1992: 205). That is, people may continue perceiving the same old city despite its gradual change. This is possible because people do not relate to the city as such, but to the city as perceived and imagined, that is, to the city as a *thought object*. The city, thus, is transposed from the material realm into the realm of symbolic representations and, as it seems, the reality of the image can be more enduring than the reality of stone (ibid.): 'the memory of groups, and also of individuals, sometimes transforms into reality what is but imagination and dream, and looks for and finds a place [for the imagined]' (ibid: 212).

worries that they could disappear one day. In conclusion, both Éva and Helén welcome the change of the city to the extent that they can interpret it as an expansion of something that was there before: bourgeois environments, historic buildings, exclusive boutiques, department stores, and such like.

Narratives of consumption represent lived memories of socialism, as the empirical findings reveal. That is, memories of socialism are to a significant degree memories of consumption. Despite, or rather because of, the change of political institutions and the economic regime, memories of socialism, to the extent that they relate to consumption, can easily inscribe themselves into the contemporary city: they continue informing urban narratives in an increasing number of places that are supportive of them: shops, boutiques, department stores, shopping centres, retail parks and the universe of the commodity world on display. Such continuities also produce discontinuities, for example when places of consumption become too exclusive so that certain social groups lose access to them. Margit's narrative (see Chapter 4) provided an example of this.

5.3   Conclusion

This chapter explored the role of memory with respect to urban narratives by focussing on two issues. Section 5.1 looked at memory in its capacity for affecting a narrative and the perceived meaning of places that stage it, and presented three narratives that revealed different ways of relating to the city. Lea's narrative showed how the memory of a single traumatic experience can affect a person's relation to the city as a whole. By contrast, Helén's case illustrated how the memory of a difficult period in one's life can inform a person's narrative, in particular his or her relation to places of biographical significance. Finally, Vera's narrative revealed how memories can become the driving force for revisiting places in order to be intensely relived there. In the course of discussing these three narratives, the profound relationship between narrative, memory and place became apparent, and as a consequence, the question of how memory and place reinforce each other was theorised at the end of Section 5.1.

Based on the understanding of the dependent relationship between memory, narrative and place, Section 5.2 addressed the remembering and forgetting of the socialist past, to the extent that it emerged from the narratives of Budapest. In contrast to Section 5.1 which was mainly concerned with the spatial aspects of memory, Section 5.2 dwelled more

on the temporal dimension of remembering. It suggested that remembering the socialist past and contrasting it with the contemporary city produces a simultaneity of different times: nostalgia for the past, a lacking sense of continuity between past, present and future, and ongoing shifts between a focus on positive and negative aspects of the past and the present. In this context, narratives of consumption were identified as providing the human subject with a basic sense of continuity between contemporary Budapest and its socialist precursor.

Throughout both this chapter, and Chapter 4, the city has been identified as an important agent with respect to memory and remembering, as well as a site for enacting narratives of social class, status, nation or religion. We have seen how narratives depend on the city, and how in turn urban change affects the urban experience. The findings so far call for a more thorough investigation of the impact of the city on narratives, an investigation that I wish to carry out in the next chapter.

Events and places in the city are events and places for an experiencing subject who conjoins them by means of a narrative. However, it was argued in Chapter 1 that from this it does not follow that events or places were fully 'locked' within the spatio-temporal structure of a narrative. On the one hand, a narrative is a subjective activity, but on the other hand it is dependent on the city, which affects it in sometimes unforeseeable ways – a fact that led Casey to the conclusion that, with regards to experience, place possesses an 'ontological wildness' (Casey 1996: 35). In other words, the city represents an authority as to experience and is equipped with the power to surprise, irritate, stimulate and alter it.

This chapter looks at the role of the city in affecting narrative subjectivity. Section 6.1 addresses the city as a site of weak social control and the related increase of individual freedom: by sheer numbers, the vast majority of people whom one encounters in the city are strangers whose powers to make claims with respect to one's *personal* identity are limited. Theoretically, this aspect is prominently linked to the work of Simmel who further argues that such impersonality of human relationships is made possible by the money economy and its implicit logic of impersonal exchange (Simmel 1995 and 2004). A further aspect that Simmel's work addresses, and which can equally be identified in narratives of Budapest, concerns the intense emotional life in the city – a vast number of stimuli that challenge one's capacity to respond to them emotionally – to which, out of self-protection, people respond with indifference or even aversion.

While Section 6.1 addresses an aspect that with regard to a narrative is both pervasive (in the sense that it constitutes a general condition of urban life) and subtle (an attitude of indifference forms 'consciousness rather than being among the objects of which it is directly aware' (Crites 2001: 30)), Section 6.2 concerns the more obvious power of the city to shape, enable or to restrict narratives. It makes a phenomenological argument on the mutual constitution of body and place, and then looks more closely at the interplay between urban form and the lived body. Several narratives of Budapest will help reconstruct the dialogue between the experiencing, embodied subject and the urban places in which he or she dwells, such as the square or the street. Attention will be paid to the question as to how narratives turn out differently, dependent on the characteristics of places in which they are performed.

The specific character of urban life becomes obvious when contrasted with life in towns or villages. In smaller settlements people are likely to know one another personally more or less well. Such knowledge typically includes others' names and professions as well as stories about their private life, and the likelihood of having relatives, friends or acquaintances in common is high. Based on the mutual knowledge of each others' personal identities, Simmel concludes, life in a 'small town ... rests more on feelings and emotional relationships' (1995: 31) than life in the city: 'the inevitable knowledge of individual characteristics produces ... an emotional tone in conduct' (ibid: 32–3). The unavoidable companion to mutual knowledge and an 'emotional tone in conduct', however, is the individual's exposure to the claims of the community: in a small town or village the individual is subjected to social control.

Urban life is radically different. The vast majority of people whom one encounters there are strangers whose knowledge of, and hence powers over one's *personal* identity are limited. Furthermore, the nature of face-to-face interactions in the city also differs from interactions in towns or villages. Above all, they lack the 'emotional tone in conduct' mentioned above; instead, human relationships in the city are dominated by *functional* interdependencies inherent in the division of labour, and are mediated by the *impersonality* of the money economy (Park 1967a, Simmel 1995 and 2004, Tönnies 1955, Wirth 1995). While historically, production in smaller settlements 'was for the customer who ordered the product so that the producer and the purchaser knew each other', the city 'is supplied almost exclusively by production for the market, that is, for entirely unknown purchasers who never appear in the actual field of vision of the producers themselves' (Simmel 1995: 33). Money, Simmel argues, not only levels out qualitative differences between goods but also renders the personal identities of the merchant or the buyer irrelevant: 'Money is concerned only with what is common to all, i.e., with the exchange value which reduces all quality and individuality to a purely quantitative level' (ibid: 32).

In the city, people are strangers to each other in the sense that they either don't know each other at all, or that interactions between them are typically confined to situations that they master by relying on *impersonal* roles that render the largest part of their individuality invisible to others. But unlike Rousseau who lamented the loss of affectionate relationships and the corruption of morality as soon as one substitutes city life for the

community of small towns,[61] Simmel takes a more balanced look at the issue. Above all, he emphasises the freedom that arises as the individual is set free from the social bonds of the community:

> To the extent to which the group grows – numerically, spatially, in significance and in content of life – to the same degree the group's direct, inner unity loosens, and the rigidity of its original demarcation against others is softened through mutual relations and connections. At the same time, the individual gains freedom of movement, far beyond the first jealous delimitation. The individual also gains a specific individuality to which the division of labour in the enlarged group gives both occasion and necessity. (Simmel 1997d: 180)

In the following, I shall present three narratives of Budapest that reveal the empirical significance of these issues: *Ádám* emphasises the aspect of individual freedom in the city while he strongly rejects any form of social control as associated with life in small towns; *András* contrasts the lack of accountability for one's actions in Budapest with the warmth of the community in the small town of Visegrád, and expresses his sympathy for both; finally, *Márta*'s narrative reveals how the complexity of urban life can lead to withdrawal from, and indifference towards, whatever one encounters in the city.

Ádám

Ádám, a 38 year old bookbinder, grew up in a small town in southern Hungary. He was in Budapest at the age of eight for the first time in order to undergo complicated leg surgery. After the surgery, he was brought to Budapest several times for medical checks:

> You experience things differently as an eight year old boy. All this left a strong imprint on me – both the journeys to the clinic and ... [the place] where my uncle used to live. I have very intense memories of the staircase, the smells and odours, the ornate iron balustrade ... the bar in the courtyard for beating carpets and the entire atmosphere of the apartment building. All these combined into a very intense experience.

At the age of 18, after completing his A Levels, Ádám became an apprentice at a bookbinder's workshop in a small town near Budapest. From there he commuted frequently to Budapest, both to attend a class at college and to meet the bookbinder master's clients: 'Slowly, I began to orientate myself ... [and] to get accustomed to the city ... I be-

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[61] See Sennett (2002: 115–22).

came the master's driver ... and was sent to Budapest regularly. I remember the moment when I began to orientate myself intuitively.' In 1987, at the age of 19, Ádám finally moved to Budapest from where he now commuted to the bookbinder master's workshop. Around that time, he found a second job at the <u>Museum of Medical History</u> on the Buda side of the city, close to the Castle: 'The area became a central point in my life for the next few years: its atmosphere, the lunch breaks, walks, discussions, the cinema.'

Once in Budapest, Ádám and his friends often moved flats. Ádám lived in different parts of the city and refers to the specific atmosphere of each of these: 'In the old Váci Street we lived in a place that must have been a brothel at some point. Purple curtains, a large bed and an atmosphere as if someone had left the flat at the turn of the last century.' Like the memories of his early visits related to treatments in hospital, Ádám recalls a synaesthetic experience of Budapest when describing how he became acquainted with it: 'I wasn't really open [towards the city]. I didn't take any obvious, conscious steps. Not in a manner as if I wanted to breathe in the city. I took rather an affective step by step, situation by situation approach.' By a lack of openness Ádám means the absence of a conscious decision to appropriate the city as quickly as possible. He took what he describes as the slow way: a step by step appropriation that requires time until knowledge of the city increases and a sense of home emerges. Yet how else could a sense of home emerge when somebody is unfamiliar with a city, while also lacking larger narratives of it that could render it comprehensible from the outset? Ádám contrasts his way of getting to know Budapest with more extroverted approaches to the city that, as he imagines, other people would take:

> Some people are extroverted and immediately able to experience the city with all their senses. In contrast, I approached the city through affective, unconscious movement. It wasn't a mindful way of becoming acquainted [with the city], a conscious way of moving. It was rather a bit as if I was driven by fate, and it felt as if I could see myself within that movement from above, incapable of losing myself.

In a rather esoteric language, Ádám reports a sense of detachment from both the city and himself while moving and acting in it. He seems to have been lacking an active relationship with the city ever since he moved to it, in the sense that the city would become part of a narrative that he strongly identifies with – a narrative that would bring about activities in the city pursued with effort and enthusiasm. In contrast to all narratives discussed so far, Ádám's relationship to Budapest is rather passive, 'as if he was driven by fate', and his

experiences in the city do not seem to integrate easily into a coherent, meaningful story. Consequently, Ádám is dwelling on the spatial and sensual aspects of urban life, as well as on aspects that are general rather than confined to the particular place of Budapest. A slowly evolving emotional landscape of the city, through which it becomes internalised until a confusion between the self and the city occurs, replaces identifications with narratives offered by society:

> Very slowly, through a mosaic of different experiences, atmospheric elements and impressions began to add up to a larger picture, to an inner image or emotional landscape of the city arisen from places where I had been walking or driving. I can't remember exactly the moment when I began to feel the entire city within me so that ... any time somebody mentioned a particular place or area, a mental image would emerge before my eyes. There is a point when sensually and intuitively you become one with a place. This is the actual moment when you start feeling at home. Despite the fact that I don't own a flat, my sense of home is inseparable from this city.

Although Ádám seems to have developed a basic sense of home in Budapest, grown from 'atmospheric elements and impressions' that add up to a felt unity with the city, he nevertheless reports a sense of displacement, that is, a lack of a strong and positively meaningful relationship with the *particular* city of Budapest:

> It seems that I have remained on the outside until today. In a way I am absolutely at home here, but only alongside the fact that I am an outsider at the same time ... maybe because I was neither born here nor did I grow up here ... I am like somebody who arrived from afar and will never fully become one with this place, yet who has nevertheless developed ties that cannot be disrupted any more.

Ádám is like a nomad who, even when he explores the possibilities that a certain place offers, never fully identifies with that place. He is, in Simmel's words, a *stranger* who settled down in a town or city, but still longs to travel: 'although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going' (Simmel 1950: 402). It is this kind of detachment – being physically *there* while remaining an outsider or stranger in relation to others – that reappears in Ádám's account of the change of the political regime in 1989: he was the only interviewee in the sample to observe at first hand Jozsef Antall, the director of the Museum of Medical History, become Hungary's first prime minister:

159

Many people who became politicians after '89 came to the Museum regularly. This wasn't obvious to me before 1989 – I realised it later only ... I was surprised to see how, in an instant, our seemingly apolitical director became the country's first Prime Minister ... Later, he returned to the Museum from time to time and visited the restorers' workshop. We had some chats on these occasions, but these are some personal memories only ... We [Ádám and his colleagues] walked over to Parliament Square when the republic was proclaimed.

Ádám talks about the events of 1989 as a personal anecdote, not as something linked to his political values. He expresses an ongoing indifference towards Budapest, and his detachment must have grown further between 1987 and 1989, manifesting itself as a sense of unhomeliness and the wish to leave: 'I found myself at the crossroads when, for whatever reason, the city became constraining for me. I was fundamentally restless in the years of 1988 and 1989. In the advent of the change of the regime the city made a dark and grey impression on me.' I couldn't find out why Ádám felt that Budapest became narrow for him, except a general reference to his age. Driven by 'the natural restlessness of a young man in his twenties', and making use of the freedom that the change of the political regime has brought about, in early 1990 Ádám left the country for one year. He spent several months in Paris and Geneva, where he was working for bookbinders who taught him new techniques. During his stay abroad, Ádám's already significant sense of detachment from Budapest increased even more: 'In financial terms things lost their weight ... and I got detached from my life at home ... This state of affairs continued to last during that entire year, although I knew that I should build up something at home.' Things became even more difficult when Ádám returned in 1991. Only one year after he had left, he found Budapest radically changed: 'I remember the dreadful experience of standing at Oktogon Square, shocked about realising how aggressive the city has become. Compared to earlier, car traffic, as well as life in general, had become very tough. The whole city changed completely during subsequent years.'

It must have been around 1991 that Ádám slightly lost track. Even more than previously, he became an outside observer of his and other people's lives. After being absent from the city during the critical time of its change, Budapest ceased to be a place where Ádám could lead an active and meaningful life – a place where he could feel at home. His detachment from Budapest was present during the entire interview. From time to time Ádám became rather unclear in his formulations and gave the impression of a slightly confused person. His sentences were often incomplete, and at times it is difficult to follow

the leaps that his narrative takes. His accounts of both himself and the city are often confused with esoteric formulations. It may be too bold to conclude that Ádám's absence from Budapest during its initial year of change is to be blamed for his difficulties to cope with the city, because the metamorphosis of urban life following the events of 1989 met with his already significant sense of detachment from the city, and his difficulties in leading an active and meaningful life there. However, the transformation of the city seems to have made things more difficult for him. With the detached attitude of a non-participant observer, Ádám describes the change of the city, and how some of his friends made themselves a life during the 1990s:

> It was amazing to see all those changes ... How Liberation Square suddenly became <u>Ferenciek Square</u> ... how the owners of shops changed, how friends built up their businesses, how, for example, the owner of a tiny second-hand bookshop became the owner of a two storey store, and how the Central Antique Bookshop grew into the country's largest auction house.

However, despite his fragile and from a psychological perspective probably quite problematic relation to the city, Budapest – in its quality as a big city – represents the only place where Ádám can imagine living. In contrast to the detached attitude that informs his narrative in general, he talks passionately about the positive aspects of urban life:

> My life is pretty airy here. I have almost no family ties ... [and] I think that's one of the reasons why I like to be here. I like the indifference that the city gives me ... Regardless of your social networks or the relationships with your friends or family, it is easy to live an introverted life. This is what I mean by indifference: whenever you seek silence you can withdraw in the midst of the biggest bustle.

Ádám appreciates the impersonality of urban life that allows him to withdraw from his friends and relatives whenever he wishes. In a city like Budapest, he maintains, 'it is possible to live such a life. And this is important for me ... Paradoxically, there is a possibility for impersonal silence in the midst of the biggest bustle.' 'The mutual reserve and indifference' between strangers who do not need to interact with each other, or to take into account each other's identities when they engage in impersonal economic exchange, Simmel believes, 'are never more sharply appreciated in their significance for the independence of the individual than in the dense crowds of the metropolis, because the bodily closeness and lack of space make intellectual distance really perceivable for the first time' (Simmel 1995:

40). For Ádám, impersonality and the freedom from social bonds represent positive values of urban life:

> People like to be left in peace ... You can live and move in a certain way in the city ... It is a bit like in [Wim Wender's movie] *Wings of Desire* where angels are moving between humans without being seen. I have experienced this many times, and it is important for me ... I am really emotional about this possibility. I can't imagine living in other than a big city any more.

The impersonality of urban life, that is, the possibility of living in the city without engaging in close personal relationships unless one wishes to, stands in contrast to social life in small towns or villages where one is always exposed to the claims of the community.[62] Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Ádám conjoins his appreciation of the freedoms of urban live with a rejection of tight social bonds as they exist in rural areas where people mutually know one another, and where they are expected to assume certain social roles. Ádám vividly rejects such claims to fixed identities that are subjected to the control of the community:

> In rural life ... everybody has their assigned place. In terms of society or social life it is a bit like being born into it. You may study and become a doctor but then you return to a given position. These are positions that ... are requested or needed and that define your place in that environment. Once this has happened it is very difficult to escape. Everybody, every family and every individual, has certain [assigned] attributes that they cannot ... get rid of easily. And this is another reason why I really like [urban life] ... It didn't take long [after moving to Budapest] until I felt relieved any time I returned to Budapest [from family visits in rural Hungary].

Ádám expresses his difficulties in adapting to life in small towns where it is difficult to break away from the community. Being acquainted with the high level of individual freedom that urban life allows, claims to one's identity in rural settings seem to frighten him – and to generate a strong wish to escape. As Simmel (1997d: 180) observed, the city dweller 'who is placed in a small town feels a restriction' – a type of narrowness related to his or her exposure to the claims of the community. Social control, Ádám says, has become even stronger in recent years, and he explains this with the revival of more tradi-

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[62] For an analysis of different modes of sociality in rural and urban settings see Tönnies's (1955) classic work on *Community and Society*. An analysis of the tensions between anonymity and community in the city can be found in the work of the Chicago School, most notably in Wirth's essay on *Urbanism as a Way of Life* (Wirth 1995).

tional, and in particular more religious ways of life that were less tolerated by the political regime prior to 1989:

> It is amazing to see how small towns that were strictly religious before socialism have changed [since 1989]. I noticed how public life, the system of norms, and morality in former traditionally Catholic settlements have turned grey again ... I can't imagine living in such an environment anymore. It is both amazing and sad to see how these [traditional or religious ways of life; AS] have recently increased even in larger towns in rural Hungary.

Upon returning from Paris and Geneva, Ádám tried to live in several larger towns in Hungary, but for the reasons above he could not cope with life there. 'It was a revealing experience. I realised that this was nothing for me, and I had to return [to Budapest].' Ádám likens the freedom from social control, or the possibility to withdraw from friends and relatives whenever one wishes, to a drug that one can get addicted to:

> No one who has ever lived in Budapest for more than two years can get away from it easily. Maybe this is not even a story about Budapest but rather about any big city. Somehow you get infected with an attitude or a way of life that you can hardly escape anymore ... So far I haven't experienced any serious limitations to my life in Budapest.

Ádám's narrative reveals him to be the typical city dweller who one would expect to find in a textbook on urban sociology rather than in real life: attached to the city yet not to a particular one, detached from traditional values as well as from narratives of nation, religion or class; free from the social bonds of the community but also a little bit lost and threatened by isolation: 'It is obviously only the obverse of this freedom if, under certain circumstances, one nowhere feels as lonely and lost as in the metropolitan crowd. For here as elsewhere it is by no means necessary that the freedom of man be reflected in his emotional life as comfort' (Simmel 1997d: 181; see also Park 1967b).

So it seems, Ádám is on the rather problematic side of city life. In particular, he has not managed to develop an active, positively meaningful relationship with Budapest, even though he 'can't imagine living other than in a big city any more.' But, crucially, that big city could be any big city in the world. 'In this sense I am a local patriot, but local patriotism in the common sense of the word', that is, an attachment to a *particular* city, 'is alien to me.'

Ádám is not the only person in the sample whose narrative addresses the differences between rural and urban life. Indeed, most interviewees touch upon this issue directly or indirectly. Budapest with its 1.7 million inhabitants is Hungary's only big city, followed by the much smaller city of Debrecen where only 200,000 people live. For many Hungarians, being born in rural Hungary and moving to Budapest later, while maintaining strong ties to one's place of origin, is the rule rather than the exception. Like Ádám, András – a 58 year old taxi driver who works in Budapest but lives in the nearby small town of Visegrád – values the impersonality of urban life, in particular the lack of accountability for his actions there. However, and in contrast to Ádám, he is also enthusiastic about Visegrád. He contrasts the degree of individual freedom that exists for him in Budapest with the warmth of a community consisting of only 2000 individuals, and expresses sympathy for living in both places:

> Budapest is great for working ... I really enjoy its anonymity. But I like Visegrád too. When I go ... to the post office, I don't need to show my ID to pick up a recorded letter. This is great. Or I could take the local council or the church as further examples. But there is also something about Budapest. Sometimes you don't want to be observed or considered by others, so there is a duality. People like to get recognition in a community, but it is equally nice not to be noticed by anyone so that one can melt into a great nothingness. Then I can do nasty things and drive like taxi drivers do, and nobody will remember me. I couldn't get away with that in Visegrád. I suppose that this duality is inside me ... It is here [in Budapest] where I earn money and do nasty things – and then I go home.

For András, the love of anonymity and freedom in the city and a longing for recognition and warmth within a rural community coexist. He wishes both for the strong social ties of the *community*, and for the impersonality of *society* which Tönnies (1955) identified as a form of sociality bare of individuals' mutual knowledge of each other's identities. As András cannot get both in the same place, he combines the advantages of Budapest with that of Visegrád by dwelling in both places.

Life in the city is subject to functional interdependencies inherent in the division of labour; it is mediated by the impersonality of the money economy; and characterised by the presence of strangers – but, at the same time, urban life is also exposed to the complexities created by these. The city is a site of dense economic exchange between a large number of individuals differentiated socially, culturally, ethnically, and so forth. Their

activities and ways of life, to the extent that they are visible to others, translate into a vast number of sensory impulses that challenge the capacity of the individual to respond to them emotionally: 'The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli' (Simmel 1997d: 175). Out of protection, people respond to the constant influx of stimuli with an attitude of indifference that Simmel has termed the *blasé attitude*:

> The essence of the blasé attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions between things. Not in the sense that they are not perceived ... but rather that the meaning and the value of the distinctions between things, and therewith of the things themselves, are experienced as meaningless. They appear to the blasé person in a homogeneous, flat and grey colour with no one of them worthy of being preferred to another. (Simmel 1995: 35–6)

The blasé attitude, Simmel argues, 'is the correct subjective reflection of a complete money economy to the extent that money ... expresses all qualitative distinctions between them in the distinction of "how much"' (ibid: 36). However, while indifference represents a response to the intensity of urban life, it may also stand for the individual's inability to comprehend the complexity that is at hand. That is, the blasé attitude that protects the individual from an overabundance of stimuli may also contain an element of resignation in which the individual doubts whether he/she will ever be able to master the strangeness of the city. This is obvious in the case of Márta whose narrative I shall discuss in the following chapter in more detail: 'I like to discover things in an environment that I am familiar with. Yet when there are countless unknown elements I get exhausted. Then I keep everything at a distance because there are so many things to be resolved that my brain gets tired.'

This section revealed how narratives of Budapest reflect some conditions that are specifically urban. In doing so, it focussed on the city as a site of weak social control and a corresponding individual freedom, as well as on the attitude of indifference that informs urban narratives. The following section will look at the impact of the city in more spatial terms.

While the previous section addressed the entire city in its aspect of supporting a certain kind of individuality, this section is concerned with the impact of the city on a smaller scale. In relying on the empirical findings, it focuses on the dialogue between the experiencing, embodied subject and the places in which he or she dwells, such as the square or the street.

Narratives necessarily involve the lived body in its relation to places: 'We interact with each other and the world around us through our bodies' (Tavernor 2007: 16). We perform narratives as embodied beings and engage with places in various ways. For example, we not only see places but also hear, smell or touch them. Furthermore, the succession of events that meaningfully connect to a narrative is accompanied by a corresponding succession of bodily states and their relation to places: the 'position' of the body within the broader spatio-temporal form of a narrative; the configuration of limbs and their movements (*cf.* Casey 1996, Ferguson 2006, Merleau-Ponty 2002); the involvement of the senses to changing extents (some places we rather see, others we rather hear, smell or touch; see Feld 1996); feelings that arise in dependence on the body (such as cold or pain); or feelings that colonise the body (such as fear or excitement).

The phenomenological concept that addresses the relation between the lived body and place is that of perception. According to Merleau-Ponty (2002), it is through perception that the human subject is in the world, directed towards it and becoming aware of it at the same time. Crucially, this directedness towards the world is not secondary to an otherwise unstructured assembly of the embodied subject and the things around him or her, as if these were separated first and conjoined meaningfully only later. Rather, perception structures the realm of things from the outset: it not only informs about one's immediate environment in the form of random sensations but orders them into a scene, with the perceiving subject at its centre. The phenomenological concept which grasps the structuring role of perception is that of *depth*: 'surrounded by depths and horizons, the perceiver finds herself in the midst of an entire teeming place-world rather than in a confusing kaleidoscope of free-floating sensory data' (Casey 1996: 17; see also Merleau-Ponty's 2002: Part 2, Chapter 2).

In perception a sense of place emerges that is not secondary (for example as a function of time or interpretation) but intrinsic to it. At the centre of place, and necessarily directed

towards it, is the embodied, experiencing human subject. That is, from a phenomenological perspective, place does not appear to be an entity that exists independently from the human subject; rather, it comes into being through perception. Conversely, there is no perception without the realm of things that appear to the human subject situated in their midst. Therefore, place can be defined phenomenologically as the configuration of the embodied human subject and the realm of things that surround him or her, related to each other in perception: 'Just as there are no places without the bodies that sustain and vivify them, so there are no lived bodies without the places they inhabit and traverse ... Bodies and places are connatural terms. They interanimate each other' (Casey 1996: 24). The lived body, which Merleau-Ponty (2002: 239) regarded as 'the natural subject of perception' inscribes itself into its own physical environment and thereby co-constitutes our experience of place: 'the human body's brachiated and multiply articulated structure renders it a uniquely valuable vehicle in the establishment of place. Precisely by allowing us to make a diverse entry into a given place – through hands and feet, knees and hips, elbows and shoulders – the body insinuates itself subtly and multiply into encompassing regions' (Casey 1996: 21).[63]

Since bodies and places interanimate each other, it is appropriate to assign place an equally significant role in this relationship as to the embodied, experiencing subject. Casey's term to mirror Merleau-Ponty's concept of *corporeal intentionality* (that refers to the body as interfering with place through the movements of its individual parts) is that of *operative intentionality*: a place 'has its own "operative intentionality" that elicits and responds to the corporeal intentionality of the perceiving subject. Thus place integrates with body as much as body with place' (ibid: 22). Because 'we are never without perception ... we are never without emplaced experiences ... we are not only in places but of them' (ibid: 19). Likewise, Merleau-Ponty (2002: 140) proclaims: 'I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them', while Le-

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[63] Sharing the insight of the mutual constitution of body and place, some authors have looked at the relation between the embodied subject and the places in which he or she dwells. For example, Norwegian architect Thiis-Evensen's work on *Archetypes in Architecture* (1987), or Bachelard's (1994) concept of the *oneiric house* emphasise the relation between the body and *interior* places (see also Frampton 2002). Both authors claim that a sense of dwelling derives from a sense of insideness, for which the house as home provides the paradigmatic example. In an edited volume, Dodds and Tavernor (2002) have explored the relationship between the human body and buildings, while in an attempt to transcend the boundaries of individual buildings, Norberg-Schulz (1980 and 1985) has addressed the wider spatial contexts of dwelling. Writings on the phenomenology of architecture will not be further discussed here in order not to compromise the space given to the discussion of empirical findings. Furthermore, there are hardly any accounts related to interviewees' experiences *inside* individual buildings. The urban experience is, above all, an experience of *outsideness*, subjected to unforeseen encounters between strangers and the unpredictable complexities of urban life.

febvre highlights the fact that '[t]here is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space and its occupation of space ... [T]he living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of space, which is to say the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body' (Lefebvre 1991: 170).[64]

Urban narratives are lived at 'the intersection of the moving body and the physicality of architecture ... [that] come together to create a new spatial event' (Borden 2001a). For the remaining part of the chapter, I would like to show how this dialogue between the lived body and place informs narratives of Budapest. As will become obvious, narratives turn out differently, dependent on the characteristics of places in which they are enacted. Individuals' memories, or their identification with social collectivities further inform this relationship, suggesting that the mutual constitution of the lived body and place is not without the imprints of aspects discussed in earlier chapters. The lived body in its relation to place, the social realm and memories jointly affect urban narratives.

'We are not only in places but of them'

While the eye is prominently involved in the *perception* of place, the *experience* of place cannot be equated with the gaze of the least 'embodied' of all senses. Rather, being *in* and *of* places directly involves all senses of the body. Eye, nose and ear distinguish between objects and their spatial relation to the human subject, while the tactile sense eliminates the distance between the lived body and place:

> The entrances [to apartment buildings] are beautiful, as are the ornate facades, the spacious staircases, the balustrades and the gangways of the inner courtyards. You step out onto them and hear what is going on in the other apartments. Not everybody likes this, but I think it is precisely what gives charm and a special atmosphere to it. (Zsófia)

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[64] This section does not aim to substitute a brute phenomenological view on the relation between the embodied subject and place for the sociological one advocated in previous chapters. (Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's work on the phenomenology of perception has been criticised for being both body- and ocular-centric, thus marginalising the importance of culture and society (see Jay 1993); and Casey has been criticised for neglecting power, the psychical and the discursive from his analysis of body and place (see Hooper 2001).) Rather, this section emphasises the bodily and sensual dimension of narratives that, in conjunction with aspects discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 7, add up to the complexity of the urban experience. That is, the section regards the place-body matrix as an agent of narrative, rather than as its vessel.

This section focuses on core phenomenological arguments on the mutual constitution of body and place, and does not discuss Marxist or feminist geographer's writings on the bodily aspects of the urban experience (see, for example, Bell 1999, Butler 1993, Duncan 1996, Foucault 1978 and 1991, Grosz 1998, Hooper 2001, Lefebvre 1991, Nast and Pile 1998, Pile 1996, Probyn 1996, Soja 1995 and 2000, Tonkiss 2005).

Narratives of Budapest contain manifold references as to how people sense places, buildings or strangers. Moreover, accounts of places, and of animate and inanimate objects that they gather, reveal significant variations with respect to the involvement of the senses. In the above example, seeing and hearing place predominate, accompanied by a sense of spaciousness that seems not to be exclusively linked to any of the senses but rather involves a felt and assessed relationship between the body and its surrounding place. Moreover, all these sensory experiences seem to add up to, and merge as, a certain feeling – in the above example a positive one.

At times, smelling and touching place dominate over seeing and hearing it, or simply complement these: 'experiencing and knowing place ... can proceed through a complex interplay of the auditory and the visual, as well as through other intersensory perceptual processes' (Feld 1996: 98), revealing the 'overwhelmingly multisensory character of ... experience' (ibid: 94). Let us recall Ádám's already introduced statement in this context:

> I have very intense memories of the staircase, the smells and odours, the ornate iron balustrade ... the bar for beating carpets in the courtyard, and the entire atmosphere of the apartment building. All these mix in the form of a very intense experience. (Ádám)

> The [old] tram ... is absolutely part of this experience [of the inner city; AS]. It shakes and rattles as if it wanted to fall into parts all the time. It is uncomfortable, and all, but nevertheless it has a charm that modern trams could never imitate. (Gábor)

At yet other times, the content of what is perceived or sensed seems to be no more important than the general constituents of an emplaced experience, such as a sense of light or a felt temperature, or silence and calmness, that is, the absence of sounds or voices. And as in all accounts of the city presented here, the perception of place is always informed by a *sense* of place – hints with regards to how it feels to be in a given place, worded in a manner as if feelings were a mere reflection of the properties of place:

> I really love these old buildings ... They radiate calmness and solidity ... you can lose yourself while looking at even a single handle. It is a great pleasure to look at these buildings, especially when you sit outside in summer. When the sun shines onto the ornate facades, you can spend hours marvelling at them. They radiate charm and a really lovely atmosphere. (Zsófia)

Urban narratives engage the senses to changing degrees, mirroring the ever changing sequence of situations in the course of a narrative: 'Because motion can draw upon the kinaesthetic interplay of tactile, sonic, and visual senses, emplacement always implicates the

intertwined nature of sensual bodily presence and perceptual engagement' (Feld 1996: 94). Therefore, '[l]ived experience involves constant shifts in sensory figures and grounds, constant potentials for multi- or cross-sensory interactions or correspondences ... in which one sense surfaces in the midst of another that recedes, in which positions of dominance and subordination switch or commingle, blur into synesthesia' (ibid: 93). More often than not, more than one of the senses are involved together, and the simultaneity of their stimulation leads to a synesthetic experience of place:

> In these residential buildings and their distinctive inner courtyards a gentle odour of sulphur is always in the air. The buildings are in a state of slight decay, yet they still guard their old patina. They are not new any more but rather slightly worn-out, yet they still display their beauty and their well formed proportions. These buildings have a soul. When you enter the courtyard you find yourself surrounded by silence, and ... on hot summer days it feels as if you entered a cool church. You are gently touched and stimulated by the silence and the cool air. That's what these buildings do to me. (Gábor)

In the above example, the commingling of sensory experiences occurs in three different ways: through synesthesia, personification and metaphor. Firstly, in the courtyards of the old residential buildings, Gábor finds himself surrounded by silence (a confusion of an absence of sounds or voices with the sensed dimension of space); and he is touched by silence (a confusion of touch with the absence of sound). Synesthesia, as Feld observes, 'points to the complexity of sensory ratios, the rich connections inherent in multiple sensation sources, the tingling resonances and bodily reverberations that emerge from simultaneous joint perceptions ... [It is a] medley of the senses bleeding into each other's zone of expectations' (Feld 1996: 93). Secondly, Gábor personifies the old residential buildings by attaching human attributes to them: buildings 'guard' their patina (like subjects who actively govern their possessions) and, like some women, 'they display their beauty and their well-formed proportions'; finally, 'these buildings have a soul'. In a similar manner, another interviewee, Márta, whose narrative will be discussed in the next chapter, expressed her difficulties in developing a sense of home in Budapest by attributing to it the ability to speak: 'This city does not speak to me ... Or it speaks in some strange language that only birds understand.' Thirdly, Gábor expresses his experience of the inner courtyards by referring to the interior of a church; the two sites enter into a dialogue whereby sensing one place provides the reference for sensing the other.

A distinct feature of all hitherto examples is that they seem to question the dichotomies of body and place, self and city, by pointing to a much closer interaction between them. Bodies and places 'interanimate each other' (Casey 1996: 24); 'we are not only in places but of them' (ibid:19); 'as places are sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place' (Feld 1996: 91); 'experiences relate the fundamental conditions of their own temporality to that of the world outside, they create an engagement between subject and object that is ultimately a lived form of dialectical thought' (Borden 2001b: 195–6; see also Seamon 1980) – the accounts of Budapest reveal the accuracy of these statements and firmly ground their theoretical language in everyday experience. For example, the old tram as it 'shakes and rattles' immediately connects to the passenger's body through auditory feedback and physical resonance, giving an 'immediate experience of one's presence through the echo-chamber of the chest and head, the reverberant sensation of sound' (Feld 1996: 97), so that 'perceiver and perceived blur and merge through sensous contact, experiencing inner resemblances that echo, vibrate, and linger as traces from one sensory modality to another, ... continually linking bodily experience to thought and action' (ibid: 93).

Similarly, sounds and smells emanating from the environment are immediately absorbed within the body: 'By smelling something, we draw this impression or this radiating object more deeply into ourselves, into the centre of our being: we assimilate it, so to speak, by the vital process of breathing ... intimately' (Simmel: 1997b: 119). This close relationship between the lived body and place at times may take on a dramatic dimension and strictly determines a narrative, as in the account of the 1956 uprising remembered by Erzsébet: 'I left the office at noon and arrived home late at night. Usually, it would be a 20 minute walk but people were shooting all around and I had to run for shelter all the time. I was zigzagging on side streets, and it took more than half a day until I reached home.'

By contrast, a less threatening version of the mutual constitution of the lived body and place can be found in Ádám's account on his first experiences of Budapest. In remembering how he became acquainted with the city, he recalls the sensual imprints that the city had left upon him, until a confusion between his lived body and the city emerged. It is worth citing Ádám here again:

> Very slowly, through a mosaic of different experiences, atmospheric elements and impressions began to add up to a larger picture, to an inner image or emotional landscape of the city arisen from places where I had been walking or driving. I can't remember exactly the moment when I began to feel the entire city within me so that ... any time somebody men-

tioned a particular place or area, a mental image would emerge before my eyes. There is a point when sensually and intuitively you become one with a place. (Ádám)

This sense of close relationship, or unity, between the lived body and place has been described by Lefebvre as follows:

> Objects touch one another, feel, smell and hear one another. Then they contemplate one another with eye and gaze. One truly gets the impression that every shape in space, every spatial plane, constitutes a mirror and produces a mirage effect; that within each body the rest of the world is reflected, and referred back to, in an ever-renewed to-and-fro of reciprocal reflection, an interplay of shifting colours, lights and forms. (Lefebvre 1991: 183)

The dialogue between the lived body and place, as the quotes from the empirical study indicated, is never without hints as to how it feels to be in a given place: 'we experience the scent of the rose, the loveliness of a sound, the attraction of the branches swaying in the wind as a joy occurring inside our spirit' (Simmel 1997b: 111). Such feelings extend from the enjoyment of the play of light on an ornate façade to the identification with the perceived meaning of a given place. The experience of place – more appropriately conceived of as a confusion of body with place, mediated by the senses – thus appears to be inseparable from a sense of place, that Basso (1996: 54) poetically described as the 'close companion of heart and mind.' A sense of place expresses the experience of place in the form of a feeling, and by merging myriad sensory inputs into one feeling it also condenses and simplifies that experience.

A sense of place, however, represents more than a reflection of the brute characteristics of a given place. Just as places are inseparable from the social and cultural forces involved in their creation, so the lived body in place is imbued with 'cultural categories in the form of differential patterns of recognition, ways of organizing the perceptual field and acting in it, and manners of designating and naming items in this field' (Casey 1996: 34). The following section looks at this aspect in more detail.

Space-shaped experiences

The fact that we are not only *in* but also *of* places is sociologically significant to the extent to which the embodied experience of place exercises an effect on a narrative performed in its midst. Narratives may turn out differently depending on the characteristics of the places in which they are lived. I have already addressed the overall impact of urban life
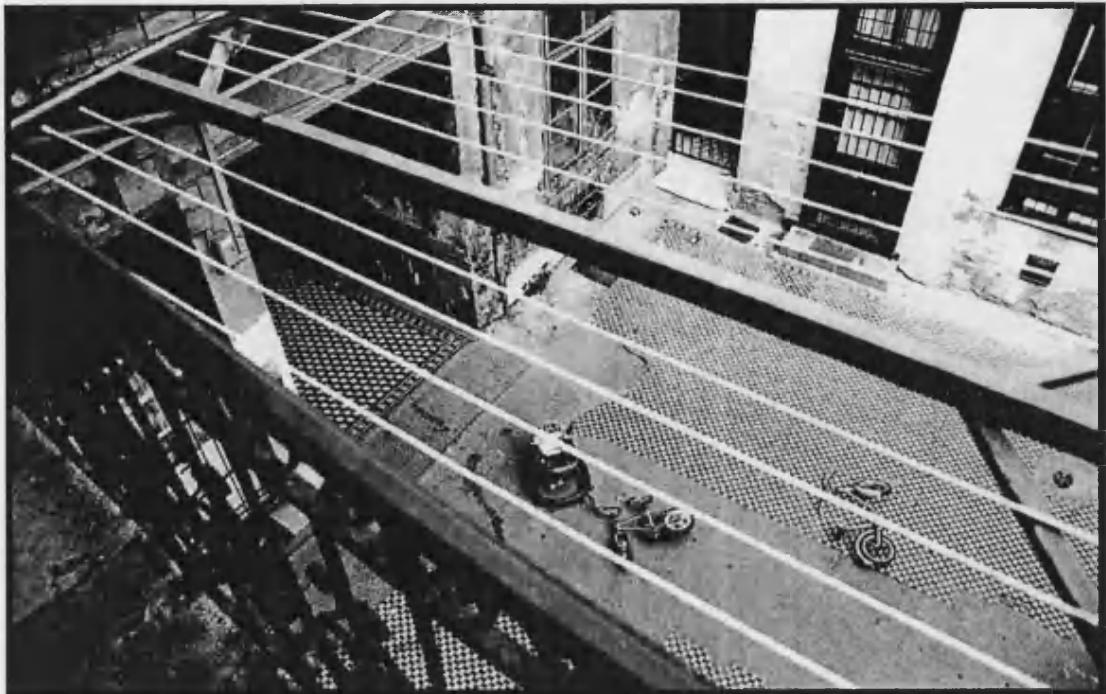
The inner courtyard of an old residential building in the 8th district.

on narrative subjectivity. Now I wish to address the role of small scale urban places such as the street or the square in this context.

The overabundance of sensory stimuli in the city, Simmel argued, provokes a certain response on the side of the individual. In order to protect themselves, people respond to the intensification of emotional life with an attitude of indifference towards the perceived. However, it seems that under certain circumstances the opposite might be the case: stimulated by the sensual qualities of a place, the individual may feel inspired to open up towards the city and to actively explore it, rather than to respond with the detachment of the blasé attitude. Precisely this seems to apply to three interviewees in the sample: Gábor, Zsófia and Attila, from whom I shall consider the former two here.

Both Gábor and Zsófia appreciate the nineteenth century urban fabric of Budapest, but the buildings that flank the streets there are neither preferred for their historical value, nor for the bourgeois lifestyle that some interviewees associate with them. Instead, Gábor and Zsófia refer to sensual pleasures stimulated by ornate façades and balustrades, the play of forms and light, spacious staircases and cool inner courtyards, smells and odours, and such like. Let us briefly reconsider their already introduced statements in this context:

> I really love these old buildings ... They radiate calmness and solidity ... you can lose yourself while looking at even one handle. It is a great pleasure ... especially when you sit outside in

173

summer. When the sun shines onto the ornate facades, you can spend ages marvelling at them. They radiate charm and a really lovely atmosphere. (Zsófia)

In these residential buildings and their distinctive inner courtyards a gentle odour of sulphur is always in the air. The buildings are in a state of slight decay, yet they still guard their old patina ... When you enter the courtyard you ... are gently touched and stimulated by the silence and the cool air. That's what these buildings do to me. (Gábor)

The courtyard is an essential feature of late nineteenth century residential architecture in Budapest (Bodnár 2001, Gyáni 1998, Lugosi *et al.* 2010). It is typically enclosed by a four to five storey building from all four sides, rectangular in shape and about two hundred square metres in size, sometimes significantly larger. Courtyards constitute a spatial and social microcosm within the urban fabric of Budapest. They block off the noisiness of the inner city and remain cool even on a hot summer day, but the companion to such seclusion is residents' exposure to each other. The corridors that provide access to flats are visible to every inhabitant, and as neighbours walk down on them they pass each other's windows at arm's length. Such proximity is a common source of conflict, often fuelled by the social mix of tenants and their different ways of life. Zsófia and Gábor, however, show no concern for this issue and emphasise their positive view of the courtyards instead.

Furthermore, Gábor and Zsófia appreciate the possibility for unexpected discoveries in these parts of the city, such as an old mosaic shimmering below a dusty façade or an empty courtyard revealing fragments of a social microcosm. In summary, both narratives describe experiences of sensual stimulation, which they highly value. Monuments, grand structures (including shopping malls), panoramic views and overly legible environments that are too simple to become a source of stimulation are either not mentioned at all, or referred to as obstacles to the pleasures of urban life. For example, it is the life of the old residential buildings on the Pest side of the city that inspires Gábor's work as a photographer, while he avoids the rather sterile and well maintained middle-class environments of Buda:

I like Buda too, but there is something special about Pest. Pest is a bit dustier, and it has a distinct patina. Pest is a bit more proletarian. And I like it more than the elegant ... parts of Buda. I mean, I like Buda too, but for some reason I don't take photographs there. I don't mean it as discrimination, but it is simply here [in Pest] where I feel inspired to work.

Gábor's images resemble Atget's photographs of early twentieth century Paris that Benjamin (1985) likened to those of a crime scene: it is as if somebody had just stepped out of

The Gozsdu
Courtyards, restored
to the glossy charm
of solitude.

the image, leaving a universe of worn-out things behind that speak to the viewer, inviting him or her to speculate about what might happened there before: 'to live means to leave traces' (Benjamin, cited in Tonkiss 2005: 120). It is in the rundown residential buildings of the inner city that Gábor portrays the domestic lives of marginalised social groups – predominantly Gypsies and poor Hungarians – and the deprived material conditions in which they live. In opposing widespread clichés that either emphasise their misery or reduce their identities to that of criminals, Gábor's photographs show how, in the midst of deprivation, people nevertheless strive for ways to sustain their dignity. By contrast, well-maintained environments often do not reveal much about the lives of their inhabitants, and hence they do not possess their sensual qualities either. Along the example of the Gozsdu Courtyards (a series of interconnected courtyards in the inner city recently restored to upmarket housing and retail), Gábor compares such lack of stimulation to the meagre attractiveness of some women:

> The problem [with the Gozsdu Courtyards] is that it is by far too glossy, too fancy, in short: not honest. I often ask my partner not to put on makeup all the time: "You are more beautiful without, you don't need it." Images are always false. A worn-out building can be beautiful and honest, but the Gozsdu will resemble a woman after a series of cosmetic surgeries; a woman who got everything reshaped: her breasts, her face, everything. By looking at her you may be impressed for a moment, but you don't get particularly excited to approach her.

For Zsófia too, there exists a relation between the sensual qualities of the inner city and her narrative, evident in her rejection of places that do not stimulate the senses: 'I have never arranged to meet a friend in an enclosed modern place [like a plaza] ... I be-

lieve this is for emotional reasons ... I enjoy being in the street.' More than this, she allows herself to be inspired by the intensification of emotional life, and this encourages her to turn outward and to socialise in the public realm, rather than to withdraw into the blasé attitude: 'What is the atmosphere of the inner city? Well, the many people and their constant busy movements are definitely part of it ... so there is not much time to step back and contemplate. Rather, you are compelled not to sit quietly at home but to go onto the square [to socialise].'

Pleasures caused by the stimulation of the senses, it seems, at times translate into a heightened awareness of both places and people. These pleasures turn people outwards, make them more curious about the city at hand, and encourage them to interact with strangers whom they otherwise would meet with indifference. These findings confirm the main argument of *The Conscience of the Eye*, in which Sennett explores how places could be designed in ways that encourage encounters and interactions between strangers – places where 'subjective life undergoes a transformation so that a person ... is aroused by the presence of strangers and arouses them' (Sennett 1990: 149).[65]

Four experiences in Heroes Square

While places sometimes stimulate such open states of mind, often they restrict the realm of possible experiences to a significant extent. Erzsébet's way home in the midst of a hail of bullets was an extreme example of this, but on other occasions places may condition a narrative in a similarly brutal manner, for example through strictly enforced access rights or strict codes of conduct imposed on their users.[66] Mirroring the limitations of her narrative in the city at large, Margit, for example, reports a related experience of restriction, associated with the design of shopping malls. It is worth recalling her already introduced quote here:

> It gets on my nerves that they want to determine where I should go. You can't go straight-forward just to buy biscuits, and leave. *No*, you need to go upstairs and then downstairs again. You are forced to look at everything, and if you have 3 Forint with you they will want to take it from you. That's fairly aggressive.

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[65] For a discussion of the question as to how urban design may increase awareness of both places and people in general, and encourage interaction between strangers in particular, see Sennett 1990 and 1994. For a phenomenological stance in favour of an openness towards the unexpected, see Heidegger 1971.

[66] On the conditioning of behaviour in an increasing number of places, and its implications for both the identities of users and their ways of interacting with each other, see Augé (1995).

Heroes Square – a strictly symmetrical, monumental large open space.

Other restrictions do not unfold in the manner of *you must*, but manifest themselves as an obstacle to any meaningful activity. Some places seem to be less inhabitable than others – a fact that applies to Heroes Square, unless one connects it to a sense of being Hungarian:

> I am not particularly touched by Heroes Square. It's nothing but a desert ... We used to participate in the First of May parades there, in front of the tribune. These were lovely events ... because they were about being cheerful. I completely forgot [to mention it] ... It is a desert made of stone and concrete ... desolate, abandoned. (Margit)

Because Margit does not have a strong sense of being Hungarian, she does not know what to do on Heroes Square – how to make it part of a lived narrative – unless such a narrative is collectively organised and imposed upon her as part of a spectacle, in this case of the socialist First of May festivities. Yet in the absence of events that could fill the Square with life, it hardly connects to the everyday narratives of Budapesters; nor does it host uses or amenities (such as benches or tables) that could turn it into a destination and invite people to socialise there.[67] Being 'a desert made of stone and concrete', the Square acts as an empty volume that exercises a 'pacifying and neutralizing [effect on] the bodies of the citizens' (Sennett 1994: 304).

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[67] As Gehl (1996) observed, people tend to socialise where there are amenities that support it, in the form of street furniture or uses that connect to their daily activities.

The statues of leaders at the time of land-taking in 896, placed around the column with Archangel Gabriel on its top. 'We'll trample you down if you don't submit to us', these horsemen seem to say.

Statements on the difficulty of making Heroes Square one with one's life can be found in a number of narratives, and such statements always coincide with a respondent's weak sense of being Hungarian, or the eventual complete absence of nationalistic feelings:

> I am not overly impressed by Heroes Square. There are some statues, that's all. I don't make a big fuss of being a Hungarian so that any time friends or acquaintances visit me I would take them to the Square to show them our ancestors: [*with ironical emphasis:*] *Here they are, what a big issue!* Once my Belgian friends came over for a visit and we went to have a look at it, and I could see that they weren't particularly overwhelmed either. (Attila)

Attila simply does not know how to relate to Heroes Square, and if I had not asked him about it he probably would not have mentioned it at all. Having briefly talked about the Square, he quickly moves on to narrate about the town park behind it in detail. Another interviewee, who also lacks a distinct sense of being a Hungarian, equally expressed her difficulties in relating to Heroes Square, but she nevertheless observed the impact that it has on her body: '[W]hen I stand on the Square it makes an impression on me, because it is built to impress you. Although I don't know much about history, it makes an impression by its very size ... It is inevitable that people diminish in size in relation to it' (Márta).

178

Heroes Square is experienced differently again when it resonates with a person's national identity, as in the case of Éva whose narrative was presented in Chapter 4. Intended to glorify the history of the Hungarian nation on the occasion of the Millennium festivities in 1896, Heroes Square was designed to impress the citizens of the country. In identifying with the Square as a symbol of the Hungarian nation, Éva allows it to fully unfold its effect in conformity with the intentions of its creators. Her account, which was already discussed in Chapter 4, echoes Márta's, but it lacks the critical distance that Márta expressed:

> I liked Heroes Square ... so much so that even today my heart is ... beating faster any time I walk across it ... On Heroes Square you feel as if you were in a huge church with ... a tall cupola that always attracts your eyes or makes a certain impression on you ... The statues are placed in a semicircle and it is as if you raised your eyes to God. That is, they are placed above you ... and you are forced to raise your eyes and to look up to them.

Something as profane as a square 'made of stone and concrete' can attain a sacred dimension for those who identify strongly with its perceived meaning. Indeed, a sense of nationality, historical greatness, and Christianity are deeply connected for many Hungarians. 'God bless the Hungarian people' is first line of the national anthem, while the main annual bank holiday on 20th of August celebrates King Stephan who ordered his pagan subjects to convert to Christianity, for which he was declared a saint by Pope Gregory VIII in 1083. As Durkheim (1995) noted in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, sacred places and rituals are sharply delimited from the profane sphere of the everyday, and it requires rituals of transgression to pass from one to another: 'religious and profane cannot coexist in the same place' (ibid: 312). Likewise, 'religious and profane cannot coexist at the same time' (ibid: 313).[68] In the subjective urban geography of Éva, entering Heroes Square marks such a shift in space and time, indicated by her accelerated heartbeat and the religious metaphor used to describe the meaning of the place.

The design of the Square supports such a shift by occupying the human subject's field of vision in the form of a total panorama: the statues of Kings and leaders of the Hungarian history are arranged in a semicircle and define the boundaries of the place for the person who stands on it. Furthermore, the statues are placed about three metres above the ground, and larger than life-size, so that one is 'forced to raise the eyes and to look up to them', and thereby to submit oneself to their authority: 'It is inevitable that people diminish in size in relation to it' so that the Square 'makes an impression by its very size' even on those who

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[68] For the same argument see Eliade 1954 and 1959.

Heroes Square, as it reveals itself to the perceiver. The unusual format of the photograph represents the experience of the square: wherever one turns, it is difficult to escape its presence.

'don't know much about history.' Heroes Square attempts to colonise the eye and the movements of the body; it constitutes a perceptual totality to which Éva happily submits herself. As the perceptual propositions of the Square and Éva's readiness to submit to it merge, her sense of being Hungarian manifests itself intensely – while the meaning of the Square as a symbol of the nation is also confirmed: 'There is an originary experience that is repeated in ... [subsequent] experiences. And in that process of repetition there is a rein-forcement of the original moment of identification. In this sense habit – as a ritualistic replication of certain experiences – is ... precisely that which consolidates the process of identification' (Leach 2002: 307).

For yet other Budapesters, such as for the community of skateboarders and bikers, Heroes Square means again something else: a place to perform their tricks.[69] Narratives not only turn out differently according to the places in which they are performed, but different narratives likewise create different places. That is, there are many ways to experience a place: the interplay between the lived body and place varies according to one's standpoint which is not just one in place and time, but also one in culture, history and society, as well as one irreducible to any of these, namely the genuinely subjective element in any urban narrative:

> People's urban practice is constrained by the social and spatial relations that frame their ac-tions, but it is not only these factors which ensure that everyone's spatial stories turn out dif-ferently. The random and fragile connections and disconnections of an everyday life, the shortcuts of memory, the dead-ends and private jokes that steer a subject in space, are like so many maps of the city – written over and folded badly, consigned to routine or made up as you go. (Tonkiss 2005: 130)

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[69] On skateboarders' ability to subvert the intended official meaning of a place through bodily practice see Borden 1991a and 1991b.

Rather than determining a narrative, place provides room for a range of different experiences. Place may restrict or strongly influence certain narratives, as Heroes Square does, but it is difficult to imagine a place that does not tolerate any deviant narrative at all, at least by being powerless towards the meanings that people silently attach to it: 'Heroes Square was built for a particular purpose. What it does to you ... depends much on how far you allow yourself to be lulled by it' (Márta). After all, urban narratives are not the property of the city, but occur at the intersection of place, the body, memory and the social realm, without being reducible to any of these. This becomes more obvious in the next section that presents accounts of unpleasant experiences in the public realm of Budapest, which can only be explained by taking into account a respondent's social status, religious faith or memory.

Disturbing strangers

Places affect the urban experience not only through their design or the uses that they accommodate. On the contrary, it is the presence of other people that sometimes exercises the biggest impact on a narrative. We may visit a place in order to socialise there, to watch other people, or to be seen by them. We may identify with people and their activities in a given place, or choose to visit a place because it provides a setting for interactions:

> They greet me when I enter the kosher pastry shop. People are talking to each other. There is a guy ... whatever topic comes up he cites the Talmud and the Holy Scriptures. I would hardly meet somebody like him elsewhere. (László)

> You dress up, no matter whether you admit it or not. Whenever I go to Liszt Square, I put on make-up ... You see young, pretty girls and smart guys there ... who apply great effort in dressing up for their performance on this promenade. You always spot if someone comes in order to show him- or herself ... People sit with eyes wide open on Liszt Square. (Hajnal)

The manner in which places affect narratives depends to a significant extent on whom we may encounter there. Moreover, whether or not we appreciate the presence of certain people in a given place is inseparable from our belonging to the social collectivities of class, status, ethnicity, gender or religion – either in the form of our identifications with any of these, or as an effect of others' attributions. Mere subjective motives and preferences further complicate the picture. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to assume that strangers *do* something to oneself in and out of themselves, for this would ignore one's own

involvement in the matter. As a non-Jew I would hardly value somebody citing the Talmud to me; and because I am not a well-dressed young woman I am not too concerned about being seen on Liszt Square – or about walking certain side streets at night.

However, once the place-bound, dependent relationship between strangers and the human subject is acknowledged, one may ask how the presence of the former affects an urban narrative. Helén for example, who – similar to Éva and Tamás – values highly the historic fabric of the inner city that provides a setting for the bourgeois lifestyle, expresses her concern about its decay, in particular when this is paired with the presence of the poor: 'I don't want to offend anybody, but somehow the whole area has become quite shabby. It is really rundown, it is bad smelling, and it is populated by homeless people.' What makes the presence of the poor irritating to Helén is that they can be encountered in midst of environments that she would like to see reserved exclusively for people like her. Sometimes, the unexpected appearance of certain strangers in midst of an appreciated environment represents a serious irritation to a bourgeois narrative, as becomes obvious in Helén's statement already discussed in the previous chapter:

> It is really exasperating sometimes ... We were going to the theatre one evening and were looking for a car park ... [*with an angry voice:*] And right there they stood, ready to take our money. We were in a car park that resembled a construction site, standing and sinking in mud, and paying a horrible sum. I despaired when seeing this in the very midst of the inner city – and the Gypsy was taking money for this!

In this example, as with the ones to follow, the unexpected appearance of strangers leads to an instant shift in the experience of place. These events induce sudden ruptures within a narrative and give it another direction. Whether this is experienced as pleasant or unpleasant, or even as threatening, depends on the incident in question and one's interpretation of it. In the above example, Helén is involuntarily confronted with the presence of Gypsies, of whose existence she is principally aware of but nevertheless tries to repress, for example through a lifestyle that relies on places such as the boutiques on Andrássy Boulevard where workers or Gypsies – in her view, people of doubtful existence – are less likely to be encountered (*cf.* Honneth 2001). Helén's account, thus, is one 'of border disputes and of the "shock", "fear" and "fury" that the transgression of borders provokes' (Pile 1996: 5). It is a story 'about the intertwining of territories and feelings, about demonised others, and about senses of self and place' (ibid.). Similarly, László's narrative takes an unpleasant turn as he is confronted with the anti-Semitic behaviour of a stranger:

I was reading a Hebrew book on the tram one day, hidden so that others could not see it ... Somebody stood behind me, looked at the book and started swearing. It was a heavy shower of words, heavier than anything I have ever heard before. I wrestled with myself whether I should tolerate it or not. That person's voice was incredibly aggressive. And meanwhile I noticed that people around me were amused. I could hear "ssss, Jew" – they were laughing and no one was upset. I was provoked ... And then I thought that I can't fight all these fights. So I simply did not react ... Yet to be defeated in such a situation is a horrible experience.

László describes a number of anti-Semitic incidents that he has witnessed in public during socialism and – increasingly – since 1989. These experiences, and the anticipation of further ones, have increased his awareness of signs that may reveal his identity to strangers, and that, therefore, should be eventually hidden in public: the Hebrew book, the yarmulke worn during Sabbath or attributes of the Jewish body: 'They didn't know father was Jewish. He doesn't look like a Jew: his nose is straight and he doesn't speak with that singsong either', says László with a singing voice. For both Helén and László, the peaceful and familiar settings of their narratives turn hostile as soon as certain strangers appear who pose a threat to their sense of mental or bodily comfort. In an instant 'shift between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the known and the unknown' (Pile 2001: 265), their sense of place changes in an unfavourable way (*cf.* Anderson 1990, Freud 2003).

In two further examples, it is not strangers whose unexpected appearance induce a disturbing experience of displacement; rather, these experiences are brought about by the 'appearance' of the dead – or those who were thought to be dead. We have seen in the previous chapter how the city can constitute a *topography of pain* as it stirs in somebody's traumatic experience. Lea, who survived deportation to Auschwitz where her family were killed, one day visited the Holocaust Museum: 'Suddenly, I didn't know where I was. Right at the entrance there were two large photographs ... and one of them showed my dear little brother ... You should have a look at the museum but take a tranquilliser before.' In another example, also discussed in the previous chapter, Lea recalls how she met her former teacher in a grocery shop in the 1950s. None Neither of them knew that the other had survived the Holocaust and, overwhelmed by finding each other alive they embraced each other crying.

This chapter looked at the role of the city in affecting narrative subjectivity by focusing on the following aspects: the city as a site of weak social control and the related increase of individual freedom; the intensity of emotional life to which, out of self-protection, people respond with the indifference of the blasé attitude; the interplay between urban form and the lived body; and, finally, the role of strangers in altering the urban experience.

One overarching finding common to all these aspects concerns the mutual constitution (interdependence, interpenetration) of the lived body and place, so well expressed by Casey (1996: 19): 'we are not only in places but of them'. This relationship, moreover, is a primordial one: there is no isolated body to which place would be added later, just as we cannot think of a place without the embodied subject who dwells in its midst. Even when we speak of a place from a distance, we do not conceive of it as an abstract point in space; rather, we think ourselves as actually being there and evoke a sense of that place in our imagination:[70]

Furthermore, the close relationship between the lived body and place is not without the imprints of culture, history and society. As Casey points out, 'culture pervades the way that places are perceived and the fact that they are perceived, as well as how we act in their midst' (ibid: 34). In other words, the impact of place on narratives is always mediated by the lived body, socially informed patterns of perceiving and acting, and memory: place integrates all these aspects which it 'brings and holds together within its own ambience' (ibid: 36). And, as the inquiry in the next chapter reveals, being in and of places contains an explicit emotional dimension too.

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[70] On this aspect see for example Heidegger 1971, Casey 1996.

To live a narrative, or to tell a story about the city, requires that one knows something about the city prior to engaging with it. As I argued earlier, one always is, and must be, familiar with the city at however a basic or preliminary level, for without any preconceptions about the meaning of the city and how it may support one's activities, agency itself seems impossible.[71]

As the previous chapters revealed, narratives do not integrate the human subject with the city in an abstract manner; rather, one's sense of collectivity, memories, the lived body and urban forms inform this relationship and contribute to the density of the urban experience. This chapter argues that our relationship with the city has a distinct emotional dimension too. If the Indo-European root *gna*', from which the word *narrative* has developed, means both 'to tell' and 'to know' (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001: xiii), then knowledge itself may be recognised as containing the *comfort of understanding*, that is, the comfort of being familiar with the places where one lives. From this point of view, urban narratives may be regarded – in addition to the rather formal aspect of connecting the human subject with the city – as acts of home-making.

Narratives are never without their emotional tonalities – a fact that all the cases discussed so far reveal: Éva, for example, is *excited* about Heroes Square so much that her heart is beating faster any time she walks across it; both she and Helén describe department stores in historic buildings as spring-like and *warmth-giving*; Margit talks about shopping centres and other places that have become out of reach to her, with an *angry* voice; Ádám points to the *suffocating* narrowness of rural life, while he is *passionate* about individual freedom in Budapest; Lea recalls the *terrifying* experience of seeing a photograph of her brother who died in Auschwitz – the list of examples could be extended easily: 'An emotional life lies at the heart of the city – and the city can become a strange, pleasurable, hostile place through our reactions to its buildings' (Pile 2001: 274), or to strangers, one might add.

Accounts of a sense of belonging[72] – or its opposite, a sense of displacement – permeate, and in some cases dominate, every narrative of Budapest. Consequently, the chapter recognises the empirical relevance of 'belonging' and 'displacement', and discusses it in the light of the existing literature (Basso 1996; Bell 1999; Butler 1993 and 1999; Casey 1987;

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[71] I discussed the relevance of the stock of knowledge at hand in the city in Chapter 1.

[72] Sometimes, I will speak of a sense of home instead, but I shall use both expressions as synonyms.

Fortier 1999; Leach 2002; Probyn 1996). More specifically, the chapter asks how 'belonging' turns into 'displacement', or, conversely, how a sense of displacement gradually gives way to a sense of home in the city. The chapter will be grounded empirically in the narratives of Rita and Márta, two young women who moved to Budapest about two years prior to interview, yet whose lives have followed different trajectories since then: while Rita quickly conquered Budapest for herself so that she now feels more at home there than in her home village, Márta has largely failed to develop a positive attitude towards the city.

7.1   Repetition, Familiarity, Belonging

A sense of belonging to the city, as the existing literature suggests, emerges from our everyday *performances* through which we familiarise ourselves with the places where we live. The concept of *performativity* is Butler's, and she has made use of it to question essentialising notions of identity. As Butler (Butler 1993 and 1999) argues, our identities are not pre-given but emerge and solidify through being enacted and negotiated – through being performed – in everyday life (Leach 2002). This opens up the possibility for rewriting and modifying identities by gradually changing the performances that sustain them. It is this insight that gives the concept of performativity an explicit political dimension. Unsurprisingly, 'performativity' and 'belonging' have become prominent concepts in the study of gender, class, community or ethnicity, offering a tool for both understanding, questioning (and ultimately altering) gender, class, or ethnic identities.[73]

However, we must be somewhat cautious in adopting and applying the concepts of 'performativity' and 'belonging', because of the methodological and theoretical assumptions inherent in them. Rather than deciding in advance that narrative subjectivity is gendered, classed and, indeed, subjected to power (and who could say that it is not?), I was reluctant to share such preconceptions out of concern that I would then only find empirical evidence for what I was searching for. Thus I felt that a narrative approach to subjectivity would be more appropriate as it allows interviewees to present what they feel is important in shaping their urban experience. As we have seen, a sense of status, nation or religion (and to some extent gender) inevitably shapes individuals' urban experiences, but it does so to a varying extent. That is, gender, class, status, nation or religion may be central to understanding some narratives, while it is less useful in explaining others. Furthermore, the urban experi-

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[73] For a compilation of studies on this matter see Bell (1999).

ence is equally subjected to personal memories (see Chapter 5), urban forms and the complexity of urban life (see Chapter 6) and the genuinely subjective dimension inherent in any narrative. To claim that these were merely anecdotal to gender, class or power would be as problematic as to claim that narratives were entirely free from them. Again, we should recognise and respect individuals' authority in informing us about this matter.

Having said this, I felt inspired by the concepts of performativity and belonging, but decided to free them from the contexts and motives from which they originate. As a result, the concepts now help reveal a general aspect of human engagement with the city, namely that of finding a sense of home in it, and of maintaining that sense through everyday narrative performances, whether gender, class, or otherwise structured.

Performativity is neither random nor singular, even though to some extent every narrative is unique. Rather, narratives appear to be imbued by individuals' senses of collectivity, their personal memories, urban forms and the complexities of urban life. They *cite* these aspects, just as they cite social and material conditions from which they have emerged and in which they are enacted. Because none of these change easily, narratives attain a relative stability over time: whether lived or told, narratives tend to be repeated. 'Performativity', Leach (2002: 301) therefore argues, 'is grounded in ... invocation and replication'; and because of the citational character of agency, performativity is not 'merely about routine or the reiteration of practices' (Fortier 1999: 43), nor about 'replicas of the same' (Butler 1993: 226).[74]

The citational character of urban narratives has been already revealed to some extent in the previous chapters. For example, any time Helén buys a silk scarf in a boutique on Andrássy Boulevard, she feels 'as if a life dream comes true'. As she repeatedly engages in the pleasurable act of buying, her narrative cites both the deprivation of her youth and her appreciation of the bourgeois way of life (see Chapter 5). Vera's narrative cites her memories that she intensely relives any time she returns to Budapest.

As we enact our narratives again and again in the 'same' places, we become familiar with them: 'Through habitual processes of movement, by covering and recovering the same paths and routes, we come to familiarise ourselves with a territory, and thereby find meaning in that territory' (Leach 2002: 299). Through repetition, 'spaces are "demarcated" ... [and] "re-membered", such that those participating reinscribe themselves into the space, re-

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[74] There is an obvious dialogue between the concept of *'performativity'* and *'citationality'*, and Bourdieu's concepts of *'practice'* and *'habitus'*. This was addressed in Chapters 1 and 4. On the similarities and differences between Bourdieu and Butler see also Meier (2004) and Reckwitz (2004).

evoking corporeal memories of previous enactments' (ibid: 302). As we repeatedly enact our narratives, the places involved become 'spaces of belonging'. Therefore, Leach concludes, '"[b]elonging" to place can ... be understood as an aspect of territorialisation' (ibid.), through which people become 'owners' of the places where they live, which now 'belong' to them, just as they 'belong' to it. The result of this attunement is the 'intertwining of territories and feelings' (Pile 1996: 5).

In his phenomenological study on remembering, Casey reached similar conclusions. A familiar space, he writes, 'is an "attuned space," a space with which one feels sympathetic at some very basic level – in contrast with the indifferent site-space of cartography or rational geometry ... In the ambience of attuned space, it is correspondingly difficult *not* to feel at home; for this is the very space that inheres in the place one has made one's own' (Casey 1987: 192). Like Leach, Casey sees a sense of home grounded in the everyday appropriations of places that stage one's life, through which these places become interwoven with one's life until a sense of belonging to them gradually emerges:

> This "down home" sentiment is not only a matter of feeling at ease in a given place but of feeling at ease in a place that has become *one's own* in some especially significant way. "One's own" does not imply possession in any literal sense; it is more deeply a question of *appropriating*, with all that this connotes of *making something one's own* by *making it one with one's ongoing life*.
> (ibid: 191–2; emphasis in original)

A sense of belonging to the city, as both Leach and Casey suggest, emerges from familiarity with places that stage one's narratives. This familiarity, in turn, is grounded in repetition. What adds complexity to this understanding is that narratives themselves gradually emerge over time. For example, many people from rural Hungary move to Budapest, the country's only big city, at some point of their adult life. How do they become familiar with places that do not yet have a meaningful position within their everyday narratives, places that have yet to be appropriated? And when strange places gradually turn into familiar ones, how does a sense of belonging to them emerge? The narratives of Márta and Rita help answer this.

Márta

Márta, 24, was born in a Romanian village and moved to the nearby small town of Tirgu-Mures at the age of six. Later, she moved to the significantly larger town of Cluj, the capital of Transylvania (Romania), where she studied Japanese for two years. Unhappy with the university there, in particular with the lack of native Japanese teachers, and with occasional discriminations against her as a Hungarian, she moved to Budapest two and a half years ago. Here she studies Japanese at a Buddhist college, and works in an esoteric bookshop located in a teahouse on Jókai Square.

Prior to moving to Budapest, Márta had occasionally been to the city, usually on short weekend trips with her family. These visits had largely been limited to Liszt Square, where her mother's second husband owns a flat, and the adjacent streets. Occasionally, Márta and her family visited friends in distant parts of the city, but 'we always took the car, so I never came to know the city in-between.' Apart from Liszt Square and its immediate surroundings, Márta did not engage much with the city at hand: 'When I moved to Budapest about two and a half years ago, I first stayed at Liszt Square for a couple of months ... and found a job in the [teahouse] Red Lion, which was a two minutes walk from the flat. So I saw terribly little of the city.'

More than two years have passed since Márta moved to Budapest, but, surprisingly, she has not yet discovered the city for herself: 'To be honest, I find it quite difficult to speak about it. I have a few memories, such as going for a coffee on Liszt Square, but the connecting bits and pieces are missing. When trying to recall the past three years, I find it difficult to narrate.' I have known Márta for many years, and know that she is a lively person and a talented story teller. The silence when it comes to talking about Budapest is all the more disturbing:

> It is astonishing, really, I have no difficulties in recalling the flat on Liszt Square ... but the things that happened in-between seem to be missing – I am left with almost no experiences and memories ... I do of course recognise the places where these photographs[75] were taken, I recognise every single one, but I have no memories that would connect me to them.

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[75] As explained in Chapter 2, I asked some respondents prior to the interview to look at photographs of Budapest that I had taken before, leaving it entirely up to them how, or even if, to integrate the images into their narrative.

Márta's difficulties in narration surprised her as much as they surprised me, and it seems that it was in part at the time of the interview that she became fully aware of this. Her obstacles to narration manifested themselves vividly: short passages of talk were followed by long, at times uncomfortably long, phases of silence. Márta was looking out of the window most of the time, as if she wanted to avoid admitting her difficulties by avoiding my eyes. It took a 28 second break after looking at one of the photographs before she continued: 'It is nice to see the photographs, they don't frighten me, they just make me silent ... The area makes me silent, and now that I look at the images, the same thing is happening again'.

Some photographs caused Márta to narrate about places other than Budapest. For example, the photograph of Csengeri Market reminded her of markets in Cluj or Munich, 'places full of life' to which she can relate positively, and for a moment her liveliness returned: 'But Csengery Market, well, there is nothing special about it. I can't say anything about it other that one can buy tomatoes and onions there, oranges and red peppers.' Here, Márta stopped for another 38 seconds, before declaring: 'I do recall some events as I look at the photographs. Plumes of memories rise – memories of things that happened [in the places depicted] – yet, somehow, these images don't make me narrate. Nothing happened there that is exciting enough to be reported [*1 min 38 seconds break*].'

Two years after moving to Budapest, Márta seems far from becoming familiar with the city. Like the protagonist in Kafka's parable *Before the Law*, it is as if she stood outside the city's walls in search of a gate to enter. Not that Budapest was a complete stranger to her – she recalls plumes of memories; she knows a number of buildings and sites in the city; she works and studies there; and she has a partner – but for some reason these potential ingredients of a narrative don't build up to a meaningful story:

> I do recognise where these buildings stand, yet they don't touch me. I could keep looking at these photographs, but I wouldn't be able to tell you much about them. They are like postcards: the buildings look really nice, but ... the images don't inspire me to actually visit them ... Likewise, I don't feel attracted by cultural institutions, for which Budapest is so famous.

Márta's difficult relationship with the city manifests itself as an inability to say how buildings or places relate to her in a positively meaningful way, and as the associated difficulty in integrating urban places into a narrative. Márta is struggling to find access to Budapest, that is, to find her meaningful place in the city, and the city's meaningful place in her life. She is struggling for an access that could translate as, and find its expression in, a narra-

tive, or a series of narratives, which she could happily pursue. Since such a positive relation to the city has not (yet) emerged, all that Márta feels towards Budapest is indifference: she distinguishes buildings or sites by name, but these names do not seem to mean much to her, and they do not resonate with her life in a positive way. Márta's indifference towards the city levels out the distinctions between buildings, places, or activities, which appear to her as a mere collection of fragments – differentiated by their name, yet otherwise disconnected from each other:

> I don't feel any difference between an underpass [built in socialism] and [the historic] Ringstrasse. This is not because one is better or worse than the other, but simply because all this is in Budapest ... I cannot help it, but I am not particularly moved by anything here. All I can feel is indifference.

Márta does not only find it difficult to relate distant places to each other and to herself, but also to connect adjacent urban phenomena, such as a shop and a building that hosts it:

> [In other cities,] shops at street level connect very well with the buildings above. That is, shops don't make buildings look alien or strange ... By contrast, shops seem to be distributed randomly here. To be honest, I don't quite see the purpose of things [shops] here. I don't know why the Westend [shopping centre] was built, or why there are shops at street level [on the Ringstrasse]. These shops lack true purpose; there is no proper reason why they are here. It might have been different in the past, but all this has gone.

Márta's difficulties in developing a meaningful relationship with Budapest stand in sharp contrast to the positive attitude, or even enthusiasm, of Éva, Tamás, Helén and Vera, who have managed to integrate the city into their narratives in many ways. Márta, however, has largely failed to accomplish this. She has been living in Budapest for two and a half years, but she is far from being familiar with it, let alone from developing a sense of belonging to it. On the contrary, Márta finds it difficult to narrate about her life in the city, and she seems to project these difficulties onto the city. She continues the above statement: 'Somehow, this city does not speak. All this is a kind of false monologue whose content is no more the same as in the past. They are trying to make the city speak, yet the city speaks in some foreign language – [*12 seconds break*] – that only birds understand – [*32 seconds break*].'

Instead of applying effort to discover the city, Márta is waiting for the city to act, to speak to her, so that she can relate to it. She is trying to maintain an open attitude towards

the city, but this openness is mixed with passivity. Márta is waiting for the city to take action without making her own contribution. Unsurprisingly, 'the city does not speak':

> I wouldn't say that I lack intention to develop a positive attitude towards Budapest. For ... one or two weeks [remember that Márta has been living in the city for more than two years; AS] I have been looking at magazines that advertise places and activities worth visiting ... places that could make me curious and inspire me to see them ... I express the wish to discover the city. A strong wish makes things happen. That's all I can do.

However, the mere wish to discover Budapest is not sufficient to change things for the better, especially since the activities and distractions that a big city like Budapest offers do not resonate with Márta's interests. There are countless possibilities for enacting narratives in the city, yet Márta fails to make any of these possible narratives her own; in her own view, the city does not speak in a language that she can understand: it speaks in a language 'that only birds understand'. 'Budapest is like a silent movie. I can see myself walking down streets, that's all.' Márta does not acknowledge her own stake in the silence of the city that will hardly speak to her unless she is willing to listen. On the contrary, she believes that the silence that she perceives is the silence of the city rather than her own. At one point in the interview, Márta suggests a grotesque spectacle in which buildings would be given a voice by audiovisual installations that would enhance their presence in the city and make them speak to her loud and clear.

In sharp contrast to her experience of silence in Budapest, Márta is passionate about her hometown Cluj where she always keeps track of minor events, such as a newly opened café or pub. In Cluj, she says, she is always curious about new places, and she immediately feels inspired to visit them. But when she reads about a café in Budapest, her reaction is quite different, 'although there are a thousand times more things on offer':

> Sometimes, I do get excited [when reading] about places in Budapest, yet as soon as I go there ... I notice a sharp gap between an advert and the actual place. There is a contrast between a place as it is described or supposed to be like, and how it actually feels to be there. I don't know. This might equally point to a mismatch between my own expectations and reality.

On the one hand, Márta expects too much from the city, namely for *it* to resolve her difficulties in developing a positive attitude towards it by taking action from its own side. On the other hand, her case also reveals that it is difficult to enact narratives in places that one is not familiar with. Lived narratives increase one's familiarity with the city, yet it seems

that narratives themselves require a basic level of familiarity to begin with. This suggests that the relationship between performativity and familiarity is not one of linear cause and effect; rather, familiarity and performativity mutually support and presuppose each other in the form of a circular relation that evolves over time. In Márta's case, however, this process occurs at a very slow pace, and she is far from experiencing the sense of home in Budapest that she does in her hometown Cluj:

> I do not have any expectations towards Cluj: I always feel empowered there because it is my hometown ... I naturally develop an interest in new things there ... However, things are different in a mute environment [like Budapest] ... There may be countless things to discover, but they don't make me curious, because I don't encounter them in a familiar environment ... I like to discover things in an environment that I am familiar with. Yet when there are countless unknown elements I get exhausted. Then, I keep everything at a distance because there are so many things to be resolved that my brain gets tired.

Two and a half years after moving to Budapest, the city is still a stranger to Márta. She cannot make much sense of new impressions and experiences, and she cannot relate these to what she is already familiar with. Her experiences of the city stand next to each other, but do not touch – they are disconnected. Márta continues the above statement: 'I don't find the time to deal with tiny details when I am not at peace with the city as a whole. The city does not touch my heart. Whenever I try to make it speak, there may emerge a dialogue for five minutes that I will have forgotten by the next day.'

Why has Márta failed to develop a sense of belonging to Budapest? Is it a matter of self-confidence? An overall difficulty to cope with new situations, regardless of what type? Psychological readings of her case may be appropriate, yet instead of following this trait of interpretation, it may be equally important to understand that the circumstances of Márta's life in Budapest do not appear to encourage the emergence of a sense of belonging, for a number of reasons. Firstly, Márta had never lived in a large city before, and life in Budapest has caused her a considerable amount of emotional distress. As the above quote suggests, this can partly be attributed to the intensification of emotional life that Simmel (1995) described as a key aspect of the metropolis (see previous chapter). For example, Márta compares her experience of Budapest with that of London, where she had spent a month prior to moving to Budapest: 'Upon returning from London after four weeks, I could not say more than two sentences about my visit. And I cannot talk about it until today. It does

not attract me because I felt lost in space there. I could not appropriate it, just as I cannot appropriate Budapest.'

Budapest is a metropolis both in size and population. There is an all too obvious presence of misery in the public realm of the city that some interviewees (Éva, Helén, Tamás, Vera – and Márta) experience as both disgusting and threatening. Budapest is a city of sharp social tensions, as Márta sensitively observes:

> People who take the tram do so ... because they cannot afford a car. This is a very special part of the population. If you are young or less wealthy you will meet these people all the time. By contrast, those who think of Budapest as the cradle of culture ... will never encounter these people. They can't imagine that the majority of the population is struggling with massive problems. You can tell by a look in people's eyes that they are unhappy ... Take the tram at night, and you will see how terribly agitated people are: they are nervous, they hustle each other, and most of them are latent aggressive. Old ladies are compelled to stand ... as none of the young people offers them their seat. People are so overwhelmed by their own problems that they have no energy at all to realise that old people should be offered a seat ... You need to be very understanding and compassionate to accept these people, or to be positive about them.

Secondly, Márta realised soon after moving to Budapest that she was less interested in studying Japanese than she had assumed. She also had to find a job in order to cover living expenses. Márta finds herself in a situation where most of her time is consumed by a job that she does not like, with little time left for studying a subject in which her interest has diminished over time. She describes her situation as being stuck on a treadmill.

Thirdly, there are no other narratives that could encourage Márta to develop a sense of belonging to Budapest. Unlike Tamás, she is not interested in high-brow arts and culture; unlike Éva, she has no particular sense of being Hungarian; unlike Helén, she is not excited about places of consumption; unlike Vera, she has no memories that she could cherish; unlike Ádám, she is not passionate about the level of individual freedom possible in the city; and unlike Rita (see below) she is not partying, nor excited about Budapest as a place of self-realisation. On the contrary, Márta expresses indifference, or even aversion, towards places such as Heroes Square or the Westend shopping centre, the same places that some interviewees were passionate about as they were articulating their belonging to the Hungarian nation, or to social status:

> Heroes Square is a square ... It doesn't make my heart beat faster, nor does it scare me. Both reactions would mean that I am attached to it ... Why should I be bothered? It was built by people of a past era, and it is up to them why they built it.

194

> The Westend is a brainwash. It is incredibly crowded, and if I were to outline a drawing, I would place bubbles above individuals' heads: "I! I! I! Me! Me! Me!" [*Márta refers to individual's ego here; AS*] They play hostile music, there are [*with irony*] fantastic neon lights, and the air conditioning operates as if it were a special form of brain suction.

Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, Márta's failure to make herself a home in Budapest may be attributed to her loneliness in the city. Belonging, as Butler and Bell argue, emerges from narratives performed *together* — from narratives that become meaningful through being shared with, and directed towards, people who are important to oneself. In Márta's case, however, there are no such significant others, and her lack of sociability in Budapest translates into a lack of belonging. The city, expected to speak to her as friends would do, fails to substitute for an impoverished social life.

Márta's narrative reveals that an initial familiarity with the city does not necessarily lead to a sense of belonging over time. Márta has been living in Budapest for two and a half years, and she is quite familiar with many places already. However, there is little evidence of an evolving positive relationship with the city, that is, an emerging sense of belonging that goes beyond mere familiarity with, or knowledge of, the places that host her everyday life. Márta's narrative suggests that in order for mere familiarity to turn into a sense of belonging, one must have a good reason for being in the city. That is, there must be a narrative that one strongly identifies with. Such a narrative, or narratives, may emerge slowly from a number of positive experiences in the city: repetition turns into familiarity, and familiarity turns into belonging. And belonging, in turn, finds its expression in lived narratives to which one relates in a positive way (and which one therefore happily repeats), meaning that these narratives will further one's sense of home in the city. Márta is concerned about her lack of familiarity with Budapest, and hopes to gradually overcome her difficulties to narrate:

> I will probably never miss the city from afar, but I do hope to reach a point when I can nevertheless narrate it. It is important to be able to tell a story about the place where one lives ... I really don't want to leave Budapest after four, five years, still unable to talk about it for more than five minutes. This wouldn't be me. By nature, I am a person who enjoys narrating. I can talk about my grandmother's village for days. I can talk about Cluj for ages.

Márta attempts to adjust herself to the fact that Budapest will perhaps never become her home. Yet she equally maintains that being there is vital for her personal development. A hostile environment, Márta maintains, provides conditions that make certain experiences

possible – experiences that she will benefit from later in her life, once she has left the city: 'This city is a stage of opportunities. Here I am, and I try to make use of them. It may sound odd, but this is the only way how I can relate to the city ... I can learn many things here, which I will find useful later. But I cannot relate to it emotionally. I won't fall in love with this city.' It is worth citing a long passage from the interview here:

> I try to see Budapest as a place ... where I can have certain experiences ... I have learned a lot here, and I have changed a lot. Although I cannot relate to the city ... it nevertheless offers me one of the greatest opportunities of my life ... Whenever I travel home to Cluj ... people tell me how much I have changed. I can feel this too, and from this point of view I am really grateful to this city. This also means that the years I have been living here are not wasted. The silence of the city is not necessarily bad. On the contrary, it seems to do good to me.
>
> A.S.: Tell me how you have changed.
>
> It is an internal change or development. I am in the process of becoming more mature, of becoming an adult actually ... It is a development that I will probably benefit from a lot in the future, and I may be able to reinterpret my stay in the city at a later stage.
>
> A.S.: And how does Budapest relate to this development?
>
> By not obstructing it ... It is a strange way of putting it ... but I have managed to induce countless developments here that I could hardly induce elsewhere. For example, I would hardly work long hours in Cluj ... So I believe Budapest offers a setting for my inner development. It provides opportunities for it, and this is a very positive aspect of the city.
>
> A.S.: Could other places, such as Cluj, offer you the same?
>
> I am under constant stress [in Budapest], but at the same time I feel that I change much quicker here ... I would be calm and more peaceful in Cluj, and I would do everything at a slower pace. And I would be more attentive towards things and people around me. This is good ... It is good when inner and outer experiences are in balance. But I undergo an intense phase of inner development right now ... However, I know well that this is just an interim phase rather than a fulfilled life. And that's why I would like this phase to come to an end ...
>
> A.S.: Where will you be at the end of this phase?
>
> ... I would like to turn outwards and pay more attention to my environment ... without abandoning inner experiences...
>
> A.S.: Will all this happen in Budapest?
>
> No, I don't think so ... It will be in a place that really speaks to me.

Márta claims her life in Budapest to be centred on the development of the self, without specifying what that means. It is an undefined gathering of experiences to be used in

the future; a phase of inwardness to be followed by an increased attentiveness to the outer world. Márta, it seems, has come to see Budapest as a place where she can mature and become an adult. In this view, the city is present as the necessary condition of personal development, but it is simultaneously absent as the positively meaningful destination of a narrative. Conceived in this way, Budapest is as cosy as a dental surgery: it is a place where one endures stress and pain, but while the dentist drills and fills, one can take comfort in the idea of being better thereafter.

It is difficult to tell to what extent Márta's story of personal development represents a strategy for bearing the silence of the city, but it is inevitable that to some extent it does. This becomes obvious as she refers to the importance of home and food which are charged with the task of mitigating the hostility of the city. In Budapest, Márta maintains,

> it is important to live in a flat that is comfortable, spacious, bright, soft, clean – home. It is equally important that the food one eats feels pure ... [and] comes from a clean place ... Given the dirtiness of the city, I insist that the food I eat is clean ... It is in Budapest that I have become attached to organic food shops ... I know, this is in reality a compensation for the silence of the city ... But I don't mind ... Everybody is attached to things that give some temporary happiness.

At the end of the interview, Márta once again referred to her difficulties in developing a sense of belonging to Budapest. She did so by contrasting her relationship with Budapest with her feelings towards Cluj – and she expressed the difference between the two cities with words borrowed from the realm of intimate relationships:

> Cluj is talking to me even when I am silent. Sometimes, I am so very happy there that I could fly ... It is very fortunate to have such a relationship with a city. It is nice to know such a place, and to return there eventually. But no one should expect me to feel about Budapest in the same way ... You cannot force yourself to develop such a positive attitude. It either emerges, or it doesn't, just as you can't fall in love with somebody who you don't love.

Then, Márta concluded the interview by distinguishing between home as a *geographical* place, and home as an *emotional* place, that is, a place of belonging:

> There should be a surplus, just as there is a surplus between a home and a dwelling ... There is no home without a dwelling, but it is possible to dwell without having a home ... Until now, I have experienced Budapest as a dwelling, not as a home. What could turn it into my home? I will let you know as soon as I find out, in another interview.

197

I have seen Márta many times since I interviewed her, and I know that her relation-ship with Budapest has changed for the better. She left the city, as she predicted, five years after moving to it, and she left with a number of positive memories that mitigate her oth-erwise still ambivalent view of the city. Yet instead of conducting another interview with her – which would raise methodological problems – I shall discuss the narrative of another young woman here. Like Márta, Rita moved to Budapest two years prior to the interview, yet although she did not know much about the city at that time, she almost instantaneously developed a sense of home there. From this point of view, Rita's narrative reads as the possible second narrative that Márta could have delivered.

Rita

Rita, 20, grew up in a family of ten children, in the village of Ecsegfalva in Eastern Hungary. Her father works as a joiner, her mother is a house wife and dressmaker: 'We have always been very poor, especially when all of us were living at home. Now only my five younger brothers and sisters stay with my parents, and this makes their life much eas-ier.' Despite the family's modest financial situation, Rita maintains, they never lacked food, nor did she ever feel that she missed out on anything. Her parents knew how to economise and managed to spend their resources wisely.

Rita went to school in Ecsegfalva and then moved to the nearby town of Szolnok where she trained as a waitress and then spent a couple of months working in Germany. Upon returning, Rita started looking for a job in rural Hungary. First, she was offered a job in Szolnok, but she could not find an appropriate accommodation The same thing hap-pened in the towns of Eger and Szeged. Rita was desperate to find a job: 'And then, my older brothers told me not to be stupid – searching for a job in Eger or Szeged. These are beautiful towns, but it is almost impossible to find work there. So they suggested that I move up to Budapest'.[76]

Up to this point, Rita had not considered moving to Budapest, although her three older brothers were already living there. She had briefly visited the capital only three or four times in her entire life, and she had always found it difficult to relate to it in a positive way: she disliked Budapest for its dirt and stench, and for being privileged above rural Hungary:

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[76] In Hungarian, the word 'rural' signifies any place, including large towns, other than Budapest. As collo-quial language has it, one moves 'up' to Budapest, and 'down' to rural Hungary – although geographically, Budapest is the centre of the country.

I knew nothing about Budapest, other than what I had seen on TV ... Moreover, I must admit that I always disliked it ... for getting all the government funding and all major public events. I grew up in the region of Békés, which is one of the most deprived regions in the country. So I strongly opposed Budapest's prominent position.

Yet without any job prospects in rural Hungary, Rita had no choice but to move to Budapest:

I had a very hard time. I was at home in Ecsegfalva from October until late December, and I was crying all day long. I was in despair being unemployed, and on top of all this, I had an argument with my mother who did not want me to leave ... I had a big argument with my parents about this, and, unfortunately, I moved up to Budapest without resolving it.

Rita's decision to move to Budapest was born out of desperation, and initially she struggled to develop a positive attitude towards the city:

The first three months were really hard. I knew absolutely nothing about the city. Everything was very strange. The air was extremely polluted ... and I felt literally sick from the disgusting smell of the sewage system and the stench in the city. I felt nausea for quite a long time when walking down the streets, being sick from the unpleasant smell of the city ... But I got used to it. People can get used to everything. It was hard, but I got used to it.

Rita's first boyfriend in Budapest helped her become familiar with the city. She moved into his flat, and he supported her financially until she found a job:

He helped me discover the city by public transport. I was so disoriented at the beginning that I had no clue how to get to places like Blaha Square, Ferenc Ringstrasse, or Ferenciek Square. All these names sounded the same to me. So I mixed them up, but he showed me everything. He also helped me find a job. We read job adverts, and he accompanied me to interviews ... He was also my emotional support, as I was very homesick.

With the help of her boyfriend, Rita swiftly overcame her initial aversion to the city: 'I quickly learned how to get around by public transport. It took only one and a half months until I knew every place in the city.' Rita could hardly know every place in Budapest after only six weeks, but it seems that she knew enough for a basic sense of familiarity to emerge. Rita has moved flats six times during the last two years, and has been living in various parts of Budapest. She describes these places mainly in terms of their accessibility by public transport, and their perceived safety. For a short period of time, Rita shared a flat with her

older brother in the Roma ghetto around Eastern Railway Station: 'I had a very hard time there. I was verbally abused all the time. I was terrified and could hardly bear the situation emotionally.'

> Then, I moved to [the outer city district of] Kispest. Well, Kispest is a bit strange. I liked it, but I was verbally abused many times upon returning from work at night. I was scared, and so I moved to Káposztásvirág on the opposite end of the city. Káposztásvirág is beautiful, very lovely, but incredibly far away: it took me one hour to get to the city centre, so I moved again.

The greatest part of Rita's initial narrative centred around the accessibility of places and areas in Budapest with public transport, and her perception of safety in different parts of the city. Yet how can her geographical and gendered map of Budapest explain her excitement about the city that manifested itself at every turn of her narrative? Although Rita distinguishes between different areas in the city with respect to their accessibility, and their perceived safety, she is generally positive about every part of the city without exception. 'Káposztásvirág is beautiful', public transport is 'fantastic', Oktogon Square is 'superb', and the building of the Museum of Industrial History is 'superb' too. Even Budapest's 8th district, infamous for its deprivation and crime rates, is for Rita a 'very very cute little neighbourhood'. Rita gives a hint as to how to understand her excitement about the city:

> I love Budapest very much for its excellent public transport, and because it offers many many opportunities indeed. And this is also true with respect to jobs: everybody can find work here ... I love the city because it is nice, and I appreciate nice places such as Heroes Square, Vaci Street, Liszt Square, Jókai Square, the Parliament. Whatever [place] comes to my mind: Gellert Hill, everything. Yes. So I came to love the city very much. I do recognise its beautiful aspects, and the countless opportunities that it offers.

Rita's excitement about good public transport, and well known places such as Heroes Square or Váci Street, combines with an appreciation of the 'countless opportunities' that Budapest offers. Could it be that Rita is actually confusing the two, meaning that her excitement about her career prospects in Budapest is spilling over to the city, turning places, districts and public transport into something special? Rita is excited about the possibilities that life in Budapest offers for her. Returning to the argument that she had with her parents prior to moving 'up' to Budapest, she proclaims: 'they did not understand that I do not want to work in a shabby pub in rural Hungary ... This is not why I got educated. I would

like to achieve something in my life, to be honest.' This statement marks the beginning of a considerable section of the interview in which Rita expresses her plans and wishes for the future: 'I don't have big plans ... I don't want to be rich or to achieve great things, but I would very much like to own ... a cute little flat in Budapest, and I would like to learn things.' Rita emphasises that she has no big plans, but her modest words cover a quite elaborate vision of her future:

> I have a dear friend here who has opened my eyes. Now I understand that it is very important to learn, because you can achieve many things just with a good education. I did not enjoy learning in the past, nor did I want to, but under his influence I started learning again [for her A-Level equivalent exams; AS] ... I want to become an interpreter. This is one of my dreams, and I know it is very hard to become an interpreter. I would also like to travel a lot and later to have a family in Budapest ... But I would like to work abroad for one or two years first ... And then I would like to live here in Budapest.

Rita's wishes to take A-level exams, build a career as an interpreter, and have a home and family in Budapest have emerged since she has moved to the city. She has become more and more aware of her opportunities, and she has developed an ever stronger wish to explore them. Within only two years, Rita has emancipated herself from the predictable life prospects of a waitress in rural Hungary. More specifically (and in sharp contrast to Márta), Budapest forms an integral part of Rita's narrative of self-realisation by providing a setting for her dreams and future plans.

Rita mastered Budapest by exploring and appropriating the opportunities that it offers, and I could clearly feel the self-confidence that had grown out of this positive experience during the interview. It is both as a result and an expression of this experience that Rita is making her future plans in the city, rather than elsewhere. These plans do not make a fixed impression; rather, they envision a future that, as Rita says, is by nature unpredictable. Only two years after moving to Budapest, she considers the city more as her home than the village where she grew up: 'I feel very much at home here. I am more at home here than in Ecsegfalva where I now feel more like a visitor ... I really appreciate the countless opportunities that everybody can enjoy, and I can find everything here: entertainment, whatever I need.'

Rita's sense of belonging to Budapest is inseparable from her future plans that she strongly identifies with. These plans mediate between her and the city: the latter is perceived as being supportive of them – indeed, it has encouraged these plans to emerge – and

hence Budapest naturally has its place within Rita's narrative of self-realisation. Rita, to adopt Casey's (1987: 192) phrase, has made Budapest her own by making it one with her ongoing life. This suggests that the object of belonging is, strictly speaking, not the city itself, but the city as imagined – in this example Budapest as the envisioned setting of Rita's personal development. I have already indicated the imaginary dimension inherent to narratives in Chapter 1, and will elaborate on it further in the next section.

Rita's narrative speaks of the joyful discovery of the self in a city previously unknown to her. It is like seducing a stranger. She pursues a narrative of self-realisation that makes use of, and is inspired by, the opportunities that Budapest offers. Rita loves the city for its good public transport and the countless possibilities it offers, and she maintains a vocabulary of excitement throughout the interview. Yet how can a particular city be loved for general qualities that can be found in any big city? It seems, therefore, that Rita is in fact more excited about her ability to fully explore these opportunities, than about Budapest itself. That is, she is probably less excited about the city than about herself. She moved to Budapest as a young girl from the village, and has conquered it within only a few months. Rita's case is particularly interesting, because this process of appropriation has not yet come to an end, allowing for a fascinating insight into a narrative under construction.

Rita has conquered Budapest, but while she has a strong narrative of self-realisation, her narrative of the actual city has not yet developed. Paradoxically, Rita is experiencing a sense of home in a city that she hardly knows. This finding is interesting with respect to the theoretical discussion at the beginning of the chapter, as it suggests that a sense of belonging to the city sometimes emerges before one becomes familiar with the city, even before one could find a language for describing the city grown out of personal experience. Rita is excited about having conquered a city that she used to dislike, and about having discovered her powers to create her own life, but she still seems to be in search of an object and a language that can adequately express this excitement. Budapest, the setting of Rita's positive experiences, is the natural object of her narrative (rather than the discovery of the self), but two years after moving there, the city itself is still a stranger to her. Thus, it has to be prepared; to be made up; its ordinary aspects have to be presented as special. The vocabulary of excitement that Rita uses throughout the interview reveals her attempts at closing the gap between the excitement of the self and the 'ordinariness' of the city.

Prior to the interview I suggested Rita take her own photographs of Budapest. She happily accepted and spent long hours walking across the inner city – just to come up with
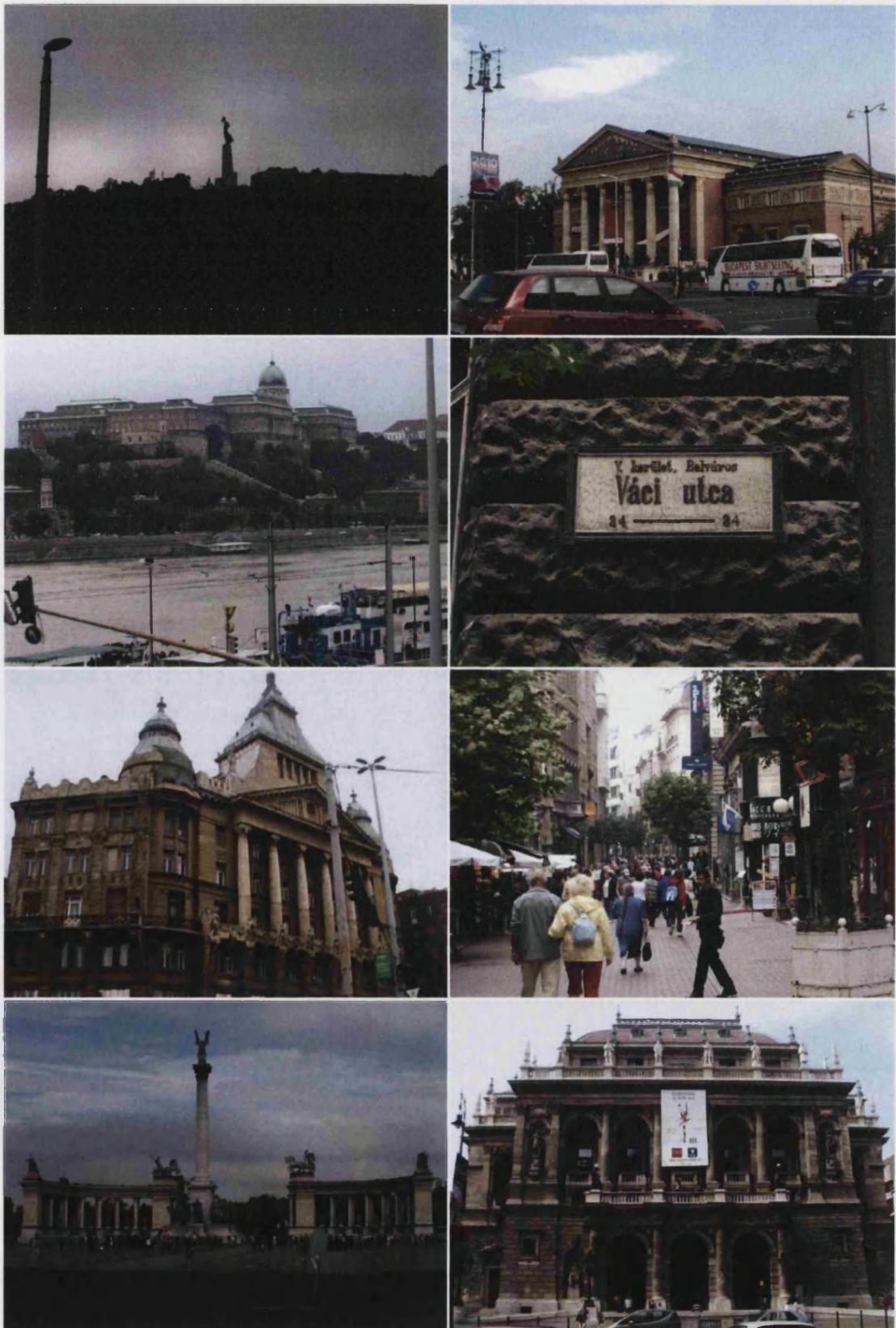
Rita's photographs resemble a collection of postcard motifs. From left to right, and above to below: the liberation memorial on Gellért Hill, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Castle, sign of Váci Street, palace on Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Street, Váci Street, Heroes Square, and the Opera on Andrássy Boulevard..

a collection of postcard motifs that show the Castle, the <u>Elisabeth Bridge</u>, the Parliament, the liberation memorial on Gellért Hill, Oktogon Square, Heroes Square, Liszt Square, Váci Street, and the Opera. Echoing the above finding that Rita tends to compose places and districts into a geometrical image of the city, connected through public transport, her photographs are connected spatially (within the trajectory of a walk), rather than through a narrative. They show buildings and destinations that form part of a collective imagery, yet it is unclear what these destinations mean to her. Rita, it seems, uses well known places in Budapest as a means to communicate her experience of the city, but like a child that repeats an adult's words and gestures without fully understanding their meaning, this communication remains incomplete. The clichéd motifs that Rita depicted become the words of her narrative of self-realisation – words that signify places in Budapest rather than her personal development since moving to the city. Therefore, her words convey rather than disclose the true meaning and nature of her experience. Budapest spoke to Márta 'in the language of birds', but Rita too speaks about her experience in some foreign language. She continues explaining her photographs:

> I adore Liszt Square, I love it very much, since I adore places where one can sit outside in the crowd ... I really, really, adore Elisabeth Bridge and the beautiful panorama [of the River and the Castle] ... I love Budapest at night when it is incredibly beautiful ... I adore the atmosphere of well-lit streets. I generally dislike winters, but the way Budapest is decorated and illuminated at [winter] nights; and the odour of cakes, fir trees, grilled chestnuts and hot wine punch – all this has a lovely atmosphere ... Honestly, I fantastically adore Budapest ... And Heroes Square – I think this goes without saying. It is very, very nice, and I like it very much, since it is flanked by two museums and beautiful statues. It is very lovely; and it is large; and there are countless people; and there is a beautiful park behind it.

The language of excitement that Rita uses does not distinguish between sites in the city, nor does it state how these relate to her. Rather, all sites mentioned are equally 'beautiful' and 'adorable', while Rita has difficulties in explaining in what their beauty lies, or why she perceives them as adorable: I asked her what she knew about Heroes Square:

> Not much. What I know is that there are statues of founders, that is, ehm, King Stephan. That's what I know. I do not know much I'm afraid, given that I hardly know Budapest ... I feel somewhat ashamed about the fact that I do not know these very important things.
>
> A.S.: But, after all, what do you like about Heroes Square?
>
> The fact that it is a large square, surrounded by – how shall I put it? – surrounded by the city.

King Stephan is the most prominent founder of the Hungarian state, and there is hardly anybody in the country who has not heard of him. Furthermore, Rita's claim that there were countless people on Heroes Square is completely wrong: there are generally very few people on the Square (if any), which Margit quite accurately described as a desert made of stone. How can one be excited about places that one knows almost nothing about? Similar to her account of Heroes Square, Rita's excitement about Váci Street – the country's most famous shopping street since the late nineteenth century – seems to replicate the street's anchorage in collective imagery, rather than to reveal its relation to her everyday life:

> I took a photograph there, because it is the most famous street in Budapest. I'm not sure, it doesn't really mean much to me. Okay, it is nice, really, and it has a lovely atmosphere, particularly at night. Otherwise, there are mainly tourists, and that's why I depicted it. Other than that, it doesn't mean much to me. You know, I am not so much interested in it. Say, it is nice and good, but otherwise I am not too interested in it [*laughs, embarrassed*]

Rita attempts to bridge the gap between an excitement about her individual development and the city that is still largely unknown to her. In doing so, she has recourse to the existing collective imagery of Budapest, but no matter how enthusiastically she makes use of it, it seems not to provide her with an adequate language for her experience. This is reminiscent of de Certeau's verdict on the impact that certain places make on their inhabitants. De Certeau calls these 'proper places' – places whose meaning is well defined in public discourse: 'the discourse that makes people believe [in the meaning of place] is the one that takes away what it urges them to believe in, or never delivers what it promises. Far from expressing a void or describing a lack, it creates such. It makes room for a void' (de Certeau 1988: 105–6).

Proper places, de Certeau argues, attain a peculiar weight and presence in everyday life, as human subjects often internalise their significance without actually being able to relate to them. The difference between the abstractly felt weight of a place, and the eventual absence of their significance in the everyday narratives of those who inhabit them, manifests itself as a feeling of a void – that is, as a tension within consciousness that alienates the human subject from the very places in which he or she lives. From this point of view, Rita's recourse to *proper* places for the purpose of expressing her sense of home in Budapest must be seen as

actually alienating her from the city, as these places fail to adequately express her urban experience.[77] Did I further this alienation by asking Rita to narrate?

7.2 Belonging as Identification

The previous section introduced the concepts of familiarity and belonging and discussed two narratives that show how a sense of belonging to the city may – or may not – merge easily. This section attempts to get closer to the nature of 'belonging', as well as to clarify how and when it emerges. In pursuing this goal, I follow Leach's train of thought, who suggested that in order to fully understand the relationship between human subjects and the city, one must extend the concept of belonging by that of identification:

> [I]f we are to understand 'belonging' as a product of performativity we must still construct an argument to explain exactly how this comes into operation. For the argument above [introducing the concept of belonging; AS] merely assumes that a sense of belonging will emerge as a consequence of progressive territorialisation, without fully accounting for this process of identification. (Leach 2002: 303)

Adding the concept of identification to that of belonging helps understand why sometimes a sense of belonging to the city emerges easily, while at other times it does not. This will improve our understanding of the complex and often ambiguous ways in which interviewees relate to the city of Budapest.

As I argued earlier, narratives are not the immediate product of external conditions. Rather, social and material conditions provide a context for urban experiences, but in a manner that these conditions always blend with individuals' ways of making sense of them, that is, of projecting meaning onto them and integrating them into their narratives. We may believe that the city exists for its own part in the way we perceive it (or feel about it), yet this *natural attitude* (Husserl 1983) is in fact mistaken: 'In the hermeneutic moment one tends to read that projection as though it were a property of the object. And yet in reality ... all kinds of content are merely projections. Buildings ... do not have any inherent meaning. They are essentially 'inert' and merely 'invested' with meaning' (Leach 2002: 305–6).

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[77] Interestingly, de Certeau regards the feeling of a void as the psychological impulse behind a narrative, which represents an ongoing attempt for closing the felt gap between oneself and the city. Through making room for a void, urban discourse '"allows" a certain play within a system of defined places. It "authorizes" the production of an area of free play ... It makes places habitable' (de Certeau 1988: 106).

In our narratives, we project meaning onto the city, yet by the same token we also experience the city as a place that *possesses* particular meaning. That is, we project ourselves onto the city (our conceptions about its meaning), and, unsurprisingly, then receive back a city that appears to us just what we take it for. Any urban narrative 'involves a twofold mechanism of grafting symbolic meaning onto an object [a building, a stranger, the city as a whole; AS] and then reading oneself into that object, and seeing one's values reflected in it. The environment must therefore serve as a kind of "screen" onto which we would project our own meaning, and into which we would "read" ourselves' (ibid: 305). In the course of these 'series of mirrorings' (Leach), we perceive the city as a familiar place that 'appears as what it is taken for, and exists in the way it appears' (Waldenfels 1992: 19). Illusion, thus, is at the heart of the urban experience: we believe that the city exists in and out of itself in the way that we experience it, as if it were independent from our acts of imagination.

Imagination is the key word here, for we do not relate to the city as such, but to the city as conceived: Éva imagined Heroes Square as a symbol of national greatness; Tamás imagined the inner city as a place of high-brow culture; Helén imagined Budapest as a stage for the bourgeois way of life; Lea imagined Budapest as a place where a life amidst humans would be possible; finally, Márta and Rita imagined Budapest, though in quite different ways, as the site of their personal development. Yet how do imagining the city, and having a sense of belonging to it, relate to each other?

Just as one does not relate to the city as such, but to the city as imagined,[78] one does not experience a sense of belonging to the city, but to the city *as imagined*. It is for this reason that Probyn (1996: 68) defined belonging as 'the imaginary', rather than real, 'possessions that are created in the name of an identity project', while Fortier extends the list of imaginary possessions to include the community (rather than just the places) where one lives: 'Imagining a community is both that which is created as a common history, experience or culture ... and about how the imagined community is attached to places ... Cultural practices ... mark out spatial and cultural boundaries' (Fortier 1999: 42; see also Ahmed and Fortier 2003, Cohen 1985). Similarly, Leach (2002: 301–2) maintains that 'just as communities are "imagined" communities, so the spaces of communities – the territories that they have claimed as their own – are also "imagined"'. Finally, Pile restates the imaginary relationship between self and place by calling for 'an appreciation of the intricate and dynamic ways in which narratives of

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[78] Imagining, of course, is a multi-layered activity that 'impregnates' (Lindner 1999: 289) the city at various scales. On the city as imagined, see Chapter 1.

space and self intertwine. These stories are about the ways in which people gain a sense of who they are, the ways in which space helps tell people their place in the world, and the different places that people are meant to be in the world' (Pile 1996: 6).

Yet to imagine a place in relation to oneself means to identify its meaning, and thereby to transform the city into a place that appears to possess certain qualities connected with one's activities, values, memories, view of the world, future plans, and so forth. In this way, the city becomes part of a narrative. A sense of belonging, then, seems to emerge *when the perceived reality of the city, and one's expectations of the city, match*. To express this somewhat paradoxically: a sense of belonging emerges when people identify themselves with the city as identified, that is, when they see their narratives reflected and supported by it. Éva identifies Heroes Square as a symbol of national greatness, and relates to it positively as her sense of being Hungarian is reinforced there; Tamás identifies the inner city as a site of high-brow culture, and relates to it positively as it allows him to participate in cultural life; Helén identifies Budapest as a stage for the bourgeois way of life, and she relates to it positively as it supports her bourgeois lifestyle; Vera identifies the city as a site of dense memories, and relates to it positively as it allows her to relive her memories any time she returns to it; finally, Rita identifies Budapest as a site of opportunities, and relates to it positively as it supports her narrative of self-realisation.

Identifying oneself with the city as identified not only brings about the comfort of understanding the city, but makes narrative engagements with it a pleasurable task. It expresses and reinforces a sense of home in the city. As Beate Mitzscherlich (2000: 98) notes: 'all emotions associated with "home" are positive: home is about security, familiarity and the comfort of belonging experienced in certain environments. These emotions stand for the qualities of the relationship between an individual and the environment ... A sense of home emerges, when an environment and the actual needs of a person match'.[79] Mitzscherlich does not argue that a sense of home is the more intense the more 'an environment and the actual needs of a person match.' Isn't an environment that perfectly matches one's needs pacifying? How can one even think of such environments in the light of urban complexities, globalisation, migration, and such like? Rather, places of belonging need them-

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[79] Given that a sense of belonging reflects 'the qualities of the relationship between an individual and the environment', its in-depth investigation would require the consideration of other bodies of literature, such as psychoanalytical object relation theory or instinct theory (for example, Greenberg and Mitchell 1983, Loewald 1986, Winnicott 1971a and 1971b). However, such an analysis cannot be achieved within the agenda of this thesis. For an interesting dialogue between geography and psychoanalysis see Pile 1996.

selves to be found and conquered, that is, appropriated in midst of (and against) environments that seem less inhabitable. However, the latter can be regarded as being essential to the 'home game', precisely because they delay a sense of home from emerging – and through this stimulate the human subject to search for it. The pleasure of finally finding a sense of home in the city is the more intense the less it can be taken for granted, or found easily everywhere.[80] By contrast, without a perceived match between one's narratives and the city, it will be very difficult for a sense of belonging to emerge.

With Mitzscherlich, a sense of belonging can be conceptualised as an 'individual story of successful or unsuccessful projections, of the attachment of individual needs and emotions to certain objects' (ibid: 107). Yet what happens when 'belonging' does not emerge easily over time, so that one's life in the city is experienced as problematic?

Multiple belongings and displacement

A sense of belonging to Budapest, as the narratives presented throughout the thesis suggest, can be found in different times and different places: in Budapest as a bourgeois city (Éva, Tamás, Helén); in Budapest as a Hungarian city (Éva); in Budapest as a metropolis (Ádám); in Budapest as the city of one's memories (Vera); in Budapest as the city of one's imagined future (Rita); and so forth. As Mitzscherlich notes, '[h]ome is a psychologically complex phenomenon, individually constructed in many different ways and deeply anchored in our emotional life. It is related to biographic experience, current living conditions and future plans, and is sometimes experienced as problematic' (2000: 88).

Éva, Tamás, Margit, Lea, Helén, Vera, Ádám, Márta and Rita: they all found a sense of home elsewhere. Budapest is their common point of reference, but they each refer to a different aspect of the city, and to a different time, and their narratives are interwoven with the city in different ways. Moreover, their narratives suggest that every single person dwells in different homes simultaneously, or one after the other: Helén feels at home in the inner city, as it simultaneously supports her bourgeois lifestyle, and confirms that she has left an unpleasant past behind; Éva feels at home in the inner city, but as she walks from Andrássy Boulevard towards Heroes Square, the object that elicits her sense of belonging transforms:

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[80] This aspect too calls for psychoanalytical theories to be investigated. Loewald's instinct theory may provide a fruitful starting point here, for it regards the relationship between the human subject and the world as an intersubjectively mediated crystallisation of libidinous energies (Loewald 1986; see also Honneth 1996 and 2003).

Éva admires Andrássy Boulevard for its bourgeois splendour, while she adores Heroes Square as a symbol of Hungarian history.

Finally, a sense of home in the city may become stronger over time (Rita); or it may fade away (Éva) or even turn into its opposite – little by little (Margit) or suddenly (Lea) – as the city or the human subject change, and as one encounters new situations and strangers in public. In the light of these examples, home appears as a palimpsest of more or less successful, overlapping layers of signification and colonisation that may, or may not, condense into a single feeling or statement: 'I am at home'. As the narratives discussed suggest, a sense of home is vulnerable and fragile: 'Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It is never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it' (Perec, cited in Tonkiss 2005: 126). Just as a sense of belonging to the city emerges as one becomes familiar with it (as one appropriates it and thereby makes 'it one with one's ongoing life' (Casey 1987: 192)), and starts to experience the city as being supportive of the narratives that one cherishes – in the same way a manifest sense of belonging can diminish or disappear. Familiar places can become alien as the city or the human subject change to such an extent that once unquestioned narratives become problematic. As Leach notes, 'territorialisation belongs to the same logic as deterritorialisation ... [T]he very provisionality of such territorialisations colludes with the ephemerality of any sense of belonging. Just as territorialisations are always shifting, so too identifications remain fleeting and transitory' (Leach 2002: 302).

In the view of most interviewees, Budapest has changed significantly since 1989, and in many cases this has contested a formerly unproblematic relationship between narrative and place. In some cases, habitual ways of narrating have become problematic, as corresponding places have changed or disappeared (Margit, Éva). New places have appeared in the meantime, but not everybody knows how to make them 'one with one's ongoing life'.

Territorialisation and deterritorialisation – resulting in 'belonging' and 'displacement' (or indifference) – may occur for each individual in synchronic and sometimes contradictory ways. Márta values her temporary stay in the city as this allows her to gain certain experiences that she will make use of in the future, but apart from that she does not feel at home in Budapest at all. Tamás feels at home in sites of high-brow culture, but his sense of home is threatened by the presence of the poor, and the perceived lack of cultural excellence in Budapest. Rita loves the city for the opportunities that it offers, but she feels threatened in places and situations where she is verbally abused as a woman. Ádám appreci-

ates the freedoms of Budapest as a metropolis, but his wellbeing is jeopardised as he feels lost and isolated in the city from time to time. Lea has a strong sense of belonging to Budapest where she has managed to start a new life after the Holocaust, but sudden encounters with her painful past sometimes destroy her sense of home in an instant. Helén is at home in bourgeois sites such as Andrássy Boulevard, and the nearby exclusive boutiques, but she is concerned about threats to this beloved area arising from the presence of lower social classes. Margit felt at home in Budapest during socialism, but she has largely lost that sense of comfort, and has more and more withdrawn from the city since 1989. Éva still loves to visit Budapest for one day, but she is melancholic about the fact that 'this is not the old Budapest anymore'.

In the light of these examples, it seems that the only way to acknowledge the complexity of 'belonging' is to always think of it in conjunction with its opposite: displacement. For a sense of belonging is never complete, and never long-lasting: from time to time we may encounter irritating, unpleasant or even threatening new situations that obstruct our narratives; or the city changes so that we may find it difficult to integrate it into our narratives. In sum, 'belonging' and 'displacement' do not seem to relate to each other as an *either–or* but rather as an *and*. They form two poles of a continuum that one can be rather close to or rather far away from, but that one can never fully and lastingly reach.

Belonging as atmosphere

A sense of home cultivates the city by transforming it into an emotional landscape made up of places and situations – and their integration into a narrative – that elicit positive emotions – and of ones that don't. A sense of home, it seems, lays a foundation on which the most banal daily activities can become meaningful: discovering a new pub, as Márta said, feels quite different in Cluj, compared to how it feels in Budapest. This points to a peculiar aspect of belonging: even though it derives from concrete narratives enacted in urban space, it also renders concrete experience *diffuse* by adding something to it that originates elsewhere. That is, an already manifest sense of belonging adds an emotional tonality to narratives, and hence to the city, while (or even before) these are perceived, experienced, and acted out. Rita's narrative provides a particularly clear example of this: she 'adores' Budapest, although she knows very little about it.

'Belonging' emerges from concrete narratives which it then transcends. As a sometimes overwhelming feeling, a sense of belonging permeates the urban experience – it blurs with it – like a good mood that we wake up to in the morning, and that accompanies our activities during the day. Yet to permeate the urban experience means to provide a diffuse *atmosphere* for it.[81] That is, a sense of belonging *holds* a narrative (that, from a formal point of view, can be said to hold and connect places and events) by anchoring it in our emotional life – and it is perhaps this anchorage that makes narratives experienceable in a coherent way.

7.3   Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the concepts of familiarity and belonging, and discussed two narratives that show how a sense of belonging to the city may – or may not – emerge easily. We have seen through Márta's narrative that her familiarity with the city has not encouraged a sense of belonging to emerge. By contrast, Rita's narrative revealed that a sense of belonging sometimes manifests itself before one becomes familiar with the city – indeed before one even finds a language for describing the city. The chapter then moved on to look at belonging as a series of identifications with the city that produce a peculiar landscape of belongings and displacements. Finally, a sense of belonging was identified as providing an atmosphere for urban narratives.

A sense of belonging is one of the four main aspects that affect urban narratives, alongside identifications with social collectivities, personal memories, and urban life and urban forms, which were discussed in Chapters 4 to 6. It is the task of the Conclusion to establish the relationship between these aspects, as well as between the *general* and the *particular*: what has the study revealed about narrative subjectivity in general, and, by contrast, which narrative themes appear to be uniquely associated with the particular city of Budapest?

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[81] The idea to conceive of a sense of belonging as the atmosphere of a narrative is inspired by Casey's study on *Remembering* where he describes atmosphere 'as a presence felt throughout' (Casey 1987: 78), which permeates the mnemonic presentation, and gives it 'its own identity and stability' (ibid.).

CONCLUSION

The present study sought to contribute to an empirically grounded understanding of urban narratives in contemporary Budapest. Its two aims were to reconstruct key *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity in general, and to identify important narrative *themes* that govern individuals' urban experiences in Budapest today. Both research questions were sufficiently answered through the study of twenty narratives of the Hungarian capital, which helped reveal four main aspects that affect individuals' urban experiences: their identification with social collectivities, memories, sense of being at home in the city, and, last but not least, urban life and urban forms.

Status (and to a lesser extent class, nation and religion) was the most significant social collectivity mentioned, and I acknowledged this fact by discussing three such narratives in Chapter 4. Éva's narrative, informed by her sense of belonging to the middle-class, revealed the association between status and patterns of consumption in urban space. She was positive about the bourgeois splendour of socialist Budapest, in particular about the pairing of its historic urban fabric with a relatively sophisticated provision of goods of consumption. By contrast, Tamás expressed a strong affinity with high arts and culture and an associated bourgeois lifestyle, which he applied as a measure to judge the city and its dwellers, as well as recent urban changes. He was preoccupied with Budapest's lack of cultural excellence, which he regarded as the legacy of socialist politics of domestic migration. Finally, the narrative of Margit, who has experienced decline in social status since 1989, revealed her difficulties in coping with the recent changes in the city. She has largely withdrawn from Budapest as shops that once allowed for a fragile sense of inclusion to society have became too expensive for her.

The narratives discussed suggested that both class (as a market position that affects people's life-chances) and status (as the perceived hierarchy between social groups discernible by their consumption habits) (*cf.* Chan and Goldthorpe 2007, Weber 1961) have become more important recently. As a result of post 1989 insecurities of income and employment, the preoccupation with status has become a dominant theme for many Budapesters, and as such it deeply affects their relationship with the city and their sense of belonging to it (*cf.* Bukodi 2007b, Demszky 1998, Galasi 1998, Ladányi and Szelényi 1998). While status and class are well established concepts for describing modern societies, the ways in which they manifested themselves in narratives of Budapest revealed that they have distinctly local

overtones that are associated with the particular historical and political context of Budapest, Hungary and Eastern Europe.

Chapter 5 discussed the significance of memory to urban narratives. It argued that there is a dependent relationship between memory and place that derives from the fact that experience itself is necessarily emplaced (cf. Casey 1996, Merleau-Ponty 2002). That is, every single event that forms part of a narrative has its own setting that stages it. The three narratives discussed showed how memory and place reinforce each other, and grounded the act of remembering in the particular setting of Budapest. The narrative of Lea, who survived deportation to Auschwitz, revealed how the memory of a single traumatic experience can inform a person's relationship with the city, which, in the given example, becomes a site for stabilising a damaged identity. Helén's narrative provided a less extreme example for how memory functions to unlock the meaning of the city (cf. Casey 1987, de Certeau 1988, Halbwachs 1992, Tonkiss 2005). Her joyful engagement in the activities of consumption has helped her to gradually overwrite the memories of her deprived youth. Finally, the narrative of Vera, who left Budapest during the 1956 uprising, showed how the wish to cherish one's memories can be the reason for returning to certain places anew.

The chapter then addressed the remembering and forgetting of the socialist past. It briefly reconstructed the recent symbolic transformations of Budapest's public realm (cf. Bodnár 2001, Kovács 2001, Rév 1995), and argued that these have had an effect on contemporary narratives of the city. During times of accelerated urban change remembrance seems to lose its well-established modalities, and the relationship between memory, narrative and place can become problematic (cf. Boyer 1994, Curtis 2001, Halbwachs 1992). It may become difficult to enact narratives, as the places supportive of them alter or disappear. New places appear, but people may not know how to make them one with their ongoing lives. Memories may become incommunicable to others, as the actual sites of perception and enactment fade over time.

The thesis then looked at the role of the city in affecting narrative subjectivity. The first part of Chapter 6 addressed the city as a site of weak social control and the related increase of individual freedom (cf. Simmel 1995, Wirth 1995). In this context, I discussed three narratives: Ádám's, who emphasised the aspect of individual freedom in the city while strongly rejecting any form of social control as associated with life in small towns; András's, who contrasted the lack of accountability for one's actions in Budapest with the warmth of the community in the small town of Visegrád, and expressed sympathy for both; finally,

Márta's narrative revealed how the complexity of urban life can lead to withdrawal from, and indifference to the city (*cf.* Simmel 1995).

In making a phenomenological argument on the mutual constitution of body and place, the second part of the chapter looked at the interplay between urban form and the lived body (*cf.* Borden 2001b, Casey 1996, Lefebvre 1991, Merleau-Ponty 2002). It sought to reconstruct how places and bodies mutually constitute each other (Casey), and how the senses are involved in this task to changing extents (*cf.* Basso 1996, Feld 1996, Lefebvre 1991, Simmel 1997b). The chapter presented narrative accounts of sensing places in Budapest, and revealed how the pleasures caused by the stimulation of the senses can at times turn people outward and encourage them to engage with the city and with strangers whom they otherwise would meet with indifference (*cf.* Sennett 1990).

Chapter 6 concluded with a discussion of four different experiences in Heroes Square. It revealed, on the one hand, the power of place to shape narratives, but showed, on the other, that urban experiences are not the product of place but occur at the intersection of place, the body, memory, and the social realm. This became obvious in the discussion of a number of accounts of unpleasant encounters with strangers in the public realm of Budapest, which could only be explained by taking into account respondents' social status, religious faith, memories, and such like.

Chapter 7 revealed the distinctly emotional dimension of the urban experience. Accounts of a sense of belonging – or its opposite: a sense of displacement – permeated, and in some cases dominated, every narrative of Budapest, and the thesis therefore attempted to theorise urban narratives as acts of home-making in the city (*cf.* Basso 1996; Bell 1999; Butler 1993 and 1999; Casey 1987; Leach 2002). The process of becoming familiar with Budapest, and of eventually experiencing a sense of belonging to it, was discussed along the narratives of Rita and Márta who both moved to Budapest approximately two years prior to interview, yet whose lives have followed different trajectories since then: while Rita quickly conquered Budapest for herself and now feels more at home there than in her home village, Márta has failed to develop a positive attitude towards the city. Her narrative revealed that familiarity with the city does not necessarily lead to a sense of belonging over time. This suggests that in order for familiarity to turn into a sense of belonging, one must have a good reason for being in the city and pursue narratives that one strongly identifies with. By comparison, Rita has developed a strong sense of belonging to Budapest, despite the fact that she knows little about it. This suggests that a sense of belonging to the city sometimes

emerges before one becomes familiar with it, indeed before one finds a language grown out of personal experience for describing the city.

Chapter 7 revealed that respondents' sense of belonging to Budapest depends on their more or less successful identification with aspects of urban life (cf. Leach 2002, Mitzscherlich 1997, Pile 1996 and 2005), and suggested that a sense of belonging is never complete or long-lasting, but rather fragile and threatened by its opposite: displacement. This became obvious as the chapter discussed accounts of Budapest's transformation since 1989. Many interviewees were challenged by the recent changes of Budapest, and the chapter reconstructed narrative strategies for coping with this.

The importance of 1989

The collapse of the socialist regime and the subsequent advent of a market-driven economy led to a number of changes in the Hungarian capital. The thesis acknowledged this fact by sketching the cornerstones of Budapest's recent structural transformations, such as the privatisation of the housing stock; uneven restoration of the inner city led by the interests of private capital; gentrification of the inner city; polarisation of places of consumption into large and expensive Western style shopping centres and second hand shops and cheap Chinese outlets; increase in poverty, social inequalities and status insecurities; and related social polarisation of urban space (cf. Andorka and Spéder 2001, Bodnár 2001, Galasi 1998, Lichtenberger 1995, Mozer 2006, Smith 1996, Szabó 2001). The thesis also reconstructed aspects of Budapest's symbolic transformations, such as the purification of the public realm from vestiges of socialism (best illustrated by the renaming of streets and removal of statues; see Búza *et al.* 1998, Kasza 1999, Kovács 2003); the revitalisation of images of the nineteenth century bourgeois city (Szabó 2001); the marketing of the coffee house culture (cf. Erki 1995, Gyáni 1996, Saly 2005, Vadas 1996, Zeke 1996); and a more general spectacularisation of urban life.

While many of these structural and symbolic transformations are obvious, the answer to the question as to how these changes have affected everyday narratives of Budapest is less straightforward. First of all, the thesis revealed that the events of 1989 (and other historical events such as the 1956 uprising, and Hungary joining the EU in 2004) are largely absent from contemporary narratives of Budapest (cf. Vajda 2008). There is a surprising silence of narratives when it comes to the recent change of the political and economic regime. However, this does not prove the events of 1989 irrelevant; rather, it reveals that

lived experience operates within its own timelines. Everyday narratives, the findings of the study suggest, do not focus on moments when history is written, but adapt gradually to subsequent transformations of the city (cf. Gyáni 1995, Lüdtke 1995).

Interviewees' examples of urban changes included the increase in poverty and decay, sometimes seen to impede the enjoyment of the nineteenth century urban fabric; the increase of speed and aggressiveness in the city; newly erected Western-style shopping centres that many interviewees rejected for obstructing the historic character of the inner city; relief over the disappearance of socialist aesthetics; discontent and even disgust over workers, gypsies and homeless people, who some interviewees perceived as contesting their sense of ownership and safety in public spaces; the disappearance of affordable shops and their replacement with cheap Chinese outlets; and difficulties in coping with the complexities of the new commodity world.

In conclusion, the scale and speed of recent urban changes have contested the relationship between narrative and place in various ways. The thesis revealed, for example, the increasing significance of social status as a dominant category of the urban experience, and suggested that individuals' preoccupation with status may represent a narrative strategy for coping with social inequalities, economic insecurities, and the accompanying polarisation of urban space. The narratives discussed also revealed that the relationship between memory and the built environment has become problematic in many respect, as narratives have been challenged by the change of places once supportive of them. Melancholia for a disappearing city, and estrangement from the contemporary one, may be regarded as symptoms of individuals' attempts to re-define their relationship with Budapest. Finally, the narratives discussed revealed that urban changes have contested individuals' sense of being at home in the city. Feelings of belonging and displacement may be companions to the urban experience in general; feelings of the latter type, however, seem to prevail in contemporary narratives of Budapest.

However, the thesis also revealed that not all aspects of the urban experience have changed since 1989. The continuity of one's principle attitude to commodities, and the resistance of certain memories to urban change are examples of this. These continuities seem to have mitigated the effect of Budapest's recent transformations on narrative urban subjectivity.

Having summarised the aspects and some of the themes that the study identified, the next section looks at the relationship between aspects and themes from the point of view of subjective experience.

The wholeness of the urban experience

Chapter 2 suggested distinguishing between *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity and *themes* that govern individuals' narratives of Budapest. While this distinction was helpful in structuring the thesis (each aspect was discussed in a separate chapter, and each chapter devoted separate sections to individual themes), it is important to note that aspects and themes are categories of analysis, rather than of everyday experience. Urban narratives connect urban phenomena meaningfully, but it is unlikely that people will reflect upon the fact that their narratives could reveal something about their sense of belonging to a social collectivity (to name one possible aspect), or about their ways of coping with Budapest's recent change (to name one possible theme). Indeed, to regard belonging to a social collectivity as an *aspect* of narrative urban subjectivity, and coping with urban change as a narrative *theme*, already represents an act of abstraction on behalf of the researcher.

Every narrative discussed throughout the thesis carried imprints of its time and place: narrative themes were inseparable from the city of Budapest and could not be told exactly in the same way anywhere else. At the same time, every narrative carried imprints of aspects that are more general: social collectivities or personal memories may be uniquely place-bound, but people's narratives will always be affected by their belonging to (or exclusion from) one or the other social collectivity, or by their personal memories, regardless of what these may refer to.

Just as aspects and themes are categories of analysis rather than of experience, one needs to be careful not to oversimplify individuals' urban experiences by regarding these as one-dimensional, that is, as being subsumable to one single aspect or theme. Although a narrative may be dominated by one aspect or theme, other aspects and themes also usually come into play. As Fincher and Jacobs (1998b: 5) note, 'identity as reducible to one attribute is contrary to our current understanding of identity as multiply and variably positioned'. Narratives may be informed by, say, a person's sense of class and nation simultaneously. For Tamás (to take but one example from the study), Christianity, the Hungarian nation, and its history become alive within the bourgeois lifestyle and its preference for high-brow

culture. When he enters a church, his love of culture, history and religion inform his experience simultaneously.

Aspects of narrative urban subjectivity do not represent distinct spheres of experiencing, regardless of the fact that for analytical purposes one may discuss each aspect on its own. For example, it is not the case that some urban narratives are just affected by individuals' personal memories, while others are affected by urban design only. Rather, aspects such as one's sense of belonging to social collectivities, one's memories, the forms and uses of the city, and one's sense of having a home in it, come together to jointly shape a narrative. They *simultaneously* affect every single moment of the urban experience. In crossing Heroes Square, for example, Éva's body, her memories of previous visits with her father, her identification with nationality and the bourgeois lifestyle, and the design of the Square are present simultaneously. These aspects jointly shape her narrative, and from the point of view of her experience, they 'enter into a deconstructive meltdown – or more exactly, they are seen to have been nondiscontinuous to begin with' (Casey 1996: 36). One could even say that aspects of narrative urban subjectivity not only jointly shape the urban experience, but also mutually refer to each other. Memories connect with place (and vice versa), places connect to the lived body (and vice versa), the lived body connects with social collectivities (and vice versa), and so forth.

On the basis of narrative themes and aspects identified throughout the thesis, and their relationship to each other, a number of suggestions for future research can be made.

Directions for future research

The present study was distinctly explorative in character. It sought to identify key *aspects* of narrative urban subjectivity, and important *themes* that govern contemporary narratives of Budapest. Both goals were pursued with the largest possible degree of openness towards findings. That is, apart from a theoretical and methodological decision in favour of narratives, no attempts were made to pre-select a certain aspect or theme for analysis. As an unavoidable consequence of such an open approach to the field, the findings of the study are diverse; some of them are derived from one or two cases only. This means that more research would be needed to further explore many of the issues raised. The following three paragraphs make some suggestions for the future study of narratives of Budapest; for complementary methods worth considering when studying urban narratives in general; and for theorising narrative urban subjectivity.

With regards to contemporary narratives of Budapest, two topics seem particularly promising for further exploration: memories of socialism and individuals' sense of social class or status. Both themes were important for understanding almost half the narratives included in the sample, and an exclusive focus on any of these would allow a systematic consideration of issues such as individuals' age, gender, ethnicity or political attitudes; their social and economic background, place of origin, ways of using urban space, habits of consumption, and other aspects of their life-world (such as family or work). More research would be needed to understand how these and other issues combine with urban change to jointly produce individuals' urban experiences, including their strategies for coping with change, their senses of belonging or displacement to the city, and such like. It is likely that further research would enhance our understanding of the impact of social class and status on urban narratives in Budapest more than the present study can. Similarly, a more complex picture of the crisis of memory (*cf.* Chapter 5) and its impact on the urban experience has yet to be drawn, including the perduringness of narratives adopted under socialism and enacted in contemporary Budapest.

With regards to methodology, the application of complementary research methods could help explore in more depth some of the issues that inform narrative urban subjectivity. The chosen method of in-depth interviews with a narrative core was very successful in this respect, as it helped identify a number of themes and aspects, many of which were only vaguely known before conducting the study, or not anticipated at all. Additional ethnographic methods such as participant observations and photography, however, could further improve our understanding of certain issues, such as interactions in public, or the relation of the body and its movements to place (and the infiltration of this relationship with notions of gender, age, religiosity, social class and status). In this way, the more immediate aspects of urban narratives – the decisive and playful moments of the *here and now* that sustain narratives and often alter their trajectories (*cf.* Jones 2007) – could be made accessible to analysis to a larger extent than was possible in this thesis.

Finally, the study allows us to draw some general conclusions with regard to theorising urban subjectivity. The discussion of narratives of Budapest suggested that it is problematic to draw a sharp distinction between the different aspects and themes that govern narratives. No doubt, such distinctions are useful tools of analysis and discussion, but at the same time they seem to misrepresent individuals' urban experiences, which are more holistic and do not submit easily to conceptual categories. The wholeness of the urban experi-

ence was anticipated in Chapter 1, and the subsequent discussion of narratives throughout the thesis provided a powerful and empirically grounded insight into this. The findings of the study show that the urban experience is located at the *intersection* of the body, the social, the material, the spatial, the personal and the emotional. It is mutually constituted by these aspects, yet irreducible to any single of them. The *lieu* of the urban experience has no sharp coordinates; rather, it blurs into a complex force field opened up and sustained by the above aspects. This complexity should be acknowledged when studying and theorising any aspect of the urban experience, for example by adapting multi-conceptual and cross-disciplinary approaches to the field.[82]

The imagined solidity of the city

The narratives presented throughout the thesis show a remarkable variety in terms of individuals' urban experiences. Narratives turn out differently, dependent on one's social and biographical background, small and large-scale plans, memories of the city and sense of belonging to it, and the design and uses of places that stage one's life. As we have seen, narratives create their specific landscapes of the city, which are not only physical, but also symbolic and emotional. Budapest means something different when blended with a person's sense of social status, as opposed to being blended with a sense of religiosity or nationality. Some narratives almost entirely lack references to social collectivities and are more affected by key biographical events or personal memories. Despite the fact that some themes recur in a number of narratives, it is nevertheless obvious that there is no meta-narrative of Budapest. At times, narratives differed so much from each other that I could hardly believe that respondents were talking about the same city. *Did* they in fact talk about the same city?

One issue that has increasingly captivated me in the course of this project was to see how people hold on to their selective views of the city, and how they take it for granted that Budapest indeed exists in exactly the manner as they perceive it. This phenomenon is

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[82] Possible issues worth further exploration are (without any claims to completeness): the links between urban narratives and self-identity (*cf.* Keupp et al. 1999, Kraus 1996); the relationship between narrating and dreaming or desiring (*cf.* Pile 2005, and the work of Benjamin in general); the anchorage of the "external" city within the "internal" space of the psyche, and the associated question as to how *narrating* the urban relates to *attachment* to the city (*cf.* Bowlby 1984, Honneth 1996 and 2003, Leach 2002, Loewald 1986, Pile 1996, 2001 and 2005, Winnicott 1971a and 1971b); and the phenomenological foundations of narrativity (including the theoretical links between phenomenology and narrative theory). The study of any of these aspects requires a conscious move beyond the boundaries of sociology, and towards disciplines such as psychology, social psychology, psychoanalytical object relation theory or philosophy.

of course well illuminated by Husserl's (1976) concept of the *natural attitude*, but it was nevertheless exciting to see this attitude at work. People carry their identifications with class, status, nation or religion (or any other social collectivity), as well as their personal memories and subjective plans, into the city by using its spaces selectively; associating places and activities with one collective or the other; welcoming certain aspects of urban change while rejecting others, or by relating to strangers in certain ways (see Chapter 4). Yet by carrying these meaningful distinctions into the city, people also *construct* the city as a place of class, status, nation, religion or memory. A bourgeois narrative, for example, depends on a certain urban environment to unfold, yet it also *creates* that environment as an environment that 'appears as what it is taken for, and exists in the way it appears' (Waldenfels 1992: 19). A bourgeois narrative conceives of its places as *bourgeois places*.[83] Similarly, personal memories necessarily involve places that staged the events of one's life, yet they also *create* those places as *places of memory*.

Paradoxically, a phenomenon as ephemeral as a narrative – unfolding in time and seldom leaving visible traces in the city – relies upon places imagined as being solid, in the sense that doubts about their identity barely arise. Yet this solidity does not endure close scrutiny: 'Human constructions par excellence, places consist in what gets made of them – in anything and everything they are taken to be – and their disembodied voices, immanent though inaudible, are merely those of people speaking silently to themselves' (Basso 1996: 56; see also Leach 2002: 305–6, Merleau-Ponty 2002: 82–3; Prechtl 2006: 72–6).

Yet if solidity is not the quality of the city but the product of imagination, what is then the *actual* nature of the city? Certainly, the city then would need to be seen as resembling a dream object that may vividly appear to be solid and real, while in fact it is not. Just as objects in a dream seem to be solid and real during sleep, but then dissolve and disappear as soon as one wakes up, in the same way we might see the solidity of the city as the effect of imagination rather than as being inherent in the city. Understood in this way, we may conceive of the city *negatively*, as the lack or absence of the solid city that we normally see.

If the city lacks the solidity commonly attributed to it, then the accountability of the human subject for his or her urban experiences cannot be overestimated.

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[83] This issue has been theorised by Bourdieu whose concept of *doxa* (Bourdieu 1990: 66–8) in some respect resembles Husserl's concept of the *natural attitude* (see Murphy and Throop 2002, Myles 2004).

Map 1: Buda, Pest and Óbuda 1841.

Map 2: Budapest around 1890.
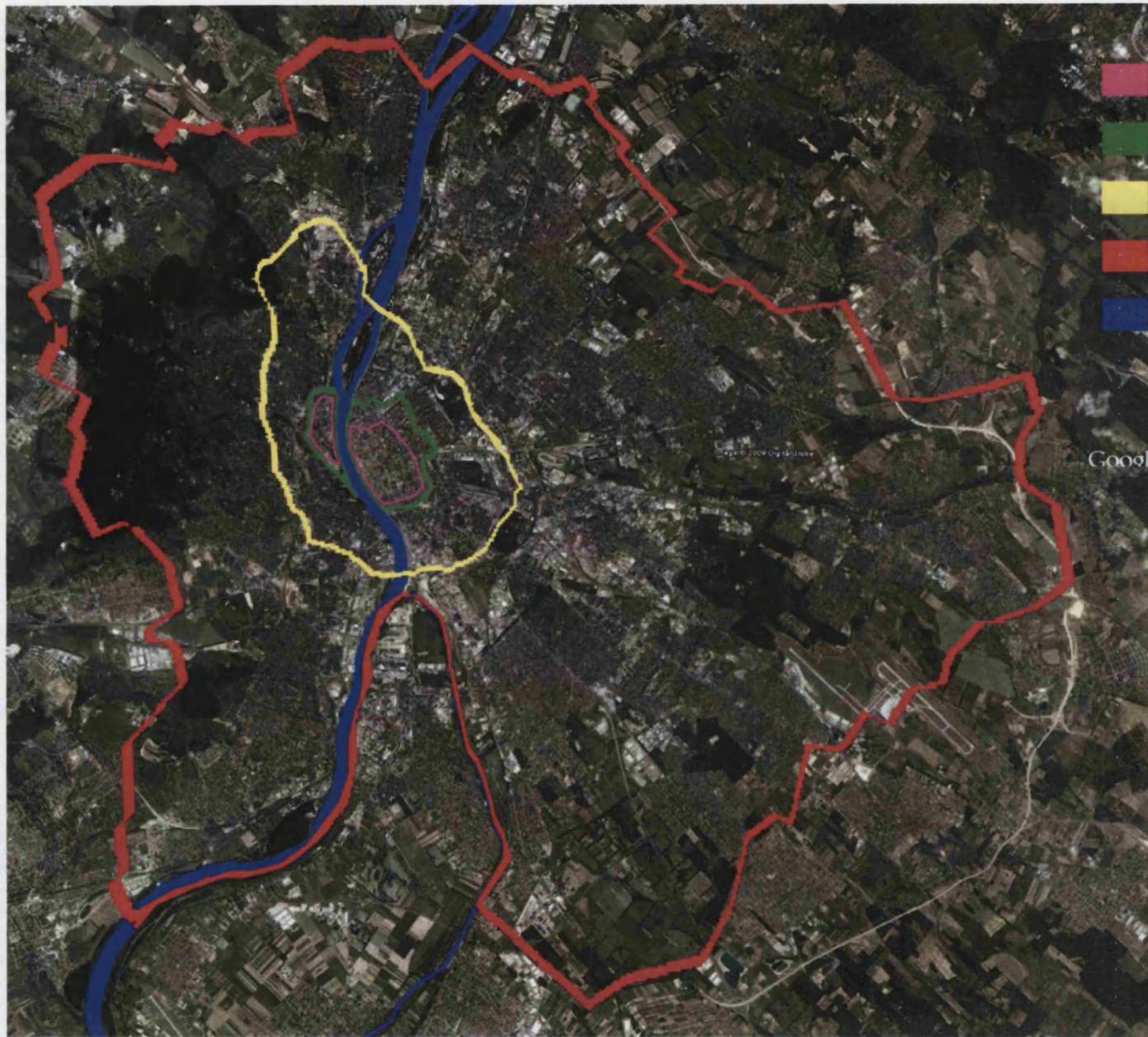
Buda and Pest 1840

Buda and Pest 1870

Budapest 1910

Budapest today

River Danube

Map 3: The growth of
Budapest between 1840 and
today.

I   Várkerület
II   [District has no name]
III   Óbuda-Békásmegyer
IV   Újpest
V   Belváros-Lipótváros
VI   Theresatown
VII   Erzsébetváros
VIII   Józsefváros
IX   Ferencváros
X   Kőbánya
XI   Újbuda
XII   Hegyvidék
XIII   [District has no name]
XIV   Zugló
XV   [District has no name]
XVI   [District has no name]
XVII   [District has no name]
XVIII   Pestszentlőrinc-Pestszentimre
XIX   Kispest
XX   Pesterzsébet
XXI   Csepel
XXII   Budafok-Tétény
XXIII   Soroksár

Map 4: The districts of Budapest today.
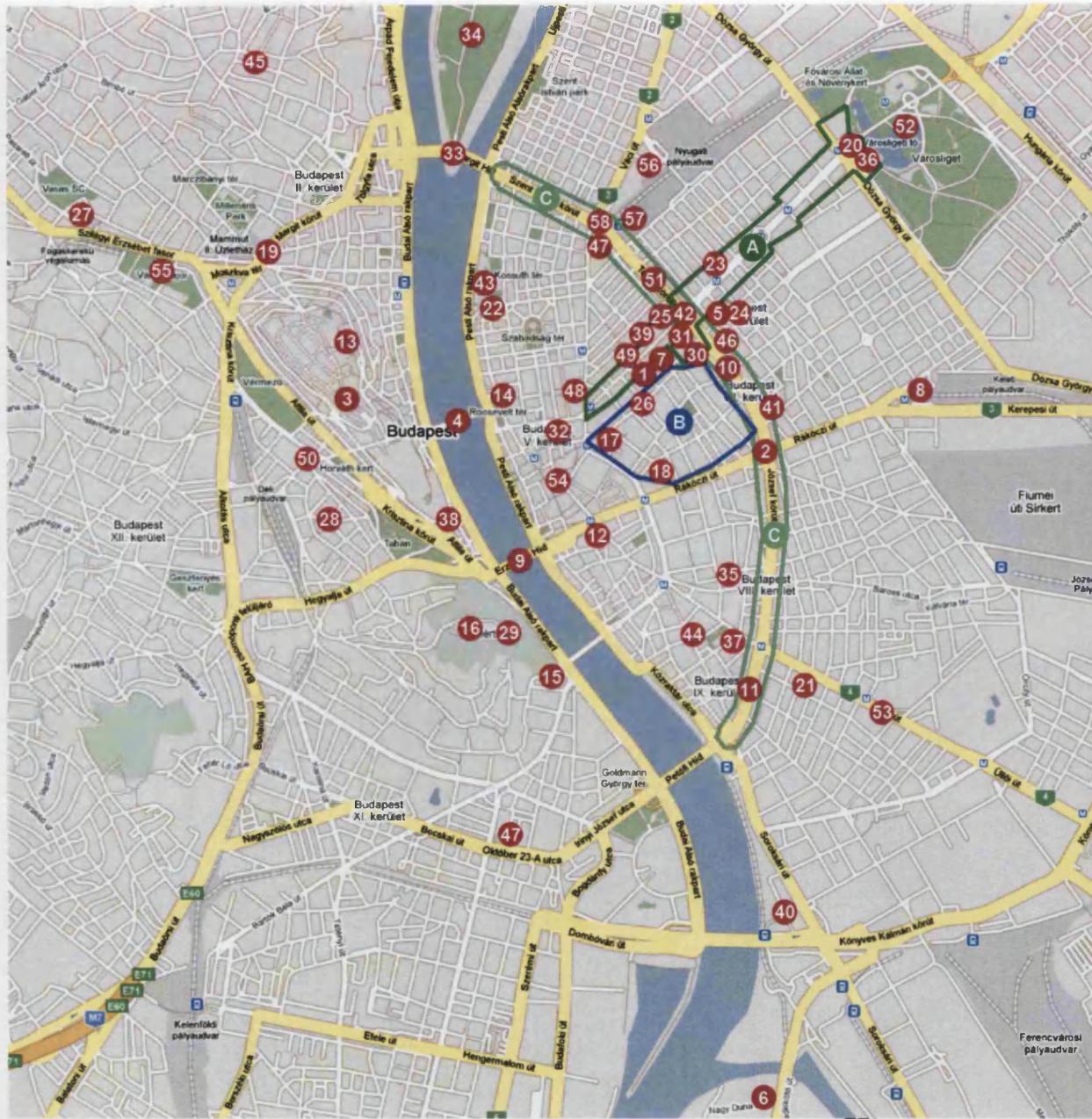
KEY TO NUMBERS AND LETTERS

A. Andrássy Boulevard with UNESCO world heritage site
B. Jewish Quarter
C. Körút [Ringstraße]

1.	Ballet Institute	30.	Liszt Music Academy
2.	Blaha Square	31.	Liszt Square
3.	Castle and King's Palace	32.	Luxury department store
4.	Chain Bridge	33.	Margaret Bridge
5.	Csengeri Market	34.	Margaret Bridge
6.	Csepel Island	35.	Mikszáth Street
7.	Fashion Hall	36.	Museum of Fine Arts
8.	Eastern Railway Station	37.	Museum of Industrial History
9.	Elisabeth Bridge	38.	Museum of Medical History
10.	Elisabeth Körút	39.	Nagymezö Street
11.	Ferenc Körut	40.	National Theatre
12.	Ferenciek Square	41.	New York coffee house
13.	Fisher's Spire	42.	Oktogon Square
14.	Four Seasons Hotel	43.	Parliament
15.	Gellért Spa and Hotel	44.	Ráday Street
16.	Gellért Hill	45.	Rose Hill
17.	Gozsdu courtyards	46.	Royal Hotel
18.	Great Synagogue	47.	Skála department store
19.	Hay Square	48.	St.Stephan Basilica
20.	Heroes Square	49.	State Opera
21.	Holocaust Museum	50.	Szilágyi secondary school
22.	House of Technics	51.	Teresa Körút
23.	House of Terror	52.	Town Park
24.	Hunyadi Square	53.	Üllöi Street
25.	Jókai Square	54.	Váci Street
26.	King Street	55.	Városmajor
27.	Körszálló Hotel	56.	Westend Shopping Center
28.	Krisztinatown	57.	Western Railway Station
29.	Liberation Memorial	58.	Western Square

Map 5:
Main destinations in central Budapest mentioned in Chapters 3 to 7.

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