

**THE SOCIAL LIFE OF RUINS:
URBAN EXPLORATION OF ABANDONED SPACES
IN BUDAPEST**

By
Kata Varsányi

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisors:
Prof. Daniel Monterescu
Prof. Vlad Naumescu

Budapest, Hungary

2011

Acknowledgements

To all my explorer-minded friends, informants and professors,
who took the time to talk to me, listen to me and go exploring with me,
and whose insight, support and enthusiasm would have deserved a better thesis.

Abstract

This paper focuses on the transitory, liminal state of urban buildings that have lost their functions but have not been assigned a new one to, i.e. abandoned architectural sites after and before being used. It does not aspire to contribute to the multilayered and multidisciplinary research dealing with the urban revitalization processes, but to present ethnographically the groups of people attracted to the abandoned spaces precisely due to their transitory nature. The paper aims to find the motivation behind such interest and to analyze it within / against their own discourse.

I will observe methods and movements in Budapest that intend to rediscover the city at / through the above mentioned derelict spots, by different means: the practice of individual urban explorers, who regularly venture into the unseen and often off-limits parts of the city, sharing their stories with the public on blogs and forums; the "urban walks" organised by the Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre; and people who do not belong to either group but occasionally set out to discover hidden spots of the urban landscape.

Based on interviews, participant observation, and the analysis of the online interfaces of the groups, the paper argues that all types of this broadly understood urban exploration can be seen as 'tactics' in the de Certeau-ian sense, and as such, these short, temporary visits to abandoned spaces that have lost the original strategic function offer the possibility, the freedom and the anti-structure to experience the city and its past from a new perspective. The practice of urban exploration raises questions concerning (self-) conscious urban citizenship (right to the city), patrimony, legality, and social memory.

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Literature review	4
3. Conceptual framework.....	9
3.1. Budapest.....	10
3.2. Abandoned urban spaces.....	13
3.3. Urban exploration.....	16
4. Strategic answers	21
5. Tactical answers: urban explorations	26
5.1. Urbex	26
5.2. Urban Walks	42
5.3. Individual tactics.....	52
6. Conclusion.....	55
7. Bibliography	56

1. Introduction

Abandoned. Urban. Spaces.

Buildings, facilities in the city that once possessed functions, were related to humans and human actions, were made *places*, but no longer are. They are left empty: they are no longer in use. These decaying, empty buildings (may they be industrial facilities on the outskirts, or tenement houses in the inner city) are often considered to be scars in the urban landscape, especially by city planners. They are “matter out of place” using Mary Douglas’ term. They stand out, do not fit in. They cannot be defined. They cannot be assigned a meaning. One cannot make sense of them, therefore feels the urgent need to re-use them, demolish them, or simply turn a blind eye to them. They are also scars on the purist, sanitized aesthetics, or aestheticized cityscape. Despite my initial reservation about the “stigmatizing” term *scar*, I have to admit it is appropriate. These abandoned buildings are indeed scars on the skin of the city, traces of wounds, gaps on the urban surface that allow us to get an insight to what is underneath, to what the essentials are like. The often ruinous edifices are “tears in the spatiotemporal fabric” (Dawdy 2010: 777); they are out of space and time: they are out of the cleanly ordered structures of space and time. “Every street is precipitous” writes Walter Benjamin (1999:416), leaning downward to a “vanished time”, to a collective past: derelict buildings might also lead us to the suppressed, the hidden. “These seemingly sleepy, old-fashioned things, defaced houses, closed-down factories ... bust forth within the modernist, massive, homogenous city like *slips of the tongue from an unknown, perhaps unconscious, language*. They surprise. (De Certeau: 1998:133, emphasis mine)

This paper focuses on people who are aware of and attracted to such buildings; who set out to explore the city, even beneath the seamless surface, through the scars. And this is what unites them, however different their motivations and methods may be. I argue that the various means of *urban exploration*, in a broad sense, are all tactics, in a de Certeau-ian sense,

to get to know, signify and thus live in the city. Three tracks will be presented that all have the same destination, namely derelict edifices in Budapest: from individual urban explorers (“urbexers”), who create blogs and document their adventures to off-limit sites with a high degree of self-awareness, to occasional ruin-gazers, through the example of organised and guided tours to the buildings.

The discussed subcases of urban exploration in the Hungarian capital 20 years after the transition are seen as tactical responses to the abandoned edifices that testify to historical/social changes. “Society can be judged as much by what it abandons as by what it builds.” (Dunlop 2009) And also by how it/its citizens deal with abandonment, and through that with the historical legacy reflected in the built environment. Based on its findings the paper argues that Budapest-based urban explorers re-signify the spaces they visit, also transforming them to alternative sites of memory. They create new narratives of the city, they make it habitable.

The data were mainly obtained from in-depth interviews with one representative of each category; gathered through “participant observation” (joining them on their trips to the field) and via the materials they share on the internet (websites, blogs, forums).

The structure of the present work will follow this outline. After a brief review of the relevant literature, in chapter 3 I will set the context and the conceptual framework of the paper by defining and elaborating on the three main concepts expressed in the subtitle. That is, the contextualization of the field (Budapest) is followed by the sections about the terms ‘abandoned urban spaces’ and ‘urban exploration’, also introducing and showing the applicability of the basic theoretical concepts (Turner’s liminality and de Certeau’s tactics, respectively). Before the core chapter that presents the tactical acts of urban exploration, Chapter 4 demonstrates some strategic answers given to the presence of derelict buildings in Budapest. These are contrasted with the heterogeneous tactical methods in chapter 5,

presenting and analysing the three subcases: urbex (in the strict sense); organised urban walks; and individual initiatives. A section on the conclusions and limitations of the study closes the paper, with suggestions to future research.

2. Literature review

*“... a surge of interest by both artists and scholars in ruins...
these are the intellectual equivalents of the UrbEx movement”*
Dawdy 2010:770

The dereliction of the built urban environment frequently evokes the image of ruins. Since “to be seduced by the beauty of ruins is an experience as inescapable as it is old” (Hell, Schönle 2010:2), writings on (the contemplation of) ruins abound, from the Renaissance through the romantic period, giving inspiration to various art forms. The fascination with ruins is partly due to their dual/ambiguous nature, their dialectic between past and present, culture and nature, absence and presence, fragment and whole. Their mere existence evokes reflections about history and melancholy, however, according to Simmel there is more to the “general fascination with decay and decadence”, “beyond what is merely negative and degrading”: “purpose and accident, nature and spirit, past and present here resolve the tension of their contrast –or, rather, preserving this tension, they lead to a unity of external image and internal effect. It is as though a segment of existence must collapse before it can become unresistant to all currents and powers coming from all corners of reality.” (Wolff 1959: 266)

What is the case with the ruins of modernity?

Dawdy (2010) connects the modern experience of accelerating time, the frequent and fast changes with the emergence of “young ruins”, referring to the notion of ‘creative destruction’(Marx, Harvey), i.e. “the paradox of rapid destruction inherent in the productivity of capitalism” (Munn, as quoted in Dawdy 2010:770). The built environment adapts to alterations more slowly – to which these left behind edifices testify, in ever growing numbers. “They may appear, disappear, and reappear in rapid succession, in an uneven rhythm, or persist far beyond their original use life, but ruins are a defining feature of the urban

landscape”, as Dawdy sees it (2010:762). Their presence has triggered critical (multidisciplinary) reflection, which she calls ‘the ruin revival’. In her opinion it “indexes an emerging fixation on time itself” (2010:762). One element of this intellectual surge could be the volume precisely entitled *Ruins of Modernity*. The collection includes essays that focus on different aspects of ruins through examples from a wide geographical range, showing how multifaceted and complex the term is. Or broad. Or, “uniquely ill-defined”, according to the introduction by the editors. The questions they raise are indeed important and thought-provoking:

Where does the ruin start and when does it end? Is a well-preserved but empty building already a ruin because it has lost its practical and social function? And, at the other end of the spectrum, does rubble still classify as ruin? More broadly, is ruin an object or a process? ... Does the ruin evoke nostalgia for the past; or shame over it? Faith in future progress? The breakdown of utopia? (Hell, Schönle 2010: 6)

However, Hell and Schönle give an explanation to the wide range of interpretations by referring to an underlying feature of ruins (which, also, justifies the discussion of ruins on a paper about abandoned, functionless urban buildings): “the ruin is a ruin precisely because it seems to have lost its function or meaning in the present, while retaining a suggestive, unstable semantic potential... the ruin functions as a uniquely flexible and productive trope for modernity’s self-awareness.” (2010:6)

I shall return to this crucial feature of ruins (also extremely relevant regarding the present paper) after another important point that was raised by Bradley L. Garrett in his review on *Ruins of Modernity*. Although the introduction of that volume asserts that “the beholder defines the ruin” (2010:7), the reviewer felt that the contributors to the collection looked at these objects with the “gaze of a passive theoretical spectator, observers lacking bodies, dissecting ruins metaphorically from the safe distance” (Garrett 2011:379). In his point of view, these essays like the majority of works on ruins (cf. Trigg 2006, Ginsberg 2004) represent the *grand discourse* exclusively; he misses “stories not about capital, empires,

name dropping, wars, and the production of history but about bodies in places and about places on the margins brought to centre” (Garrett 2011: 379). Such priority is given to local histories and personal engagement for example in the works of High and Lewis (2007), Edensor (2005a, 2005b, 2007), De Silvey (2006), Armstrong (2010) and Garrett himself (2010). *Corporate Wasteland* tells the story of North-American deindustrialization through personal narratives. Geographer Tim Edensor’s main focus is on industrial ruins too, advocating sensory engagement with them (2007). The material transience observed and experienced at abandoned rural homesteads is the main interest of both DeSilvey and Armstrong, who even proposed a “spectral ethnography”. Present paper is indebted to these works talking about “ruination as a place for different experiences and alternative representations; ruins as places of play ... unexpected memory, and encounters with the uncanny and the sensual” (Garrett 2011: 379).

The above mentioned “semantic instability of the ruins” (Hell and Schönle 2010:6), is also related to this: sensory engagement, personal re-signification of the ruins/ connected material forms is possible because of their emptiness as signifiers, “whose referents are long gone” (Armstrong 2010a:9). They are “semiotic vessels”, in Walter Benjamin’s terms who used it with regard to outmoded commodities, but ruins could be understood as their architectural equivalents, according to Dawdy (2010: 768), who also refers to them as *tears* in the fabric. De Certeau mentions cracks on “the surface of order ... punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning”, acknowledging at the same time that “it is a crack in the system that saturates places with signification” (1998:107&106). It is for the same reason that Edensor (2005b) considers ruins “alternative sites of memory”, where the “past” can be experienced through its materiality left behind, where involuntary memory may be stimulated. He contrasts this, personal form of memory with the externalized way of social remembering.

A shift (similar to Benjamin's look at the passages) is advocated by Pile (2005), "in order to get at some of the real (really operative) processes in city life, attention should be paid to those things that appear marginal, or discarded, or lost, or that have disappeared or are in the process of disappearance" – the epitome of *those* being ruins. This train of thoughts can evoke the centre-periphery dynamics. (Bringing the marginal to the focus (of public / personal attention) has already been referred to by Garrett earlier.)

"Does the ruin evoke nostalgia for the past; or shame over it?" Hell and Schönle's question is repeated now to present two different answers to it, triggered by the ruins' "potential vacuity of meaning". While Dawdy believes that by excavating the layers of ruins we often find what was "thought best forgotten" (2010:769), industrial archeology (lately) takes pride in its findings, classifying them as part of patrimony, through which they enter the heritage *industry*. (Orange 2008) The literature reviewed so far used international examples and background (mostly British and North-American), therefore an essential contextualization for the specific case of the paper will follow in the next chapter, for example on the relation of Budapest and de/industrialization.

What Garrett was missing from the papers of *Ruins of Modernity* were bodies in ruins – critical literature rarely deals with individual curiosity venturing to these spaces, as opposed to a *movement*. Urban exploration is an international movement, founded in the beginning of 1990s by Toronto-based Jeff Chapman (mostly known as Ninjalicious) who by giving this practice a name and media presence¹ created a worldwide dialogue among the (until then unaware) practitioners. Urban explorers, "urbexers", venture into the city's normally unseen (often off-limits) areas, i.e. not only into urban ruins (derelict edifices), but also into drains, metro tunnels, or rooftops, sometimes infiltrating to still functioning facilities too, which are,

¹ *Infiltration*: the zine about going places you are not supposed to go; also website, forums.
<http://www.infiltration.org/index.html>

however, with limited access. The often-cited Dawdy dubs urbexers as “underground flâneurs, kindred spirits to Walter Benjamin” and finds their movement a contemporary social phenomenon that signals “the archaeological turn” in popular culture (2010:767), an increasing interest in ruins and past temporalities (like the clockpunk scenes). Bradley L. Garrett, a practitioner and investigator of urban exploration highlights the aspects of urbex that are “inviting us to shift our gaze in new directions, to challenge convention and to think more critically about the practices of everyday life”, in addition to the personal connections to people and places urban exploration offers (2010:1459). In this article Garrett also provides a bibliography on and by urban explorers. One paper he refers to, Delyser (1999) focuses on the question of ‘authenticity’ with regard to heritage sites and ruins, comparing “cultural tourists” and urbexers. This theme also appears in *Corporate Wasteland*, where High and Lewis talk about urban explorers as tourists in search of authentic experience, fitting in the “larger phenomenon of ‘dark tourism’ (2007:42). They highlight the social distances that are traveled through at explorations to post/de-industrialized sites, since the majority of the urbexers does not come from a “blue-collar background”. As earlier, I have to remark here again that the literature reviewed does not reflect the current scene in Hungary. For example, as we shall see, the term ‘urban explorer’ arrived and began to spread in the Hungarian public awareness in the past years, definitely not being as popular/widely accepted to refer to it as tourism.

3. Conceptual framework

What I talk about when I talk about...

...the urban exploration of abandoned spaces in Budapest

This chapter will focus more on the specific case of the paper, presenting the context and the concepts into which it is embedded and to which it is indebted.

Even though the organisation/content of this section might appear haphazard, as it includes miscellaneous items ranging from historical contextualization to the setting of the theoretical framework, I considered essential to combine them into one chapter in order to introduce and clarify the most important terms and concepts used in the paper, at the same time. The basic notions are all referred to in the subtitle of the paper, which therefore will serve as a guideline/structuring principle here: this section is divided into three subchapters, following the three main ideas expressed in the subtitle (although in a reversed order). Accordingly, first I will historically contextualise the presence of the abandonment of built physical structures in Budapest. Then, I will present the terms generally used to describe abandoned urban spaces and explain why I opted for the adjective liminal, introducing Victor Turner's theory and its applicability to the present case. The last subchapter shall clarify the term urban exploration (the way it is understood in the paper), and show in what sense it can be considered a tactic, based on Michel de Certeau's theoretical distinction between strategies and tactics.

3.1. Budapest

Examining abandoned spaces and the tactical responses given to their presence in the case of Budapest needs historical contextualization with regard to changes in the urban structure and planning policies that contributed to the existence of these liminal areas.

The spatial and social structure of Budapest is still largely influenced by the results of the socialist urban policy. While extensive industrialization was promoted, housing problems began to be tackled in the 1960s by means of building housing estates on the outskirts, which coincided with the intentions to integrate the areas attached in 1950 forming Greater Budapest (Csanádi, Csizmady, Kocsis, Kőszeghy, Tomay 2010: 438). The tendency towards decentralization from the 1970s further contributed to the decline of the inner city residential areas, triggering the “block-rehabilitation” initiatives in the 1980s. The process of suburbanization after the transition has also resulted in the concentration of lower-income inhabitants in those areas, leaving some edifices in poor conditions, later derelict.

The areas that hosted large industrial production sites in Budapest until 1990 were focused at the main industrial-quarters basically localized in the middle of the 19th century (Kukely, Barta, Beluszky, Győri 2006: 59). Over time, and due to the urban sprawl, these sites became interior part of the city, creating homogeneous zones of industrial, military or railway-related functions. The substantial cut in these after the transition resulted in the almost 68 square kilometers of brownfields (abandoned or underused, mostly industrial facilities) in the so-called transition zone, stretching between the inner city and the suburbs. This means 13% of the territory of Budapest.

Dealing with (giving strategic answers to) these edifices/zones that went through a change of function/ condition and became derelict either in the inner city or in the transition zone was/is the task of urban planning, which was set in a new socio-economic environment

after the transition, too. Central, top-down decision making gave way to the policy formation of autonomous local governments. Also, while the most important actor used to be the central power, the objects of planning (urban areas, real estates) have become factors of the market (Csanádi, Csizmady, Kocsis, Kőszeghy, Tomay 2010: 368), introducing new interests and actors into the planning process, strengthening the private sector.

From 1991 onwards, different urban policies and reform concepts were formulated. The 1998 Urban Development Concept “was already conceptually different from its predecessors. It focused on the most problematic developmental sections of the city, listed possible programs, and specified needed development interventions in the four strategic zones” (Pallai 2004: 9) . (i) the inner city; (ii) the transition zone; (iii) the Northern twin cities; and (iv) the Southern logistic zone.

The “urban renewal” plans for the devalued inner city residential areas often tending towards segregation has frequently brought about gentrification in the 7th and 8th districts, however, after 2005 social rehabilitation plans were also proposed and realised (Magdolna Quarter Project) that lay emphasis on the integration of the original dwellers, too. Nevertheless, there revitalization of the inner city is far from completed.

The revitalization of the former industrial areas lacked comprehensive plans: some parts are rehabilitated, through spontaneous functional changes, but large territories are yet to be repurposed, they make up the so-called rust-belt (Kukely, Barta, Beluszky, Győri 2006: 58) – of liminal spaces. Some argue that due to the unplanned privatization process vast areas belong to too many minor owners that hinder comprehensive renewal strategies. In many cases even the property-relations are to be settled.

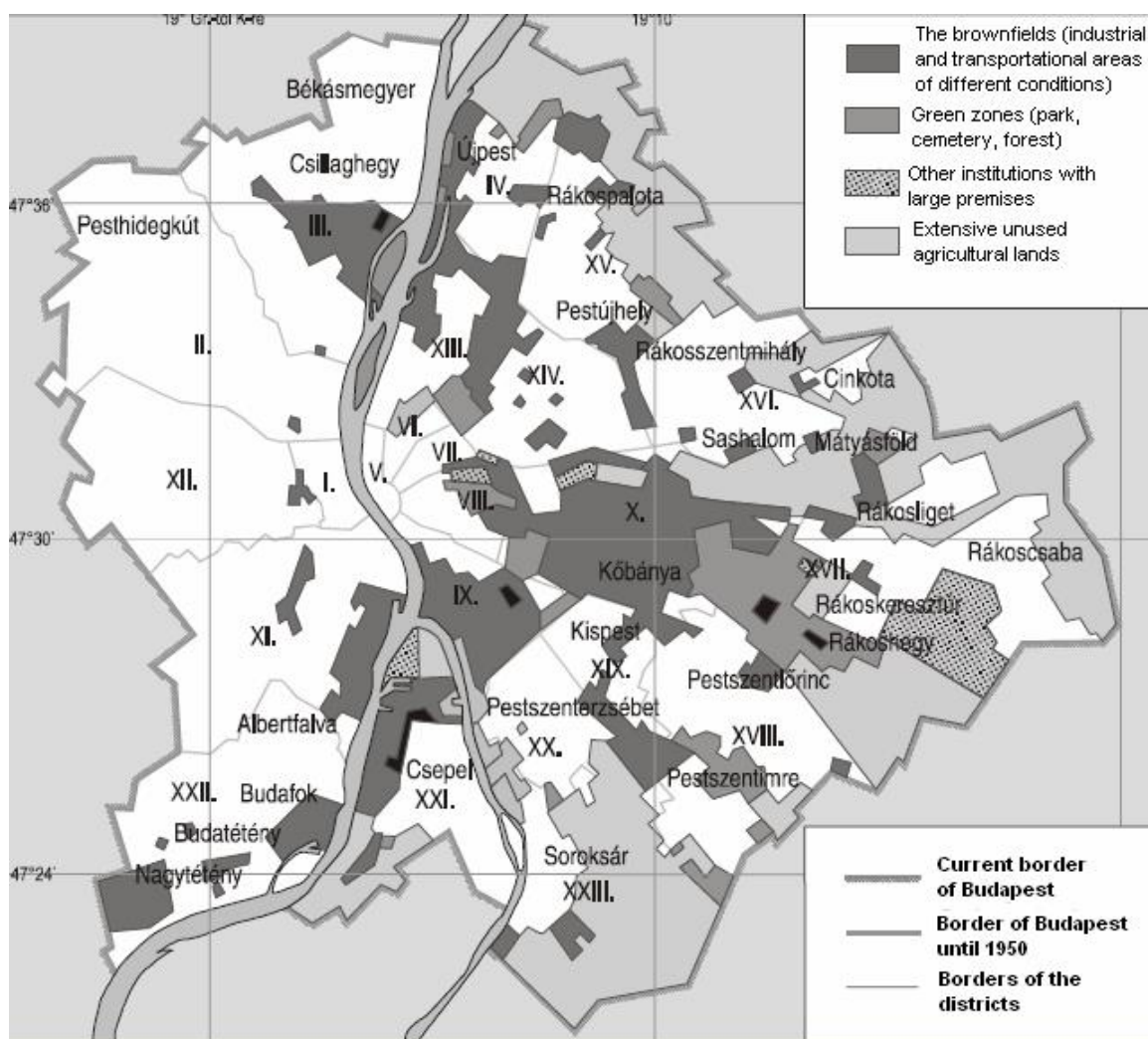


Figure 1. (Source: Kukely, Barta, Beluszky, Györi 2006)

The map in Figure 1 shows the brownfields of Budapest. Three main areas can be differentiated: the northern zone contains the earliest industrial parts of the capital in the 3rd, 4th, 13th, 15th, 16th districts (Óbuda, Angyalföld, Újpest). Due to good infrastructure, transport connections (Váci út, Szentendrei út) it has shown a change in its economic structure, shifting emphasis to services and residence. The Southern (outer Ferencváros, Csepel, Kelenföld) and Eastern (Kőbánya, Kispest) brownfields zones are slower in the re-structurisation process (Kukely, Barta, Beluszky, Györi 2006: 62), and facilities with large areas are left to decay - with the loss of their original function and for lack of a new one.

In conclusion we can say that the effects of the “creative destruction” process mentioned earlier, or more in particular, the dynamics of the post-socialist transformation have left their traces on the built environment of Budapest, providing “destinations” to the urban explorers both in the inner city and in the transition zone.

3.2. Abandoned urban spaces

The void cannot be earmarked ... because to name it is to claim it in some way.
Daskalakis 2001:124

First of all, a few words on the terminology. Abandoned urban spaces are referred to by various terms, each highlighting different aspects. Drawing upon the indeterminate status of these spaces, Gil M. Doron entitled an article of his (2007) “...badlands, blank space, border vacuums, brown fields, conceptual Nevada, Dead Zones, derelict areas, ellipsis spaces, empty places, free space, liminal spaces, nameless spaces, No Man’s Lands, polite spaces, post architectural zones, spaces of indeterminacy, spaces of uncertainty, smooth spaces, Tabula Rasa, Temporary Autonomous Zones, terrain vague, urban deserts, vacant lands, voids, white areas, Wasteland... SLOAPs²”: a list that he calls “a desperate attempt by the discourse to make sense of a certain type of space”. However, as we shall see, this *certain type of space* is at the crossroads/interest of different agents, disciplines, and therefore discourses. The above mentioned list mostly comes from that of architecture and urban planning. In the following I will present the most often used expressions in sociology and social anthropology, also indicating (and supporting) the one that describes the situation best in my opinion: liminal – which does not coincide with Doron’s preferred term *dead zones* (although he also applies it ironically, considering wasteland as a positive agent for urban sustainability).

² SLOAP stands for Space Left Over After Planning

Abandoned buildings are often referred to as *peripheral* spaces of the city, which does not necessarily and exclusively refer to geographical non-centrality. Rather, their status is a mixture of temporal, spatial, social and economic periphery, as they are not sites of the present, of mainstream social actions and movements. Peripheral spaces, in the sense the Chicago school conceptualised them, presuppose peripheral people, as the location in space would determine moral and social organization. The adjectives *peripheral* or *marginal* set these edifices in a situation defined by a centre, on various levels. As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, urban explorers' attention and their signifying practices can temporarily alter these relations, which contributes to the center-periphery dynamics.

However, to my mind the in-betweenness of these abandoned spaces appears more important, therefore I prefer using the term *liminal*, the way Victor Turner used it. Stemming from an examination of the functions and structures of Ndembu rituals, Turner (1977) highlighted the importance of the middle phase of rites of passage (van Gennep), the liminal one (after the separation, before the aggregation/re-incorporation). It is in this transitory period that the “change”, the acquisition of knowledge takes place; therefore the ritual subject has to leave the relatively stable state of *structure* and enter liminality, where the attributes are necessarily ambiguous, being “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial” (Turner 1977: 95). Considering the functionally interstitial status of abandoned urban spaces, I think they might be classified as liminal. In my view, their attributes of *anti-structure* appear on various levels.

As the British geographer, Edensor stresses, industrial ruins, for instance, can provoke “multiple and contrasting sensual experiences” (2007: 217), new encounters with materiality – different from the conventional urban order and the sensory deprivation experienced there through restrictions, moderations, sanitation. The direct visual, sonic and tactile stimuli can

evoke new engagement with the material world, and can also liberate the body from “the usual self-conscious performative constraints” (Edensor 2007: 217).

Abandoned urban spaces, however, are not only exempt from the bodily but also from the “political” constraints of the city, in the sense that their function (through which power represented itself) ceased to exist. Nevertheless, legal constraints are still present, therefore the question of transgression have to be addressed when discussing the *act* of exploring these buildings - since it is not directly related to the built environment itself.

As we see, in these spaces of anti-structure there is no prescribed order, nor is there prescribed meaning to the site or to the elements of material culture, i.e. to the objects there present. These forgotten buildings offer the freedom to the visitors to construct their own narratives, their own understanding³ of the past/present of that particular piece of the city. In this regard, they are tools in what Lefebvre suggests, to “multiply the readings of the city” (1996: 159).

The anti-structural nature of abandoned buildings might evoke Foucault’s notion of *heterotopias*. According to the fourth principle of “other spaces” they are sites “indefinitely accumulating time” (1967). It is in keeping with the concept according to which ruins, in general, can be compared to palimpsests (Armstrong 2010: 247, Edensor 2007: 834, Huyssen 2003 :7) with multiple layers of meaning and time incorporated in them. Urban ruins do not accumulate time in the etatizing way as museums and libraries (Foucault’s examples) do, but rather spontaneously, they simply “articulate the overlaying of temporalities” (Hell, Schönle 2010: 8). Therefore they could be seen as “accidental heterotopias suggestive of antimodern heterochrony” (Dawdy 2010: 777), in the sense that they index the “failure” of modern industrial past in post-industrial cities.

³ Of course it is related to the earlier mentioned “semantic instability” of the ruins, which also stems from, however, the loss of original function – possibly initiating a liminal phase.

Being abandoned, these spaces lack the original agents of the place-making process, and as such, they could be considered to belong to the group of *non-places* in Augé's term. However, I would argue against this view, since for Augé (1995) non-places are transitory sites, through which we pass but to which we do not relate (airport lounge, ATM machine, highway, etc.), or in other words, spaces which are functional but not socially relevant. My point here is quite contrary: abandoned buildings are in-between functions (have lost their original one and are either to be assigned a new one or to be demolished) and can have social relevance, regarding the people who visit them and gain new insight to the life of the city, of former inhabitants/ workers, to the *past*, reinforcing/challenging collective social memory, all while establishing a relationship with the environment, makes sense of the *place*. The aforementioned social relevance will be elaborated in the following subchapter, inasmuch as the visits to these *liminal* areas by means of an *urban* exploration can be considered tactics eluding prescribed, strategic directives.

3.3. Urban exploration

urban exploration (n.) the investigation of manmade structures not designed for public consumption, from mechanical rooms to stormwater drains to rooftops; usually such areas are off-limits
<http://www.infiltration.org/resources-infilspk.html>

In the strict sense, as it has been referred to, urban exploration means the discovery of the city's usually unseen and often off-limit parts, including closed and derelict buildings, but also rooftops, drains and other areas with limited access⁴. Urban explorers usually set off alone or in smaller groups and document their trips on blogs or internet-forums⁵. However, I decided to use the term urban explorer referring to all the individuals included in the research,

⁴ From now on I will use the term 'urbex' to refer to urban exploration, *strictu sensu*.

⁵ <http://weburbanist.com/2008/05/18/30-awesome-websites-for-adventurous-urban-explorers-urbex-forums-photos-and-more/>

that is, in a much broader sense than the ordinary use. Besides Budapest-based urban explorers (who call themselves so), I also focus on a series of organised trips to “functionless public buildings, abandoned water towers, industrial facilities waiting for reuse”, trips that offer the “the experience of *discovery*”⁶, and individuals who neither on a regular basis nor in a planned manner but take the time to occasionally explore hidden parts of the city they live in.

The paper seeks to answer the research question about the motivation by understanding the nature of exploration/discovery, by observing how urban explorers engage with the abandoned spaces and the traces of history, past human lives, and by getting to know how these individuals perceive these spaces within the city.

I suppose that there is more to the urban explorers’ motivation in visiting derelict urban buildings than sheer excitement or curiosity of this “urban necrophilia” at the *dead zones*; more than search for adventure in trespassing abandoned properties at times even (semi-) illegally. I assume that the drive behind it is connected to the liminal status of these spaces: the liberty of the anti-structure (as for the above mentioned materiality and alternative past-construction), to the attraction of the almost-disappearing-but-still-existing, the past-but-still-present, to a sense of patrimony and to conscious citizenship (or civic consciousness, which might also be abstracted to the notion of *right to the city*), belonging to the city by knowing and experiencing it - even under the surface visible to all, at all times.

Most urbex blogs and forums include testimonies from their authors/members that generally emphasize “the experience of a whole new way of looking at your world”⁷, noticing and exploring the hidden parts of the city, or those which are visible but where “most people

⁶ “Functionless public buildings, abandoned water towers, industrial facilities waiting for reuse: *urban walks* organised by KÉK offer the experience of *discovery* to those interested and open towards architecture.”
<http://kek.org.hu/varosisetak/setak/aktualis/>

⁷ <http://urbanexplorers.net/>

wander mindlessly ... barely noticing anything except what they have to”⁸. Let me quote at length on explorer, whose images evoke and reinforce the already cited classics, Benjamin and de Certeau:

Exploring industrial ruins and structures made me look at the city as one living organism. I started to feel not only the skin of the city, but also to penetrate the inner layers of its intestines and veins, which swarm with miniscule life forms. These spaces—abandoned subway stations, tunnels, sewers, catacombs, factories, hospitals, and shipyards—form the subconscious of the city, where collective memories and dreams reside.⁹

A more institutionalised form of engaging with abandoned buildings in Budapest is present via the “urban walks” initiative of KÉK (Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre) that organizes guided trips to some derelict sites of the city. Although the motivation behind such an idea could be simply explained by professional interest (architectural heritage), the KÉK manifesto and the atmosphere of the walks imply a broader context: “Architecture is no isolated constructional task but a vital component of cultural, economic, social and political processes.”¹⁰

To sum up, the paper presumes that social and historical phenomena reflected in the built environment can be/are observable/observed at the place/time when/where they become most apparent: in changes, in liminality, through the *scars*. Even those elements can be found then/there that are not promoted or even suppressed by the official discourse.

It is for this reason that I consider the act of urban exploration, venturing into unseen and off-limits part of the city, a tactic – contesting the strategies that aim to create clear structures and a univocal system. I use the terms *tactics* and *strategies* as Michel de Certeau proposed in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. There he argues that “the ordinary man” (to whom

⁸ <http://www.desolationue.com/about/>

⁹ <http://mirukim.com/statementNakedCitySpleen.php>

¹⁰ <http://kek.org.hu/index.php?page=kialtvany>

the book is dedicated) is not merely a passive consumer, but an active producer. Through the “procedures of everyday creativity” he balances the mechanisms of power: using the elements of the order forced upon him he creates ways of actual resistance. “The construction of individual sentences with an established vocabulary and syntax” (de Certeau 1998: xiii). The author also refers to this creative construction as art, namely, “the art of the *weak*”: “a tactic is determined by the absence of power just as strategy is organized by the postulation of power” (1998: 37&38). And the prerequisite of strategies is not only an isolated will and power, but also a physical place appropriated as one’s *own*. This grants its owner the “mastery of places through sight” (de Certeau 1998: 36); it grants him the possibility to look at the exteriority, and not only to look at it, but by panoptic practice, to observe, measure and control it. The readable spaces thus created mean the power of knowledge. Tactics, on the other hand, are used by those lacking the power and the *proper locus* that would provide autonomy and the possibility to read. As it we see, spatial relations and practices are crucial when discussing strategies and tactics. The chapter, “Walking in the city” commences with the example of looking down from the top of a skyscraper at the city: this voyeuristic deed gives the (fiction of) seeing the whole, the (illusion of a) transparent text of the city. However, “the ordinary practitioners of the city live... below the thresholds at which visibility begins.... They trace ‘indeterminate trajectories’ that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move.” (De Certeau 1998: 93& 34) Via their ways of operating, their creative spatial practices, their tactics, these people break the “univocity of the system” – and in my understanding, they thus “follow” the already mentioned Lefebvre-ian imperative to “multiply the readings of the city” (1996: 159).

Urban space offers possibilities and barriers to the tactician walker – who actualizes one possibility, in the given space, using the given elements, but constructing a new meaning to them. A new text / new texts are being written over the given one. (Berger 2007: 20)

“These ‘ways of operating’ constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production.” (de Certeau 1998: xiv) They re-appropriate, they re-signify the spaces and make them *places*, make the city habitable.

This paper argues (and uses as a conceptual framework the notion that) urban exploration is a tactic, inasmuch as it challenges the spatial order inscribed on the city, precisely by venturing into the hidden spaces, or where one is not *supposed* to go, thereby re-signifying urban space. A tactics are creative ways of operating – so is the act of urban exploration (used here as an umbrella term), which I aim to show by presenting different elements of this heterogeneous set. A tactic is by nature momentary (based on a “clever utilization of time” as opposed to a strategy’s establishment of a place), it “takes advantage of the ‘opportunities’ and depends on them” (de Certeau 1998: 39), just as temporary urbex visits are. Mentioning Bradley L. Garrett’s dubbing of urban exploration (in the strict sense) as *place hacking*¹¹ might also be relevant now: it suggests remaining within the “framework”, using the tools, “mechanisms of power” however, with the aim to turn them against it.

According to de Certeau (1998:106) “it is a crack in the system that saturates places with signification”. This paper focuses on the crack in the urban fabric (the liminality of abandoned spaces) and on the crack in the strategically prescribed ways of operating (tactics of urban exploration), to show how the coincidence of the two create (re)signified urban *places* in Budapest.

¹¹ Garrett’s blog *Place Hacking. Explore Everything* at <http://www.placehacking.co.uk>

4. Strategic answers

Physical environment does not immediately adapt to political-economical changes, as we have seen in the section about Budapest. Although after the transition there were examples of relatively fast and spontaneous re-functionalisation in the Hungarian capital, numerous edifices, both in the inner city and in the transition zone, stood/ still stand abandoned. In the following, I will briefly present some strategic responses to their presence, preceding the core of the paper that deals with the tactics related to these abandoned spaces.

As it has been mentioned in the introduction, from the urban planning's point of view (despite their presence/abundance) derelict edifices often pass unnoticed/ turned a blind eye to, or are objects of urban revitalization processes. *Something has to be done with them.* Their functional in-betweenness, their ambiguous anti-structural status, their being indefinable creates the illegibility of the urban text. It hinders visibility – by which strategies are bound (de Certeau: 37). *Something has to be done with them.* They can be demolished and their real estate be used for constructing new edifices; they can be renovated and reused according to a newly assigned function. Strategic actors need to make sense of them, to signify them – since they need places through which they establish their power, as we have seen earlier with de Certeau. “Strategies are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper) elaborate theoretical places (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed.” (de Certeau: 1998: 38) What have been / are the strategic actions to re-signify derelict buildings in Budapest?

On the one hand, there are the so-called brownfields, abandoned or underused industrial facilities, the direct consequences and most visible signs of deindustrialization. As it was shown on a map in chapter 3, in Budapest they occupy large territories on the former outskirts that have become valuable real estates with the sprawling of the city (transition zone). Their reuse/redevelopment is therefore determined by strong economic interest complemented by environmental concerns, legal questions, as well as by the policies of the urban planner and the cultural heritage institutions. Due to their status (being at the crossroad/crossfire of such different values and interests) their future requires dialogue and wide-ranging (professional and social) discussions, which is not always present, even though some national¹² and international¹³ initiatives of this kind do exist.

Budapest has numerous examples of repurposed industrial facilities. Millenáris Park is now a “multifunctional area for leisure activities”¹⁴, hosting educational and cultural programmes, being a “community space and a meeting point of different disciplines and their users” – at the 3.6 hectare-premises of the former Ganz-factory (ironworks, later electricity plant). After the property rights and the municipality regulations were settled following the transition, the plans for the *revitalization* of the area were conceived and realized (1999-2002). Two buildings were torn down, but the majority (under heritage protection) remained intact, and was renovated and repurposed, maintaining the character of the industrial halls¹⁵.

Trafó - House of Contemporary Arts cannot be omitted when discussing artistic/cultural re-functionalisation of brownfields facilities in Budapest, as it was “the first of this kind in Hungary” when it opened in 1998. It was the Budapest City Council that bought the building, a former electrical transformer station. Later the “legal successor to the

¹² <http://kek.org.hu/uploads/Flash/konzerve.swf> - 3 napos nemzetközi konferencia sorozat az ipari épületek és műemlékek jegyében (3-day international conference about industrial facilities and/as protected heritage sites)

¹³ <http://www.reworking-the-factory.org> - “Strategies to reevaluate the architectural and urban heritage of the early 20th Century”. International, interdisciplinary workshops and projects in the framework of 3-year intensive programmes.

¹⁴ http://millenaris.hu/the-millenaris/about-us/our_mission/

¹⁵ In 2002 Millenáris Park was awarded the *Europa Nostra* (European Federation for Cultural Heritage) prize for the preservation of built heritage.

legendary Young Artists' Club (FMK) ... converted it into a suitable, multifunctional, well-equipped contemporary arts center appropriate for the current times”¹⁶. However, the above described history of Trafó lacks an important point: it was a French anarchist artistic group at the beginning of the 1990s that put the building (abandoned for more than forty years) to cultural use for the first time. It could be argued then that it is a tactical answer to the presence of the abandoned edifice; however, my stance on it is that it *might have been* tactical in the beginning, but the permanent and institutionalized use of the space is definitely a strategic one. A strategic act is “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with *will* and *power* (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated”. (de Certeau 1998: 35, emphasis mine) The will and the power were both present and articulated (even by the appropriation of the *place*, which is also a prerequisite of establishing power) – maybe taking over a creatively fabricated tactical idea.

Similar is the case with the “ruin bars”: downtown houses waiting to be torn down are saved and transformed into alternative spaces of entertainment, bars which make use of the apparent decay of the building, as “trademarks”. The creation of such bars might be seen as a tactic, repurposing a space, in contrast with its originally assigned function, however, from another point of view, their operators apply strategies, their aim is to have control over the entity, they are entrepreneurs having consumers in mind via this type of “guerilla hospitality” (Lugosi, Lugosi 2008). Through this process, as the buildings are re-appropriated (even if temporarily), they are subject to reabsorption into the urban order (Chatterton 2002; Groth and Corijn 2005, Lugosi, Bell, Lugosi 2010).

This phenomenon can be associated with the first phase of gentrification, the artist-/studentification of a neighbourhood. Although it could be argued that the influx of the young is not related to affordable residence only to temporal pastime activities, their presence still

¹⁶ http://www.trafo.hu/statics/trafo_info

contributes to the (advertisement of) the second phase: newly built housing complexes whose target audience is the well-off youth (yuppie-ification).¹⁷ The mushrooming of such ruin bars in the centre of Budapest (especially in the 6th, 7th district), seen in our case as the re-appropriation, re-signification of abandoned tenement houses, definitely lends itself for sociological investigation, bearing in mind its economic, political and cultural references.

These ruin bars could be called liminal spaces, since, by their nature, they are “linked to transitionality” (Éber, Szegő) – on the level of time, as their existence is overshadowed by the instability of their future; on the level of space, because they often “move” when the sheltering edifice (“tamed communal space”) is finally demolished; and even on the level of ideology evoked through materiality. Besides the “deployment of ruin aesthetic” (Lugosi, Bell, Lugos 2010: 4), the creative designers of these spaces draw heavily upon the object culture of socialism when setting the style. They aim to create a “retro feeling”, charming nostalgia to an era which the target audience did not experience first hand (Éber, Szegő).

Although ever-growing, the phenomenon of ruin pubs is only sporadic, more extensive and comprehensive strategic solutions were/are also proposed regarding the poor-condition /often derelict residential buildings, in forms of the urban rehabilitation projects. Budapest provides examples for both the “bulldozer-type” (“slum clearance”) and “soft rehabilitation” types (Csanádi, Csizmady, Kocsis, Kőszeghy, Tomay 2010: 73). In case of the former, larger areas are demolished, and “revitalized” by newly constructed residential areas triggering gentrification (Corvin-Szigony project), while the latter, “social rehabilitation” issues less drastic changes, aiming to keep the original population as well, as a result of different “integrated social, cultural and technical measures”, as in the Magdolna Quarter Project (Rév8: Regeneration Program in Budapest – Józsefváros, Magdolna Quarter Project, 2007).

¹⁷ Cf. “The investor behind the greatest city-rehabilitation project of Budapest, invited pubs into the only block left standing in the midst of a destroyed quarter, to fill the neighbourhood with meaning and visitors, enhancing thus the reputation of the quarter to be built and helping the sale of flats.” Polyák, L. *Urban spaces of periphery, or the rediscovery of the edges of Budapest*. <http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=en&page=3&id=358>

All the different cases of revitalization, gentrification mentioned in this section, by nature include a part of transition (Zukin 2010), a liminal phase, anti-structure – but with a head facing future, the final re-incorporation to structure (Turner 1977). It is interesting, however, how the temporary re-uses of these spaces, which create a platform “where dominant social and cultural discourses are challenged, and alternative discourses of civil society are articulated” (Lugosi, Bell, Lugosi 2010), are finally becoming institutionalized, part of the mainstream. For example, ruin bars, alternative art centres are integrated in the tourist-landscape: they become trend-setters, and thus, “fake” according to the standards of the original “inventors” – as ethnographies on such places show (such as Araújo-Alovjanovic 2011). Periphery becomes centre. Subculture becomes culture. The underground suddenly ends up on the surface. Could Turner’s concept of the *liminoid* explain the prolonged anti-structure that even aims to be incorporated into structure without losing its defining features...?

However, this paper is not about to expand further on that, rather on the practice of urban explorers, who do not want to appropriate the space, they do not want to *use* it, as one of them emphasized. Instead of pondering on the re-use or future of abandoned lots, they demonstrate an attitude in the fashion of “carpe diem”, in the momentariness of tactics. Their interest is in the actual moment – which, of course, does not exclude fascination for the existing traces of the past. As it has been stated, this study aims to investigate the “present” of abandoned urban buildings; their transitional, liminal state - and the interest oriented towards them that manifests in tactical visits to the spots.

5. Tactical answers: urban explorations

This core chapter of the paper aims to present the ways abandoned urban buildings, the disruptions of the urban fabric are (re)signified by the disruptions of the prescribed order and way of action, by tactical urban exploration. Tactics, and broadly understood urban exploration acts as such, are creative constructions, therefore they shall be presented in their heterogeneity, in three respective subchapters.

5.1. Urbex

This section of the paper will present the urban explorer phenomenon, *strictu sensu*, through a Budapest-based urbexer, Altomán, someone who consciously and consistently documents his urban adventures and discoveries on his blog: “almost the only urbex blog of Eastern Europe”. As such, he is one of the (two) “faces” of the movement in Hungary, frequently invited to programmes of alternative radio stations, and interviewed by online news portals. The data presented and analyzed in this chapter was obtained from an in-depth personal interview, his blog, and other sources that were published on / by him on the internet.

(Self)Introduction.

The first interface between Altomán and the public is his blog, launched in April 2010. Prior to focusing on the posts themselves, I would like to dwell on the (more or less) permanent, “introductory” sections of the blog, to observe how he introduces himself, and how he (re)presents urban exploration.

The header includes his carefully chosen (or rather: coined) pseudonym, that makes up the address of the site, too. The name, as it shall be discussed later, refers to his obsession

with heights: at the time he started the blog he was unaware of the urbex term (and movement). The subtitle reads “Reports from everywhere you shouldn’t”. For those slightly familiar with the urban exploration sub-culture, this should immediately evoke *Infiltration*, the legendary magazine by Jeff Chapman (Ninjalicious), the father of the movement: “Infiltration: the zine about going places you are not supposed to go”. (“Inter-textual” references to Ninjalicious interweave Altomán’s discourse on urban exploration, which might be due to mere coincidence, as they share the same interest and way of thinking, or to the fact that he read, “explored”, and incorporated the ideas and expressions of the author of *Access All Areas: a user's guide to the art of urban exploration*. (Ninjalicious 2005)) The right side of the blog’s header, surprisingly, features a photo of its author, sitting cross-legged “on top of the city”, on the roof of a building. Although it is in perfect accordance with the nickname, makes clear/ helps to visualize what type of “reports” are to be read about the high altitudes, for instance, “where you are not supposed to go”, posting a self-portrait to a blog that includes depictions of semi-illegal activities is thought-provoking, and definitely unusual.

Besides the header, it is the “About” column that is permanent and that was meant to transmit information that the blogger thinks is important to know about himself or his site. Altomán’s description goes the following: “Here I collect the happenings connected to my mania of urban adventure and height, so that I don’t forget them in the heat of life. Or if you prefer, you are visiting almost the only urbex blog of Eastern Europe.” The first sentence introduces the theme of adventure besides the so far emphasized topic of altitudes; does the second one equate these two with urban exploration? Little time is left to ponder upon this question – by clicking on “urbex”, which has yet to become a household word in Hungary, the reader is directed to a blog-post from September 2010 entitled “Altomán dictionary” that gives a brief definition of urbex-related terms (by means of translated and hyperlinked wikipedia entries). Returning to the original introductory sentences, the expression “almost

only” needs to be highlighted. It used to be “the one and only” and was referred to as such on a well-read Hungarian blog on urban issues (<http://urbanista.blog.hu>), when one of the commenters strongly objected, basing his arguments on his own net-diary. Since then the sentence includes “almost” - hyperlinked to the blog that Altomán dubs “the other half of Hungarian urbex”, <http://alterbp.blogspot.com/>).

In addition to an email address, the introduction of the blog also features a “warning”:

Important: everything written on this site is the product of mere fantasy, by-products of my repressed vein as sci-fi writer. The photos are either photoshopped or stolen from here and there on the internet. The videos were sent to me by strangers from unknown email addresses. Doing urbex is INSANE, don't you even think about it!!

This is a frequently re-appearing element of such websites¹⁸, with a central “do not try this at home” message. It is interesting, however, that the above mentioned Ninjalicious wrote the *credo* of urban exploration under the title *No Disclaimer*¹⁹:

It's tempting for me to throw one of those disclaimers on this site too, just to be on the safe side, but I can't quite bring myself to do it... Urban exploration is free, fun and hurts no one. It's a thrilling, mind-expanding hobby that encourages our natural instincts to explore and play in our own environment. It encourages people to create their own adventures ... And it nurtures a sense of wonder in the everyday spaces we inhabit... I've had some of the best moments of my life while exploring, and I can't recommend the hobby enough. So, no disclaimer. Not for your entertainment only. Please do try this at home. (<http://www.infiltration.org/ethics-nodisclaimer.html>)

The irony in Altomán's text also makes its interpretation ambiguous, as if it was suggesting a reaction contrary to the explicit message. However, changing the word INSANE to “LIFE-THREATENING” in the *disclaimer* (1 June 2011), together with a post raising awareness of

¹⁸ For example, the “other half of Hungarian urbex” writes: “Many of my photos were taken in life-threatening (and/or illegal) situations, inspired by spontaneous ideas and without any sort of safety equipment or planning. I have an unhealthy lack of respect for danger, so obviously, if you choose to try and repeat any of these things in my photos, you are an idiot.” (alterbp, August 2010)

¹⁹ <http://www.infiltration.org/ethics-nodisclaimer.html>

the possible dangers one might encounter at a spot he explored lately (and thus publicized) shows the responsibility and seriousness of his warning: “Surely it would sound strange if I tried to talk you out of doing it, but still I beg you to think!”

A recent (May 2011) alteration of the header calls for the extension of this section over self-introduction. The second subtitle of the blog became “National Insecurity”, which could already open discussions on the politics of urban exploration. However, when asked about it, the author merely highlighted the pun at the NSA, and did not elaborate on its political innuendo.

Having looked at the ways of self-representation of the Hungarian urbexer’s blog, it can be concluded that they are in line with the patterns of the international community, meanwhile demonstrating differentiating, personal elements (obsession reflected in the name). The “evolution” of the blog is also traceable, that goes alongside with his gaining consciousness as an urbexer...

Let’s go! Why go? Why go again?

It would not come as a surprise to learn that curiosity is a huge motivating factor behind the activity of urban explorers. High and Lewis also admit that “the interest is nothing new” (2007:47), most people’s childhood memories include the terrifying yet intriguing sight of a derelict building. Altomán belongs to the majority, in this sense. “I more or less tracked this whole thing down in my own psychology”, he explains, “and for me the initial push was curiosity”, whose target was an abandoned summer house at Lake Balaton where he spent all his holidays as a child. After some summers of hesitation, he ventured into the building with a few friends, all aged 12-13. At that moment, curiosity overcame fear. Fear of the unknown, the risk of being noticed was surpassed by curiosity that he considers “the most important and most deeply coded human feature”. This is the element “that takes you in. What keeps you in

is adrenalin.... and the experience of freedom”. By freedom he meant the feeling of being somewhere where no one else is, where no one else *can* go. (That was all he explicitly expressed on his ideas of liberty, however, as it shall be seen, there are other, related notions implied in his discourse.) When asked about what differentiates him from those who are not there, why cannot the others go to the places he visits, Altomán repeated that he is more interested in the sites than he is afraid of getting caught. “Although I consider myself the same person as earlier, people now no longer look at me saying ‘here’s the silly kid and the parents are not keeping an eye on him’, but they immediately think of what I’m stealing, what bomb I’m planting, in which room I want to commit suicide”²⁰. The presence of security guards, however, is understandable for him, explaining it by the “evasion of responsibility”: not to be assumed liable for any accidents²¹ on the premises, the owner nips the trouble in the bud, by keeping adventure-seekers away. It is in this line of thought that Ninjalicious asserts, on behalf of all urban explorers: “When we see a sign that says ‘Danger: Do Not Enter’, we understand that this is simply a shorthand way of saying ‘Leaving Protected Zone: Demonstrate Personal Accountability Beyond This Point’”²². Assuming responsibility for his deeds, Altomán admits he has never had guilty conscience for entering such a space and “taking the feeling” with himself: he knows it is a violation of law, a crime, but he does not consider it a sin. To show the integratedness of his attitude into the urban explorer worldview, let me, repeatedly, quote the *No Disclaimer* : “While it's true that some aspects of the hobby

²⁰ He also remarked that if urban exploration became an accepted phenomenon (“though probably not as popular as gardening”), maybe that would create a new category for the security guards too, and could serve as an excuse - if caught.

²¹ “in my opinion, the hobby is no less of a personally assessed risk than smoking, driving or even riding a bike” (Ninjalicious)

²² A solution “betwixt and between”: an abandoned Soviet military base in Hungary is visitable upon purchasing a ticket (from the guard) which warns that you are entering the site on your own responsibility. Although it could be argued that this *ruin of modernity* has been commodified (and therefore de-authenticised) by the act of selling tickets to its visitors, I would refute this by saying that it is not a strategic decision, rather the tactics employed by the security guards, making use of the visitors. Truth be told, parts of the vast territory, for example the tarmac of the former airport, are in use these days, nevertheless, the majority of the edifices (barracks, housing estates, training sites, etc.) is left basically untouched since their abandonment – and usually they are the targets of the explorer-minded visitors.

happen to be illegal, it's important not to confuse the words 'illegal' and 'immoral'. Laws against trespassing are like laws against being out after curfew: people get into trouble not for actually doing anything harmful, but simply because the powers that be are worried that they might."

Concluding the discussion of illegality, Altomán believes that for him it is only "the cherry on the cake", "an extra dose of adrenalin" that might contribute to the "addiction", but it is not essential for the urbex-experience, which, for him, is an experience of liberty.

Returning to the initial motivation of *childhood curiosity*, and moving along the path set by the first word, rather than the above described curiosity-fear-illegality line of associations, we soon arrive at the notion of playing. Urban exploration is often considered to be "a rediscovery of childhood"²³ where derelict spaces serve as playground for the explorers. An exhaustive and comprehensive master's thesis (McRae 2008) has been written on this topic, in a framework set by Henri Lefebvre's concepts of the production of space and the spatial triad: "Urban exploration is a form of play that actively engages with urban space and has the potential to promote interaction and use value amongst participants throughout the city... actively subverting the work and consumption that dominates contemporary urban life." (McRae 2008:71) However, this idea does not only appear in etic accounts: "This is our playground, yes, we often say that", affirms Altomán, who also underlines the importance of play, objecting to the "sadly mistaken side-effect of today's culture" where the act of playing is restricted to children. In his view, more things stem from play than is generally believed, as "the play instinct cannot be suppressed".

It is not due to selection/editing, the only general statements Altomán uttered about human nature were in fact the above quoted ones on curiosity and playfulness. Nevertheless,

²³ Cf. Garrett's video, *Trespass* <http://vimeo.com/22932154>.

they perfectly coincide / are in parallel with Ninjalicious' axiom, "we're designed to explore and to play". It might be, then, concluded, that the urbex creed emphasizes these inherently human features, which, however, are suppressed by social expectations ("the absence of 'play' is often taken to differentiate adults from children" McRae 2008: 37), or by order (law). The movement considers itself a (possible form of) manifestation of these instinctive traces which are violently underplayed and restricted by society.

In my understanding these explicitly valued concepts are implicitly also present in the "sense of liberty" – the experiencing of which is the utmost aim and reason for the urban exploring missions in my informant's case. While visiting hidden, abandoned, or off-limit spaces one is free(d) of all these constraints of the *social order*, of *structure*... as he is in the liminal space of the Turnerian anti-structure. I will present more clues to support this argument in the following section that describes the nature of the exploration-experience.

On mission. When, where, with whom, what's there?

Altomán's blog presents a wide range of spaces he has explored: from metro tunnels to the top of the tallest building in Hungary, through abandoned railway stations, textile factories and hotels. He admits that many missions, as he calls them, were decided on the spur of the moment: "we were there, it was there – we could go, so we did go". There are other actions about whose target he heard by word of mouth, and as they looked/sounded *interesting*, he paid them a visit. Since the blog was launched (and advertised, therefore well-read) he has received numerous tips, so currently targets abound: he has more plans than time to execute them. As an average, he goes exploring once every 1 or 2 weeks – a figure that also surprised him when articulated, "well, I would go a lot more often, if I could", but however much he values it, it is "only a hobby, still". Concerning the company, he rarely goes alone on planned trips: "I'm a sharing person; I like to share the experience". Besides his avowed preference for

community, he acknowledges other advantages of a team-exploration (2-3 people, not crowds): “we push each other, provoke... so that no one chickens out”; it makes a spontaneous division of *labour* possible, “we can pay attention to more things... and more attention to each other... Maybe it’s just me who is so sentimental... but no one should die while exploring together with me”. This sense of responsibility is reflected in the already mentioned post in which he warns about the dangers that need to be taken into consideration at one particular site, an abandoned train-maintenance hall in Budapest²⁴. Compared to the reports of the international urbex community, Altomán’s caring for fellow urbexers is not unique sentimentality, but widespread practicality. Although it is encouraged to set out in small groups, one might explore solitarily too, as a “lone wolf who discovers himself this way... it’s a bit like meditation”, my informant assumes. He often goes with the people who recommended the specific site for exploration.

Most urbex narratives I have read include, to some extent, a historical description of the “target”. It is also present in Altomán’s case, even though he admittedly does not do more research “than necessary” – commenters frequently correct/complement the information he provides on the blog. He merely uses history as a tool, to gather information about the structure of the building, for example. My informant differentiates three types of urbexers: those obsessed with history, architecture or photography, classifying himself as “a bit of all”, historian-minded the least. He accepts the importance of photography as means of conveying the *experience*, to share it with others on the blog, though he thinks his skills could be improved: “it would be good to take good photos”²⁵. His tripartite classification, however, might remind us of the criticism against urban explorers, by authors of the *Corporate*

²⁴ The post about it was so popular, probably because it was featured on a huge news portal (http://hvg.hu/napi_merites/20110529_budapest_mav_temeto), that it brought as many readers to the blog in two days as it usually attracts in half a year (Altomán’s personal communication). In numerical terms that means 1186 “likes” to the post compared to the average of 3; also the number of followers of Altomán on facebook.com was multiplied from 15 to 166. (1 June 2011) Large part of the feedback Altomán received expressed the will to visit the spot: that is why he felt the need for raising awareness about the perils.

²⁵ Photos from Altomán’s blog to be found in *Appendix 1*.

Wasteland, for example: they are “more interested in aesthetics than history... [their] narratives are a little more than an impressionistic collage of observations and feelings” (High and Lewis 2007: 55). This statement could be refuted by saying that they never aspired to be more – however, the question it raises is important. Do urbexers only abstract these ruins, grab them out of their historical context, perceive them as mere timeless playgrounds, create beautiful photos²⁶ of the inevitable decay in the circle of life...? In my opinion, it is Garret’s argument from an earlier chapter that answers this dilemma: it is not about the “production of history but about bodies in places and about places on the margins brought to centre” (2011: 379) It is about past (history) the way they experience it now, in the present, through the space and the materiality of a passed era. The *anti-structural* nature of the ruin, I would argue, does not only take its visitors “out of space and time” (indeed, urban exploration is a journey over temporal, spatial, and also social distances²⁷), but by its anti-structural liberty it creates the formless state of pure potency (Turner 1977), the freedom and the possibility to engage with the space (its history, social memory) in a new way. Let us now turn to what this liminal experience is like for the “representative” urban explorer.

It is interesting to note that the most extensive descriptions on Altomán’s blog are related to abandoned buildings, despite the fact that urbex, and his personal practice too, is not restricted to such sites. In these derelict spaces remnants of the (not necessarily distant) past(s) strike the visitors. As Barndt (Hell, Schönle 2010: 270) says “ruins are palimpsests that invite us to contemplate a layered temporality”. Altomán also writes about “multi-layered feeling” of the sites: sometimes you have to find your way through the apparent putrefaction to the core, where decay is present on another level, as you encounter the result of “mummification” [of edifices] by the surrounding lush bio-sarcophagus”. He often compares the exploration to

²⁶Decontextualised into “the aesthetic realm of frozen time” (Barndt:275)

²⁷ I refer to social distance as urban explorers (mostly middle-class youth) tend to visit facilities that they would not, if they were still functioning. They often experience the past-reality of a blue-collar population, they had never been acquainted before so closely.

time-travel, when entering spaces (even homes) that were abruptly neglected, and where “time has practically frozen”. Walking among the furniture, clothes, newspapers left inside years ago definitely has a bizarre, voyeuristic feel to it. This travel in time (historically) also affects the perception of time: not being able to tell how long the exploration lasted is a recurring element in other urbex narratives too (objective vs. subjective time).

The experience of being in this time-less (or rather: explicitly timed) spaces is “hard to describe”. Regardless of the previous historical research, the building and the objects of the *past* lend themselves to be *experienced*. Let me quote at length Altomán’s narrative about his visit to the above mentioned “dead railway station” - which in fact never functioned as a station, only as a train-maintenance hall; however, this historical fact is overcome by the actual experience:

We went there, looked at the trains, and even touched them, as if we were afraid that they were not real - although they were more real than any of the cosmeticized preparations in the museums. No make-up, no gutting! These were dumped here decades ago, and since then only time has touched them. 100% authentic material. Reality show.

More real – authentic – reality. Ninjalicious also claims that what draws him to the places he explores is a feeling of getting “a glimpse of something authentic, not designed for public consumption. It's the thrill of getting to peek behind the scenes and see the real situation”, and as if responding to the above criticism he declares: “I wouldn't say what people are looking for is the beauty of decay so much as the beauty of authenticity, of which decay is a component.”²⁸ Experiencing the *authentic* qualities of things of the *past* might shade our understanding of it, question the “cosmeticized” picture institutionally presented, or even subvert narratives of heritage. While in the case of “official” past / memory construction (e.g. conventional representations of history in museums, or history books) events/ objects are selected, organized, contextualized for the public, during an urbex-visit each step of the

²⁸ In an interview with Dylan Trigg. <http://side-effects.blogspot.com/2005/08/ninjalicious-1973-2005.html>

process is up to the explorer. This might be a (not even necessarily conscious) step to fight *urban amnesia*, result of the tendency highlighted by social memory scholars in which “ever more sophisticated technical instruments ... exteriorize the human faculty of recall” (Jedlowski 2001: 29). Although there are institutions of memory, the need to remember remains personal (Huyssen 1995). I would argue that through the sensory engagement with these urban ruins (with the linked materiality), and the anti-structural freedom to interpret them (“no one to tell you how to feel what to think” Garret: *Place Hacking*), urban explorers shape their understanding of the past and construct their own narratives of the city. While examining the way urbexers relate to memory in “forgotten places”, Harris (2010) establishes six ways of experiencing the past: questioning, imagining, reconstructing, reading, sensing and personalizing it. Whichever is the way, the spaces that create the platform for such an engagement can be called “alternative sites of memory”, “where remembering may be experienced, practised and articulated otherwise” (Edensor 2005b): other than the way the *strategies* determine how memory is to be spatialized, inscribed upon space. The act of urban exploration therefore can be seen as the de Certeau-ian *tactics* vis-à-vis the *strategic*, regulatory discourse of memory politics, using abandoned spaces, urban ruins and their liminal status that facilitates the construction of new narratives of the past.

“We are not alone!!” Who are we?

Following the description (and analysis) of the nature of the urban explorer experience, I would now like to turn to the urbex phenomenon as such, in Hungary, approaching it from the side of its emblematic figure to see how he “gained consciousness” and what effects this awakening had.

As it has been mentioned earlier, Altomán started his blog in April 2010 but got acquainted with the term “urban exploration” only months later: “I’ve always had problems formulating what this hobby/characteristic of mine is, what this blog is all about, etc. Among other things, that’s why I coined the word “altomán” to be able to refer to this whole thing shortly.” Two youtube-videos that were recommended to him made him suspicious, so he initiated a thorough internet-research to arrive at “the fantastic recognition” that he is not the only one with his obsession with urban heights and abandoned spaces. In the childlike-enthusiastic September 2010 post entitled “We are not alone!” he writes, “You rarely hear of us, as what we do is mostly illegal, but we are there, under you, above you, everywhere we shouldn’t be!! Altomans of the world, unite!” In his joy at the discovery and at being able to name things he asked one of the most influential urban-related blogs to spread the word. And it did²⁹: since October Altomán’s blog was featured on often-visited Hungarian websites (index.hu, blog.hu, hg.hu, hvg.hu), he was interviewed in programmes of radio stations (radiocafé 98.6, tilos rádió), which all show that this phenomenon he introduced in Hungary with this name is considered to be interesting. The time of writing this thesis, May 2011 has been especially eventful in this sense, apparently a turning point in the public-awareness of urban exploration.

He has received many comments and private messages, large part of which says, “I’m also doing this, but I didn’t know it has a name”. My informant was happy hearing this: “great, I brought you its name, guys, from now on contact me, let’s do it together, ‘cause it’s good!” Since then, he has been in touch with about 10 fellow urban explorers, who are actively on the field; there is a wider circle of 10-20 people who occasionally join him; and the group of the so-called active supporters, who are interested in it, give tips on spots³⁰, help in gaining entry, etc. (These numbers are increasing.) When asked about the demographic

²⁹ http://urbanista.blog.hu/2010/10/19/urbex_tiltott_kalandok_budapest

³⁰ “I know about a place.. someone could have a look...”

features of this “urbex-related community”, Altomán described the phenomenon as a “stratum-hobby”, i.e. only a small percentage of the population practices it: “it’s not gardening, not even skateboarding”. Urbexers, logically, are from an urban setting, and “from the representative 10-member Hungarian sample” the age range of the active members is between 15 and 35, with a median of 24 years. This corresponds to the international urbexer-population that consists of “mainly white, middle-class youth between the ages of fifteen and thirty” (High and Lewis 2007: 42). Following the original, North-American example, Altomán is also considering launching a forum as an online center for discussions and exchange of ideas, organizing trips more efficiently. However, he admits that for the time being, communication in emails is sufficient.

Having a name for the activity means you can talk about it: my informant gets access to resources more easily and also finds people with whom he shares a common interest. Ninjalicious is credited with having coined the term, and thus starting a worldwide dialogue (High and Lewis 2007: 43) – Hungary has also joined this dialogue, by setting up its own local one (by Altomán starting a blog, discovering the name – “just at the right time”, he says). As I see it, this step was an eye (and door) opening one, which nevertheless will still leave numerous practitioners unaware of their actual “affiliation”. (*Does being an urbexer require self-awareness?*)

In lack of a central forum, the visible hubs of the Hungarian urban explorer-life are the blogs of Altomán and alterbp (“the two halves of Hungarian urbex”). Although I started the chapter by analyzing this “diary”, I am returning now to observe it from this perspective. According to Altomán, the blog was launched for personal reasons: so that the absent-minded author can document his adventures systematically. He opted for the form of a blog since “others might also be interested”. He believes, as it has been seen, that “everything we do on Earth is done to be shared”. Besides this main motivation of posting, being “no hypocrite”, he

admits he appreciates complimenting comments: “Yes, I did that. That’s me. It’s also part of it. Full stop.” Both the interview and the posts implied the priority of the former drive: he is aware of the responsibility towards his readers (even regarding the quality of photos, as well as their physical well-being, as discussed earlier). By sharing he means the sharing of the experience itself – in a December 2010 post discussing the plans for the next year, he calms the reader: “There is no question that all executed plans will be amply photo-documented and reported in such a way that you will all think you had been there”. His reports are indeed exhaustive, personal, by nature, and even if they were classified as simple “impressionistic collage[s] of observations and feelings”, I would take High and Lewis’ critical remark as a compliment.

Mission accomplished. What’s it all about?

In this chapter I attempted to present the urbex movement, via the Hungarian epitome, focusing on the nature of the exploration in abandoned urban spaces. I claim that their tactics to live and engage with the city within the city are made possible by the liminality of the urban ruins they venture into.

Abandoned urban spaces can be considered liminal in the Turner-ian sense, because they are between functions, they are in a state of anti-structure (outside the constraints of social norms, prescribed order), which grants people the sense of liberty – on various levels (to play, to discover, to engage with materiality/past, to construct and interpret narratives of the past, etc.). However, liminality is transitory, therefore temporary – it is crucial to underline that urban explorers are not squatters, they do not want to use these spaces in any permanent way. This was they also keep the tactical nature of their actions. (Such a prolongation of liminality would result in a liminoid status, in Turner’s terminology, which I

find highly problematic as I referred to it earlier.) Urbexers pay short, though often repeated, visits to these spaces. They make them places, appropriate them, but only temporarily – i.e. they signify, embody the space. But only temporarily: on the one hand, due to their off-limits nature one cannot spend there as much time as wished, and on the other, precisely due to their liminal, transitory nature: sooner or later these buildings collapse/are demolished/are renovated and reused. (An interesting aspect, outside the scope of present paper, would be to observe how the act of photographing freezes/prolongs/contradicts this temporary, transitory state of these spaces; whether taking a photo of them means their appropriation, their colonization – to further amplify the ideologically loaded term *explorer*.)

Liminality, in-betweenness is perceived by Turner as the experience of unrealized potential; being on borders of categories is often criticised, considered taboo or polluted, according to Mary Douglas (1966): the “otherness” of the “polluted” can be seen as a source of renewal, innovation and creativity. In this reading tactician urbexers in the liminal spaces of the city are the epitome of pure potential, the possibility of social change, of “insurgent citizenship” (Holston 1999): they are at the “tears in the spatiotemporal fabric through which new social forms can emerge” (Dawdy 2010: 777). Their performed tactics they might be seen as missions to reclaim the city, fight for the *right to the city* – “since cities should be for citizens”, says Ninjalicious, “but urban explorers aren't generally fighters. We don't seek to smash the state, just to ignore its advice on a subject it doesn't really know much about.” Tactics in general do not aspire to overthrow the system, they are “instances of ‘resistance’ to an official order” (Morris 2004: 678). Are the tactics of urban exploration similar to hacking then? (Garret: *Place Hacking*), I repeat the question, now in a slightly different context. Breaking in to show the weaknesses of the system? Or maybe they are simply manifestations of a growing and strengthening “conscious urban-ness” (Altomán) (or urban conscious-ness?) that is present on many levels. If being urban and being conscious about it means having an

embodied spatial experience of the city as a *lived space*, then urban exploration definitely is a means of achieving it. “Certainly going exploring is a good way to get people intimate with places and thus start to care about them. Explorers really do seem to develop a stronger bond with their surroundings.”³¹ Or, as Bradley Garret writes on his explorer-experience, “I successfully *temporarily* inhabited those sites of material history and constructed assemblages of emotional and memorial *attachments*.” (*Place Hacking*; emphasis mine)

³¹ Dylan Trigg interview with Ninalicious at <http://side-effects.blogspot.com/2005/08/ninjalicious-1973-2005.html>

5.2. Urban Walks

This subchapter steps out of the frame of the strictly understood urban exploration, to focus on another tactical solution to discover and engage with Budapest: organized and guided ‘urban walks’ to abandoned industrial facilities, closed hospitals, etc. Although at first glance the initiative of KÉK might appear to be an official, highly institutionalized program (raising awareness of the built heritage), it is only partly so: it stems from and depends on the organizer’s inner motivation, and also, it lays emphasis on the personal (hi)stories related to the visited sites besides the ‘grand discourse’. I will present this subcase of urban exploration based on an interview with its curator/organizer/manager, on “participant observation” and on the results of a questionnaire filled out by participants of the last walk in May 2011³².

History. How come?

The Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre (KÉK) was founded in 2006, aiming to be an “independent cultural centre, open to all, which promotes architectural education, awareness and innovation among multidisciplinary professionals and the general public”³³. Since then it has promoted the dialogue about the city, its culture and our built environment, drawing architecture into the centre of public attention via various means: exhibitions, film clubs, workshops, lecture series, symposia, debates, and international conferences. It is this wide range of activities that *Városi Séták (Urban Walks)* is incorporated into. In fact, it was one of the initial ideas, as the first walk was organised three months after the opening of the KÉK-headquarter, in September 2006. In cooperation with the Cultural

³² The 10-item online questionnaire inquired about previous experience, motivation and focus of attention before/after the trips, besides general impressions. It was filled out by 42 informants. The questionnaire is to be found in *Appendix 4*, or at:

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dFNZQ2dJR0R1QnQteHdfa0NKd3RYMHc6MA>

³³ http://kek.org.hu/index.php?page=a_kek_celjai

Heritage Days program³⁴, as a pre-session to a conference on industrial heritage (that I already referred to) a mill (right before its renovation) and two water towers were visited. The thus initiated first season of *Urban Walks* consisted of 5 trips in 15 months, to former or partly still functioning industrial facilities³⁵. Afterwards, due to personal reasons, the program was suspended for years – until KG³⁶, an active then-volunteer for KÉK had the idea to resuscitate it in September 2009. Following a long organizing and arrangement process the second season started in April 2010 in the recently closed mental asylum in Lipótmező (OPNI). Since then, organized visits have been paid to a former paper factory, power plant, a church, the Várkert Bazár at the foot of the Castle Hill, synagogues under/after reconstruction, and some stations of metro line four, which is currently being constructed³⁷.

What connects these various sites? What is the discourse behind the *Urban Walks*? What are the explicitly set objectives? The program's website informs us: "Functionless public buildings, abandoned water towers, industrial facilities waiting for reuse – the reappearing *Urban Walks* organized by KÉK offer the experience of *discovery* to those interested and open to architecture."³⁸(emphasis mine) The invitations to each trip often feature the word "expedition" – apparently the vocabulary is not that far from *exploration*. The operation hall of a power plant is said to grant a "spine-chilling experience of space" to the "culture-adventure-seeker public". The search for adventure, thrill is an important part of the urbex experience too – however, the nature of these adventures is probably not the same. Other KÉK-walks invite us to wander among "walls of mysterious past", to "peep under the

³⁴ This programme is within an international framework that consists of "opening up historical buildings normally closed to the public" for one weekend each year, according to a specific theme.
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/EHD/Presentation_en.asp

³⁵ Dreher Brewery – October 2006, Kelenföld Power plant – December 2006, Törley winery – June 2007, former Theatrical Scenery Factory re-functionalised as cultural centre – December 2007.

³⁶ His initials are to be used throughout the paper.

³⁷ These last trips were integral parts of a program series organized by KÉK (*Betontavas*) during the spring with focus on the applicability of 'exposed concrete'. All dates and destinations of previous and planned *UrbanWalks* are to be found at the program's website: <http://kek.org.hu/varosisetak/setak/aktualis/>, together with a historical overview of the visited sites.

³⁸ <http://kek.org.hu/varosisetak/setak/aktualis/>

deeper layers” of a building, to find out “what life was like once” - such an interest oriented towards the past is not (necessarily) explicit in the urbex discourse regarding the objective, but, as we have seen, is definitely part of the experience. Summing up, the language of promotion implies discovery, adventure, and engagement with the past during the *Urban Walks*, in derelict edifices, echoing the main themes of the urban exploration-type presented in the previous section of the paper, even though their nature and the means to achieve them differ. Having no or little reference to the architectural discoveries in case of the *Walks* could be explained by the fact that it is “taken for granted” by KÉK: it is the built environment that host, provokes, all the above mentioned phenomena, as it is stated in the centre’s manifesto, “architecture is no isolated constructional task but a vital component of cultural, economic, social and political processes.”³⁹

Having observed the language (and the related notions) of the public(ized) self-representation of *Urban Walks*, the question of motivation behind such an initiative still remains to be answered.

Motivation. Whose?

From the interview with the curator of the *Walks* it became clear that although KÉK as an organization fully backs the revitalized program that fits their agenda and corresponds to their mission, it is mostly KG’s motivation that determines its trajectory. However, since without motivated participants the expeditions would not work, I will present the main factors that urge people to join visits to abandoned spaces, too. Nevertheless, when examining the phenomenon of *Urban Walks* as a creative way of operation, as a *tactic*, it is the motivation of the organizer that is to be highlighted, him being the agent behind the event. Therefore I shall start by observing it.

³⁹ <http://kek.org.hu/index.php?page=kialtvany>

KG's motives concerning the *Walks* are twofold, different for particular trips and for the program series as a whole. What personally draws him, a future architect, to these derelict edifices is the discovery of their architectural, artistic values, regardless of their poor condition. But beyond the visible, observable elements, he talks about "the strange, interesting" atmosphere of the spaces, their "aura" which he partly puts down to the "charm of the past era in which it was built" that is tangible even in decay. On the other hand, it is related to knowing and feeling that "something was functioning here that no longer is", that is why he underlines the importance of the "human stories" connected to these building, by inviting a most relevant person as a guide for each walk. He values discovery in the sense of excavating and getting to know the "deeper layers of our environment, of our city", to know what *was* there – through observing what *is* still there. It might evoke de Certeau's lines (1998:108) about places: "the presences of diverse absences. What can be seen designates what is no longer there... demonstratives indicate the invisible identities of the visible". The "spirit of the place" that KG mentioned as an element that attracts visitors might be in fact the "ghost of mundane space" Edensor (2005b) writes about, which haunt these edifices and "saturate the fabric of the city".

Besides experiencing these haunted spaces himself and getting to know their hidden and decaying values, KG feels a "mission" to show them to others as well, precisely for transmitting this (at least) twofold experience. On the one hand, by organizing *Urban Walks* he aims to share the adventure and the "experience of discovery" as he provides the possibility for larger groups to enter buildings otherwise closed to the public. In my reading, it is similar to the urbexers' practice of *sharing* their missions with larger audiences on blogs/forums, except for not relying only on photos and narratives to convey the sensations, but on first-hand experience. On the other hand, however, KG is also conscious about raising consciousness about the hidden values, directing attention towards these derelict edifices:

making them *visible*. He believes that making people notice their present state could have an effect on their future, even indirectly: “it won’t be socially accepted” to let, for example the 19th-century buildings of the Várkert, “rot”. This sense of *responsibility* serves as “good inspiration [for KG] to take the effort” and face the challenges of organization that he might not take up was it only for his sake, KG remarks ironically. It is of course contradicted by his personal interest described above, the fact that he organizes walks to spots he finds exciting, and his “previous urbex experience” (i.e. his inherent curiosity that once manifested in venturing into a partly renovated abandoned public bath in Budapest). His sense of “mission” both to experience the places and to open the eye of the public is not restricted to *Urban Walks*, he acknowledges other initiatives with to some extent similar aims⁴⁰, not considering them competitors: “the best would be if these didn’t even have to be organized, they just happened by themselves. ... Urban exploration is good”.

After looking at the organizer’s motivation, let us now turn to the ideas behind the participants joining the *Walks*. According to the results of the questionnaire most people (61%) listed the answer “by other means I could not visit the site” among the reasons; curiosity and interest in architecture were the second most popular motivations. It is interesting to note that only one respondent highlighted a special interest in abandoned, hidden spaces. When asked to list parts/spots in Budapest that they would like to explore either individually or in frame of the *Walks*, half of the informants marked specific destinations/areas of interest. Obviously, this, on the one hand shows the curiosity and conscious explorer-mindedness of one half, and the lack of it in the other 50%. This fact, together with opinions such as “these trips are interesting precisely because I would never think of going theses places”, shows that these *Walks* still need to be organized, reflecting on

⁴⁰ He mentioned the examples of the alterative city tours of BeyondBudapest or ImagineBudapest.

KG's wish mentioned in the last paragraph, however, awareness is being raised. Only one fourth of the informants admitted to have explored/visited similar buildings before – maybe the Urban Walks will not only be an eye-opener to the deteriorating architectural heritage but also to the possibility of (even individual) urban exploration, in the broad sense of the word.

Organization. How? Who?

As we have seen the main motivating factor for participants is to go to places which are otherwise not visitable. It is an important feature for KG as well, when selecting the destinations: “it’s an extra”. He wanted to continue the trend set by the first season of the *Walks* in 2006, featuring urban industrial facilities, but also including other public buildings he finds worth exploring. The ideas for destinations are gathered from the press, from “walking with more open eyes”, or by word of mouth, as in the case of urbexers. Once the destination is decided, the most challenging period starts, which also has to do with the liminal status of these abandoned buildings: finding the owner, or those responsible for issuing a permit. This usually results in 4-5 projects being organized in parallel, as it can take up to 3 months to find the proper person. The fact that the *Urban Walks* is under the auspices of KÉK is important in practical terms, since requesting authorization to enter on grounds of mere curiosity is usually rejected⁴¹, as opposed to the professional interest backed by an organization: “it creates a clear-cut situation”. As I see it, this fact supports the idea of considering the *Walks* a tactic, inasmuch as it uses the institutional tools in a creative way, even if not to contest the order.

Advertising, raising awareness of the walks themselves is vital. As a KÉK-branded program, information is sent out prior to each *expedition* via the electronic newsletter of the organization, reaching some thousand subscribers, and is publicized at other related online

⁴¹ Or the permit is sold for a price, as seen for instance, in the case of the previously mentioned military base, or an abandoned railway station in Budapest.

interfaces. While KÉK's main focus is architecture, it is obvious from their credo that they intend to address people from other fields, too. Although KG has no information about the profession of the participants, he expects mostly "civilians". This expectation is confirmed by the results of the survey, according to which the vast majority was not (studying to be) an architect (91%), having occupations on a wide range, though almost without exception intellectual ones. This under-representation of architects in this random sample might be due to the fact that only one third of my respondents got to know about the *Walks* from the KÉK-newsletter, the other 60% was evenly distributed between sources of friends and different types of media⁴². Regarding the average number of participants, KG estimates 60-80. He would like to take in "as many as possible", but the permits frequently limit the size of the visiting group, making pre-registration necessary. Based on these data the curator states that the highest level of interest was in case of the first walk to OPNI (almost 200 pre-registrations), and has been relatively elevated ever since.

Experience - knowledge. And / or?

As we have seen earlier the most attracting features of a visit to an abandoned urban space for KG was double: experiencing the "spirit of the place", exploring the site, while also discovering and learning about its architectural/historical values. He expects and observes similar interest (to different extents) from the participants too: individual explorations during/after the informative guiding. While he appreciates both, he says "we need to find a balance...it's not good if we always move as a group [following the guide], nor is it good if it all falls apart... some coordination is needed". He considers the presence of a guide vital – "being simply there is not enough", someone who is able to talk about the place is a "big

⁴² It has to be admitted that many respondents were familiarized with KÉK through the successful "Budapest100" programme, a joint project by OSA and KÉK that celebrated the centenary of several public and residential buildings of the capital in April 2011. The event that offered guided walks in the edifices relied on the active participation of residents/owners/employees and was widely advertised on TV, radio and on the internet.

plus”. To talk about the place: to talk about its history and architecture, and about their personal relation the building. KG carefully chooses guides, if possible, to be attached to the site in some way, to be “an organic part of the place” (director of a paper factory, nurses from a hospital). The stories they tell, are “signifying practices”, “local authorities” (de Certeau: 1998: 106), adding to the official discourse on what the place was *supposed* to mean⁴³. Although it might be argued that through these personal narratives of the past the visitors of the present only experience other people’s loss and nostalgia, I believe that the “verbal relics” (de Certeau 1998: 107) contribute to the act of signifying the place for the participants themselves, based on the walk and the guide’s narration in that specific spacio-temporal setting. (Also, according to my informant, there are always participants who were also related to the edifices in different ways.) Similarly to the way these stories of the past shade the understanding of the present state, the act of the walk itself “adds to the history of the space”, believes KG. It is for this reason that occasionally “cultural events color” the walks and “the history” too, providing a new layer. “It is interesting to see how an artist reflects on this space” in the form of short concerts or video installations.

Based on the results of the survey it can be stated that guide’s presence, as a source of information (both factual and personal memory-based) is valued highly among the participants, and has priority over the sensory, explorative engagement with the space. Around 80% considered the historical and architectural information fairly or highly important (marks 4-5 on a scale of 5), which ratio was 70% with regards to the personal narratives. This tendency was also articulated in the answers to the question “What do *Urban Walks* mean to you?” Besides ‘fun’, ‘entertainment’, ‘social event’, the expressions *knowledge* (related to art/history), ‘to *know* more about the city’, ‘being *informed*’, ‘gathering interesting background *info*’ were recurring elements, such as phrases concerning the *(re)discovery* (of the

⁴³ Local histories vs. history production. Cf. Garrett 2011: 379.

neighborhood/ hidden, forgotten buildings) or a ‘*fresh look* on built heritage’. One respondent explicitly expressed that it is via these walks (and the information acquired there) that he appropriates (urban) space: “I make place of my city through them.” Another informant described his best *Urban Walks* experience (to the Rákosi bunker) as finding an “invisible imprint of an era”, while yet another one characterized the tours as events “when invisible becomes visible” – evoking the critical concepts centre-periphery. These derelict buildings do become visible, signified, and relevant to a wide audience that can further transmit *knowledge* about them – as it is the (awareness-raising) aim of the curator.

However, an *Urban Walk* is not only an intellectual but also a “visual experience”⁴⁴. Almost 75% of my respondents considered it (fairly/highly) important to ‘capture the moment’ and take photos, mostly for aims of documentation. One third of those who filled out the questionnaire also marked “artistic purposes” as applicable, 2 individuals’ motivation for participating in the trip was photography. In an informal interview the official photographer of the event series (whose works are posted on the website) told me that in these environments it is relatively easy to take photos “that sell”, however, his aim is to create photographs “which speak to those who were not here”, that show “how people interact with the space”⁴⁵.

This section of the paper presented the *Urban Walks* initiative, understood as a de Certeau-ian tactic, entering normally not visitable derelict buildings and getting to know (also establishing) different narratives linked to them, thus exploring and signifying these segments of the urban fabric. I argue for its tactical nature not only due to its creative use of official means to achieve its aim, but also for its momentariness: it takes advantage of opportunities that might not be repeated. These are unique events; there is no guarantee that a permit will be

⁴⁴ Both terms are mentioned as answers in the questionnaire.

⁴⁵ Photos of the *Urban Walks* taken by the official photographer are to be found in *Appendix 2*.

issued again, that the building's condition does not deteriorate to an extent that hinders visits, etc. For the time being, this prevents this tactic to be taken over by strategies. Or to be commercialized, with fixed dates and fixed destinations: it is not to be transformed into a business-like activity – neither does the organizer want to, nor could he.

The results of a questionnaire showed a tendency among the participants towards giving more emphasis to information compared to a sensory, spatial experience of discovery during the visits. In my opinion, however, the *empty “semiotic vessels”* of the ruinous buildings and objects left behind are not only signified through the stories heard about them but by the setting, environment in which they were heard, i.e. they are part of the *experience*. Also, to counterbalance the priorities given, let me finish this section by referring to KG's best memories connected to *Urban Walks* – “it's the OPNI, no doubt. Not the *Walk* itself, but before, we could go in the three of us, and just wander in the building... we went wherever we wanted to”, exploring the space.

5.3. Individual tactics

This chapter does not aspire to provide an ethnography-analysis as the previous chapters – neither in length, nor in depth; despite and precisely because of the heterogeneity of the group it aims to present.

Tactics are defined as “creative ways of operation”: their forms vary depending on their creator and the circumstances. Urban exploration, understood as a tactic here, can be realized in various forms, two of which have been described already. However, I consider it important to include others in the paper, mentioning them at the same level as urbex and the *Urban Walks*, to emphasize the variegation of the whole set. Some practices will be mentioned here, not all; some, not a chosen one will be described. Being mostly individual tactics, they are strongly connected to the *tactician*’s personality; therefore an analysis might easily take a psychological turn. For this present paper their joint “sociological” importance is thought to be relevant: numerous individuals exploring the city for different reasons.

(On a personal note: ever since I became fascinated by the topic two years ago, and especially during the course of the research, I have encountered a surprisingly large number of people interested in derelict urban spaces, albums entitled ‘abandonment’ on different photo-sharing portals, individuals who go on walks by themselves to discover unknown and often hidden parts of their city – without ever having heard of the term urban exploration.)

“What’s in a name?”

After Altomán gained consciousness as an urban explorer, and spread the word about the phenomenon in the Hungarian blogosphere, the vast majority of the comments he received, as I have already referred to, were testimonies: “I also used to do / have been doing it – only that I didn’t / don’t call it anything.... So it has a name?!” Being unaware of name of

the action bears no value judgment, de Certeau (1998: 93) also states that most city dwellers (walkers, especially) are not practicing reflexivity – they cannot read the text they produce. Learning the name, however, of such an activity gives access to a new discourse, might cause re-evaluation of the practices, but most importantly, it raises consciousness. It raises questions, too, about the definition and the range of activities it comprises. One blogger, making it clear that she doesn't identify with Altomán's urban explorer identity, wrote to him in a comment, "I'm practicing this with a wider audience, but a lot less extremely, and also, legally", referring to the Cultural Heritage Days Programme. Illegality frightened many from identifying with urban exploration – although it is not a criterion for urban exploration, neither in the strict, nor in the broad sense in which it has been used in the paper.

A is another *tactician* who does not consider himself an urban explorer: "I don't have the time for that". However, he often takes long walks in Budapest, with the intention to map the neighborhood, the city. He is (and has always been) conscious about his need for transparency: he would like to *know* the place, as that would grant him security. The abandoned, closed buildings are obstacles, they are indefinite, ambiguous spaces that have to be "solved", defined, "made sense of". A never takes photos during his walks, since he "couldn't capture the whole thing"; he prefers sharing his discoveries with others in speech. Unlike many others.

Photos, footprints.

In Hungary, as in many other countries, one can easily find pictures uploaded to photo-sharing sites on the internet with the label "abandoned". These often testify to thorough explorations of abandoned spaces mostly in Budapest, but also in the countryside. One individual, M, mentioned photography as part of his art in the brief introduction– as we have seen in the previous chapter such artistic motivations can set someone to *explore*. Two of his

folders are named “missions”, with the remark: “my main topic, abandoned, derelict buildings, industrial facilities, military bases, stations, etc. missions that have to be accomplished!”⁴⁶ M’s 521 photos of abandonment demonstrate extremely wide-ranging (geographically and within Budapest, too), and frequent, sometimes even repeated explorations⁴⁷. Although the narratives behind them are not expressed verbally, the photos convey the experience of *exploration*.

⁴⁶ <http://indafoto.hu/michaud/missions>

⁴⁷ Some photos of his are to be found in *Appendix 3*.

6. Conclusion

This paper observed different tactics of urban exploration and argued that these acts re-signify abandoned spaces in the city, shape understandings of the past. The liminality of urban ruins is a crack in the fabric of the city: their anti-structural nature offers liberty of constraints, also in the sense to fill the “semiotic vessels” of these derelict buildings individually, thereby turning them into alternative places of memory. Through their different tactics it is the heterogeneous group I referred to as *urban explorers* that take the opportunity/possibility offered by these sites, contesting strategically prescribed ways of operating.

Three tactical answers were presented to the traces of post-socialist transformation in the built environment of Budapest. Altomán, representing the Hungarian urbex community; the organizer and participants of the *Urban Walks* program, and occasional-individual explorers all visit and inhabit temporally abandoned peripheral spaces of the city, though with different motivations: to experience, to know about and to know the city, respectively.

I am aware of the fact that the phenomenon could have been observed in other theoretical frameworks as well (focusing on center/periphery, governmentality, right to the city, for example), possibly even yielding better understanding of it. Further research could study each presented group separately, more in depth. As mentioned, it is also thought worthwhile to concentrate on and analyze the visuals by which these invisible/forgotten urban spaces become visible/ remembered, again.

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

T.S. Eliot

7. Bibliography

Altomán's blog. <http://altoman.blog.hu/>

Armstrong, J. 2010a. "Everyday Afterlife." *Cultural Studies: iFirst article*, 1-21.

Armstrong, J. 2010b. "On the Possibility of Spectral Ethnography." *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies*; 10; 243-250.

Augé, M. 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.
London: Verso.

Benjamin, W. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Berger, V. 2008. *A cselekvés művészete*.

<http://www.tarsadalomkutatas.hu/kkk.php?TPUBL-A-828/kotojelek2007/TPUBL-A-828.pdf> (retrieved 10 April 2011)

Chatterton, P. 2002. "'Squatting is still legal, necessary and free': A brief intervention in the corporate city." *Antipode*, 34:1, 1-7.

Csanádi G., Csizmady A., Kocsis J.B., Kőszeghy L., Tomay K. 2010. *Város. Tervező. Társadalom*. Budapest: Sík Kiadó.

Dawdy, S. L. 2010. "Clockpunk Anthropology and the Ruins of Modernity". *Current Anthropology* 51: 6, 761-793

De Certeau, M. 1998. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.

Delyser, D. 1999. "Authenticity on the ground: engaging the past in a California ghost town." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89:4, 602–632.

Desilvey, C. 2006. "Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things." *Journal of Material Culture November* 11:3, 318-338.

Doron, G.M. 2007. "...badlands, blank space, border vacuums, brown fields, conceptual Nevada, Dead Zones ..." *field: a free journal for architecture*. 1:1, 10-23.

http://www.field-journal.org/uploads/file/2007_Volume_1/g%20doron.pdf

(retrieved 27 May 2011)

Douglas, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.

London: Routledge.

Dunlop, D.W. *Showcase: Emptied But Still Secret*.

<http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/23/asylum/> (retrieved 24 November 2009)

Éber, M., Szegő, D. n.d. "Transitional places. Bars in ruins, retro-gardens and nostalgia cafes in Budapest at the dawn of the 21st century."

<http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=13033&ctag=articlelist&iid=1> (retrieved 10 November 2011)

Edensor T, 2005a. *Industrial Ruins: Aesthetics, Materiality and Memory*. Berg: Oxford

Edensor, T. 2005b. "The ghosts of industrial ruins: ordering and disordering memory in excessive space." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23: 829-849.

Edensor, T. 2007. "Sensing the Ruin." *Senses & Society* 2:2. 217–232.

Foucault, M. 1967. *Of Other Spaces – Heterotopias*.

<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html> (retrieved 10 January 2011)

G. Daskalakis et al. (eds.) 2001. *Stalking Detroit*. Barcelona: ACTAR.

Garrett, B.L. 2010. "Urban explorers: quests for myth, mystery and meaning." *Geography Compass*, 4:6, 1448–1461 (paper and video article)

Garrett, B.L. 2011. "Review of *Ruins of modernity* by Hell & Schönle". *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, 378-380.

Garrett, B.L. *Place Hacking. Explore Everything*. Bradley L. Garrett's blog at

<http://www.placehacking.co.uk/>

Ginsberg, R. 2004. *The Aesthetics of Ruins*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

- Groth, J. and Corijn, E. 2005. Reclaiming urbanity: Indeterminate spaces, informal actors and urban agenda setting, *Urban Studies*, 42:3, 503-526.
- Harris. 2010. *Urban Exploration: The Search for Memory in Forgotten Place*. (thesis)
- Hell, J., Schönle, A. (eds.) 2010. *Ruins of modernity*. Durham : Duke University Press.
- High, S., Lewis, D.W. 2007. *Corporate wasteland. The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.
- Holston, J. 1999. Spaces of insurgent citizenship, in: J. Holston, (Ed.) *Cities and Citizenship*, pp. 155-173. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Huyssen, A. 1995. *Twilight memories: marking time in a culture of amnesia*. New York: Routledge.
- Huyssen, A. 2003. *Present pasts : urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Infiltration. <http://www.infiltration.org/>
- Jedlowski, P. 2001. "Memory and Sociology. Themes and Issues." *Time and Society*. 10:1, 29-44.
- Kortárs Építészeti Központ. <http://kek.org.hu/>
- Kukely Gy., Barta Gy., Beluszky P., Győri R. 2006. "Barnamezős területek rehabilitációja Budapesten." *Tér és Társadalom*. 1, 57-71.
- Lefebvre, H. 1996. *Writings on Cities*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Lugosi, P., Lugosi, K., 2008. Guerrilla Hospitality: Urban Decay, Entrepreneurship and the 'Ruin' Bars of Budapest. *The Hospitality Review* 36-44.
- Lugosi, P; Bell, D., Lugosi, K. 2010. "Hospitality, Culture and Regeneration: Urban decay, entrepreneurship and the "ruin" bars of Budapest". *Urban Studies* 47, 1-23.
- McRae, J. D. 2008. *Play city life: Henri Lefebvre, urban exploration and re-imagined possibilities for urban life*. Master's Thesis at Queen's University.

https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/1046/1/McRae_James_D_200802_MA.pdf (retrieved 25 October 2010)

Morris, B. 2004. "What we talk about when we talk about 'walking in the city.'" *Cultural Studies*, 18: 5, 675 — 697.

Ninjalicious. 2005. *Access All Areas: a user's guide to the art of urban exploration*. Canada:Infilpress.

Orange H. 2008. "Industrial Archaeology: Its Place Within the Academic Discipline, the Public Realm and the Heritage Industry." *Industrial Archaeology Review*, 30:2,83-95.

Pallai, K. 2004. *Emergence of Strategic Planning in the 1990s - The Case of Budapest*.
http://www.pallai.hu/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/2004_strategic_planning-bch.pdf
(retrieved 30 May 2011)

Pile, S. 2005. *Real Cities*. London: Sage Publications.

Polyák, L. *Urban spaces of periphery, or the rediscovery of the edges of Budapest*.
<http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=en&page=3&id=358> (retrieved 4 December 2010)

Rév8 Józsefvárosi Rehabilitációs és Városfejlesztési Zrt. 2007. Regeneration Program in Budapest – Józsefváros, Magdolna Quarter Project.
http://www.rev8.hu/csatolmanyok/eng_dokok/eng_dokok_2.pdf (retrieved June 2011)

Trigg, D. 2006. *The Aesthetics of Decay* New York: Peter Lang.

Turner, V. 1977. *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Wolff, K.H. (ed.) 1959. *Georg Simmel, 1858-1918. A collection of essays with translations and a bibliography*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Zukin, S. 2010. "Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World" in *Blackwell a City Reader*. 2nd Edition. West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Appendix 1
Photos from Altomán's blog (<http://altoman.blog.hu>)



“Dead station”



“Socialism's ghost train”



“Fleurs du mal 3/3” (former campsite for children)



“Fleurs du mal 3/3” (former campsite for children)

Appendix 2

Photos from the *Urban Walks* website (<http://kek.org.hu/varosisetak/setak/fotok>)

Credits: Tamás Bujnovszky



Budafok Paper Factory



Budafok Paper Factory



Várkert Bazár



Kelenföld Power Plant



Várkert Bazár



Budafok Paper Factory

Appendix 3

Photos of abandonment from <http://indafoto.hu>

Credits: michaud



“Factory”

<http://indafoto.hu/michaud/image/6661485-5427cb77/254233>



“Tower” (abandoned housing estate)

<http://indafoto.hu/michaud/image/7794971-7a5cebca/254233>



“Jubileum8” (Ferencváros Railway Station)

<http://indafoto.hu/michaud/image/8699607-102433cd>



“Post” (before demolition)

<http://indafoto.hu/michaud/image/8236269-b1815367/254233>



“Stage” (Budai Park Színpad)

<http://indafoto.hu/michaud/image/6661819-67800568/254233>



“Lacháza”

<http://indafoto.hu/michaud/image/8136109-6b23b182/user>

Appendix 4

Questionnaire about the *Urban Walks*

Az elhagyott városi terekről, épületekről szóló szakdolgozatomhoz kérném a segítségét. Köszönöm, hogy a rövid kérdőív kitöltésével és visszaküldésével segíti munkámat. Az adatokat bizalmasan kezelem. A kérdőív a *Városi Séták*kal és az ön ehhez fűződő élményeivel kapcsolatos.

Amennyiben egy rövid interjúra is lenne ideje ehhez kötődően (akár a következő séta alkalmával), kérem, a fenti címen jelezze!

Köszönettel: Varsányi Kata (Közép-Európai Egyetem)

„Funkciójukat veszített középületek, elhagyott víztornyok, újrahasznosításra váró ipari létesítmények – a KÉK szervezésében ismét jelentkező Városi Séták a felfedezés élményét kínálják az építészet iránt nyitott érdeklődőknek.”

1. Honnan értesült a *Városi Séták*ról?

- a) a KÉK-hírlevélből
- b) ismerőstől
- c) egyéb: _____

2. Mi a foglalkozása?

- a) építész /építész hallgató b) egyéb: _____

3. Miért jelentkezett a *Városi Séták*ra? (több válasz is megjelölhető)

- a) személyes kötődés a helyekhez
- b) építészeti jellegű érdeklődés
- c) történelmi jellegű érdeklődés
- d) máskor/máshogyan nem nyílna lehetőség a látogatásra
- e) kíváncsiság
- f) egyéb: _____

4. Hány KÉK-es *Városi Sétán* vett már részt? _____

(Emlékeztetőül a Séták helyszínei a 2.évadban, 2010-től: OPNI, Várkert Bazár, Budafoki Papírgyár, Kelenföldi Hőerőmű, Zsinagóga-túra, Rákosi-bunker, M4-túrák, Magyar Szentföld Templom)

5. Melyik volt a legérdekesebb/legjobb/meghatározóbb élmény? Miért?

6. Mit és mennyire tart fontosnak egy *Városi Séta* előtt és közben? Adjon egy pontszámot 1-től 5-ig mindegyik témának: 1 egyáltalán nem tartom fontosnak → 5 nagyon fontosnak tartom)

- a) előzetes tájékozódás a hely/épület történetéről (háttér-információ)
- b) a vezetés során elhangzó történelmi vonatkozások
- c) a vezetés során elhangzó építészeti vonatkozások
- d) a vezetés során elhangzó személyes történetek az épülethez kapcsolódóan
- e) a vezetés nem olyan, fontos inkább magam fedezem fel a helyet
- f) fotók készítése

7. Ha készít fotókat a *Séták* alatt, milyen célból?

- a) dokumentálás saját célra b) megosztás céljából c) művészi célból

8. Látogatott már hasonló helyeket egyénileg? Ha igen, hol? _____

9. Budapest melyik részét „fedezné fel” szívesen legközelebb, akár egyénileg, akár a *Városi Séták* keretében?

10. Foglalja össze röviden, mit jelentenek önnek a *Városi Séták*!
