BUSINESS AT THE INTERSECTION OF TOURISM AND CULTURE:

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF ALTERNATIVE TOURISM COMPANIES IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

By

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ABSTRACT

Alternative tourism, defined by Eadington and Smith (1992:3) as "forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social, and community values," has emerged in the past twenty years as a salient descriptor for a diverse array of tourism companies, products, and activities that are positioned, sometimes explicitly, against the traditional mass tourism experience. This relatively new niche in the tourism market has prompted much interest from tourism researchers but confusion remains around how to more precisely define this niche and understand its diverse forms as well as its potential as a vehicle for sustainable development. What is alternative tourism? Who are the social actors and institutions involved in its practice? What does it do that is precisely "alternative"?

This exploratory study pursues these questions in the context of the burgeoning tourism industry in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary. Ethnographic methods of interview and participant observation have been utilized to closely study four companies in Budapest defining themselves as "alternative tourism providers." Investigation focuses on the motivations, backgrounds, and work of the guides and owners operating these companies and the "alternative" representations of the city that they create and sell.

Alternative tours emerge in this study as cultural products created at the intersection of tourism and culture, where profit-making aims are wedded with the tastes, knowledge, class backgrounds, and sentiments of cultural producers who craft a particular story of Budapest through these tours. The study concludes that, contrary to predominant definitions of alternative tourism which emphasize the centrality of ethical and environmentally responsible business practices when conceptualizing this niche, in fact, the companies in my study more clearly share a common aim to produce and sell specialized narratives of the history and culture of Budapest to upper class tourists through private, luxury walking tours.

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INTRODUCTION

What Is Alternative Tourism?

Alternative tourism, defined generally by Eadington and Smith (1992:3) as "forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social, and community values," has emerged in the past twenty years as a salient descriptor for a diverse array of tourism companies, products, and activities that are positioned, sometimes explicitly, against the traditional mass tourism experience. This new niche market has received much attention from social scientists and policy makers interested in its capacity as a vehicle for sustainable economic growth sensitive to the values and concerns of local communities.

Despite growing interest, debate persists regarding whether predominant definitions of alternative tourism, such as the one cited above, are adequate to describe the heterogeneous mix of tourism businesses which define themselves as "alternative." Used intermittently alongside other descriptors such as sustainable tourism, alternative tourism remains as yet a vaguely understood term.

In the Budapest context, the four alternative companies that I investigated in this ethnography provide high-priced, private walking tours of the city which take small groups of people to locations and neighborhoods of Budapest "which you won't find in the guidebooks," as one marketing slogan states. Alternative tours have taken me to such diverse locales as an abandoned synagogue, a recycled lamp shop, a 19th century sculpture garden, a socialist-era department store, and a Roma family's living room. These tours often have themes such as the "The Hidden Treasures of the Jewish District" or "Budapest: Go District," to name just two.

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This ethnographic study is an initial exploratory attempt to investigate this burgeoning alternative tourism market in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary, with a specific focus on the local entrepreneurs and tourism workers inhabiting this niche. What is alternative tourism in Budapest? Who are the local actors and institutions involved in its practice? What does it do that is precisely "alternative"? Can these alternative companies be fairly described as engaging in a form of responsible or sustainable tourism, as many academics of speculated, or are they doing something different

I will argue in this paper that, contrary to current definitions of alternative tourism which emphasize the centrality of ethical and environmentally responsible business practices, in fact, the companies featured in my study more clearly share a common aim to provide alternative narratives of the history and culture of Budapest and Hungary to up-market clients. In this case, alternative tourism should not necessarily be conflated with sustainable tourism.

Rather, in this ethnography an account of alternative tourism will emerge in which alternative companies produce and sell narratives of city life "alternative" to those of mainstream tourism. Following the work of Goffman (1974) and Wynn (2005), I will argue that the guides and operators of these companies are cultural producers who "key," or frame, the city through the production of such narratives. Following Sewell (1992) and Swidler (1984), culture in this context is defined as schemas through which the world is rendered meaningful and navigable to social actors. In this context, walking tours constitute cultural representations which are constructed, communicated and sold to tourists through the efforts of small business entrepreneurs and tour guides working in this niche.

Utilizing Bourdieu's theory of *distinction* and data from my research, I will also highlight the mechanisms of class distinction at play in the attempts of middle class entrepreneurs and

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guides todefine their companies and these narratives ashigh quality,up-market "alternatives"to "the tourism of the masses." In this context, the production, consumption, and discursive framing of these alternative travel experiences became a mechanism for class distinction rooted in the everyday practices of tourism workers and tourists.

Why Tourism?

As Stronza (2001) writes, tourism really only became a legitimate subject of study for social scientists in the 1970's. However, since then, the study of tourism has not only occupied the interests of numerous anthropologists and sociologists, but it also constitutes its own subfield: tourism and leisure studies. Tourism is arguably a ubiquitous feature of modern life, present in different forms from the remote village to the urban center. The *World Tourism Organization*estimated that 940 million tourist arrivals occurred in 2010 generating \$919 billion in revenue worldwide and indicating an overall increase of 6.6 percent from 2009.

Clearly, tourism is big business. Evaluating the impact of this economic activity on tourists, communities, and the world more generally has been a central preoccupation for many of the social scientists studying this field. These studies gain increasing relevance to public sphere debates as tourism continues to be touted by policy makers and development experts as a vehicle for economic growth, particularly in the developing world.

Aside from these policy debates, however, tourism, as Lenn (1989:275) has noted, may be the "single largest peaceful movement of people across cultural boundaries in the history of the world." For anthropologists, tourism, as a global industry linking individuals, cultures, and capital, provides a unique opportunity to investigate the social reproduction, change, and interaction that takes place within economic practice. In addition, studies of tourism provide the

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opportunity to critically evaluate economic development strategies which are increasingly relevant in public sphere debates. In this sense, my study is firmly rooted in the tradition of economic anthropology, founded upon Karl Polányi's central principle that the economic is embedded in the social (Polányi 1944).

Outside of my interest in the debates described above, I was also led to tourism through my experiences as a European city dweller. As urban studies specialists have noted (Judd and Fainstein 1999; Wynn 2005; Metro-Roland 2011), tourists have also become a ubiquitous presence in most major urban centers. With 12.4 million foreign tourists visiting in 2009 and spending approximately 4.2 billion dollars in the city that year, Budapest has been no exception (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2009).

I first stumbled upon the idea to study alternative tourism when I spotted a small group of what appeared to be tourists on a walking tour of the 8th district of Budapest, an area of the city with a reputation for poverty, crime, and ethnic strife. Tourists groups are typically a rare sight in this neighborhood, and after some time spent scouring the web later that evening I identified the tour company most likely facilitating that tour as well as numerous other companies offering to show visitors "a different side of Budapest." After sifting through marketing materials, newspaper articles, and asking around amongst friends who had guided for some of these companies, I came upon the descriptor "alternative tourism," used by local media as well as in the marketing materials of the tour companies themselves, to describe the business that these companies do in the city.

Tourists, such as the group discussed above as well as numerous others, are increasingly an integral part of the "sidewalk ballet" of city life (Jacobs 1961:50, as cited in Wynn 2005: 3). Most if not all residents of downtown Budapest encounter tourists on a daily basis, and their

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presence impacts the cityscape in numerous complex ways. This study is an effort to understand some of these processes taking place in the city, specially focusing on the emergence of alternative tourism as a sight of cultural production and social interaction in the urban setting. In this sense, my work is therefore also rooted in urban anthropology.

Methodology

Ethnography provides a unique and effective way to access meanings that actors attribute to what they do and follow social action as it happens.The methodology of this study, therefore, largely draws from classic ethnographic methods pioneered by Malinowski (1922), Geertz (1975), and others, which rely on description and grounded interpretation of social action. Qualitative methods of participant observation and semi-structured interview were the main methods used. I have tried to provide, as a final product of this work, an analysis of alternative tourism grounded in "thick description" which integrates accounts of social action with the subjective meanings that actors attribute to it (Geertz 1975). I have tried as much as possible to let the data that I have collected guide and interrogate theoretical concepts used in my analysis.

Over the course of one month, I went on five alternative tours and conducted intensive interviews with thirteen individuals[1]. I also participated in two tours defined as "mainstream" for comparison. The alternative companies chosen for my study were selected through research conducted online and in local media. Each of the four companies investigated has been featured in one of the local new media outlets as an "alternative tour company" in the past two years and

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[1] My informants were involved with alternative tourism in the following ways: 1 founder/director of operations, 1 founder/program coordinator/tour guide, 1 founder/business manager, 1 programs coordinator/ guide, 1 office assistant/ tourist, 4 guides, and 4 tourists. I spoke to the founders of 3 of the 4 companies investigated and a long-time employee and program coordinator of the other. Guide informants collectively worked for 3 of the 4 companies studied. I was able to go on tours offered by 3 of the 4 companies.

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produces marketing materials which describe it as such. Three out of the four companies featured are also members of *Kulturista*, a newly founded collective of "alternative tourism providers" operating in Budapest. Names of informants have been altered in this ethnography for the protection of research participants.

This ethnography was not created in a vacuum by a value-free and all-knowing expert. Rather, as a positioned subject and participant in this story, I have attempted to create a well-constructed, but inevitably partial, account of a social phenomenon. One such limitation of this account is that the perspective of the tourists themselves is largely left untreated. Due to policies of the tour companies and limited time, I was unable to access these private, pre-arranged tours and thus was forced to recruit fellow participants in alternative tours from my university. Although I interviewed most of these participants, many of whom were complete strangers, the data from these interviews is arguably not representative of the majority of consumers who attend these tours. Therefore, my ethnography focuses chiefly on the meanings and actions of the entrepreneurs, tour operators, and guides creating the alternative tours. The perspectives and actions of these individuals nonetheless produced a wealth of rich and worthwhile data, which I hope that the remainder of this ethnography will demonstrate.

Outline

The second chapter of this paper will be review of some major themes and debates in the social science literature regarding tourism. Special attention will be paid to emerging subfields, including sustainable tourism and cultural tourism, which are often discussed in tandem with alternative tourism.

In the third chapter, I will describe the field of social relations through which the alternative tourism business is produced in Budapest and the specific socio-historical context in which the tourism emerged in Budapest and also Hungary more generally. This section will serve as a summary and analysis of the field of social actors and institutions involved in the emergence and functioning of this niche market and their relations to one another.

In the fourthchapter, I will shift focus to the motivations and work of the small business entrepreneursstarting these companies and the tour guides largely producing and delivering this alternative product. Analysis in the third chapter will focus on the meanings and motivation entrepreneurs and tour guides attribute to their work as producers and sellers of city culture alongside mainstream tourism companies in Budapest.Attention will also be paid to the specific role that tour guides play in the alternative tour and how they bring their personal histories, motivations, and meanings to their work. The challenges, benefits, and realities of such precarious employment will also be discussed. Throughout both these chapters I will highlight the process of class distinction taking place in the packaging and delivery of these cultural representations.

The fifth chapter will focus on the product of the work of the guides and small entrepreneurs discussed in in this thesis: the tour itself. I will provide a descriptive account of the content of these tours (i.e. the places tourist are taken and the information shared with them) and the methods used to convey that content (lecture, questions, games, conversation) by comparing my experiences as a tourist on both mainstream and alternative tours. I will then utilize ethnographic data to argue that alternative tours, in addition to facilitating class distinction, constitute "keyings," or framings, (Goffman 1959; Wynn 2005) of the city that in some cases

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may be counter to the mainstream and thus "re-keyings." Throughout I will be using ethnographic vignettes to ground my arguments. There will be a brief conclusion.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORIZING TOURISM AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

1.1 THE EMERGENCE OF TOURISM IN SOCIAL THEORY

Despite its relatively recent emergence, the study of tourism in the social sciences has generated a vast amount of literature, theories, and debates of significant depth. This review will summarize and discuss some of the major debates in the literature with emphasis being placed on research regarding emerging niche markets in the tourism sector.

The sociological investigation of tourism evolved into a legitimate endeavor in the late twentieth century with Erik Cohen's (1972) typological essay and MacCannell's (1973) theoretical treatise on the subject. As Cohen (2004) himself has argued, until the late twentieth century, much social theory focused on questions of power, labor, and class, following Weber (1912), Marx (1867), and numerous others. Tourism, although acknowledged as a modern phenomenon, did not become a central subject of inquiry until the 1980's and 1990's with increasing interest in consumerism and popular culture in the social sciences. The study of tourism in sociology solidified a general interest in leisure which remains in the social theory literature today (Cohen 2004).

In this context, MacCannell's (1973) formulation of the tourist as the modern subject on a doomed quest for authenticity synthesized emerging topics of interest such as popular leisure with well-established debates and theories regarding modernity and capitalism (Cohen 2004). For MacCannell, sightseeing constituted a form of modern ritual in which sights functioned as symbols through which society could be read and differentiated. In a context where authenticity

was only to be found in an exotic locale far away from the shallowness of modern life, MacCannell argued that the modern subject becomes a tourist searching for a true "back stage" amidst an array of staged ones contrived (ironically) by locals for the tourist. Through this argument, tourism emerges as a futile endeavor and symptom of modern malaise.

John Urry's work (1991) constitutes a later effort to synthesize theories of modernity with tourism through his conception of the "tourist gaze." Urry argues that at the core of tourist practice is a modernist will to knowledge, facilitated by the sense of sight (i.e. the gaze). Embedded within the knowing and privileged gaze of the tourist is an asymmetrical power relationship in which the tourist is able to see and assess the gazed upon local in a relatively one-sided interaction. He argues that much of the tourism industry is set up to facilitate and commodify this power relationship. Along with MacCannell, the work of Urry represents another attempt to broadly theorize and integrate tourism into contemporary social theory.

1.2 CENTRAL DEBATES: WHAT IS TOURISM AND WHO IS THE TOURIST?

Since MacCannell's contribution, many researchers (Cohen 1984; Swarbrook and Horner 1999; Suvantola 2002; Lyons 2005; Steiner and Reisinger 2006) have criticized his broad depiction of tourist motivations as overly simplistic. These debates constitute a central controversy in sociological studies of tourism, crystallized in the following related questions: what is tourism and secondarily, who is the tourist?

Cohen's (1972, 1973, 1979) numerous efforts to theorize a systematic and varied typology of the tourist provide the most authoritative counterpoint to MacCannell's broad authenticity thesis. Cohen identifies four tourist types, the organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the drifter, and the explorer, based on the amount of exposure the tourist has had to

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the host environment vs. seclusion in hotels and other "bubbles" manufactured for tourists by the industry. Other researchers (Ritzer and Liska 1997, Rojek 1993, MacCannell 1989) have argued for the emergence of the ironically aware "post-tourist" who accepts and perhaps even revels in the inauthenticity and commodification of the experience of travel. As evidence of the emergence of this post-tourism, Bryman (1997) cites the popularity of places such as Las Vegas and Disney Land in which obvious fakes of famous sights (such as the Eiffel Tower or canals of Venice) are key attractions so well-constructed that they constitute simulacra that are "more real than the real" (Rizter and Liska 1997:102). Present in the work of these authors is the assumption that there is a vast array of diversity in the characteristics and motivations as well as the kind of activities tourists take part in. Nonetheless through observation and theory, ideal types can be established. My study and other such efforts to describe and define alternative tourism and other niche markets in part arise from this trend in the literature.

In more recent moves towards deconstructionism, Rojek and Urry (1997) and others (Wearing, Stevenson, and Young 2005; Dann and Jacobson 2003) question the usefulness and validity of describing tourists and tourism in such strict typologies or drawing boundaries between tourism as a discrete practice and culture more generally.In these contributions, the so-called "post-modern turn" of the late 20th century towards critical deconstruction of central categories and assumptions of earlier social theorists finds expression in the tourism literature (Harvey 1991). Following David Harvey's (1991) analysis of late modernity, Rojek and Urry argue that with the emergence of consumer capitalism in the Post-Fordist era, a "culturization of society" constituting "de-differentiation" in discourse and practice between all sorts of social and cultural spheres which previously were distinct" has occurred (Rojek and Urry 1997: 3). Such spheres include high/low art, home/abroad, and the cultural/the economic. They argue that

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culture and tourism now hugely overlap, citing examples such as the rise of cultural tourism and cultural production through and for tourism, the mass movement of cultures through migration, and the emergence of tourism as an established cultural practice in Western societies. Culture, in this context is defined, following Sewell (1992) and Swidler (1984) as constantly transforming schemas through which the world is rendered meaningful and navigable by social actors. As an examination of how tour guides produce and sell culture,in the form of the alternative walking tour, this study interrogates this posited overlap between tourism and cultureAs an attempt to re-conceptualize alternative tourism through theories of social space and distinction, this study is also an attempt to move beyond typologies to a conceptualization of alternative tourism which considers the social processes underlying such practices.

1.3 CENTRAL DEBATES: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON HOST COMMUNITIES

Another central theme in the tourism literature has been an interest in the impact of tourism on local communities. Much ink has been spilt in the social sciences assessing the effects (overwhelmingly viewed as negative) of tourism in both Western and non-Western settings. Stronza (2001) in her review of the tourism literature identifies two streams in these critiques of tourism: studies assessing economic change and those focusing on socio-cultural change.

Policy makers and economists from the 1970's to the present have viewed the economic impact and potential of tourism development as overwhelming positive, citing the tourism industry's role as a key sector of economic growth particularly in developing countries (World Bank 2012).Much of the work of social science researchers has been dedicated to interrogating and complicating this assessment with ethnographic data from around the world.

As Crick (1989) has noted, at the level of macro-economic analysis, the benefits of tourism are limited by a number of factors including leakages of revenue to non-local beneficiaries (foreign or multi-national companies, for example), increases in local prices coupled with a rise in low-paying service sector jobs and increased social stratification, substantial public spending required for infrastructure, and over –dependence on an unstable industry dependent on the fickle demands of tourists and on political stability more generally (316).

Numerous researchers have also focused on the impact of tourism on the culture of host communities. In his introduction to the edited volume *Tourism and Cultural Conflicts* (1999) dedicated to the subject, Robinson argues that tourism often results in inequalities and cultural conflict that far outweigh its supposed benefits. He cites for example the commodification of local culture by outside agencies (also see Silver 1993; Macdonald 1997), the degradation of natural resources (also see Chatterjee 1993; Robinson 1996), and the introduction of asymmetrical power relationships (also see Cukier 1996) as detrimental to the socio-cultural ecology of a community.

In addition, despite the breadth of literature on the subject, as Stronza (2001) points out, little is known about local motivations for engaging with tourism and becoming employed in the sector. In their efforts to chronicle the vices of tourism, researchers have largely overlooked local perspectives on the subject. This ethnography is in part an effort to mend this gap by investigating the lives of local entrepreneurs and tourism workers in Budapest.

1.4 TOURISM AND ITS IMPACT ON URBAN SPACE

The impact of tourism on the urban environment has also constituted a significant subarea of interest for tourism researchers. As Selby (2004) points out in Understanding Urban Tourism: Image, Culture, and Experience, in an era of massive de-industrialization , cities have increasing turned to the service sector, and in particular, the tourism industry for economic growth and survival. Place-marketing has emerged as a common strategy for achieving this transition. As Fainstein and Judd (1999) argue in their introduction to The Tourist City:

> Cities are [now] sold just like any other consumer product. They have adopted image advertising, a development that can hardly escape any traveler who opens an airline magazine and reads its formulaic articles on the alleged culinary and cultural delights of Dallas, Frankfurt, or Auckland (4).

In this effort to become a tourist escape, Fainstein and Judd argue that cities often must mobilize such resources as heritage, culture, and architecture for urban renewal projects or, in the case of such resorts cities as Las Vegas, must create a veritable urban Disney World for the tourist out for nothing (7). These strategies for tourism development have stimulated much public debate alongside broader questions regarding urban renewal and its consequences. As urban renewal initiatives transform city landscapes in the name of, amongst other things, tourism development, who wins, who loses, and what happens to the social fabric of the city (Fainstein and Judd 1999)?Much research (Metro-Roland 2011; Hoffman and Musil 2005, 1999; Erlich and Drier 1999) on tourism in the urban setting has focused on answering these questions.

Urban geographers have also made significant contributions in recent years to the study of tourism and how it transforms and is transformed by space. David Harvey (1997) in his essay on contemporary urbanization conceptualizes the city as constituted of and by heterogeneous and conflicting social processes. These processes in turn create "thing-like" forms such as territories,

built structures, and fixed social relations which, in fact, are the results of fluid social processes (Harvey 1997: 20). In this argument, the city emerges as a product of a dialectical relationship "between process and thing," in which space both shapes and is shaped by culture(23).Through this process of negotiation, "space" becomes culturally meaningful "place" (Low and Zuniga 2003).Geographers(Nelson 2005; Chang and Lim 2004; Hampton 2003) have explored this dialectical relationship of culture and space in the context of representations of cities (driven by the place-marketing described above) generated by the tourism industry. How do these representations and the "entrepreneurial re-imaginings" behind themtransform the city Chang and Lim 2004)?

Jonathan Wynn's (2005) study of walking tours in New York City provides an example of an ethnographic approach to assessing the impact of tourism-generated representations on the city, with a focus on the cultural productions of tour guides and their companies. Through detailed interview and participation observation of tours, he argues that tour guides are cultural producers who "re-enchant" the city with alternative narratives of city life and culture. His thesis stands in contrast to arguments that cities (and the world more generally) are becoming increasing rationalized and homogenized due to globalization, mass tourism, and diversification of economic sectors (Rizter 1993; Weber 1930). As another ethnographic study of tour guiding, my study shares much of the methods, theoretical perspectives, and questions present in Wynn's research. In my case, these tools will be mobilized along with my own ethnographic data to further understand alternative tourism in Budapest and its impact on the urban landscape.

1.5 ALTERNATIVE TOURISMS: NICHE MARKETS IN THE POST-FORDIST ERA

As the tourism industry has grown and diversified in the past fifty years, scholars have increasingly recognized the importance of emerging niche markets, including eco-tourism, cultural tourism, food tourism, and others. These niche markets have been labeled by some (Wearing, Stevenson, and Young 2005) as forms of a broader kind of alternative tourism, positioned sometimes explicitly against the mass tourist track. As Harvey (1989) has argued, the emergence of these niche markets may reflect a broader structural transformation in capitalism from a Fordist paradigm in which mass consumption of durable, homogenous products was the norm to a Post-Fordist paradigm in which an array of diverse products are created in small quantities to fit highly individualized consumer desires.Following this thesis, tourism for the masses is now being replaced with a highly specific, client-driven niche tourism adapted to the specific desires of the Post-Fordist consumer.

Although numerous tourism studies (Trauer 2006, Douglas et al 2001) experts have created detailed typologies of such "special interest" markets, debate still exists regarding how and if these precise definitions actually play out in real life. What distinguishes these niche tourisms from mass tourism more generally? Is there overlap? Can they be justifiably called "alternative"? How is the word "alternative" mobilized in this context and what does it do? How do these emerging markets reflect broader changes in the tourism industry, modern capitalism, or even society more generally?

In this section, I will provide a brief review of theoretical approaches to the emerging niche markets which are often discussed interchangeably with alternative tourism: cultural tourism and sustainable tourism. I will then finish this review by discussing some efforts to

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define and analyze alternative tourism and presenting the theoretical framework I will be using in my own analysis.

1.5.1 Sustainable Tourism: An Ethically Responsible Alternative?

Sustainable tourism, as defined by the World Tourism Organization, consists of a set of ethically-responsible business practices which help ensure the economic, ecological, and socio-cultural sustainability of both the host community and the tourist enterprise. The participation and input of local stakeholders throughout the construction and delivery of the tourism product is a key aspect of these sustainable standards (World Tourism Organization 2004).

In the tourism literature, sustainable tourism has constituted a new area of interest, particularly in debates regarding its potential as a sustainable strategy for economic growth in the developing world (Stronza 2001, Font 2004, Hudson 2007). Within the continually diversifying tourism market, it has emerged as highly heterogeneous niche which defines itself and its product through its adherence to ethical standards (Lansing and DeVries 2007). Sustainable tourist companies often attempt to ameliorate some of the most pointed contemporary critiques of the tourist industry, namely the impact of tourism on the natural environment, the impact of tourism on the socio-cultural environment, and the distribution of economic gains from tourism development (Lansing and Devries 2007). Examples of specific strategies used by tourism companies to mitigate these problems include improving job quality in the tourism sector by providing well-paid, stable employment with educational and health benefits to locals, minimizing waste production involved in marketing and delivering tourist products, and integrating local stakeholders directly in decisions about the presentation and preservation of socio-historical sites featured on tour itineraries (Murphy and Price 2005).

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Like ethical consumption initiatives more generally, sustainable tourism has been the subject of much critique from without and without academia. Most critique centers on the question of whether companies in fact adopt sustainable practices or if the name itself is only used as marketing ploy to attract a certain kind of customer (Wheeler 1995; Mowforth and Munt 2003; Liu 2003; Lansing and Devries 2007). Many critics maintain that, precisely because of the flexibility with which the term is used and adopted, sustainable tourism is in fact often more a marketing ploy than a real effort to insert ethical principles into tourist development. Lansing and Devries (2007) and Murphy and Price (2005) both suggest that concrete guidelines must be developed and international oversight mechanisms established in order to realize the goals laid out by the World Tourism Organization.

1.5.2 Touring Culture: The Emergence of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism, defined by the World Tourism Organization as "movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts, and cultural tours" has emerged in the twenty-first century as a salient subfield of tourism (Wearing, Stevenson, and Young 2010). This mode of tourism has typically been packaged by agencies as an authentic interaction with local culture, sometimes positioned as an alternative to the typical mass-tourism itinerary. Its primary focus is the experience of authentic cultural sites, events, and interaction.

Arguably from its infancy, tourism has been rooted in an interest in education and self-improvement through encounters with authentic culture. The word tourism itself is linked by scholars to the Grand Tour undertaken by youth of the European aristocracy and bourgeoisie during the 18th and 19th centuries (Richards 2005). These tours of the major cultural centers in Europe often functioned as "cultural finishing schools" for young aristocrats and bourgeoisie

who had completed their formal education.   Although culture continued to be an important motivator for tourism into the twentieth century, the institutionalization of paid holidays also stimulated the growth of domestic leisure tourism, particularly in Northern Europe (Richards 2005).

In the twentieth century, as economic growth, the end of the world wars, technological advances in travel, higher standards of living, and a shortened work year brought mass tourism to an unprecedented amount of people in Western industrial societies, cultural tourism for self-improvement as it was practiced in the 18th and 19th century became eclipsed by an emphasis on travel for leisure, shopping, and viewing famous sights (Cohen 1984). As Jennifer Craik (1999) argues, "gradually the educational and cultivating aspects of tourism were diluted in more prosaic quests for exploration, escape, and pleasure" (119). The popularity in "sea and sun" vacations and theme parks such as Disney World are examples of this tendency.

Cultural tourism re-emerged as a niche market in the late twentieth century with the continued diversification of the tourism sector and the rise of the cultural industry (Rojek and Urry 1997: 4). Craik (1999) and others (Britton 1991; Silberburg 1991) have also attempted to trace different categories of tourist activity internal to cultural tourism. These typological efforts have been mirrored in the tourism policy studies literature with as many as fifteen different sub-types of cultural tourism being identified, including festival tourism, industrial tourism, eco-tourism, heritage tourism, and others (Richards 1995). Sociologists and anthropologists of tourism have generally tended to stay away from such minute typologies and instead have identified a few major cleavages amongst activities carried out under the aegis of cultural tourism. One such cleavage includes divisions between "high" and "low" cultural activities categories differentiating, for example, festival tourism associated with youth, drinking, and

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popular music, from "high" culture activities such as opera festivals (Cohen 1992). Two other key divisions include arts tourism, or tourist activity centered around consuming the fine arts, and heritage tourism, tourist activity which focuses on the consumption of historical sites and artifacts.

1.5.3.Conceptualizing Alternative Tourism

In the current literature on the subject, the term alternative tourism has generally been used to refer to a more ethical form of tourism that is congruent with social values of both host and guest, dedicated to providing an enriching experience for all participants in tourist activity, and sensitive to the ecological, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability of the host community, i.e. sustainable tourism (Douglas et. al 2001; Smith and Eadington 1992:3; Cohen 1987). Thus in current literature, alternative tourism often becomes another word for sustainable tourism.

Empirical work on alternative tourism often reflects this tendency. In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, the region of interest for my study, most of the work ostensibly on alternative tourism focuses on sustainable tourism practices in the rural countryside. This work addresses such diverse cases as rural village tourism in the Balkans (Hall 1998), mountain tourism in Romania (Turnock 1999), and the renovation of country palaces in rural Poland (Mazurski 2000). Outside of Central Europe, Tamara Young's work (2008, 2009) on national park tourism in Australia and Belsky's (1999) study of community-based rural tourism in Belize provide examples of this tendency to favor rural settings and companies labeled primarily as sustainable. Debates reflect broader concerns in the sustainable tourism literature regarding the validity of ethical claims and often aim to assess the success of these initiatives. In these cases, sustainable tourism and alternative tourism are often accepted as more-or-less synonymous.

Alternative tourism in the urban setting has been largely neglected in the literature, and this study is in part an effort to address this gap. The companies I studied in Budapest in many ways challenge the tendency in the literature described above to uncritically equate sustainable tourism with alternative tourism. Only two of the four alternative tourism companies studied in this ethnography utilized the term sustainable tourism as a descriptor for their work, and only one of those companies described sustainable practices as a central part of their business model and concept. Rather, materials promoting the alternative tourism collective in Budapest chiefly highlight the authentic and "off-the-beaten path" encounters with city culture that these tours attempt to facilitate.

If this is the case, the next step might be to conclude that perhaps cultural tourism would be a better descriptor for alternative tourism in Budapest. It is true that the alternative companies analyzed in this study, with their collective emphasis on authentic interactions with Budapest culture, arguably constitute forms of cultural tourism. In the case of urban Central Europe, however, when the majority of most tourist activities (mass and otherwise) involve some encounter with culture, what makes these tourism companies "alternative" is not that they facilitate encounters with local culture. It is, rather, how they define culture.

In order to construct an accurate definition of alternative tourism, we must acknowledge that such alternative companies and practices emerge from diverse and specific social contexts. Considering this heterogeneity, Bourdieu's concept of distinction (1984) provides a useful tool for formulating an account of alternative tourism which is sensitive toprocesses of class distinction taking place as companies practice their "alternative" business alongside other actors and attempt to distinguish themselves in these social milieus. What strategic processes and social

relations underlie the defining and selling of alternative narratives of Budapest culture and history?

In his treatise *Distinction* (1984) Bourdieu conceived of the social as a field of relations in which actors distinguish themselves from others and negotiate their place in the social order through the habitus, defined as a "a system of internalized schemes" acquired through socialization and embodied through practice. These durable dispositions take the form of tastes, perceptions, and habits which are practiced with little conscious realization of their function and become key mechanisms for reproducing the structure of the social order and hegemony of elite classes (Bourdieu 1984: 466).

For Bourdieu, practices of cultural consumption and production play a key role in this distinctive process and served as a window into the social processes which reproduce domination and inequality.Through production and consumption of cultural products such as the alternative tour, actors distinguish themselves from members of other classes through their tastes and situate themselves with the social order. In this context, for the tour guides and entrepreneurs creating these tours, demarcations such as "alternative" become strategic mechanisms for facilitating class distinction from the so-called "mainstream." Gal's (2005) semiotic analysis of the use of the "public" and "private" dichotomy in discourse as a construct mobilized to serve the ends of the speaker provides another example of research into the strategic use of dichotomous distinctions such as, in the case of my study, mainstream and alternative. As she states, "Public and private do not simply describe the social world in any direct way; they are rather tools for arguments about and in that world" (2002:1). I will produce a similar argument about the use of alternative and mainstream in this study and argue that such distinctions are strategically

mobilized to facilitate class distinction for cultural producers and increase their cultural capital through the use of the word alternative.

In the context of post-socialist Europe, studies of alternative cultural production have chiefly focused on underground music and art movements historically linked to counter-culture circles which emerged in 1980's in protest to the socialist regime (Muršič 2009, 2008; Ceglar 1999). As a phenomenon that emerged in Budapest just in 2007, alternative tourism will be analyzed in this ethnography in a somewhat different way, as a process of class distinction carried out by entrepreneurs and guides through the construction and framingof alternative narratives of the city.

CHAPTER 2: ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS, AND LINKS: THE FIELD OF ALTERNATIVE TOURISM IN BUDAPEST

In this chapter, I will summarize some historical developments in tourism in Hungary and Budapest, the site of this ethnography. I will then analyze and highlight the key actors and institutions involved in the production of the alternative tourism industry and their relationships with one another utilizing ethnographic data. A depiction of the field of alternative tourism will emerge in which links between a constellation of state institutions, small entrepreneurs, tourism workers, tourists, and other industry actors (hotel companies, hostel owners, online travel agencies) comprise the alternative tourism industry in the city.

2.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN POST-SOCIALIST EUROPE, HUNGARY, AND BUDAPEST

Central and Eastern European countries under socialism took a different path towards the development of the tourism industry then Western Europe countries. Formal barriers to travel to and from the West as well as between countries and cities within the Eastern bloc were endemic during socialism. Nonetheless, in certain cases and increasingly during the later decades of socialism, tourism amongst cities and countries was allowed (Light, Young, and Czepczynsi 2009).

In Hungary, a distinctive kind of reform socialism (popularly known as *gulyas communism* after the quintessential Hungarian dish) emerged in the latter twenty years of the Kádár era, and a variety of reforms including more liberal travel allowances, more open policies to press and culture, tolerance for small entrepreneurial activity, and aid agreements with the

West transformed the country slowly into "the merriest barrack" in the Eastern bloc and also a top destination for shopping and leisure tourism from other Bloc countries (Böröcz 1996). Tourism formed the vanguard of the burgeoning Hungarian service sector which emerged after the 1989 transition and has since remained a major sector of the national economy, with a significant impact on foreign currency earnings, job creation, and growth stimulation in other sectors (Behringer and Kiss 2004).

In addition, a robust literature from Hungarian scholars on tourism has emerged with most contributions in English oriented towards tourism and leisure management issues (Smith, Pucskó and Rátz 2008; Rátz, Smith, and Michálko 2009) and geography (Kovács et al 2007; Kovács and Dovényi 1998; Kovács 1994). József Böröcz's (1996) analysis of tourism as leisure migration constitutes another significant contribution. Few ethnographic studies on Hungarian tourism in English, however, have emerged and this study is an effort to help fill this gap.

As the long-standing civic, economic, cultural, and transportation center of the country, Budapest is arguably the key sight and beneficiary of much of the tourism sector growth described above and has emerged as a key regional hub in Central Europe. It serves as the international gateway to Hungary and is often the first and only place that tourists visit in the country (Smith, Pucskó, Rátz 2009). In 2009, 12.4 million foreign tourists visited Budapest, accounting for 40 percent of the total share of foreign tourism arrivals in Hungary (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2009). These foreign travelers spent approximately $4.2 billion in the city during that year.

Budapest as a municipal unit was only formed in in 1873 with the unification of Buda, the capital of the Hungarian state since the 15th century, the industrial hub of Pest, and the town of Óbuda. As a former center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Budapest possesses a significant

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amount of cultural and historical resources with its scenic position over-looking the Danube river, its wealth of 19th century Austro-Hungarian architecture and coffeehouses, its numerous thermal baths, and its vibrant contemporary culture scene. The two UNESCO World Heritage sites surrounding the Castle District and the Danube Embankment as well as Andrassy Avenue arguably constitute the center pieces of mass tourism in the city.

2.2 ALTERNATIVE TOURISM IN BUDAPEST: TRACING KEY INSTITUTIONS AND ACTORS

2.2.1 Introducing the Alternative Tourism Companies and Their Stories

The four companies which I encountered during my fieldwork comprise the primary organizations doing alternative tourism in Budapest. Although each company has its own unique attributes and ways of framing their work, they also share several characteristics. Each was founded sometime between 2007 and 2008, they employ small full-time staffs of people generally under the age of 35, they specialize in guided, private walking tours and employ part-time tour guides to do this (although some have other services as well), and they price their tours generally from $75-100 per group or $30 per person for a three hour private tour, with prices varying depending on the size of the group and the activity undertaken. On average, I paid $40 for each admission to these tours i.e. thirty percent higher than the price I paid for the most popular mainstream bus tour package in Budapest, which included three tours in total.

Through the influence and framing of local media coverage and the marketing of the organizations themselves, alternative tourism constitutes a relatively stable alternative niche in the tourist market, institutionalized in the May 2012 launch of *Kulturista*, an organization

comprised of four alternative tourism companies operating in Budapest since 2007.[2] The name *Kulturista* is a combination of the Hungarian words for cultural (*kultur*)and tourist*(turista*) and reflects an emphasis on authentic cultural interactions through tourism. Embedded in this name is also a reference to the English word "cool" which positions the trendy, "cool" alternative tourism against its oft-cited opposite, mass tourism. The group describes themselves as an "association of alternative Budapest explorers." In the use of the word "explorers" rather than tourism companies, one can also detect attempts to distance themselves further from terminology used in describing mainstream tourism.

However, as one owner and manager of a company stated, "None of us, in truth, chose the word alternative, it was given to us by [the] media." Variations on this statement and a general ambivalence about the label "alternative" appeared in a number of my interviews with the key founders and managers of these companies. According to one informant, when the founding members of *Kulturista* gathered to discuss forming the collective, this issue was one of the first raised:

> When we first sat down to talk, the first question was, do we accept… the word alternative, or do we want to change this? And then we said that we would keep because even though it positions the thing a little low or underground, it expresses the difference. And we had to work on the meaning of the word so that in Hungarian, the word should not mean 'underground' and 'trashy,' but 'unique,' a 'different' type, 'quality.'

Entrepreneurs were hesitant to associate themselves with a term, which translated into Hungarian (*alternatív)*, takes on strong association with the counter-cultural "underground," as one informant termed it. Alternative tourism was not part of an underground counter-cultural scene viewed as commercially untenable for these entrepreneurs, but as a "high-quality, luxury

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[2] More information about *Kulturista* can be found be found on their Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/budapestikulturista

tourism" distinct from mass tourism. The philosophy of "varied unity" adopted by the members of *Kulturista*reflects, however, an acknowledgement that these companies inhabit this luxury niche in various diverse ways which I will describe now.

Beyond Budapest Sightseeing: Showing a "Happy and Real Face" of the 8ᵗʰ District

   Beyond Budapest Sightseeing, a company founded in 2007 by two former social workers and residents of Józsefváros states as its mission to "share the treasures which we have found, make two cultures meet, learn from each other's story, inspire, and revive the past and connect it with the present." Although the company offers multiple tours throughout the city, the socio-cultural walking tour of the notorious 8th District is the most popular service they offer. Tourists are taken into crumbling courtyards, local sweet shops, and the homes of locals throughout the tour. András, one of the founders, runs the operations of the company and works with seven guides, making *Beyond Budapest* one of the smallest companies in the group.

    When asked what specially makes this company and its tours alternative, András responded that its role as a socially-responsible enterprise dedicated to breaking negative stereotypes of the neighborhood through interaction between tourists and locals was a unique feature as well as its presence as the only tour guiding company based in the district. The company markets itself as dedicated to corporate social responsibility and has hosted a number of events to "give back" to the community, including participating in local clean-up projects and offering free tours to journalists, students, and others. In 2009, the company was also the first Hungarian tourism company to receive a European Commission "Good Practice" award. It has also been featured in international publications such as the *New York Times*.[3]Due to this

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[3] For *The New York Times* article, see: http://travel.nytimes.com/2010/04/18/travel/18surfacing.html.

publicity, it may be the most well-known alternative company in Budapest despite the fact that marketing efforts are minimal and mostly dependent on word-of-mouth, according to András and other tour guides working for the company. Of the alternative companies investigated in this study, *Beyond Budapest* is the only one originally founded with social responsibility principles as a central part of its self-concept and business model. This tendency toward sustainable tourism principles and its focus on the 8th district make this company distinctive in the alternative tourism milieu.

Unique Budapest: Showing The City "That's Not in the Guide Books" for Up-Scale Clients

   Unique Budapest was founded in 2008 by a young Hungarian public relations executive who noted the breadth of alternative themed tours in New York City and saw an opening for similar businesses in Budapest. Subsequently , *Unique Budapest* was created with the mission, as one long time guide and coordinator stated, "to show Budapest from a different aspect, from a different point of view. And to make people fall in love with Budapest." The two "profiles" of the company include private, guided thematic walking tours, offered in six languages. Examples of themes include "Retro Budapest,""The Hidden Treasures of the Jewish District,""Villas: Urban Mansions,""Art Nouveau: Eclectic Style and Culture" and "Budapest Code," a day-long interactive sightseeing game designed for large group events. The company employs four individuals for managerial and office work (both part and full time) and works with twenty guides making it one of the larger companies. The company is intent on continued growth and, since my fieldwork, has expanded its services to Hungary more generally.

   When asked what made the company unique, Zsuzsi, a long-time guide and part-time program coordinator, responded that, "We go to places which are not included in the guide

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books, places you wouldn't find. Not even locals know about it." Often accessed through partnerships with four and five star hotels such as the Intercontinental and the Sofitel, target customers for tours are typically affluent Western Europeans and North Americans. Flexibility in scheduling is a key mechanism for these partnerships and is another unique feature of the company. As Zsuzsi states:

> We are on terms with modern and boutique hotels, 5 star hotels, because they are the ones who have guests interested in going off the beaten track and of course they can afford it because these are basically private, luxury tours. The hotel calls us and says I need a guide in 2 hours, an English guide, and we do it.

In contrast to the self-concept of *Beyond Budapest,Unique Budapest* emerges in this account as a high-end purveyor of themed private tours highlighting lesser-known sites and facts of the city.

Imagine Budapest: Interactive Encounters With the City For Culturally-Minded Locals

Imagine Budapest is a family-owned and run tour company started in 2008 by two sisters who, after a stint living and studying in New York City, decided to start a thematic tour company in Budapest inspired by the uniquely-themed tours they often saw traversing the streets of New York. The two sisters, their brother, and a friend run the office and work with 4-5 other guides. The company offers weekly thematic tours (themes include "Franz Liszt-A Genius in Budapest,""Budapest Records,""Budapest: A City of Waters," and "Secret Gardens and Squares Downtown") and also private, customized tours for small groups. Public, weekly tours are in Hungarian and are marketed towards the local population, which makes *Imagine Budapest* distinctive amongst the group of typically foreigner-oriented tour companies. Luca, a long-time employee and friend of the family, summarized the mission of the company as an effort to, "show our city, where we are living…People are passing by daily in front of buildings that they absolutely do not know. We want to show where we are living because it's a wonderful city."

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Although generally avoiding the descriptor "alternative" due to the perceived "dirty" connotations in Hungarian, Tamás, brother of the founders and business manager of the company, described the work of *Imagine Budapest* as "unique and different" because of the "hidden places" they go that are inaccessible to the public, the interactive methods they use animate these places (for example, hiring professional actors to perform dramatic scenes on some tours), and their focus on creating programs for local people. As Luca described it,

> Yes, some tourists may come, and you do a special tour of the 8th district and tell about social problems or anything else, but for local people this is not new information because we are living in it, as we know it. So we do some more information for local people who are interested in architecture in culture, in literature, in history and tell them something new.

In this description, Imagine Budapest emerges as a tour company with an ambivalent relationship to the word alternative (interestingly, despite their membership in the *Kulturista* collective) but with a focus on showing little known sites to locals interested in building a deeper knowledge of the culture and history of their city. Although all the companies claimed to have some local business, Imagine Budapest is the only one with a central interest in attracting Hungarian residents.

Underguide: Inviting Foreign Tourists to "Experience the Real Life that Locals Live"

Underguide was founded by two university graduates and frequent international travelers in 2007 as a company dedicated to providing and selling a travel experience, "far beyond mass travel." Promotional materials reflect the company's primary goal to replicate the experience of visiting a knowledgeable local friend for foreign tourists:

> Never be an outside tourist anymore! There are no more hidden places or unavailable possibilities whether you travel or do business here in Hungary. Experience the real life that locals live and travel just like visiting a friend!

The company provides half-day, day-long and multi-day customized tours of the city as well as occasional thematic tours focusing on topics such as art nouveau architecture, Hungarian cuisine, and ecological responsibility in Budapest. Staff consists of four full-time employees and over twenty guides. The company promotes responsible tourism on their website, but as Anna, a general manager and founder of the company told me, this emphasis did not drive the initial development of the company but was later arrived at when they realized they were following most of the responsible tourism criteria.

Unlike the other companies who described their business as largely based around loosely scripted themed tours with pre-determined itineraries, *Underguide's* most popular tours are custom-made and planned by the tour guide with specific interests of the tourist in mind. There is no company-designated script or plan, and tour guides and, most importantly the client, are largely free to shape the tour in the way they see fit. Anna described the difference between their company's alternative way of doing things and mainstream tourism as, "They [mainstream tours] want to show. We want to feel, to understand, to get inside." Clients are typically middle to high income foreigners from the United States and Western Europe who can pay the 30-50 percent higher fees of these tours and are often driven to the company through online tourist support websites and agencies as well as and features in travel guides such as *Lonely Planet* and *Frommers*. From the milieu of alternative tourism companies in Budapest, *Underguide* emerges as the company most clearly oriented towards tailor-made, client-centered sightseeing in the services they offer. Their alternativity is defined chiefly through this customized approach but also, like other companies, through their emphasis on authentic local sites.

2.2.2 Analyzing Alternative Tourism Companies As Nodes in a Network of Social Relations

The companies described above arguably function as key hubs within the web of actors and relations constituting and producing the alternative tourism niche. Local entrepreneurs and tour guides both create and gain access to the global tourism industry through their links to these companies. As the owners and gatekeepers of these companies, entrepreneurs hold a degree of power over tour guides and their access to this industry and money, particularly in the current labor market in Budapest where companies in this study reported received upwards of fifty applications a week from prospective guides. Nonetheless, skilled tour guides with a proficient knowledge of a foreign language, social skills, and an intimate familiarity with the city are necessary for the functioning of this industry. Tourists also hold a significant degree of power in this network of relations. These tour companies and tour guides ultimately must meet the higher expectations of their up-market customers to survive. The alternative tour company, therefore, emerges as a product of the social relations between entrepreneurs, guides, tourists but also as an entity in its own right with particular relations to state institutions and a variety of local actors, which I will discuss now.

2.2.3 The State and Its Links to the Alternative Tourism Industry

The state, as realized in Budapest, consists of a series of complex, overlapping, and, at times, conflicting administrative structures operating in the name of governmental entities such as the Hungarian state, the city of Budapest, and city districts. Smith, Pucskó, and Rátz (2009) have argued that this highly fragmented administrative structure was a direct result of "obsessional and inefficient" efforts to carve highly autonomous districts out of the city fabric as a direct rebuke to the centralized, socialist-era past. Whatever its origins, this fragmented

structure has seemingly resulted in labyrinthine bureaucratic protocols to manage such relations and serious obstacles to mobilizing these disparate entities around capital-wide urban planning and development.

This fragmentation perhaps partly explains the difficulties that authorities have had in creating a coherent image of Budapest for foreign tourists to replace the "*Puszta, Piroska, Paprika*" traditionalist slogans of the 1990's which evoke the rural villages and spare landscapes of the Hungarian Great Plains (the *Puszta)*, young women dressed in Hungarian costume (with the traditional female name *Piroska)*, and hearty dishes spiced with the quintessential Hungarian spice (*Paprika)* (Smith, Pucskó, and Rátz 2009). As will become clear in the next chapter, the entrepreneurs behind these alternative tourism companies largely see themselves as attempting to create a new and distinctive representation of Budapest culture and history amenable to foreign tourists in place of the incoherent and incompetent state.

Alternative tourism companies interact with these governmental bodies and are restricted by them in various ways. Key institutions in the context of Budapest tourism include, amongst others, the *Hungarian Ministry of Tourism*, *the Tourism Office of Budapest*, and tourism authorities specific to certain districts. In the course of my interviews, the state emerged as an adversary dedicated to making it as difficult as possible for small businesses to profit and survive. This conflict was, interestingly, not framed as a battle between political opponents, but rather as struggle in which alternative companies attempt to navigate and outwit impersonal and labyrinthine bureaucratic structures. As a business manager at one such company stated:

> It's hard. Well, you know, I don't want to say this, 'Blah blah, the taxes are high, and blah blah blah its hard and we are always crying,' but it's true. Because the taxes are really high in Hungary and if you want to manage a small company you have to be smart and you have to fight day by day. Really. That's true.

As mentioned above, tax-collecting from municipal and national authorities was described as the quintessential interaction between companies and the state and the most significant state restriction on their livelihood. Acquiring certifications from national and municipal authorities to be a travel agency or an official tour guide also emerged as another point of interaction and required a significant input of time, money, and bureaucratic wrangling to achieve.

As numerous anthropologists of post-socialist Europe have observed (Yurchak 2001; Böröcz 2000; Sik 2010) informal business practices have become a common response to the challenges cited above in the post-socialist context. Alternative companies have developed a number of creative solutions to avoiding the power of the state. In the case of certifications, three of the four companies interviewed are registered "program providers" rather than travel agencies because to be a travel agency in Hungary, one full-time employee must have fifteen years of professional tourism experience. As the founder of one company sarcastically remarked about this requirement, "They're basically saying, 'Yah, go into business when you're young. You just have to hire somebody that's older than you, blah blah blah.'" Despite not having the certification as a travel agency, these companies nonetheless market themselves as such with little consequences.

In the case of certification of guides, alternative tourism companies regularly hire guides who are not certified and some even reported specifically looking for uncertified people because, as one owner stated, "We have a lot of guides who do not have this license and who know far more about the city [than certified guides] because of personal interests, the university, because of living here." Because alternative guides are taking smaller groups in parts of the city off of the traditional tourist itinerary, the risk of being caught by government officials is very low.

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Company owners and operators were (understandably) less open about strategies they use to circumvent the taxation system. Any empirical data on this subject came from guides, some of whom described not being registered as officially employed at companies (thus allowing the company to avoid paying taxes for the business they bring in and the benefits they are entitled to). A friend and small café owner speculated that such companies are probably also not reporting a significant amount of the business they do and the money they make to avoid taxation. As she stated, "It's basically an open secret. Everyone is doing it to survive."

The relationship between the state and these companies, however, is not always antagonistic. *The Hungarian Ministry of Tourism* and the *Budapest Office of Tourism* often turn to alternative tourism companies when they need to arrange special programs for visiting dignitaries and foreign journalists. Examples of such programs include special tours for Franz Liszt Year (2011) as well as more informal visits. For some of them, these contracts have resulted in expanded press coverage both internationally and domestically and, according to them, increased business as a result.

2.2.4 Links With Other Community Actors

As one experienced alternative guide told me, "Relationships are everything here." In order to gain access to these "secret" sites, alternative tourism companies mobilize existing relationships and also cultivate relationships with a variety of local actors in the city, including restaurant owners, apartment landlords, university officials, and others. One owner described as being particularly successful at this by her guides responded, "They're interested. People usually like to show what they have and what they do." András, a founder of *Beyond Budapest*, described these relationships as mutually beneficial and as a key part of the social responsibility of this

company. By bringing foreign tourists, journalists, and locals into cafes and restaurants in the district, the company, according to him, might stimulate interest and revenue for local businesses.

In order to construct tours and gather the kind of "little-known stories" to populate it, guides and companies must also tap into a network of knowledge about the city, made up of academics, amateur urban historians, locals, and others. Guides I interviewed cited amateur blogs about the city and its history as a key source of the obscure stories and places they look for. In addition, interviews with local residents served as an important source of information. Publications of the academic community and city archives also served as sources of knowledge. Certain guides, also, depended heavily on their own lives and background as sources of information for tourists. In one notable case, an older guide taking me on a tour of late socialist era Budapest brought along personal items from her childhood such as handkerchiefs and patches from the compulsory youth groups of the time and a first-edition Rubik cube.

Companies are also required to build relationships with other tourism sector organizations such as boutique hotels and internet travel agencies to connect with potential customers. As small companies with limited marketing budgets compared to multi-national companies promoting the large bus tours in the city, these companies must find their high-end clients through strategic relationships. An employee of *Unique Budapest* described this process as pain-staking, "With the hotels, it's kind of a continuous thing. You always have to call them and make new contacts and if you go to a kind of big hotel and then there's let's say a 'not so young' receptionist then sometimes it's hard to get through." In this quotation and others, Zsuzsi describes a situation in which hotel staff (particularly older) did not necessarily take the work of

their company seriously enough to forward to clients. However, with continued efforts and good reports from customers they have managed to develop solid relationships after five years.

Inter-company relationships have also emerged in recent years as a part of the functioning of this niche. As one owner described it, alternative companies did know about each other in the past but only recently agreed that it was time to collaborate in order to "get a bigger piece of the cake for alternative travel." With the recent founding of *Kulturista,* which three of the four companies studied are collectively affiliated with, they recently collaborated for a day of promotions with a press conference and free tours for the public, journalists, and tourism professionals. When asked about relations between companies, respondents avoided any critical remarks about other alternative companies (arguably their most direct competitors) and often maintained that each company had something distinct to offer. Only in a side comment from a guide who told me after a free public tour that her boss had observed "the competition" taking notes on her tour did any potential tensions emerge. Whether "the competition" was from an alternative company or some other source remains a question, and the dynamics of these inter-relationships between alternative companies perhaps offers an avenue for future research as the newly formed collective finds its footing.

Overall, as this chapter has argued, the alternative tourism niche is the product of relations between a plethora of local actors, including the state and its various agencies. I will now proceed to describe in more detail the motivations, backgrounds, and experiences of two groups of actors involved in this process: the small business entrepreneurs who started these companies and the tour guides who work for them.

CHAPTER 3: FOR LOVE AND MONEY:

ALTERNATIVE TOURISM ENTREPRENEURS AND GUIDES IN

BUDAPEST

The small business entrepreneurs who found and run these alternative tourism companies and the tour guides designing and conducting these tours are key actors in the production of this alternative niche. This chapter will first discuss the meanings and motivations small entrepreneurs give to their work and their conception of what their companies do in comparison to two other key producers of cultural narratives of Budapest: mainstream tour companies (their oft-cited opposite) and governmental tourism authorities. I will then discuss the meanings and motivations tour guides attribute to their work, the distinctive characteristics they attribute to "alternative" guiding, and the challenges of benefits of such precarious labor. Utilizing Bourdieu (1984), I will analyze the "alternative" work of these entrepreneurs and guides as, amongst other things, a process of class distinction at the intersection of culture and tourism.

3.1 SMALL BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS MOTIVATIONS:

MOBILIZING EXPERIENCE ABROAD, FINANCIAL RESOURCES, AND

KNOWLEDGE OF THE CITY FOR PROFIT

When asked why he started the company *Beyond Budapest Sightseeing*, András attributed his and his wife's decision to the combination of three main factors: their interest in the 8th district due to time spent as social workers in the neighborhood, their experiences studying

abroad and interacting with foreigners, and their need for a source of income. This mix of practical monetary need, extended interactions with non-Hungarians in foreign places, and interest in representing the city in a personal way is characteristic of the motivations entrepreneurs cited when I asked why they founded their companies. In some way dissatisfied with the efforts of state tourism authorities and mainstream tour companies, these entrepreneurs mobilized their experience with and knowledge of foreign milieus, capital resources from family and other business activities, and personal knowledge as residents of the city to represent Budapest in a different way and sell that representation for profit. In this way, their business occurs at the intersection of culture and the tourism industry.

András' explicit concern with the welfare of the 8th district in which his company is based is distinct, however, from the motivations of the other company operators who did not insinuate that social justice or sustainability was at all at the core of their motivations for starting alternative tourism businesses. As Anna, who grew up in Tunisia because her father was employed in a business there, stated about *Underguide*, "First, we did the *Underguide* thing. We did build this system, and then we realized that what we are doing is 99 percent conforming to responsible tourism criteria, which is a very good thing."

András, on the other hand, from the beginning envisioned his company as a continuation, in some sense, of the social work he had done in the past in the community, aimed at generating a positive reputation and economic growth in the neighborhood through the alternative accounts that he produced of the neighborhood for foreigners. When pushed about the level of impact his tourism company has had on the neighborhood, he was somewhat hesitant, however, to attribute too much growth to his role:

> We have been always working unconsciously that we should be part of that [responsible economic development in the neighborhood], so yes….But it wouldn't be correct to say

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that yes, because of us it's happening. It's like the different shops, the different people, thousands of people shopping, that's what makes this district go forward. We're just one representative of the district. That's kind of unique in this sense. All the 8th district has a separate touristic company, focusing only and running thematic tours here and trying to show a positive side.

Embedded in this account is András' opinion that continued economic development in the district is in the collective interest of its residents. Broader debates about the validity of this statement are beyond the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that as an upper middle-class, non-native of the district, András' positive view of continued economic development in the form of shopping is a particular and contested account. However, by bringing tourists into the district and portraying it in a positive light that is also sensitive to issues of social justice, he views his company as encouraging greater traffic in the area and more profits for local businesses which ultimately, he hopes, will benefit the community.

3.2 REPRESENTING BUDAPEST AND HUNGARY:

PRODUCING ACCOUNTS OF HERITAGE IN PLACE OF THE STATE

Other entrepreneurs, such as those behind *Unique* and *Under Budapest*, more clearly saw their role and the role of their companies in the community as creating an appealing and accurate image of Budapest for foreign audiences in the absence of a coherent effort on the part of the state and dissatisfaction with accounts of Budapest produced by mainstream tourism companies. Informants believed that their distinctive representations of Budapest life for foreign tourists would contribute to continued inflow of visitors and the economic development of the city, which they believed was struggling. They also saw the work of their companies as educational for city residents and contributing to more nuanced local knowledge of Budapest heritage.

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Complaints about the state and city efforts to brand Budapest and also Hungary in an accurate and distinctive way for foreign audiences were a constant refrain in my interviews with tour operators and founders. As one informant put it:

> All I can do is be a good representative of the country. Before, Hungary used to have a very well-formulated image communicated by the tourism board. It was about *puszta, piroska, and paprika*, and it was very simple for the new people who were coming to Hungary for it. It is a good thing, that this is not the image or the product we're selling in Hungary anymore, but there's not a new well formulated image and they're still searching… but I don't think it's going to be one of the top priorities of Hungary so this is the work that has to be done by alternative providers who care like we are.

Another operator of alternative tourism companies expresses a similar pro-active view of alternative companies' role in not only representing the city of Budapest in a new way, but also the country more generally:

> There are more things to do here, more things to see but it's not communicated [by the travel ministry] and that's a bad thing. And I personally, I can just do what I do and be the face of the country, but I cannot really get people here.

Both of these informants recognized that in the face of austerity measures, tourism outreach is unlikely to be the top priority for the country. They believed that this lack of place marketing had direct ramifications for their business and for the economic development of Budapest and Hungary more generally. Like in András' account of his company, embedded in here is also an assumption that capitalistic economic development, driven by tourism, is in the collective interests of Budapest and Hungary more generally. When asked about some of the negative consequences that such expansion of tourism might bring to Budapest (in this case, the example of Prague was used as an example of a more successful tourist city), the respondent above admitted that, "Yes I agree with you that Prague is beautiful, but overcrowded. And also Vienna is overcrowded, and I don't want to get that crowd here. But we would like to have more

tourists." Despite acknowledgement of the down-sides of effective tourism marketing, entrepreneurs maintained their dissatisfaction with the state of tourism marketing in Budapest.

The accounts cited above also indicate a feeling of powerlessness to shape the international image of Budapest and Hungarian culture and history despite their efforts to influence it from below. As Smith (2006) and Chang and Lim (2003) have observed, heritage, traced by Choay (2001) to the word "patrimony" meaning property inherited from ancestral kin, has emerged as a discourse and global industry in the 20th century, often defined on an international scale by a select few elite actors from international organizations (such as UNESCO) or the state. Through the creation and mobilization of this hegemonic "Authorized Heritage Discourse," as Smith terms it, a small group of people wield disproportionate power over representations of culture and place in fields such as tourism. The complaints of alternative tourism entrepreneurs cited above are in part a reflection of this power struggle around the question of who gets to define the heritage of Budapest, as well as in part Hungary more generally. Interestingly, however, these entrepreneurs are not so much opposed to the state's depiction of Budapest heritage as they are to the state's general inaction on this front. As one informant stated, "I hope they just pick something and do it." Their alternative narratives ostensibly provide one direction for this place marketing, although in another interesting irony, the question of what would happen when their alternativeness would potentially become part of the mainstream is left unaddressed.

In addition, in the critiques of the state I heard from entrepreneurs, the perspective of the locals whose homes and culture are represented in these alternative narratives is non-reflexively accepted as congruent with the accounts of alternative tourism providers. Of the companies investigated, Beyond Budapest is the only one which features an open, unstructured conversation

with a local other than the guide, in this case a Roma family, on the tours. *Underguide*, with its emphasis on customized tours, does also feature the voices of locals on their tours at the discretion of the tourist and tour guide planning the day, but during my experiences as an alternative tourist, I only felt I was getting a personal account of heritage from a local (other than the guide or company) during the *Beyond Budapest* tour of the 8th district. The assumption from these entrepreneurs and guides that they are qualified representatives of culture in Budapest and that their accounts are more accurate (than perhaps mainstream companies or the state) reveals how such cultural producers, despite considering themselves "alternative," cannot escape taking part in the politics of representation that surround heritage. As I will argue in the next section, rather than being more authentic or objective, their accounts of Budapest culture may more accurately reflect the tastes of the upper and middle class.

3.3 COMPLEMENTARY ALTERNATIVENESS:
PRODUCING ACCOUNTS OF CULTURE ALTERNATIVE TO (BUT ALONGSIDE) MAINSTREAM COMPANIES

Throughout my interviews, mainstream bus tour companies (the most visible in Budapest being the *Hop On Hop Off Company* which takes tourists in buses around the UNESCO Heritage sites of the city) were continually referenced as the ideological opposite from which alternative tourism companies and entrepreneurs distanced themselves and constructed their alternative product. In this case, the alternative that the word itself references was in part these large bus companies. Following Bourdieu's concept of *distinction* (1984), such discursive boundaries drawn by alternative companies between themselves and the mainstream reflect strategic moves

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on the part of entrepreneurs and their companies to increase their cultural capital and position as actors in the social field. "Alternative" in this context emerges as a discursive tool strategically employed alongside its dichotomous opposite "mainstream" to carve out a more prestigious, "different" niche market for entrepreneurs. As Gal (2002) argues when describing the semiotics of public and private, these labels "do not simply describe the social world in any direct way; they are rather tools for arguments about and in that world." The argument being made by alternative tour companies is that they are doing a higher quality, more authentic, better kind of tourism distinctive from the tourism of the masses. In these discursive efforts, they reproduce and maintain the social order and the cultural prestige of their class as well-educated, middle class producers of high cultural products.

The narratives that these companies produce also reflect the *taste* and *habitus* of middle class entrepreneurs and are marketed and priced towards foreign tourists from similar backgrounds. When asked if she viewed mainstream tour companies as competitors, Zsuzsi's response reflects some of these mechanisms of class distinction:

> They [mainstream bus tours] are not rivals because we don't do mass tourism. So the people they get are kind of the regular tourists, or average to use a neutral term. They come here. They probably don't have so much money… they just want to look around, they are not so much into culture, and so their [mass tourism's] target group is totally different. The people who come on our tours, as I said, they are more into culture. They are more open, they can afford more probably, and they want to see *behind*. They want to get something special, something different. And the attitude is also like, 'Ok, I'm not only going for the cheap stuff or the free stuff.' So they are not rivals because they do different things. They have different target groups. We can't and don't want to compete with them and that's not the point.

This account draws a sharp line between "regular" or mass tourists allegedly targeted by bus companies and the wealthier tourist targeted by these alternative companies. When describing *Unique Budapest'*s average customer, she describes them as over thirty, middle or upper class

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Western Europeans or Americans staying in 4 or 5 star hotels who preferred to not be in a big group. This profile matches how other companies described their customers with the exception of Imagine Budapest, whose customers were "more qualified or more interested" well-educated middle class Hungarians. By distinguishing their product and target customer from the lower-priced "tourism of the masses," these companies and their owners arguably increase their cultural capital and status through this alternative label.

However, as discussed earlier, entrepreneurs displayed a general ambivalence toward the alternative label and its associations with counter cultural, underground movements (Muršič 2008; 2009). In their marketing efforts to wrest the term "alternative," as they use it, from its underground, counter-cultural associations, alternative tourism entrepreneurs engage in a strategic rhetorical attempt to re-frame what alternative means (Gal 2002). For them, alternativeness is not transgressive or hostile to mainstream business interests but constitutes a high-end, complimentary alternative to mainstream travel, for the people who can afford it.

The attitude of Tamás, business manager of *Imagine Budapest* reflects this view:

> [The Hop On Hop Off model] just works. It's cheap. You can see all the city. You can walk around. You get on the bus. You can get off the bus, very easy, and they have a lot of guests and customers… I think our tours are, maybe a little higher, as you can get in more secret, or more interesting, places. So basically our target is more qualified, or more curious people who are curious in small things, or interesting things.

Alternative in this context becomes a marker for class rather than for counter-cultural opposition. The alternativity of his company, as described in this quotation, is not rendered hostile, but is coded in words like "higher," which effectively describe in spatial terms the class distinction mechanisms employed in his description.

As the above quotations suggest, for many of the entrepreneurs, their relationship with the mainstream bus companies and their narratives was complimentary. In a quotation mentioned earlier, Anna, the owner of *Underguide*, describes mainstream tour companies as showing, "only the important things." As "important" parts of Budapest culture and history, mainstream attractions shown on such bus tours are legitimate according to her. They are just not everything. András, founder of *Beyond Budapest*, describes alternative companies as even dependent upon the work of such mass tourism outfits and criticizes those who deride rashly:

> I have found especially there are a lot of journalists, who are saying, 'Ok, let's forget about the bus tours and everything. These typical activities.' But if these don't exist, alternatives don't exist. We need the boat cruises, we need the River Ride [a mass tourism company which uses amphibious vehicles], we need the bus companies, the Hop Off and On and all these things. Because they are always creating, they are big enough so that they can offer programs all the time, every day, every year for tourists and this is very important.

This pragmatic view of the role of mass tourism companies in the economic development of the city differs sharply from the aspirations of many proponents of sustainable tourism who claim to seek the transformation of tourism activities more generally (Stronza 2001). Without the tourism infrastructure provided by such mass tourism companies, alternative entrepreneurs acknowledge their businesses could not survive. The symbiotic relationship implied by such statements questions the tendency for theorists to portray alternative tourism companies as directly oppositional to mass tourism and its impact on communities, as is sometime the case with sustainable tourism (Stronza 2001). Alternative business entrepreneurs are ultimately engaged in profit-making in addition to and intertwined with cultural production, and their ability to make a profit largely depends upon having an infrastructure that can support and attract tourists of all kinds. Mass tourism companies are an established part of that structure (Ritzer and

Liska 1997).A labor force amenable to low wages, no benefits, and part-time labor is also a necessity for alternative companies, and it is to their stories which I will now turn.

3.4 ALTERNATIVE TOUR GUIDE BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATIONS: NEGOTIATING PRACTICAL NEEDS WITH PERSONAL INTERESTS

The alternative tour guides that I interviewed for this study had many things in common. All but one of them was under the age of thirty. All had college degrees and most were working towards or had finished a graduate level degree. All claimed to be from middle to upper class backgrounds and had advanced knowledge of at least one foreign language. All described themselves as Budapest natives and professed to have strong connections with the city and its culture. All had traveled or studied abroad at length and enjoyed socializing in international milieus. In other ways, their stories differed but the patterns above quickly emerged. The alternative tour guide milieu was decidedly young, well-educated, (often in social sciences, fine arts, language, or humanities) and middle to upper class with a strong cosmopolitan orientation and a personal knowledge of the city. Many of these guides originated from families who had, as Bourdieu (1984) might describe it, accrued significant cultural and economic capital in the Hungarian context.

The guides I interviewed accessed the alternative tourism job market from both formal and informal avenues. Many had chanced upon a job tour guiding through social connections with people already working as guides who needed replacements or who simply recommended them for the job to management. In the case of the alternative tourism niche, and as others have argued (Sik 2010) in the Hungarian post-socialist job market more generally, social capital seemed to be particularly important for getting hired. Some guides did get hired through more

formal means such as replying to job wanted ads. Of all the guides I interviewed, only one professed to have an official guide certification, reflecting the tendency of this niche to avoid such state- enforced restrictions as discussed in Chapter 1.

Motivations for entering the guiding field often were a mixture of the practical need for money and a genuine enjoyment of sharing the city that they grew up in with strangers. For some guides, explaining and showing guests around the city had been a life-long hobby. As one informant told me, "I was born next to the parliament and since my childhood the tourists were always asking, "Where is this building? Do you know where this building is?" and I liked very much to explain about my space." A personal sense of ownership of Budapest emerges within this account, present since childhood. For this guide, sharing her home was a life-long practice and also a source of pride. As another guide describes it, "I always ended up having foreigner friends and also boyfriends. So it somehow became a habit, showing their friends or their family around the city." Other guides cited friendships with non-Hungarians as a key motivation. As one long-time guide and English teacher stated, "I really like being in an international circle and to meet people from here and there, and so then this was kind of the basis."

In addition to these personal motivations, however, also loomed more practical concerns about making money in a time of economic upheaval where jobs for humanities and social science majors were perceived as "few and far between." Precarious part-time employment in the alternative guiding niche mixed a solution for many guides. As one guide put it when asked why so many people were interested in alternative guiding, "I think it's a practical reason. There are a lot of highly educated people unemployed right now, and it's really hard to get a job. They need to survive." When asked if taking money for doing something she once considered a hobby was uncomfortable for her, she replied, "Yah, I do [feel uncomfortable]. But it's pretty hopeless. It's

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something I'm starting to learn after my thirtieth b-day." As she has gotten older, she cited growing awareness of the need to make money. When asked why these alternative companies were receiving so many applications for tour guides, Anna from *Underguide* stated attributed this interest to young, educated people's desire to "save the world," but from my talks with guides such practical monetary interests were more important.

Guiding was rarely, however, the sole occupation of any of the people I spoke with. To be a full-time guide was judged by my informants to be economically impossible for survival because assignments were irregular. Guides often went for weeks and months without being assigned a tour by their company depending on the time of year, and this meant no wages. With one exception, which I will discuss later, all of the guides I worked with supplemented guiding wages with language teaching as well as school fellowships and other related jobs. Guiding was just one amongst many other identity-forming occupations that informants engaged in. My informants considered it to be, by definition, a part-time job accompanied by many others.

 The conditions of alternative tour guide labor reflect many of the key theses in David Harvey's (1997) analysis of post-Fordist capitalism. Through the lens of his theory of flexible accumulation capitalism, this flexible model of labor management adopted by alternative tourism companies reflects broader structural changes in capitalism in which labor is increasingly cheap, outsourced, temporary, and accompanied with few, if any, benefits. As he argues, the days of regular salaries, benefits, and strong labor unions passed sometime in the late twentieth century. What has now emerged is precarious and temporary contract labor.

Despite the stresses of "chasing your money" and "not being able to turn down a job when it comes your way" as one guide described it, many guides also enjoyed the flexibility of such part-time labor. As one guide put it, "I don't like doing things that I'm not interested in, and

the good thing is, right now, I'm not doing anything I'm not interested in." Several of the guides had already been employed in office jobs that were somewhat more stable than the mix of freelance teaching and guiding that they were currently doing, but they preferred their current arrangement despite the financial instability. Others cited the "creative freedom" that part-time labor gave them to pursue other interests, although as one skeptical informant remarked, "Yes. But you would do those anyway [with a more regular job], so, is it really that different?" For many people I interviewed, it was.

One key counter-example to the precarious employment situations described above is Katalín, a middle-aged woman who worked full-time as an economist for a transnational company but also worked as a part-time tour guide as a hobby. As she stated, "It's more of a hobby for me. I really enjoy meeting new people. This is an exciting event for me, just like it is for you [the tourist]." As a woman with a well-paying full-time job, guiding was just an supplementary interest with little to not impact on her finances.

The backgrounds and motivations of guides discussed above largely echo the observations of Jonathon Wynn (2005) in his study of New York City tour guides in which the tour guide work force is made up of hobbyists, dabbling students, activists, and part-time professional guides. Full-time professional guides were very rare, and in my case, in the alternative tourism niche in Budapest, non-existent. For the guides I interviewed, unstable labor was not "bad" or "good" but a grey mix of negatives and positives that had to be negotiated daily.

3.5 AT THE INTERSECTION OF ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION, AND INTERACTION:

THE WORK OF AN ALTERNATIVE TOUR GUIDE

In his ethnography, Wynn (2005) describes tour guiding as, "nuanced work—a blend of teaching and entertainment, interaction, and experience." The alternative guides I spoke with often used similar terms to describe how they envisioned their work, although some were wary of describing guiding as "educational" in a conventional sense. As one guide stated when describing what she does and her role as a guide, "I wouldn't say education but cultural experience. And maybe like a facilitator in a contact between the tourists and the city. I don't think I want to educate them." She contrasted her style to an alternative guide she knows who is more oriented towards education:

> She [the other guide] really wants to give the knowledge and I just want to facilitate interaction between people and city. Because it's not that easy. When you [the tourist] get to the city, sometimes you get lost and you don't see when you have travel. You don't have any ideas. There are fifty thousand places but how do I choose the right place? Most of the people, they don't want to go to hundreds of different museums. So what I do is see the people, their interests, and then the offering of the city.

In this account, one of the guide's primary roles is to assess the interests and background of the tourist, merge them with what the city has to offer, and construct an itinerary and narrative to guide the tourist to these places. Guiding, particularly in the case of companies such as *Underguide,* which focuses on custom-made tours, emerges as a job that requires knowledge of the city, creativity, and strong social skills enabling the guide to "read" the interests of the tourist. As the same guide describes:

> It's unconscious. I can't really [socially] read Asian tourists, but I know many people from my background, from Europe and from the U.S. I can understand them also from how they speak and other things. You can really quickly see the social classes and it's not so conscious.

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The informant's emphasis on unconscious processes reflects Bourdieu's (1984) formulation of the habitus as embodied practice rather than conscious knowledge. Through the largely unconscious observation of gesture, appearance, and speech, social class is read by the guide, and the tour is designed to match the assumed tastes of that class. Swidler's (1986) formulation of culture as a tool box also comes to mind. The guide mobilizes cultural schemas she has acquired from her experiences at home and abroad to assess the tastes of her customer. Following Goffman's dramaturgical approach (1974), the relationships between the guide and tourist could also be conceptualized as a complex interplay of attempts to represent and read the "performance" of each actor in the interaction. Whichever the analytical lens, guiding emerges as a somewhat challenging social encounter, in part due to its client-centered focus arguably reflective of the post-Fordist paradigm of capitalism (Harvey 1997). When recalling times that they were challenged or failed in their jobs, often stories would be attributed in some way to a "mis-reading" of the knowledge and tastes of clients.

Although the role of education in guiding was viewed by some with ambivalence, all but one of the guides I spoke to were in fact teachers and many identified strongly their role as an educator while guiding. As one informant stated, "I'm also a teacher, and I look at guiding as a kind of teaching." Guides were, however, quick to differentiate their methodological style of teaching from the teaching of the "classical" guides associated with mainstream tour companies. The lexical dates and names associated with the "classical style" were contrasted with the "stories and pictures" used in alternative tours.

The difference between these two styles was often coded in words referencing age and generation. When describing consequences of the success of the alternative tourism niche, one guide's statement reflected this tendency, "It's good because it means that there will be a shift, so

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they will take us seriously. Because some old guides, not all of them but some of them, say, 'You babies, you don't know what you're doing.'" This statement perhaps reflects tensions behind evolving practices in the tourism guiding industry, between the standardized and institutionalized methods of the "classical" guiding school and the client-centered alternative methods emerging in the post-Fordist era (Harvey 1997).

When explaining why so many people were applying for positions for alternative tour guiding, another informant coded these differences in terms of taste, "I think that they see this lifestyle, they want to be an alternative guide, not a mainstream guide...To be an alternative tour guide is something cool, being a classical guide is crappy." In this excerpt, mechanisms of class distinction underlying guide motivations arguably emerge (Bourdieu 1984). In the well-educated, upper to middle class milieus which the alternative guides I interviewed emerged from, classical style guiding is considered "crappy," low-quality, or old-fashioned, as reflected in the accounts above. In this milieu, engaging in the higher-quality, more expensive alternative guiding is much "cooler" and is associated with a certain kind of "cool" lifestyle. These judgments which influence the actions of aspiring guides derive from class-based tastes and contribute to the reproduction of the social order which perhaps makes it possible for all of the guides I interviewed to be of similar class origins. Following Bourdieu (1984), the cultural representations of the city that these alternative guides produce and sell also arguably reflect their relatively similar class backgrounds and tastes. In this account, alternative tour guiding, therefore, constitutes a crossroads of cultural production, class distinction, and commodification. Whether the actual differences between the classical and alternative approaches are actually so pronounced will be further discussed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 4: (RE?) KEYING BUDAPEST THROUGH NARRATIVES OF THE CITY

This chapter will focus on the product of the work of the guides and small entrepreneurs discussed in in this thesis: the tour itself. I will provide a descriptive account of the content of these tours (i.e. the places tourist are taken and the information shared with them) and the methods used to convey that content (lecture, questions, games, conversation) by comparing my experiences as a tourist on both mainstream and alternative tours. I will then utilize ethnographic data to argue that alternative tours, in addition to facilitating class distinction, constitute "keyings," or framings, (Goffman 1959; Wynn 2005) of the city that in some cases may be counter to the mainstream and thus "re-keyings." Throughout I will be using ethnographic vignettes to ground my arguments.

4. 1 TWO ETHNOGRAPHIC VIGNETTES: COMPARING CONTENT AND METHODS OF MAINSTREAM AND ALTERNATIVE TOURS

4.1.1 Two Afternoons Touring Budapest: Excerpts from The Hop On Hop Off Tour and the Socio-Historical Tour of the Eighth District

A big green bus is parked in its usual spot, alongside Deák Ferenc Square in the busy center of Budapest. A few young Hungarians in matching green uniforms socialize under one of the hundreds of Hop On Hop Off kiosks in the city waiting for tourists to come by and board. They don't really notice me as I step on to the bus and find my seat. Twenty-five rows of empty white plastic chairs with black head sets and radios hanging off their backs. It looks surprisingly

bare up here otherwise. I sit down, select English from the thirty languages in which the tour is offered from the radio box, and listen to strains of classic music as the bus slowly fills with tourists. By the time we leave, fifteen other people from a variety of backgrounds (young, old, European, American, Israeli, Japanese) are on board. A Hungarian tourism worker boards and announces over the crackling bus intercom that we will be making fifteen stops along our route today and that at any stop we can exit the bus and transfer to one of the other two lines covered with our ticket. We can also look around and then wait a half hour for the next green bus to drive by (thus, the Hop On Hop Off name). That three sentence speech is perhaps the longest she will make on this tour. Her presence is clearly as a chaperone and not as a guide.

The guiding, as I soon discover when a friendly American voice enters my headphones, will be done by the box on the back of the chair in front of me. In dialect-free American English, the voice starts to tell me about some of the history of the square around us. Then with a few chortles, the bus starts, and we begin our route which will take us to most of the main sights of Budapest, with an emphasis on inner-city Pest, the Castle District, and Gellért Hill. Along the way, the guide provides continuous commentary with a few small breaks filled with easy-listening and classical music that reminds me of restaurants and elevators. From the front, the guiding is timed to coordinate with the progress of the bus through city traffic, although a few glitches inevitably occur in which the guide is explaining a sight which we have already passed or have not arrived at yet. In the midst of this highly efficient and smoothly regulated system, these glitches provide a few moments of humor for me and puncture the easy flow of the electronic commentary.

No questions are asked, and little socializing takes place in the bus except amongst a family of rowdy Italian tourists who near the end of the tour completely eschew their headphones

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and chatter in the back amongst themselves. Most of the tourists sit with their headphones on and stare out at the city from the open roof of the bus which positions us approximately three feet above the streets. The tourists gaze at the city and photograph it with a sense of urgency, but rarely does anyone actually get off the bus, except at the top of Gellért Hill, where the tour pauses for twenty minutes for people to enjoy a view. Most follow the instructions of the guide as the voice directs them to look to the right and left at the various sites we pass.

Throughout the tour, the wall of the bus provides a clear separation between the tourists and the city around them. Occasionally locals on the streets make obscene gestures at the tourists or some even wave, but this is the extent of the interaction. Most of the time, the bus passes through the streets unacknowledged by the people outside of it.

If one overarching theme emerges from the commentary, it's the emphasis on "the honor," as the guide states, of having two UNESCO World Heritage Sites located in Budapest. The content of the tour consists of facts and dates about the sites, but also stories and urban legends and a few attempts at humor. When passing Parliament and describing the number of steps in the building, the guide jokes, "Perhaps that's why Hungarian politicians are so tired!" to the amusement of several tourists on the bus. As we cross Elizabeth Bridge (Erzsébet híd), the guide shares the dates of the building and renovation of the bridge, but also tells an interesting story (true or otherwise) about how the bridge itself represents Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary at the end of the 19th century and that the bridge next to it, now called Liberty Bridge (Szabadság híd), originally represented Franz Josef, the Austrian emperor and her husband. "They stand like a regal couple over the city," the guide states as we pass over the Danube once more. Stories and urban legends such as these are integrated throughout the tour.

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Music and sound effects are often used to add to the atmosphere as well, as when we start to climb Gellért Hill and sounds of ghosts and goblins play as the guide explains how the hill was rumored to be haunted. Upon passing any socialist era site, such as the former location of a Stalin Monument, communist anthems play over the headphones. In arguably the dramatic climax of the tour, the strains of "The Blue Danube" by Strauss play over the headphones as the bus passes over the Danube itself when we cross the Chain Bridge (Lánc híd).

After two and a half hours, the tour is nearing its end. I take off my headphones as the guide launches into an advertisement for the other tours offered by this company. Beneath the din of the bus engine and city traffic, one can hear the eerie sound of the electronic commentary leaking through the many empty headphones in a confused chorus of languages. I climb off the bus and back into the city.

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It's a typical early spring day in Budapest, chilly and overcast but with occasional moments of sunlit warmth interrupting the cool and calm demeanor of the afternoon. I am standing with ten other tourists in the dilapidated courtyard of a turn-of-the-century Austro-Hungarian apartment building gazing at the bullet-ridden walls surrounding and hiding us from the street nearby. After two years of living in Budapest, such marks are not particularly unusual or unique. Visible scars of the city's turbulent past are a ubiquitous sight in almost every neighborhood. Rather, it's the sheer volume of bullet marks and the huge, ill-patched holes in the building's interior walls from the fire of larger weaponry that catch the eye. Clearly a battle (or battles) happened here. Who lived in this house? What happened here to cause so much

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damage? Why hasn't this courtyard been restored? Such questions enter my mind as our guide, who is taking us on a socio-historic tour of Budapest's eighth district, begins:

"When you get into yard from the street," begins András our tour guide, "it can be very interesting, especially if the walls surrounding you, as in this case, are full of the history of the house. The Second World War and the 1956 Revolution are written on these walls." He goes on to tell us the story of how this yard was the sight of important battles during both the Siege of Budapest and the 1956 Revolution because it was near to Astoria, a base for the Nazis during the Second World War and the Soviets during the Revolution. "So take a look there," he says pointing to an unremarkable gap in the wall surrounding the yard. "That's the place where the Soviets, they broke through. They came through this yard, and these," he says pointing at two huge craters in the building's exterior walls, "were made during the Second World War fights." Various exclamations of amazement and interest come from the tourists as they photograph and wander around the courtyard looking at these marks.

He then moves on to the battles during 1956, recalling how the Soviets came through this yard as well during the street fights with revolutionaries. "So the two sides each were fighting and the Hungarian revolutionaries up there survived." He points at one of the apartments, and tells us how the family of one of the revolutionaries still lives there. "This revolutionary has a grandson who lives here in this flat and is my age. So just think of what kind of roots you get if you grow up in a place where we have hundreds of thousands of yards just like this covered in bullet spots, and your father tells you, 'You see these bullet spots. This is because your grandfather wanted you to live in a free country.'" He pauses. "That's what it means I suppose."

An hour later, we find ourselves in front of an old apartment building near Horváth Mihály Square, one of the more notoriously crime-ridden squares in the neighborhood which has been recently renovated through European Union funding. "We're going to go up and meet my friend Rita," András says to the group, "She lives here with her family, who are Roma musicians. You'll be able to ask her some questions. You don't have to feel obligated if you don't want to, but it's a good opportunity to talk to a person who lives in the neighborhood." I can sense that people are a bit nervous about going into a stranger's home and talking to her, but we head in anyway and find ourselves in a small, nicely furnished living room a few minutes later.

Rita is a petite, middle-aged woman with two children and a husband, who is the professional musician of the family. She is the only one of the family present, but she proudly shows the group pictures and offers us water and cookies in Hungarian. Andras sits next to her and addresses us, "So now is the opportunity for you to ask her any questions you have. This is really your responsibility. I am just here to translate for you. So what would you like to ask?" There's an awkward pause, and everyone nervously laughs. Rita asks us what we are doing in Budapest through András, and I reply that we are students at Central European University, studying sociology and political science.

The brief exchange seems enough to "break the ice" and from there on, the members of the group start to direct questions, through András, to Rita who answers us. One group member, referring to András' statement during the tour that there is a "mental wall" between the areas of the neighborhood with a bad reputation and the areas with a better reputation constructed by the people living in the city, asks Rita if she thinks that such an invisible barrier exists in the neighborhood. She responds with András translating simultaneously, "Yes, it might. I'm just trying to make a kind of life and take care of my kids so they don't feel that differentiation."

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This seems to spark the interest of the group who ask her more questions about her opinion (positive) about the renovation project, segregation between Roma and non-Roma in the neighborhood, and discriminatory hiring practices in Budapest. Despite the somewhat controversial issues addressed, she answers our questions directly and with no visible indication of discomfort. Throughout, András translates simultaneously word-for-word, but also occasionally contributes with his own opinions in English and Hungarian, taking a somewhat more active role in the conversation he is trying to facilitate. She also asks us questions about what we had heard about the neighborhood before we did the tour and what we feel about it afterward, although in general, the conversation is very one-sided, with us asking her questions rather than the opposite. After about forty minutes when we start to run out of questions and more awkward silences fill the room, András asks us to thank Rita, and we gather our things, say goodbye, and leave. Before he leaves, András fishes an envelope out of his bag and hands it to her. She waves from her doorstep as we descend the steps and leave the courtyard.

4.1.2 On and Off the Bus: Interrogating the Methods and Content of Alternative and Mainstream Tours

The vignettes above describe two very different days touring Budapest. They also hopefully provide the reader with some idea of the experience of taking part in a mainstream and alternative tour. When describing what made alternative tours distinctive, informants often talked about them in terms of content (where the tours went and what kind of information was shared with tourists) and methods of delivery (how tourists were shown these locations and how information was shared about them). I will utilize these concepts drawn from the data to analyze

the activity of the tours themselves and interrogate the differences that respondents drew between mainstream and alternative tours.

All the tours I went on had a beginning and an end spatially situated somewhere in Budapest. The tour itself was the effort to navigate between those points in an intentional way that conveyed something about the city. What happened during this process of navigation constituted the content of the tour.

When describing how a tour works, one guide stated simply, "There is a concept and then you build it up." For the alternative tours I went on, which all had some overarching theme, this statement was particularly true. Guides would begin the tour by introducing the theme of the tour in some way, and this theme continued to drive the content of the tour, its locations and stories. For example, The Secrets of the Jewish Quarter tour offered by Unique Budapest started in front of the largest synagogue in the neighborhood with a short introduction of famous Hungarian Jews and some of their contributions to Hungarian society. From then on, the tour continued as a history of Jews in Hungary driven by the buildings, monuments, and other spaces of the Jewish Quarter. By following these themes, alternative tours also tended to take on a narrative form, as one bigger story being constructed in the spaces between buildings and people by the guide. This long story through space made up of many other stories and spaces in between arguably constituted the content of the alternative tour.

The mainstream tour described in the first section of this chapter had no discernible theme, other than the most well-known and visited sites of Budapest. In this way, and others, I found that the content of mainstream tours did in many ways differ from alternative tours. During the bus tour, the kind of information shared varied widely with no thematic anchor other than the UNESCO World Heritage sites and generally consisted of essential facts, figures, and a

few stories. In addition, although mainstream tours covered many more sites than alternative tours, the information shared was shorter and less detailed. Contemporary controversies were also completely absent in comparison to certain alternative tours, such as the eighth district tour described in the second vignette in this chapter in which topics such as Roma discrimination and poverty were openly discussed.

Like alternative tours, however, the content of the tour itself constituted of locations throughout the city and the information the electronic guide shared about them while navigating through them. Also similar to alternative tours, topics covered were typically the culture and history of Budapest driven by the locations viewed, and the information shared vacillated from the more specific, regarding, for example, the dimensions of the Buda Castle, to the general, such as the period of Hapsburg rule in Hungary. András' story of the courtyard featured in the second vignette above shows a similar process of shifting between specific information about events that have taken place in the yard to more general conclusions about Hungarian memory and attachment to place.

As Figure 1shows, the specific locations visited in mainstream tours, however, were overwhelmingly different from the locations I visited on alternative tours. In this regard, I judged that alternative tour operators and guides were correct in stating that they took people to "different" places "off the beaten path." The scale of the mainstream tours in comparison to alternative tours also differed enormously. Most of my time on alternative tours was spent on small side streets which such buses could not even fit into. While buses were transporting large groups of people across the entire city, alternative tours were taking small groups through more compact locales. The courtyard described in the second vignette above provides a classic example of such a space which would be invisible from the street, a "hidden treasure" as one

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tourist described it after the fact. A Roma woman's living room seems even less likely. As efforts to give a broad overview of the key sites of the city, mainstream tours did not visit such places.
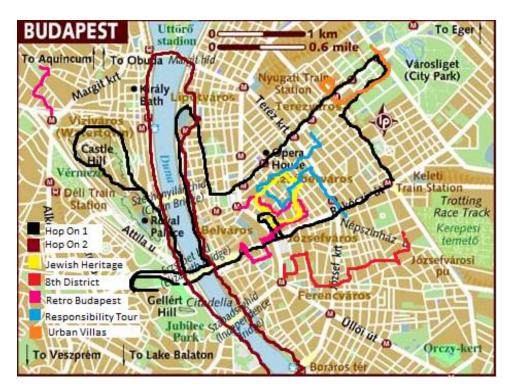

Figure 1: Tour Routes [4]

Method, defined as the way that that information was conveyed and spaces were shown, was often cited as another key difference between alternative and mainstream companies by alternative tourism operators. As Zsuzsi at Unique Budapest described this difference,

> We do more contexts, not too many figures or dates…mostly stories and pictures. It's not that I just want to give you knowledge. I don't want you to think of me as a walking dictionary or lexicon. The point is not say, 'Oh, you're so clever' the point is to make people really love and know Budapest and Hungary and Hungarian culture better so they have insight to understand us better and also to enjoy.

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[4]This figure traces the approximate routes of all the tours I went on. Map Source: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/europe/hungary/budapest/

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From her account, sharing context through stories (drawn from historical materials, travel blogs, interviews, and personal stories as related in previous chapters) is the key method used to convey information about the spaces stopped at during the tour and the history and culture of Budapest more generally. This method is contrasted with the mainstream which, according to her, utilizes the guide chiefly as a "walking encyclopedia" from which facts and figures about the city can be shared. The story featured in the second vignette in which András discusses the grandfather revolutionary and his son living in the apartment block provides an example of an anecdote being used to convey information about the site and Budapest more generally.

Contrary to such statements as Zsuzsi's above, I found that mainstream tours were not entirely absent of stories and anecdotes. The urban legends about the haunting of Gellért Hill or the romantic story about Franz Josef and Elizabeth and the bridges of Budapest described in the first vignette provide examples of such methods present in mainstream tours. In addition, despite other claims from guides and business owners that alternative tours were more "interactive" and involved tourists more in the tour through questions and games about the sights themselves, I found that information on both mainstream and alternative tours tended to be shared in a top-down manner, with the guide (electronic or otherwise) lecturing to tourists who were generally silent. On a Unique Budapest tour of urban villas in Budapest, which consisted mostly of stories told by the guide about the houses and their inhabitants with rare moments for questions and comments, one American tourist even stated to me before abandoning the tour early, "This is more like a lecture, not a tour."

The encounter in the living room of the Roma woman described in my second vignette provides a notable counter-example of this top-down tendency. Upon entering the living room András stated that we tourists were ultimately responsible for making conversation and acted for

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most of the encounter as a translator rather than a facilitator of conversation. Although there were a number of awkward silent moments for all of us because of this, we were forced as tourists to take an active role in learning about this site and this woman.

Comparison of this moment with that of the villa tour also reveals internal differences amongst alternative tour companies and guides in regards to their methodological practices. Zsuzsi described her style of guiding as largely educational. I found that this emphasis was reflected in her guiding methods, which tended to resemble lectures with a small amount of room for questions. Some guide informants reported being very much aware of these differences between alternative guides. One informant, when describing the style of a guide known for having this lecture kind of style described this person's version of alternative tourism as "doing classical guiding in places where you would not always go with your normal guide." In her mind, this guide and potentially the company they worked for were not as alternative as other guides who facilitated interactions such as the Roma living room or who preferred to carry out the tour like "a conversation between the guide and the tourist." The content of the tours was alternative, but not the methods.

In this quotation, one can detect further strategic efforts to define what is alternative and what is not. Alternativeness emerges as a discursive construct. It can be mobilized in rhetoric to distinguish guides from others and potentially increase their cultural capital by framing them as "more alternative" than another guide or company. In this way, therefore, the boundary between what is mainstream and what is alternative becomes blurred and negotiable in every day speech and practice.

Although the actual differences between the methods of mainstream and alternative companies may be a subject of debate, the overwhelming difference between the two approaches

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which is apparent in my vignettes is centered in the bus as the vehicle through which the entire mainstream tour is carried out. Luca, owner of *Underguide* provides a description of some of the effects of this difference,

> [This bus approach] is a simple route. You can't get lost. You have foreigners. Not everyone has to speak English. But this is the first step that keeps you away from real local life. I don't want everyone who comes to experience Hungarian BKV [the public transit system sometimes used on alternative tours to get around the city] but if you don't experience public transportation, you miss something to understand. It's harder. Yah, it's trashier. It's different. But that's what local life is. They [locals] never take these buses. So for me, as long as I'm interested in how people really live in a place, I would rather go on public transportation, and I would never go on a tourist bus.

I also found that the bus constitutes a significant physical barrier to interaction with the city and its inhabitants. Although tourists were able to get off the bus at various stops, I noted that many people did not. A key strong point of such tours is that they provide a condensed and convenient way to see the main sites of the city in a short period of time. Prolonged encounters such as the living room stop in the eighth district tour would not work in this kind of time and cost efficient tourism, and it might be fair to conclude that for many of these tourists such interactions were not expected or desired on mainstream tours. Buses provide a fast, cheap, and safe way to experience Budapest that a walking tour is really not capable of. What is lost, however, is perhaps the opportunity to intermix with city dwellers and to get physically closer to the city itself. Alternative tours, which overwhelmingly are walking tours, constitute therefore a different methodological approach which itself allows tourists to find these "different" sites (often only accessible) on their feet. By walking on the street along with everyone else in the city, alternative tourists become physically closer to their object of study and to the everyday practices of the city's inhabitants.

4.2 (RE?) KEYING THE CITY: CULTURAL PRODUCTION THROUGH

NARRATIVES OF BUDAPEST

An informant once asked me when discussing what exactly guides do:

> Have you considered that there are many versions of Budapest, so many different sides of it? For guides, it's impossible to fully 'know' the city. We're just trying to tell one story of it amongst others.

When describing the work of New York City walking tour guides, Jonathon Wynn (2005) expresses a similar sentiment:

> New York City, like many metropolitan areas, has a near infinite set of stories that can be exploited by a guide…Like a musician playing a song in a particular key, guides bring together a variety of urban content into what they see as a harmonious storyline (136).

The various representations of the city, found in the history books, blogs, archives, conversations, and personal experiences which guides draw from to construct their narratives, form the bulk of the "urban content" of which Wynn speaks. In the process of the walking tour, guides draw these sources together to create a new representation, a new "story" to quote the informant above, of the city.

For Wynn, these narratives of the city constitute cultural products which "collectively add to city life" (137). They are part of what Hannerz (1980) called the "traffic of meanings" or the interplay of numerous subjective interpretations about and of the city taking place on its streets (11). Such representations of space are described by Massey (1995: 41) as "geographical imaginings…the way we understand the geographical world and the way we represent it to ourselves, and to others." For him and other geographers (Chang and Lim 2004; Hampton 2003), the tourism industry is a key producer of these representations. Tourism workers and companies contribute to the construction of "schemas" or systems of knowledge which make the

city meaningful and understandable. Such schemas constitute what Sewell (1992), Swidler (1984), and others have described as culture. Culture in this framework is not an all-encompassing, *sui generis* entity, but an active process born out of the actions of individuals as they interact with their surroundings. In the context of this study, tour guides emerge as cultural producers who draw from a variety of resources to construct meaningful narratives of city life.

For Goffman (1974), this process of cultural production is a process of "keying" or framing of social life through selection, exclusion, and arrangement. Like musicians who select certain arrangements of notes in order to play a melody in a harmonious key, actors construct accounts of meaningful narratives of the social by emphasizing certain voices, spaces, and, peoples while excluding others (43-44). Through this process, meaningful schemas are created from what Wynn (2005) describes as "the cacophony of social life" (137). The tour guides and operators which design the content of the tour include some stories of city life while excluding others. Some sites are included, others are necessarily not. During the home visit in the eighth district tour discussed earlier, for example, we heard bits and pieces of one family's story. Numerous other accounts of families in the district were inevitably excluded. We heard the story of one embattled courtyard amongst the thousands of others in the neighborhood. Through the intentional selection and exclusion of such stories, voices, and spaces, the narrative of the walking tour is created. As András told me in an interview, "This is just one side of the city. There are many sides."

The presence of a stable and salient "mainstream" account of Budapest culture and history institutionalized in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites and described similarly by all of my interviewees perhaps indicates, however, that some "sides" of the city are considered more legitimate and authoritative than others. Smith (2004) describes these dominant narratives of

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history and culture as Authorized Heritage Discourse, created and mobilized by authorities such as UNESCO and the state to legitimate a particular "keying" of the city, as Goffman might put it. Cultural narratives, therefore, in this context do not emerge in a vacuum but are embedded in power relations which determine who can speak with authority about the city and who cannot. For Goffman, if an account of social life runs counter to a dominant version, it constitutes a transgressive "re-keying" (44).

Whether narratives of the city created by alternative tour companies are actually positioned against the mainstream remained somewhat ambiguous in conversations with many of my informants. For András, his company's attempt to showcase the beauty and uniqueness of the eighth district while also addressing its social problems did constitute an effort to work against dominant discourse and challenge negative stereotypes about the eighth district and its inhabitants. His tour is therefore, arguably, a re-keying of that neighborhood.

However, as discussed in Chapter 3, when speaking to founders and senior management of other companies, it was unclear whether the alternative narratives produced by these companies were precisely counter the mainstream. For many, mainstream bus tours covered "the basics" of the city, or as one owner put it, "the most important things." According to these informants, the information such bus tours conveyed might not cover the breadth of Budapest culture and history, but it was a legitimate account. Alternative thematic tours of Budapest Jewish heritage, urban mansions, or hidden inner city gardens for example, according to these informants, offered more in-depth, detailed, and focused narratives of Budapest life, but they were not directly oppositional to the mainstream.

In addition, as all the company owners stated in their interviews, alternative companies were in one or another, ultimately dependent on the presence of mainstream tour companies for

their own business. Practical needs to make money were cited by all of the entrepreneurs as a part of why they started these companies, and mainstream tour companies, in their ability to provide infrastructure which attracted tourists to Budapest in the first place, arguably constituted an ally in a mutual endeavor to make a profit. These companies might take on an alternative label that in the past had been used by others to signify counter-cultural movements, but for all of the company owners, they were not a part of this. Alternative companies were first and foremost for-profit businesses. As one company owner stated when describing why so many guides were interested in doing alternative tours:

> Because everybody wants to change the world, which is of course a good thing. But we really do get plenty of, 'I love what you're doing so much. It's so much what I think about the world,' which is great as long as they understand that this is a business.

As argued in earlier chapters, alternativeness in this context does not connote transgression of the norm, but is indicative of a strategic rhetoric employed by alternative tour companies to position their product as a high quality, more authentic luxury good. From this account, the alternative narratives of Budapest life produced by these companies emerge as complementary "keyings" not as counter-dominant "re-keyings" of Authorized Heritage Discourse about Budapest as represented in mainstream tours anchored by Budapest's UNESCO World Heritage sites.

It is important to note, however, that for a few individual guides, their tours were at least in part an attempt at a counter-narrative of Budapest history and culture. Particularly for those who worked with companies such as *Underguide* which had no official itineraries or script to the tours, the degree of creative autonomy given to guides facilitated individual attempts at transgression through tour narratives. Inspired by her time as an environmental activist, one such guide designed a tour of "green" initiatives in Budapest which was offered free to the public on Earth Day. The guide took groups through the inner city of Pest and stopped at places such as a

local farmer's market, a "green" office, a community bicycle shop, and an artist's cooperative. Throughout the tour, she sprinkled suggestions about how to integrate environmentally conscious activities into daily life, such as recycling, and discussed various barriers that have kept Budapest from becoming more "green."

Another guide stated that she tried to bring her political views into her tours when possible and often frankly discussed Hungary's social problems along the way. When explaining why she chose to do this, she stated, "I think you can't really speak about history without integrating your own perception." For her, tours were at least in part her own personal creation aside from company itineraries and scripts, and being open about her identity and political views, whether they were controversial or not, was an enjoyable and important part of the guiding experience.

When considering the positions of these guides, it seems clear that although these alternative tours in general may not be positioned directly counter to mainstream narratives, transgressive moments can and do occur, often through the personal initiative of the guide. One such moment occurred on a Retro socialist-era tour of Budapest. A discussion of the name changes that occurred when streets in Budapest, which had been named after communist figures such as Lenin and Marx during the socialist era, were re-named after 1989 led to a critique of another recent string of street name changes, this time initiated by the current Fidesz government. The guide drew a clear parallel between what she called the "petty, anti-democratic" practices of socialist-era regimes and the *modus operandi* of Hungary's current government. Such a moment in which contemporary public debates and power struggles were frankly discussed would never fit into a mainstream bus tour or in the brochures of the Budapest Office of Tourism. In these moments, although alternative tour narratives in my experience and

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in the accounts of my informants did not tend to be directly positioned against the mainstream, "a few dissident voices," as one informant described it, did occasionally emerge in these "keyings" of the city.

Overall, what materializes in this account is a plethora of frames of the city, some oppositional, some complementary, some a mix of both. I have argued that alternative tour companies and their guides act as cultural producers who, alongside other actors, create representations of the city for foreigners and for locals. From processes of research discussed in earlier chapters through to the sharing of that content in the experience of the walking tour as discussed in this chapter, these narratives of the city are the product of the work and links of many social actors. This ethnography has in part been an effort to sketch this configuration and what the cultural representations it creates. How these narratives are mobilized and transformed by the tourists who purchase them is a question that remains for later research.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an attempt to answer the question from which this paper started: what is alternative tourism in Budapest? In pursuit of this question, I have described the configuration of local actors, institutions, and relations that constitute the workforce behind this niche and analyzed the product which is one result of their collective labor: the alternative tour.

Through ethnographic description integrated with analysis drawing chiefly from the work of Bourdieu (1984), Harvey (1997), and Goffman (1974), I have constructed an account of alternative tourism which differs somewhat from previous research on alternative tourism. In contrast to researchers who equate alternative tourism with a kind of ethically-minded sustainable tourism, the "alternativeness" of the companies I investigated was defined chiefly through the high-end, specialized narratives of Budapest history and culture which these companies provided for the wealthy tourists who could afford it. In this context, these tours constituted an upper class mode of travel alternative to the mainstream tour buses and groups which constituted the "tourism of the masses." Production and consumption of these alternative travel experiences became a mechanism for class distinction rooted in the everyday practices of tourism workers and tourists. Therefore, in the case of alternative tourism in Budapest, sweeping statements made by tourism researchers about the primacy of sustainability concerns in alternative tourism companies meet a counter-example.

Alternative tours also emerge in my account as cultural products, representations of the culture and history of Budapest produced through the research, imaginations, and experiences of guides and tour operators. They are created at the intersection of business and culture, where profit-making and practical monetary needs are wedded with the tastes, background, memories, knowledge, and sentiments of the cultural producers who create these tours to craft a particular

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story of Budapest. As an exploratory ethnography of an understudied and newly emerging phenomenon, this study constitutes an initial attempt to describe and analyze this niche market, its products, and the motivations, meanings, and backgrounds of the local actors working in it. The "alternative" tourist, as an additional subjective actor embedded in this milieu, as yet remains a subject for future study.

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