A COGNITIVE GEOGRAPHY OF RUNNING: EMBODIED URBAN EXPERIENCE IN BUDAPEST AND BERLIN

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Abstract

The thesis provides an autoethnographic approach to running in the city defining running as a spatial experience. First it examines the various forms of interaction between the space and the body focusing on conflicts with basic physical elements like the ground, wind or water. It then moves on to running as an urban experience defining the unique event-like temporality of running. It argues that running is not a form of traveling to a given destination and as the activity does not aim to transform the way cities are following a utopian vision it also has no spatial politics of its own. These claims are illustrated by the spatial experiences of running in Berlin and Budapest and the discussion on the relationship to places in these two cities. The thesis concludes with the argument that running can be considered a non-narrative form of the production of knowledge that emerges through a problematic process of recognition in spatial practices.

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Introduction

Running is a technique of the body (Mauss 1973) that consists of a consciousness of small physical and mental details – an awareness of all individual parts of the body that support or aggravate the precise execution of movements. The individual's body performing this movement is always contextualized within a spatial environment and analyzing the various layers of interaction provide interpretive frameworks for understanding the practice itself. This physical movement through space is something that is often perceived as a rigorous disciplinary physical activity that is made possible by consistently following an inexorable training regimen. The activity nonetheless involves a playful element, an element that unfolds through a series of spatial interactions at the meantime situating the activity as something essentially social. The seriousness of a determination characteristic of extremely monotonous training routines can be overcome to some extent by a spatial performance, thus long-distance running never loses some of its playful characteristics.

To the very basic question of what running is this thesis will answer that running is a spatial experience and the constitutive elements of this experience will be examined to the finest details possible starting from the elementary levels of interaction between space and the body.[1] What this formulation also suggests is what running is not to this study: it is not a health-lifestyle, a body project or a signifier of class or social status. What I will focus on are the fundamental characteristics of this spatial experience and the incorporation of essentially urban elements that turn running in the city into an embodied experience, at the meantime – following Latham & McCormack – saying something important about how "the human body accommodates itself to the urban environment" (2010: 55).

[1] This definition also implies that I will not be able to deal with heuristic claims like running is happiness, running is madness and the like.

The series of questions this study aims to answer can be formulated as follows: From the perspective of the technique of the body we can ask: how to run? To shed light on the significance of the urban perspective we can ask: where to run? And perhaps most intriguing of all these questions, synthesizing all others while going back to basics: why run at all? Finally, to connect the idea of this technique of the body to urban performance; a spatial and social struggle made up of zigzagging in the crowd on pavements, being halted by traffic lights time and again while continuously breathing in car fumes: why run in the city? These questions will be answered reflecting the scale of the research which implies a reduction to the scale of the individual body. The answers to these questions will not be formulated to provide an understanding of urban running within the confines of global cities, to position the phenomena of mass running within the world economy, or to interpret the rejuvenation of big cities through the organization of marathon races within the unique histories of dynamics of growth.

As a runner I will use an approach that can essentially be identified as autoethnographic which implies the integration of personal bodily and spatial experiences to understand the logic of the culture of running. These experiences were materialized mostly in Budapest but cannot be narrowed down exclusively to the timeframe of the fieldwork or to the city itself. In this period I used participant observation to interact with other runners and trained with various groups of runners but only using data collected during these meeting appeared to be a constraining factor. To eliminate these constraints I decided to draw from my complete experiences as a runner. This experience can be summed up by 5 years of active running in different cities across Europe, most notably Budapest and Berlin. In this text I will also refer to experiences described by other athletes and to written accounts of writers or philosophers on running which I consider primary sources. I will further elaborate on these methods applied in the methods section of the thesis.

Running in the city can be approached from many different angles and can be discussed using the theoretical frameworks of social psychology, history, economics, network-actor theory, subcultural theory and of course urban theory as well. In my thesis I will not go into details of how big cities around the world are competing to create an image around the "organization of spectacle and theatricality" (Harvey 1989: 93), how marathon races are transforming the global image of the city (Roche 2000) or why the urban marathon can be considered a quintessentially late modern phenomenon (Berking & Neckel 1993: 68). As my focus will be on individual running practices I will also not analyze how "the city marathon both symbolizes and reinforces the image of the active citizen" or how urban marathons "confirm and maintain the governance of the city" while "displaying ordinary lives involved in extraordinary events" (Nettleton & Hardey 2006: 447).

What is often left unmentioned in the approaches of the disciplines referred to above is to what extent running can be considered an essentially urban experience with all the subjective characteristics this definition implies. The whole idea of practicing a health-lifestyle in big cities, which are considered to be some of the unhealthiest places on Earth, seems to suggest something of a contradiction. I will argue that the essentials of running as an urban activity can be understood and interpreted by using the theoretical frameworks that deal with the basic forms of interaction between the body and space. For this part of the analysis I will use *A Philosophy of Triathlon* by Tamás Seregi (2014) and the texts of the Hungarian writer Péter Nádas (2000) on running. Running itself is conceived as a unified whole but approaching it from this structured image misses out on the details that constitute the discipline. The basic forms of interactions determine the sense of space and reveal how runners experience different sensations or the extension and reduction of the senses. This is why I am going to start by discussing the most elementary forms of interaction and then move on to the complexity of the spatio-temporality of running.

The thesis is comprised of three major sections. The first section conceptualizes running as an interaction between space and the body and provides reflections on how this interaction is perceived and conceived while running. The basic situatedness of the body in space and the conflicting interactions with various elements is not a trivial matter. The significance of writing in detail about the interaction with the ground, the quality of the surface of running, the conflicting relationship of the body with air, wind, rain or temperature is that these interactions are key aspects of an embodied spatial experience for all runners. The core understanding of what space means for the body while running derives from the meaning of these interactions. This section also includes some aspects of the technological mediation of this interaction which I will conclude with the distinction between the primer and secondary components of this corporeal experience. The main argument and contribution of this section is that a thorough discussion of running as an urban experience cannot just begin with the runner's body already being situated in city space, simply taking all of the above mentioned conflicting relationships for granted.

The second section addresses the question of urban running extending and narrowing the body/space experience at the same time. This links running to a non-linear comprehension of time spent in the city following Lefebvre's (2004) concept of rhythmanalysis. The economic factors enabling urban running are not central to my research but I will briefly discuss how the presence of basic resources like space, time, money and power explain the high concentration of runners in big cities. In this section the characteristics of urban vision, the runner's gaze and the image of the city will be in the focus of my attention. After defining the characteristics of the unique temporality of running I turn to the spatial politics of the discipline and argue that running has no spatial politics of its own. This, however, does not mean that the social interactions between runners and non-runners in the city are void of conflicts stemming from different modes of moving through urban space.

I will point out how infrastructural developments often present themselves as conflict zones which I will illustrate through a comparative case using the framework of spatial democratization in Budapest and Berlin. The unique spatio-temporality of running defines it as a movement through space lacking the characteristics of travelling but this same unique spatio-temporality is also something that enables running to be conceived as an exploration, a way of stepping out of our comfort zone, leaving the spatial constraints of our class relations behind and visiting places we would most likely not visit – was it not for running. In this section I will discuss the consequences of long-term urban development projects for running in Budapest and typologize the variety of urban spaces available for running in this city. What I am interested here is not what is highlighted on the heat maps of running but the essentials of a spatial experience that do not appear in statistics.[2]

These discussions on the body and space will quite logically lead to the concept introduced in the third section that running can be formulated as the production of knowledge of and about the body and the city. As opposed to what Certeau (1998) says – that urban practices always involve the process of narrativizing – I suggest that the runner's experience is essentially non-narrative. The thoughts and impressions conceived while running have no material content, as the central goal of running is to not think about anything and especially to not be emotionally predisposed. Getting completely lost in our own thoughts and losing a sense of reality is not the main target of this spatial experience. Running implies the simultaneous presence of meditation and concentration (Seregi 2014/2: 603) which makes reaching a state of indifference or ataraxia (Nádas 2000: 220) central to its goals. This experience also determines the structure of the thesis: in the first two sections I will deal with intellectual reflections and then try to grasp what the essentially non-reflective characteristics of the discipline are.

[2] Here I refer to a map published by the creator of a running and cycling application, Strava. [2] http://labs.strava.com/heatmap/#15/20.24651/46.64953/yellow/run (Retrieved: 3.6.2015.

Methodology
What I think about when I think about running

Being a runner myself, I initially chose participant observation as my main methodological tool. Having the physical preparedness and personal history as a runner I assumed this would provide me with good access to running communities as an in-group member, allowing me to understand and interpret the activities and thoughts of other runners. I began fieldwork in January 2015, and participated in various forms of trainings with runners in Budapest. My first meeting with my subjects was an indoor core-training session on a cold day in January, which was then followed by quite a few more occasions. Core-training is essentially aimed at strengthening the core muscles providing stability and a better posture to prevent injuries. This type of training is background work for runners; it supports the technique of running saying quite a lot about how runners see themselves as physical bodies, how they intend to take care of this body and how they construct a body image suitable for running.

As the weather became milder I also participated in collective runs all across Budapest, visiting popular running spots like Tabán, Fisherman's Bastion, City Park, and Margaret Island. During the spring period I also visited Berlin for a short time, just to run the Berlin Half-marathon on 29th March – finishing with a personal record. Apart from this brief excursion I ran together with different groups at various places in Budapest and experienced some interesting events and interactions with out-group members. I witnessed admiration for runners from tourists and sexist remarks on behalf of bikers. From the very beginning, instead of the social background or the identity of runners, my focus was on their relationship to space, specifically urban space. Participant observation soon became an obstacle for me as an in-group researcher. Runners form a very heterogeneous collective and I had to admit that many of their actions and thoughts seemed inexplicable to me and I simply couldn't provide valid interpretations of these cases.

These obstacles became quite striking when I tried to analyze the online activities of runners. Discourse analysis was also part of the research process as I followed the discussions of different groups of runners on various online platforms, mostly in Facebook groups. These groups served as both communities of practice and communities of interest (Wenger 1998) but what I noticed early on is that there is nothing running-specific in running themed groups in social networks. This means that the discussions in these groups can be extremely misleading because the dominant discourse is not runner-specific. They usually include only a few members of larger groups bragging about their results, and posting pictures of themselves. Using Goffman's (1990) terminology, the different fronts runners present online say very little about the nature of running itself and are usually centered round narcissistic images and superficial exclamations of how running is conceived as a source of happiness or represented as a form of madness.

Trying to map the spatial experience or the cognitive geography of other runners using these sources proved to be a dead end for me as a runner. At this point I decided to turn to autoethnography as the main theme of my project, although the case discussed here is of course also related to the concrete materiality of a fieldwork I have just described. But this spatio-temporal framework proved to be constraining so I turned to my own story as a runner and started thinking about what I have experienced in the past five years. This might seem to suggest that running – and thus thinking about running – essentially remains a solitary practice. But autoethnography becoming the dominant theme simply means that I will think about running as a process and a product challenging the canonical aspects of research described above (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011). This approach doesn't necessarily imply the presentation of a collection of personal stories; it is rather a thought process, a way of thinking about running.

Thinking about running is a social process which has almost nothing to do with the physical activity of running itself. Running itself is a direct experience, something that is non-reflective. Thinking about running or trying to reflect while running, produces very little information. When runners claim they were lost in their thoughts during a run that also means they lost those thoughts; running usually provides only little practical help in things like planning a day on a morning run but nothing more substantial. Runners' thoughts on their activity are always articulated outside the realm of running, because processing the concrete physical and mental experience requires considerable distance from the performance itself. Talking about running also involves dialogues that usually occur far from the physical realm of running and these discussions often unfold in an environment that seems to contradict the concept of running as a health-lifestyle and the event-like temporality of running – for instance while drinking and smoking.

These discussions can still grasp the essence of running – which is itself also not something essentially physical. Running has nothing in common with peripatetic philosophy but this form of articulation is not the goal of the activity either. The thesis will consist of sections that aim to theorize the practice of running as a spatial experience and point out the social significance of various interactions with the elements. After a series of intellectual reflections on running I will finally conclude with how running is essentially something that is not intellectually reflected. I will use texts like *A Philosophy of Triathlon* by Tamás Seregi (2014/3) or writings on running by one of the greatest Hungarian fiction writers, Péter Nádas (2000), as primary sources reflecting on this non-reflective nature of running while providing theoretical frameworks. As I decided to integrate my whole world view as a runner into the writing process I will provide an insight into my personal epiphanies (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011), expressing through a thought process how I as a runner relate to spatial issues and live running as an urban experience in everyday life.

Chapter 1
Running as spatial experience: the interaction between physical elements and the body

In this first section I will situate the body in space and focus on how the nature of various interactions can be described; by doing so I will draw attention to how small details become determining factors of each running experience. Discussing what the wind, water or other elements do to the body while performing a particular movement is not a trivial matter and this thought process is necessary for understanding the nature of running as a spatial experience. Thinking about how my body interacts with spatial elements is a fundamental way of getting to know, understand and analyze spatial relations and this process cannot begin by already situating the body in urban space. I will briefly examine the topic of technological mediation as well, pointing out some of its most important liberating and constraining elements for runners but I argue that mediation implies a further degree of abstraction that makes it insufficient to use as an interpretive framework of running as spatial experience.[3] Following Seregi (2014/2: 605) here I will discuss abstract experiences that are abstract only in the sense that they are not concrete; but they are still encounters with the material world in the form of sensual experiences.

Tactile conflicts and the spaces of interaction between solid surfaces

While running, my feet become my most important tactile organs. My relationship to the ground can never be indifferent because this is my first basic level of connection to the surrounding space. My feet touching the ground are elementary forms of tactile interaction but in most cases, it is technologically mediated and the quality and quantity of this mediation is highly contested among runners. My direct relationship between the ground and my feet is transformed into an indirect connection where the degree of mediation determines the spatial

[3] This is a very popular theme and can basically be considered a central issue in most online discussions between runners so it cannot be completely overlooked but I will not go into too many details because it would imply an approach very different from what I have chosen.

experience. The various forms of cushioning in shoes influence the way movements are executed and distill commercial wars between shoe manufacturers into radically different bodily experiences and ideologies. The idea of providing healthy options for long distance running masks primary concerns for profit and makes the question of choosing "the right" shoes central to this body project.

Some runners argue for the primordial nature of running and actually run barefoot which turns the relationship between the feet and the ground into the primer experience of running, requiring much more attention paid to this tactile connection than when wearing shoes. Minimalist or lightly cushioned shoes allow for more awareness of the technique of running and a clear sensation of the movement of individual parts of the feet; providing safety and a more direct tactile experience simultaneously. More stabile shoes erase this fragmented awareness of the details, making running a more unified experience while also determining the speed of the runner: more mediated control over the feet also implies a slightly slower pace in most of the cases. Extremely cushioned shoes basically eliminate the tactile connection between the feet and the ground; this experience – favored by ultra-runners – is often described as running on air or running on clouds. Here the mediating force of the shoes is so strong that they basically take control over the movement of the feet; minimizing the tactile characteristics of the running experience and erasing the sensation of a confrontation between the feet and the ground. This experience could be defined as the invisible style of running, referring to the highest degree of technological mediation masking other primer sensations.[4]

Seregi identifies running as the interaction of two solid surfaces which is also essentially about the relationship between the air and the ground (2014/2: 602). The indirect relationship

[4] The invisible style is a concept used in film theory to describe the style of classical Hollywood narrative fiction (Bordwell 1988).

between the runner's body and the ground, the feet, the shoes and the effects of these elements on motion already represent a conflict that becomes more apparent when we examine the quality of the surfaces of interaction. Nádas writes about how the rigorousness of the runner's gaze measures the unevenness of the surface with the precision of an engineer (2000: 216). This is a very accurate observation as the quality of the particular surface used for running is never a neutral question for runners: cobblestone can be considered a nightmare for most runners because no amount of cushioning can even that surface and the tartan track at the Margaret Island is mocked as porridge by many of its users. Most debates on where to run focus on health issues but the relationship to surface is also the determining factor that essentially differentiates between the orientation to cross-country running or urban running; in short more challenging or more neutral surfaces.

Reaching for the continuity of the motion but always ending up in some state of discontinuity is another fundamental aspect of running. Seregi even defines running as a hopeless struggle to establish and maintain the continuity of the motion that can never be reached in a complete form (2014/2: 601). Running uphill or downhill requires completely different techniques of the body; some runners are good uphill while others downhill and these relations identify runners within the competitive collectivity of running. Incline dictates the dynamism of social and spatial relations while running: some runners catch up on others uphill then are left behind or taken over by others. Incline is dragging and pulling the bodies of the runners, it is breaking the even flow and rhythm of running, changing the stride, the pace and respiration. Nádas, for instance, claims that running uphill is better than running downhill. He explains this by writing about how, at first he thought by running downhill he cannot lose energy but then realized that speeding up also speeds up the rhythm of respiration. Running becomes disproportionate and this is impossible to handle for the runner because there is no advantageous situation without considerable disadvantages (2000: 221).

Confronting social euphoria: the crowd

As I have mentioned before, there are a number of factors that can influence the pace of running. Needless to say, running alone, with running partners or as part of a large crowd of runners implies a very different spatial experience for the individual body. Running a race induces collective euphoria which can determine the characteristics of the particular run. On the bright side the crowd is a source of physical and psychical motivation and inspiration. Running the same distance with the same physical preparedness by the same individual would almost surely end with a different result when running alone or as part of a crowd. The crowd has a positive pulling effect, especially at the beginning of a race but this can turn into yet another conflict and a source of disintegration for the runner.

Perhaps the most important goal in long-distance running is even pacing that could fit the requirement of saving up energy for the final stages of the distance to be covered. A long-distance run like a marathon cannot be conceived as a whole: the race has to be distributed in terms of time, distance and pacing. Running with the crowd at the beginning of the race, instead of trying to find my own pace can be extremely dangerous. It can induce the overestimation of my capabilities and result in the complete disintegration of my body by the end of the run. This disintegration itself is always distributed and it emerges in the form of various small local catastrophes (Seregi 2014/2: 604), little aches and pains in random parts of the body that always take the runner by surprise.[5] The biggest challenge of running in a crowd is to resist collective euphoria, to hold back the pace and interpret correctly what supporters and spectators scream: "run faster!" in this case always means "run slower!"

[5] Elite racers are no exceptions from these small catastrophes either. After a disappointing result in Boston Shalane Flanagan said her „legs just felt like dead weight" while her „breathing felt phenomenal" and even though she could clearly identify the individual elements of this disconnect she had no overall explanation for it. http://www.runnersworld.com/boston-marathon/shalane-flanagan-on-her-boston-marathon-a-bad-day-at-the-office (Retrieved: 23.5.2015.)

Social, physical and mental extremes: the temperature, air and rain

Running in the winter, in a snowstorm or even in the rain in the summer, are seen as extreme activities; but what is perceived as socially extreme usually implies nothing extreme in terms of the actual physical experience. For most runners extreme heat is much more physically challenging, unpleasant and even dangerous than running in the cold. The understanding of the effect of temperature on the runner's body also implies taking into consideration the temperature of the body itself: cooling or overheating can have the most serious consequences regarding the general health conditions of a runner. For instance, the feedback I get from my own body temperature will always remain a mystery to me; I will never know why I have something like a fever after an exhausting race or why only my hands are cold on a warm day. The decision to go out for run and the idea of having to cope with extreme conditions can be a mental barrier so the requirement of keeping up mental not physical strength is essential to be consistently running throughout the winter months.[6] However, running under extreme weather conditions actually implies the process of careful planning and completely rational decisions made, regarding what to wear during a run; what is perceived as an irrational action by outsiders is actually rooted in coldest form of rationality.[7]

Water is also a basic element that is always present, especially since it also constitutes a large part of our body. Water can come from outside or inside the body; either way I am always wet at the end of a run. The simultaneous external and internal presence of water constitutes one of the greatest challenges of running both on a physical and mental level. It is quite easy, for instance, to forget to drink enough, something that resonates with our everyday experience. I must pay attention to the balance of water in my body at all times and must make efforts to

[6] This still remains one of the greatest challenges in running, making this a constitutive element of a so-called hard-core runner's identity.

[7] This can be illustrated by how very often runners' attention turns to weather forecasts and an awareness of the predictions made for the upcoming days becomes a habit.

keep up the equilibrium of water by maintaining a sufficient fluid intake. Taking water for granted is a serious threat because water is always something that is lost, never gained and even running in the rain can lead to dehydration.

At first sight water has a very distinct direction: in the form of rain it is clearly coming from up above, but as soon as it makes the ground slippery it also starts interacting with my body from down below. Rain falling on my body constitutes it as a three dimensional object slowly taking shape as a result of the interaction; rain covers the whole surface of my body while running but exerts no dragging force on my body. Instead, this sensation can be likened to a feeling of me being constructed almost as a sculpture, a solid form, emerging from liquid that has perfect awareness of how all specific particles are constituted in motion, as part of a gradual process of transformation.

Snow is basically another form of water that usually makes running seem socially extreme but this conception is also quite misleading. It is indeed an unpleasant element, to the extent that it makes the pace of running slower, as taking off from the ground becomes more difficult. The material characteristics of snow don't allow for a regular pace but this slower pace obtained cannot really be considered disturbing because the whole city covered in snow appears to be operating with a slower pace: snow implies the characteristics of sleepiness, linguistically nicely expressed by the phrase of being covered in a blanket of snow. Also associated with cold weather, ice, a very hard, rigid element compared to the softness of snow has truly hostile characteristics. Snow basically represents no harm to the body but slipping on ice is one of the most dangerous aspects of the interaction with the elements in terms of injuries for runners.

Breathing in air and the rhythm of respiration is a basic sensation for runners but running out of breath is only related to the choice of pacing and has nothing to do with the quality and

quantity of air available.[8] Nádas claims that the runner is not carried by legs but by respiration. He also formulates this experience beautifully when he says that the more evenly the runner is breathing in the air required for the pace and rhythm of the run, the more sensually the otherwise cold and soulless outside world is flowing into the runner's body (2000: 216). In the meantime my body is also generating friction by passing through air and the wind confronted represents an essentially vertical conflict as opposed to the horizontal conflict of the interaction with the ground. The interaction with the wind doesn't resemble the sensation of the contact with water either but it can actually modify the way water is perceived and change the trajectory of water, for instance, while running in a storm I feel like water is almost horizontally hitting my body from a given direction.

As a general rule it can be claimed that wind coming from behind, pushing my body forward and wind coming from the front, pushing my body backwards are never in equilibrium: the negative, exhausting effect of the wind always proves to be stronger. Wind is of course not a solid surface but it can induce a sensation that resembles pushing against something solid. In these instances wind doesn't actually surround my body from all directions, like in the case of water. Instead, my body seems to be abstracted into a set of plain surfaces that resemble the different sides of a polygon which is then reduced to a single side. This flattening of the surface is only constructed by the interaction with the wind and my singled out flat surface is always facing against the wind. During this interaction all other parts of my body are bracketed except for the one plain surface vertically confronting the wind. This sensation of my body being made up of a constellation of flat surfaces only coming into existence through the work of the wind can be exemplified by turning our face away in the wind: at this moment

[8] I will not discuss this aspect in detail but training on a high altitude where the air is thinner and then competing at sea-level can be a considerable advantage for long distance runners. Because this is not part of the everyday experience of most runners I believe it can be neglected for the most part.

only the side facing the wind is relevant and the side turning away from the wind is almost non-existing.[9]

Seeking protection against the wind is one of the most important social functions of running in smaller groups. During races following other runners can provide shelter from the wind to some extent which also implies that running up front is always more difficult and exhausting than running in the field.[10] This is even more important in the case of marathon courses not returning to the starting point, headed in one direction to a given destination, like the Boston Marathon or the course between Athens and Marathon. The heightened perception of runners can be illustrated by their awareness of a windy day in general. Most of the time this is not something that is noticed by walkers, for instance, except in very extreme cases. Running implies a higher speed[11] which intensifies the effects of the interaction; runners are also more often confronted to spaces more open to the wind, like a riverbank or a larger plain surface because their favorite running spots are often situated there. While running in the wind the invisible and otherwise taken-for-granted characteristics of the environment are ceased and the significance of a substance rarely noticed can be understood.

Running de-contextualized: the treadmill

What I discussed so far was the general context and situatedness of the body while running in a space that is essentially material, so when I mention running without context, I simply mean running on a treadmill. Even though I am not trying to frame this interaction as the opposition between a natural and an artificial world, I am discussing this de-contextualized form of

[9] Krisztina Papp, a professional Hungarian long-distance runner would sometimes joke about how her being extremely thin decreases the effect of the wind because her body provides a smaller surface for the wind to interact with. This is of course not entirely true but minimizing the area of the surface of interaction with the wind has its significant aspects for running.

[10] This also has to do with the difficulty of setting the pace as opposed to following a pace set by someone else which explains why the help provided by pacemakers invaluable for breaking records.

[11] A cycler does move through space with a higher pace than a runner but the positioning of the body bent forward is more aerodynamic, especially in the case of road bikes.

running briefly because running in the non-place (Augé 1995) of a gym is the exact opposite of running in the streets of a busy city. The elements that distinguish running without context and running in a given spatial surrounding, also explain why running outside is considered to be the only relevant form of running by the majority of runners. When running on a treadmill all forms of interaction between space and my body are radically minimized – in return the illusion of control is provided. A much higher degree of control over the elements, in terms of speed and incline implies that there is much less left for the body to do which can be seen as either liberating or constraining. Using the treadmill basically eliminates the problem of extreme temperatures, allows for and even pacing, provides an even surface for the soles of the shoes and the feet and makes thinking about the interaction with the ground irrelevant. This de-contextualized form of running has some important implications in terms of the physical elements as well.

First of all the body is not travelling in any way, it is not moving through space from one point to another, the movement has no trajectory which also means that the air is completely still, eliminating the positive effects of the wind cooling the body. This leads to an increased amount of sweating, one of the most annoying things this de-contextualization of running holds for runners and I will inevitably end up literally standing in a pond of my own sweat after a long run. This lack of friction results in losing more water in the form of sweat, than when running outside on an extremely warm summer day – even though the temperature in a gym is considered to be ideal for physical activity. These characteristics erase the benefits of the illusion of control, making the increased tolerance of monotony in a de-contextualized environment the only thing a runner can gain from running on a treadmill.

I would still use the treadmill in the winter because it eliminates all excuses to not run outside and it still remains a useful tool for speed or hill workouts in the winter. What is more important here regarding running de-contextualized is that it raises awareness to the taken for

granted characteristics of the spatial context of running. The elements I interacts with while out on a run not only provide context, they induce a complex web of conflicts that result in various forms of losses. These conflicts seem to be competing for domination, just like their effects, they themselves are also never in equilibrium. The whole idea of spatial interaction is based on conflicts and the specificities of urban space will only add to the number of these conflicts – as we will see in the next chapter.

Technologically mediated spatial experience

Beside the production and development of various shoes and clothes, there are a number of important technological developments that aim to change the basic experience of running. Apart from the differences induced by various forms of cushioning in shoes introduced earlier, these accessories do become almost part of the body rather than an extension of it. As opposed to shoes, GPS watches and mobile phone apps are prosthetic devices, providing objective tools for measuring performance and documenting the exact amount of the distance covered. They are rationalizing and quantifying spatial experience by producing maps of routes and visualizing runs. They are unable, however, to make a fundamental connection between abstract images of space and the perceived reality as they essentially represent a way of restructuring and reducing the perceived reality to an abstract and closed world.

Having the ability to follow runs on a map can also lead to a liberating spatial experience but it is precisely the map drawn out at the end of such an exploration that points out the reductive characteristics of the technological mediation. In principle always having a map showing us our current location enables strolling and discovering new places without the dangers of getting lost or navigating to areas we perceive as unfriendly but in practice people only seem to use these tools to record and share their activities. The enormous amount of data generated

suggests that the technological mediation of running can take the form of the production of knowledge but it is, at best, the collection of knowledge.[12]

Technological mediation can also be used to measure and dictate bodily functions. The use of a heart rate monitor and the idea of running using pulse control suggest positivist claims to knowledge of and control over the body. Pulse control basically means that heart rate zones are determined for various functions – like weight loss or increasing speed – and running in the prescribed zone leads to the desired results in a scientifically distilled form. However, these forms of technological mediation can also be the source of disintegration as they close the body onto itself, instead of opening it up to the interactions with the environment and by doing so turn down the senses or reduce them to one single sense, eliminating the complexity of their coexistence.

The interactions and conflicts between space and the body discussed here are both intersubjective and social, forming a web of networks around the individual's running body which is continuously debated and contested. By claiming that the interaction with the elements discussed in this chapter is a primary experience I don't want to make a distinction between the natural and the artificial. There is nothing natural about running; this is actually made quite apparent by the many debates on what natural running is or what a natural stride is supposed to be like. Primer experience in this case quite simply means that these basic forms of interactions are always present as the most fundamental aspects of a run, they are always perceived in a non-articulated form but always allow for further reflection. Even though discussions on the technical aspects of running seem to be more common in running

[12] In one of his blog posts a runner called DK describes how he completely lost control of a marathon race after his watch failed to pick up the GPS signal. His story is a great example of how the overuse of technological mediation can lead to the disintegration of the body and the mind. http://dagadtkocsog.hu/frankfurti-kesergo/ (Retrieved: 21.5.2015.)

communities, my aim is to change the positioning of the foreground and background of these discussions and talk about the fundamentals of running as spatial experience.

Chapter 2
Running as urban experience: the unique spatio-temporality of city running

As we have seen in the previous chapter we cannot simply approach the topic of urban running by presupposing that the body is already situated in urban space and analyze what happens when one runs in the city. The spatial experience defined as running has more primordial aspects to it which situate the body within a conflict zone. Following the approach used in the previous chapter, to contextualize urban running I will briefly discuss some of the basic elements of urban infrastructure and connect them to how the image of the city – a term coined by Lynch (2000) – is constructed. In this section I will also discuss the concrete materiality of vision that is always related to the spatiality of a particular location and the temporality of a situation or event. Another important aspect of running in the city is the question of spatial politics and the consequences of authoritarian decisions and development projects on urban experience.

Running is made up of a combination of rhythms and it can be conceived as an attempt to establish the state of flying (Seregi 2014/2: 602). This is of course not possible: even though running can be distinguished from walking by having a phase of flying, this phase cannot be permanently upheld. Running challenges gravity and fails. It is a totality of rhythms but, as Seregi argues, there is no continuity in this rhythm; it will always have the sequential characteristics made up of taking off and landing, flying and falling down, no matter how smoothly I attempt to execute the movement (2014/2: 602). Other rhythms of the body add to the complexity of these rhythmic characteristics: heartbeat and respiration are always there as important signifiers of the quality of a run. There are also some variable rhythmic elements present: I might listen to music – but I don't because I find this single rhythm too dominant – or interact with other people. I will almost surely be halted by traffic lights, continuity will be broken by bridges, and my image of the city will be distorted by tunnels.

Relying on our peripheral vision is one of the most helpful tools of orientation while running. This can be easily exemplified by the fact that we can see the ground, even when we are not looking at it and we have a clear idea about the quality of the surface below our feet. We can predict what kind of unevenness of the surface our feet are about to touch and we can even it out by stepping accordingly. In Berlin, for instance, the streets are quite poorly lit – most likely to avoid light pollution – and when I was running there in the dark I noticed that it took me much more time to cover the same distance. It was only at that moment, when the significance of peripheral vision became clear to me. While running in the dark I am lacking these visual aids, I lose the confidence of my position within this conflicting relationship with the ground and this will result in a much slower pace of running and in a considerable amount of frustration.

The coexistence of my running body and my eyes make up the fundamental experience that Nádas grasps so precisely when he writes "the runner sees and what is seen is also moving" (2000: 216).[13] Instead of an abstract, tube-like vision I am able to turn my head; my vision is not blocked by all kinds of obstacles that are essential components of a car; I am certainly not in a "tube of ignorance" (Gould 1974: 120) as I would be while travelling on an airplane. When discussing the basic elements of city space Lynch distinguishes between paths, edges, nodes, districts and landmarks (2000: 3). These are all constitutive elements of how I see a city, they add to a bigger picture of my image of the city. Another visual quality of my perception is how I construct what Lynch calls the legibility of the city or "the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern." (2000: 2) Running in the city is an ideal form of contemplation due to its unique temporality which allows for spatial exploration and the construction of an invisible topography of urban space.

[13] All translations from a Hungarian original are my own.

Appleyard, Lynch and Myer define the relation between the observer and a large environment as the strongest visual sensation, claiming that being confronted by a vast space implies a feeling of adequacy that derives from "the sense of personal mastery of space" (1965: 13). Being confronted with large space implies a liberating element and the authors add that this interaction "begins to neutralize the disparity in size between the man and the city" (1965). Although this was originally written about driving, it does have implications for running. Long-distance running extends space into infinity. I can never see the end of the run – except when I'm actually approaching the goal in the final stages, when the shortest remaining distance is perceived as infinity itself. More extended space speeds up the pace of running by exerting a pulling force on the body. This can be explained by the fact that movement through space is always targeted at approaching something. In the same spirit, the narrowing down and closing in of space, slows down the motion. Running in narrow, zigzagging streets I am no longer trying to approach infinity and as the objects surrounding me come closer, reaching them becomes less of a challenge, thus my pace decreases.

Approaching the question: why run in cities?

To specify the urban context we must first ask: why not cross-country running? Claiming that I run in a big city because I live here and I live here because I want to, might be enough to justify my own personal motivation behind urban running. Arguing that I run in the city because I don't like nature is slightly more dubious but I will not try to hide this factor because it does have some implications regarding the way space is perceived while running. For urban running controlling the surface is not that important, as most of the running surfaces in cities are more even than the ones in nature. Weather conditions are rarely extreme enough to make decisions about my run instead of me – an important experience for Nádas (2000: 218) regarding cross-country running. City streets are usually cleaned from snow and are very rarely flooded. Orientation in a city we know can be a lot easier than finding our way

in nature. I would even feel safer running in a city completely alien to me because I would be able to find points of orientation or people to ask where I am, in case I get lost.

The fundamental characteristics of the bodily experience of running are determined by all the dispositions listed above. Recreational running is essentially an urban activity. This is largely due to the fact that big cities offer enough space to run and enough space to make new discoveries. Quite simply, if I start running in smaller town – like Kecskemét, where I grew up or Szentes, where my grandmother lives – I will very soon find myself outside the border of the city. From this we can understand that the extent of exploration in small towns or villages is extremely limited. However, physical space is a necessary basic resource which is not sufficient in itself.

What people need to be able to run – apart from basic physical abilities and the will to perform the activity – is time, power, and income. Long-distance running consists of training and equipment, even though the time spent with training and the money spent on equipment can vary to a great extent. Power or social status is needed to be able to make autonomous decisions regarding the use of free time. As Serravallo (2000) points out, each of these three factors alone are insufficient which explains why running is considered to be something that highly educated professionals do. And as highly educated professionals are often concentrated in big cities, running became an essentially urban activity. This radically simplified approach, however, does not explain how running historically emerged as an urban activity. To understand this process I shall provide some historical context which is vital for situating running in a social sphere but less vital to spatial experience itself.

Beginning in the 1970s, the big city marathon became a way to reconfigure the marathon as an urban event. This also implied a change in scale when these initially small-scale minority events were projected to a city-wide stage. The most important consequence of this re-

conceptualization of running was that runners gradually became members of a highly visible and mainstream group. As Latham and McCormack argue, "taking the marathon out on to the streets and placing it against the backdrop of a city's more iconic places was an essential part of this projection" (2010: 60). One of the most prominent figures organizing city marathons, Fred Lebow, used a subtle geography to transform the New York City Marathon "suggesting a series of affinities between the practice of running and the ideals of the successful professional" (2010: 61). This class-related approach became the ideal behind organizing races, emphasizing the general desirability of living in the busy centers of big cities to "reconfigure the practice of running in general, and the marathon in particular, as a mass elite practice" (2010: 61). Thus urban running was upgraded within the framework of class and was re-conceptualized as a signifier of social status.

Moving without travelling: the unique temporality of running

I argue that running has a unique temporality the most important characteristics of which are often contested. Non-runners would argue that running is goal-oriented because it is focused on the optimization of the route and pace. Moving forward is the goal of the activity, making it less flexible compared to walking and the difference between the speed of the walker and the runner is also seen as a source of conflict. As I runner I believe running is not a goal-oriented activity; it is a form of moving through space but it is not travelling because it has no destination. Most of the time running routes returns to their starting point which makes them look completely pointless in terms of conquering space to actually get somewhere. From this perspective walking is seen as absolutely goal-oriented: people usually walk to get to work, school, run errands, do grocery shopping.

As opposed to this, runners have a sophisticated and systematized way to differentiate between the qualitative and quantitative components of their workout and their trainings

imply a high degree of variability. Thus running can be summarized as moving without travelling. It is a journey, indeed, and it can very well be argued that the runner returns to the starting point in a different state of mind and state of the body. But the goal of running is in-itself and for-itself. It also allows for spontaneous alterations of the route, the run can be shortened or lengthened, according to how I feel about my body and the interaction with the elements at a given moment. Even though the difference between the speeds of these activities makes this connection seem less self-evident, these elements of urban strolling by runners can be likened to those of the flaneur (Benjamin 1999).

The democratization of space and the spatial politics of running

In this section I argue that running has no spatial politics of its own, or to formulate it quite simply: you cannot Copenhagenize running.[14] My most important claim to support this argument is that running is not a movement through space with a given destination, it is not a form of transportation and this makes the concept of the runner-friendly city almost nonsensical. This does not mean that all cities are ideal for running – what I am trying to suggest is that the general characteristics of a walker-friendly or biker-friendly city can be applied to any pleasant running environment. To have a rough idea of what a city ideal for running would or should be like we don't need a very precise definition regarding the general livability of cities; in this respect any city that makes at least some attempts to make urban space a little more pedestrian friendly is sufficient in terms of built infrastructure.

When discussing the most important conceptual tools of the creative city Landry argues that the name given to specific issues has the power to determine the way they are treated in

[14] Copenhagenize.com is a website promoting „Bicycle Urbanism for Modern Cities. Since 2007" http://www.copenhagenize.com/ Retrieved: 4.6.2015.

practice (2000: 164).[15] He suggests that by calling the transport department the department of communication, connections or accessibility the movement of cars and public transport could be turned into only one aspect of the issue thus prioritizing walking, talking and networking. What Landry argues for here is what he calls the assessment of the "humane domain" (2000: 164), a creative approach to urban space as a whole, positioning the authoritative rule of engineers and 'hard' infrastructure issues as only the "important secondary technical consequences" (2000: 164) of urban planning. This implies that there is nothing running-specific to urban development and urban planning in terms of the democratization of space – as I will shortly point out in the comparative case of the upcoming section.

There definitely is a profound ideology behind running but you cannot convince anyone to start running. At least I have never met or even heard of anyone who started running after being a spectator in a road race, for instance.[16] The decision to run always remains a deeply personal issue and an individual decision, which also implies that there can be no real activism for running. As you cannot rationalize the decision to run, its motivations cannot be generalized either and runners cannot be typified along these lines. I even have to admit that there is something slightly sectarian about running. To illustrate this I will briefly compare some of the characteristics of a road race in running and a cycling event, like the Critical Mass, or in this particular case, the I Bike Budapest event.

Cidell argues that a road race is a unique event mobility, where "the mobility *is* the event" (2014: 575) which provides participants with "the pleasure of being transgressive without the risks that transgression normally entails" (2014: 572). The race is a formalized event and the temporary subversion of automobility could only take place within the confines of a

[15] A critical approach to the concept of the creative city is necessary but I'm using it deliberately here because the general idea fits the very vague concept of the runner-friendly city (the creative city being a vague idea itself).

[16] Watching a race on tv might be a different issue but the image presented there is essentially about elite racing.

"sanctioned transgression" (2014: 581). When discussing road races Altheide and Pfuhl emphasize that "racing is a socially integrating rather than alienating experience" (1980: 138) which is true; at least to the extent that it is not centered round fierce competition with other runners. What is even more important, however, is what the authors later add: "while running is an individual effort, being a runner is a social status" (2000: 139). It is precisely this social status that is renegotiated and contested, then finally reaffirmed during a race. The only problem with projecting this status is that it is not oriented toward the outside world, as it remains a relevant discussion topic only within the running community.[17]

Compared to this a biker demonstration – like a Critical Mass – is all about integrating people into a community. To take the Hungarian case as an example: the organizers emphasized this year that I Bike Budapest wasn't meant to be a demonstration; it was conceived rather as a celebration. To cling to the word celebration for a bit: a road race is the celebration *of* running and *of* taking over the city; the Critical Mass is a celebration aiming *to* take over the city. The carnivalesque element (Bakhtin 1996) really does have a subversive nature in the case of a biker assemblage. Its most important goal is to draw in people who are otherwise not part of the cycler subculture and to encourage people to use their bikes in the city. I Bike BP succeeded in this task: there were families, small children, elderly people, and – to keep in mind the technical aspects of cycling – people riding a great variety of bikes; from high-tech to customized, strangely rundown or even mutant ones.

Cidell argues that "there is no deliberately utopian element to road races" (2014: 579), stressing the event-like characteristics of a race, the non-recurring temporality of the event and the uniqueness of each run. The lack of utopian element implies that a run cannot be

[17] The cheering of thousands of people by the roadside while I was running a half-marathon race in Berlin was a memorable experience but I still had the impression that almost all of the spectators had an intimate relationship with running, or at least to some particular runners. This was indicated by the names of runners the spectators had written on posters and by the broader context of national identity, signaled by the waving of national flags. Many of the runners were also wearing national colors to emphasize this connection.

repeated or codified in space like bike lanes can signal the permanent occupation of space and the impact of the transformation made to the city. I Bike Budapest or Critical Mass itself is event-specific but it has a more global aim which is to make cycling a fundamental part of urban life, something that essentially cannot be tied to a single event. It is an event that doesn't want to be just an event. What is highlighted by road races is that running doesn't have the ability to transform cities as we know them but I think runners are mostly comfortable with this. What everyday leisurely running does need is a democratization of space which is not specific to running and implies the primacy of integration and a holistic approach. In the next section I will try to specify what exactly I mean by that.

Infrastructural developments as conflict zones in Budapest and Berlin

To contextualize infrastructural developments for running, we must first situate them within the realm of public space or sphere, defined by Landry as the "multi-faceted concept at the heart of the innovative milieu." (2000: 119) Public space doesn't only provide a physical setting; it is also essentially a discursive space, a place for exchange and communication. Landry argues for urban planning that is more consultative and participatory against a "technocratic and incomprehensible" discipline, having very "little meaning in terms of day to day experience" (2000: 268). In this sense aesthetics, design or investments are secondary factors compared to the establishment of spaces where interaction is made possible and the opportunity to join urban dialogues is created. In the next section I will discuss how functionally integrated and segregated spaces work in two cities, Budapest and Berlin and I will argue for an integrated approach.

While Berlin is an absolutely central city to running among the very few at the top of the global urban hierarchy, Budapest can at best be positioned somewhere at the semi-periphery of these hierarchic relations. These claims can be underpinned by statistics on the number of

participants in the biggest running events annually held in these two cities and by individual personal experience as well. After running for several months in both cities I was still puzzled by why I consider Berlin to be a much more runner friendly city despite all the infrastructural developments in Budapest. Certeau writes that urban narratives are powerful instruments that can make people believe and do things (1998: 142) and to some extent this also applies to running. A spectacular infrastructural development of a space for running can provide people with the initial motivation to run but this kind of activism lacks a deeper understanding of both urban space and running.

A peculiar specificity of the developments targeting runners in Hungary is the creation of designated areas spatially and symbolically manifested by the tartan running tracks emerging all over the country. The most representative of these is the 5.3 km long track around Margaret Island – but shorter tracks can be found scattered all over Budapest: there is one in Bikás Park, Óhegy Park, Kopaszi Dam, Városmajor and to illustrate how the concept has been extended to the whole country, there is an 800m tartan running track even in Szentes – the small town I was born in with a population of no more than 30,000. I argue that these spaces are nothing but authoritative markers, where "a sense of the proper" is implied and there are "*expectations* of behavior that relate a position in a social structure to actions in space" (Cresswell, 1996: 3). These places mark the separation of spaces based on different functions, making it as clearly visible as possible. This also implies an official production of space for running limiting the possibilities of discovery, increasing monotonousness and framing running as a routine.

Creating segregated areas for runners contradicts the idea of a runner-friendly city and within the radicalized framework I am using on purpose, Margaret Island, the most frequented running space in Budapest is basically an elite ghetto. Cresswell argues that place implies the combination of the spatial with the social, transforming it into social space but if these spaces

"serve the interests of those at the top of social hierarchies, they can be described as ideological." (1996: 3) Margaret Island reduces the possibility of interaction between runners and non-runners to the minimum, thus the understanding between these different spatial practices is also reduced to clashes between uses and users. From the runners point-of view this implies that instead of following a unified path during urban exploration space is divided between functional and non-functional areas. This division also explains why so many runners use public transportation, a car or a bike to travel to a favored running spot.

I only started to think about all this when I started running in Berlin and within this relational framework I noticed how smooth and relaxing, how freely flowing the spatial experience of running there was. It was also in Berlin that I understood why urban planning "requires an active process of participation to develop consensus by minimizing or resolving conflict over implementation" (Landry 2000: 269); instead of maximizing it, like we have seen in the case of Margaret Island. The referendum over the future use of Tempelhof – a former airport in Berlin, now a public park – provides a perfect example for how public spaces "require a democratic management of urban credibility" (Certeau, 1998: 142) that is essentially responsible for the creation of democratized spaces. The stake and the message of this referendum was that the people of Berlin did not want investors to build anything of this large area of freedom,[18] not even cultural facilities like libraries – also conceived as signifiers of spatial segregation.

Tempelhof is not constructed along the demarcation lines of consumerism either, like Kopaszi Dam, a fancy, "free" place in Budapest, but is essentially "driven by a desire to make a community happy" (2000: 269) – something that is very well visible when you run past people grilling their sausages in the rain. There is no sign of conflict here between bikers, windsurfers, skateboarders, in-line skater, walkers, dogs, children and people just having a

[18] The park is simply referred to in German as "Tempelhofer Freiheit".

picnic or playing music. To sum up, what differentiates "running" spaces in Berlin from those in Budapest; is that they are not running spaces at all. They are essentially integrated, allowing for mingling and informal interactions. In this sense running truly has no spatial politics of its own; but not having specific spatial politics can only be achieved by having a strong vision of what public spaces are supposed to be like. This also implies a fight for the right to the city – not to infrastructural development.

Leaving the elite ghetto behind: running routes and urban development in Budapest

There are quite a few runners who don't run much more than 5-10km during a single workout, even though they do practice the activity regularly. These people might actually constitute the majority of runners so what I am dealing with here is most likely not representative of the whole running community. Most runners don't really want to break free from the constraining running track on Margaret Island (they probably don't even perceive it as constraining) and they don't really move out of their middle-class neighborhood to make new discoveries while running. In these cases there are essentially two major limitations: physical abilities limit the distance that can be covered by a runner during one workout and running habits limit the extent of discoveries made during runs. Breaking with habits can actually mean that I deliberately leave behind my social embeddedness, my class relations and my social status and having the physical capabilities to do that I venture into the unknown in the form of urban exploration. Leaving behind social structure completely while running is of course impossible but the attempts made to do so can result in a rewarding experience.

Running longer distances allows for a greater variety in terms of running routes. In this section I will discuss what Budapest has to offer in this respect and what kind of consequences this has for runners. In the case of Budapest the legibility of the city (Lynch 2000: 2) can be considered quite exceptional. This clarity of the cityscape is structured by the

Danube, constructing well-recognizable images that can be organized into a coherent pattern. Lynch claims that a city is legible if it "can be visually grasped as a related pattern of recognizable symbols." (2000: 3) Budapest provides a wonderful example of identifiable landscapes like the Margaret Island, the Chain Bridge, Gellért Hill and the Parliament in the central area which are all organized along the Danube. Apart from this very clear image, I believe Budapest also offers an exceptional variety of spaces for running, from flat urban areas to hills and the riverside. In this section I will typologize some of these running spaces and opportunities and examine how long-term urban developmental projects can influence the spatial experience of running in Budapest.

As I have alluded to this before, compared to big cities in many Northern or Western European countries Budapest is still lagging behind in terms of green areas. Margaret Island, City Park or People's Park are great venues for running but they still can't contribute enough to a more global image of a green city. They do contribute, however, to the spatial distribution of class relations. While Margaret Island and City Park are middle-class areas frequented by tourists and characterized by the dominance of leisure activities, People's Park is more attached to a particular locality and it is often considered to be dangerous. Following up on the concept of locality there are also many places for running in outer areas, frequented mostly by runners from the given district like Óhegy Park in Kőbánya and Rákos Creek that runs along large areas in the outskirts of town.

I once saw a poster slogan that said "leave the city behind!" which was so intriguing precisely because it is so easy to leave the city behind in the case of Budapest. As opposed to Berlin which is completely flat, Budapest, more precisely Buda can offer a great variety of hill workouts. Hill training is an important part of every runner's training regimen and it can be done on any inclining surface. In cities running up steps is a great way to practice hill running, while occupying and carving out an alternative space and drawing considerable attention to

the activity. But Buda has so much more than that to offer. The Gellért Hill is literally situated in the heart of the city: you can look down from the top of it and see a bustling city below from the perspective of perfect peace and quiet. Then there is Normafa and Hármashatárhegy, a bit farther out of the city but still within a reachable distance.

The closeness of water is also an important factor for runners and the Danube is something absolutely unique in this respect. You can run all along the riverbank from Csepel to Római Coast and discover how radically different areas located so close to each other by the same riverbank can be. For instance there is Marina Coast near the northern railway bridge, a collection of luxury apartments in the middle of nowhere, overlooking the Danube. Compared to this area the National Theater and The Palace of Arts situated right next to yet another railway bridge appears to be an actually existing cultural hub – the lack of which so many critics have complained about. The aspects of time-travel are also only a few minutes away from the non-place (Augé 1995) of luxury at the Marina Coast: as opposed to its name People's Island is only a peninsula but it is a place where time literally stopped somewhere in the 1960s and nothing can disturb the peace of goats roaming around freely in the area. It is simply stunning what the same river characterized by the canonical images of the Parliament and the Chain Bridge has to offer and it is also highly unlikely that anyone not running would visit all of these places within a single journey.

Following what most training plans prescribe an average amateur runner typically has five trainings per week. The most important of these is the slow, long run, usually scheduled for the weekend. This is a run that is typically 90 to 180 minutes long, depending on the speed and current goals of the runner which means it allows for covering quite large areas in the city. Even though there are some hard workouts every week, typically interval training in relatively isolated running tracks, the majority of trainings on a typical week have no such goal-oriented function. These are mostly casual workouts with a leisurely pace, where the

only source of variation to break monotony, are alternating routes initiating explorations. Many of the different areas in Budapest can actually be covered during one long run following the riverbank and taking some detours to hills on the way which provides an exceptional amount of variety within a single workout. What is probably the most intriguing here are the in-between areas, the voids and ruins, of the city, the remnants of ambition and destruction outside the realms of our spatial horizon.

The Long-Term Urban Development Plan (Albrecht and András 2013) defines the area by the Danube (the riverbanks and the islands) as an accentuated axis of urban development to be executed by 2030 and all the goals covered in that project are closely intertwined. An important precondition of all these developments is an efficient form of protection against floods (2013: 180). Once that problem is solved by the implementation of a dam system new building projects can be launched by the riverbank and pedestrian bridges could be built (2013: 172). Another important goal is to provide accessibility to the riverbank for pedestrians which will also has consequences in utilizing the touristic and recreational potential of the area. The improvement of transportation and connections is also a central part of this development which not only involves shipping but transportation on land as well (2013: 166-169). This is all part of an integrated approach that could change the relationship of the city to the river, a visual symbol that is already dominating the image of Budapest.

If the central idea of all long-term visions of urbanistics regarding Budapest, „the city living together with the Danube" (2013: 4) will be implemented it will provide a fast and efficient public transportation system from Szentendre to Csepel. This can be achieved by linking the separate HÉV lines and creating one single route. Once moving along this line becomes easy and straightforward the riverbanks (most likely only one riverbank on the Pest side) carrying the load of transit traffic can finally be handed over to pedestrians (2013: 165) changing the relationship between the citizens of Budapest and the Danube forever. The plan does mention

the importance of preserving the characteristics of individual areas but it also aims to create a unified environment (2013: 171) erasing many of the peculiarities and irregularities the area provides. The integrated approach to city planning also implies centralization.

All of these plans have twofold consequences for runners. On the bright side, the riverbank area will be more integrated providing large unified and well-accessible areas for runners. This will also mean that empty in-between zones, post-industrial areas and other voids of the city will also disappear forever. The urban palimpsest some runners hold so dear will also be gone. By the time the plans are completed runners won't know what happens when they venture out of their safe haven and discover things they would never see in a tube of ignorance travelling from one starting point in the city to a given destination. By exploring new routes runners can actually preserve snapshots in the form of memories about the current state of the city. By introducing some alternative running routes the main goal of this section was to show how a cognitive geography of running can be different from the mainstream and abstract image provided by the heat map of a running software.

Runners are not urban renegades but they do like to occupy spaces not specifically designed for them and hard-core runners will always run right by the side of the running track on Margaret Island. What the interaction between space and the body and the specific relationship between urban space and the body implies is that running presents us with the ideal mode for contemplation. The pace of running is neither too fast, nor too slow; it is certainly faster than walking and obviously slower than cycling or driving. The upward position of the runner allows for considerable mobility of the individual body parts, like turning the head and observing details on the way. This is a great advantage compared to the more restricted field of vision of a cycler leaning forward or a driver, for whom the various parts of the car form visual obstacles turning the process of contemplation into an indirect experience. The gaze is important in this scenario but it is not everything, you don't

necessarily have to turn your head to look *at* things. In this chapter running as a spatial experience was extended to running defined as urban exploration which implies the stitching together of a mental map of a city as a whole, in other words the cognitive geography of urban running.

Chapter 3
The body and space revisited: the production of knowledge

With the detailed account on the interaction between body and space I wished to emphasize that I don't attribute a primacy to vision for running as a spatial experience. Wölfflin (1886) recalls that Goethe once said a beautiful space would still have an effect on a person, even if one was led through it blindfolded. This implies a scheme of interpretation that substitutes the self-explanatory for the questionable (Shuetz 1944: 501). The question that still remains to be answered at this point is what we can gain from this complex spatial experience and what running in the city can add to this concept of running. Running is something that induces changes on many different levels in people practicing it but I would like to avoid all moralizing implications about becoming a better person and the like. Instead I would like to grasp the essence of this transformation in the un-reflected nature of running. Running is a transformation and if it is so, something has to be gained from this process despite the various forms of physical losses discussed in the first section.

Here I argue that running is the production of knowledge on the body and on urban space and these two forms of production are inseparably intertwined. Certeau argues that "through stories about places they become inhabitable. Living is narrativizing." (1998: 142) I argue against this process of narrativization and my most important claim when I conceptualize running as a production of knowledge is that this knowledge is essentially non-narrative. What Certeau writes about the preservation of the city, that "the city only has a story, only lives by preserving all of its memories" (1998: 143) makes no sense in terms of running; running is not a collection of knowledge. Runners only preserve snapshots or fragments that will not add up to a coherent narrative but this is also not the goal of the activity. All of the interactions discussed so far add up to something that is not narrative but transformative, as Nádas (2000: 217) very precisely observes:

> Running is establishing contact with all of these things. In the variable relationship with the elements passion dies out and fades away in the runner. Without passion associations become involuntary. It is not he, who is thinking, since he can only feel so many things simultaneously, the unbiased emotions of his mind are thinking him. …. He has memories but without everyday desires and ordinary incentives, these are not drawing out definitive images, just like his thinking is not searching for concepts. It is as if he is beyond the world of images but prior to those of concepts.

The way all of this is formulated seems to grasp the essence of running for me but it might still be a little bit far-fetched for non-runners. To understand the implications of all this I will approach running from the different forms of knowledge it can be associated with and then link it to a more complete state of body and mind.

The production of knowledge 1: the body

On the very first level, running is clearly a form of the production of knowledge about the body. This probably sounds like something very positivist, developmentalist and even evolutionist but simply saying running is an exploration or an adventure doesn't grasp the idea of a long-term transformation implied here. Runners are usually very attentive to small details and would even describe a new way of learning how to tie their shoes as enlightening. They also learn new ways of caring for their body and are extremely cautious about what is happening to it. Once while I was training with a group at the Fisherman's Bastion a man twisted his ankle: all of a sudden everyone's attention turned to him and three other men carried him away in their arms. The next week he was back to training which clearly means nothing serious had happened but the incident was a good indicator of how runners are aware of what could be happening to their body and are worried about it at the same time.

Some runners would name their different body parts and separately call their legs Buflák and Vézna, for instance, and have discussions with them about their malfunctions at times of injuries. Another runner calls his legs right runner (jobb futó) and left runner (bal futó) and this metonimic relationship, equating the limb with its function also describes a very intimate connection. These naming procedures might seem superficial or even silly but it is important to keep in mind that overtraining is always a greater danger in term of injuries than training too little. Runners with greater experience are well aware of this – I only accepted that overtraining even existed after being injured from overtraining – and are cautiously monitoring their body, paying attention to every little detail to avoid malfunctions and thus suspension from running. Intimacy is a signifier of this knowledge about the body.

The production of knowledge 2: space

Wölfflin (1886) asks how it is possible that architectonic shapes can express something spiritual, like a mood and that we can account for their expressions as impressions made on us. His answer to this is that bodily shapes can only be important characteristics of our experience because we ourselves are comprised of bodily shapes. This brings us back to the discussion about the interaction between the body and space in the first section. The physical and mental ability to run is often perceived as a gift by runners. This implies that the interaction between space and the body is something that is not taken for granted. The runner approaches space as a stranger, where an existing scheme of reference can soon prove inadequate (Shuetz 1944: 502). Gáspár Csere – a professional Hungarian marathoner – considers his ability to run to be a gift from God. This implies a conscious and reflected thinking about running, which is framed within a transcendental and discursive space for him but a crisis breaking the flow can arise (1944: 502), even from this interpretive framework.

This very spiritual understanding of the spatial experience during running is of course not shared by all runners. But what Csere (2015) is essentially talking about is a way of losing your sense of space while moving through it and only paying attention to the orderliness of small details. This implies a kind of emptiness, a void which paradoxically still seems complete in the sense that nothing is missing from it. Csere (2015) writes: "Then came the most intense kilometers, of which I remember almost nothing." The rhythm of running becomes invisible, just like space became invisible in this process, although individual details can still be highlighted when focusing specifically on them for a few moments. What we can say about the spatial experience of running so far, is that there exists a positive knowledge about the body and a web of science behind this knowledge but there is no such form of production of knowledge about space. I will try to explain the implications of this on the running experience in the following parts.

The production of knowledge 3: spatio-temporality

Seregi emphasizes that the runner has the best sense of time (2014/2: 599) and the immediate consequence of this is that runners can usually tell their own pace quite punctually without having to look at their watches. This perception of time – the knowledge about pace – derives from a very complex halo of knowledge about space and the body. When I randomly start running anywhere in the world I will be able to estimate how much time has passed and what pace I am running with. Points of orientation in cities help but I will probably be able to approximate the distance I have covered in the middle of a desert just by paying attention to my pace. I know exactly how far my first university is from my home because one of my running routes leads past it but I had no idea how far it was based on walking there every day for two years. These judgments take into consideration the whole web of elements discussed in the first section but this knowledge can still contradict my direct perception.

Seregi (2014) describes the mental attunement of running as a combination of meditation and concentration. This is actually quite similar to what Nádas (2000) calls ataraxia, the Greek word denoting a state of indifference. They both argue that as opposed to the common misconception regarding the mental attunement of running, getting lost in our thoughts while running is not the goal of this activity. Fighting boredom while running is something desirable for many runners but the concept of boredom is misleading in itself. As Seregi formulates it, running is not a cleaning tool to empty the dustbin of psychic chaos, as that process disintegrates not only the body but the mind as well (2014/2: 603). What is required instead is meditation: the emptying of the mind. The paradox of the mental side of running is that the runner has to meditate and concentrate simultaneously. The goal is to not think about anything and at the same time concentrate maximally on the heterogeneous organization threatening to fall apart, which is the body.

Once again, I am not trying to interpret running within a spiritual framework as there are some analytical tools with which the experience can be rationalized. Seregi (2014) argues that the runner does not simply execute a movement thus reproducing it – the runner is actually producing something. The runner's body has machine-like characteristics; which does not imply a mechanic mode of operation. While mechanic devices are only transforming things, machines are creating products and surplus value. The endurance from endurance sports derives from this production of a surplus, a surplus energy from the energy intake. Running does not produce products, nor value but more energy from energy. Running in this sense turns production into the pure form of production. Concluding this argument Seregi finds the anti-capitalist element in running in the form of the scandal of pure production that cannot be converted into market value (2014/2: 604).

So – we might ask – how does the pure form of production turn into the production of knowledge? First of all, this is not positive knowledge, it is embodied knowledge and

sometimes it is a very negative knowledge, the knowing of not knowing. For instance not knowing anything about the disintegration of the body and the mind, being unable to predict it or deal with it in an active way. The most common dangers of running – like deaths at races – can be associated with this passive not knowing.[19] Sometimes an explicit knowledge of what the constitutive elements of the discipline are emerges from an impassionate predisposition that Nádas (2000: 219) describes as the previously mentioned ataraxia:

> After the first steps I cannot feel what my run is going to be like. …. I cannot be so arrogant as to constitute my run as I am at the given moment. …. I can only have a sense of what I am like at a given moment based on how my run constitutes me. …. Good runs never have experiential experiences. The essence of the experience of a good run is that I am identical: and if I am not different from something I cannot know, or even feel, what I am identical with. …. I only have reflections, no self-reflection.

What is described here is a moment of recognition and in this respect running is the production of knowledge about the self, about identity. This is essentially a non-narrative knowledge and it has nothing to do with the presentation of self (Goffman 1990). An explicit knowledge *of* the elements (Schuetz 1944) of running only emerges temporarily, signaling a unique moment of identity, but this knowledge does not provide a ready-made schema to interpret this spatial experience. An element of strangeness will always remain in running which cannot be familiarized completely. Each run is a unique challenge threatening with the disintegration of this knowledge making it impossible even for in-group members to read the discipline as their native language.

[19] Miklós Vörös, an amateur runner and sociologist writes about the stages of confidence, disintegration and resurrection during a run in this post. http://suhanj.blog.hu/2012/07/05/cim-nelkul_12600 (Retrieved: 3.6.2015.)

Implications

The answer to the question of why run in the city can actually seem extremely sentimental. Running in the city is quite simply a unique opportunity for exploration. Motivational posters often encourage runners to step out of their comfort zone but this usually has purely physical connotations. Stepping out of our comfort zone in terms of a spatial exploration means that we leave the most frequented running routes of a given city behind and actually start discovering new places in our well-known city and even in cities we have never been to before. To do this we sometimes have to redraw the areas highlighted on the heat maps of running, the indicators of middle-class neighborhoods. Statistically speaking these heat maps seem to signify that most runners don't follow the suggested practice also indicating class anxieties and spatial conflicts. A central claim of this thesis was, however, that these quantifiable visuals provide little help in understanding what running as a spatial experience actually is.

This thesis aims to provide a better understanding of running as a spatial experience in general and running as an urban experience in particular. I first examined the role of the interaction between the body and various physical elements providing a possible reading for a future research on the social significance of individual physical movements through an interpretation of the layers of meaning inscribed into these moves and interactions. A very different understanding of social significance and meaning can be attributed to a single movement, a push-up or a hand-stand, for instance, in alternative contexts of social structure. The text was then extended to the materiality of personal experience and concrete urban spaces, focusing on lived urban experiences through running in Budapest and Berlin. The contribution of the thesis to the academic discourse is a qualitative approach to running as opposed to the mostly quantitative works written so far. The complex relationship between the body and space is at the center of this work and the application of an autoethnographic approach implies that

runners here are not merely parts of statistics but are individual representatives of an embodied experience.

This approach also points in the direction of how the thoughts of runners could be integrated into a dialogue on urban development projects and the section on the spatial politics of running might even give ideas to urban planners on how to construct ideal spaces for runners. Urban developmental projects, however, will always target a unified experience but an autoethnography can highlight the roughness and unevenness of the embodiment of space. Discussing running as a spatial experience provides an opportunity for running to be seen as a way of breaking with social ties and habits which suggests something completely different from previous research done on the social background of runners often reducing the motivation behind the activity to social status, class and the accessibility of various resources. Instead of quantifying runners and organizing them along social structures the formulation of detailed spatial analyses could emerge as the future trajectory of research on running.

To some extent running can be considered sightseeing but it is also so much more than that. It can also reveal hidden aspects of the city. Did you know that there is a huge park quite close to the airport in Madrid? There are lakes, large green spaces, little hills and all of this is in the middle of the ugliest district of the city. Of course this is very much a middle-class district but running is the only way to find something that is actually interesting in this extremely dull area characterized by drab architecture, hotels and parking lots. Did you know that there is a highway cutting through the middle of a pine forest in Tallinn? You can run for several kilometers on and there will be nothing but the highway and nature. There are cars speeding by in eight lanes, there are strange little villas, run down old houses, huge socialist concrete blocks by the side of the road and still: everything smells like pine. Did you know what a gated community looked like at five o'clock in the morning by the highway near Florence with all its uncanny implications? What it is like to do interval training in the parking lot of a

Tesco in Warsaw? How the birthplace of Andrzej Wajda, Suwalki in Poland uncannily resembles my own birthplace, Szentes in Hungary?

In terms of spatial experience I would say I run in the city because there is contact, conflict, action, interaction, anger, aggression, the city is alive, affecting the runner's body and mind with everything urban space has to offer. Running is not narrating, but is a form of reading and writing spatial relations while inscribing the body into urban space. To underline this claim instead of a typology of runners this text aims to offer a typology of spaces that can be used for running or for a thick description and comparative analysis of the spaces of running. As opposed to ball games, where space is conceived as territory to be occupied by opponents or track and field and gymnastics where space signifies an abstract set of rules and regulations running is neither war nor an abstract execution of movements. Running interpreted as spatial experience offers a way to see the emerging production of knowledge within various constellations while the activity still remains a field of adventure, a questionable topic of investigation and a problematic situation itself for in-group members. Autoethnographic approaches could provide valid frameworks for understanding what the discipline holds for the body and for the mind in terms of spatial liberation and urban exploration.

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