

**PRODUCING SPACES: THE SPATIAL POLITICS  
OF THE STUDENT OCCUPATION  
*#OCCUPYKOSSUTH***

by

Charlotte Drath

Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of International Relations

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
International Relations*

Supervisor: Dr. Erzsébet Strausz

Wordcount: 15,880

Budapest, Hungary  
2020

## ABSTRACT

In Winter 2018, students of the Central European University, an American institution of higher education located in Budapest, conducted a week-long occupation named *#OccupyKossuth* on Kossuth Square, the square in front of the Hungarian parliament. While hosting a variety of academic and cultural events, the space of the occupation was turned into an ‘Open University’ as a protest against the impending danger of CEU being kicked out of the country. One year earlier, a discriminative amendment to the Hungarian Higher Education Law had threatened the university’s existence in Budapest. Exploring and making sense of how the lived experiences of the occupation, as a nuanced and reflected way of grasping the political world we inhabit and co-constitute, the present thesis contributes to questions of possibilities to alternative lives to be lived in space-taking forms of political dissent. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the politics of space, I explore the significance of ‘space’ in political dissident, in particular in regard to how the ‘production of spaces’ and *sociospatial* relations offer potential for genuinely alternative politics. Therefore, I interview nine occupiers from *#OccupyKossuth* and craft a collective narrative of the occupation, which renders the internal social processes more precisely tangible. I conclude that the transformation of lived experiences of *#OccupyKossuth* allows for seeing practices of the protest as radically enacted alternatives to the current neoliberal hegemonic power structure, thus contesting them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Feeling very happy about finding myself writing *these* last lines, I would like to express my greatest gratitude to my supervisor and professor Erzsébet Strausz: Thank you for your continuous support throughout the research process and beyond! Thank you for your guidance in transforming this thesis into a (hopefully) meaningful piece!

My special thanks go to my academic writing supervisor Robin Bellers. Thank you for the weekend e-mails and for helping me explore uncharted waters of narrative writing!

Thinking back to where everything started and reflecting on where this has guided me by now, my feelings about this thesis project are full of joy, love, and immense thankfulness to all those, who became part of this project – to the students and non-students who made the student occupation *#OccupyKossuth* into what it became – to the friends and strangers that contributed to my well-being throughout and after – and to everyone who made me reflect on this research in every expected and unexpected moment. Thank you for showing me that the will to be self-reflexive has never been enough. It has been your active, friendly and random questioning that pushed me every day to rendering this thesis into a written memory of the past and a useful and enjoyable reflection for the future. Without you this project would not have been possible in the first place. I wish that our diverse connections do not end with my time at CEU coming to an end, and I hope that sometimes, somewhere, we find places to share pieces of cake or start dancing in random squares!

To my interviewees, to my friends, and my family, all without whom I would not be where I am and who I am – Thank you for letting share moments and lives, in difficult and in joyful times!

And to everyone fighting for Academic Freedom and other freedoms in Hungary, this thesis is also for you!

*Szabad Ország, Szabad Egyetem!*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: Politics, spaces, and their experiences.....	8
1.1. The everyday politicization of space.....	8
1.2. Occupations as a form of political resistance.....	11
1.3. The production of space .....	13
1.4. Analysis through ‘experiencing space’ .....	15
1.5. Interim Reflection: (Not) being an ‘activist’ .....	17
Chapter 2: Occupying Kossuth Square, occupying minds and hearts.....	19
Building up the occupation .....	21
Making the camp happen – The Open University.....	24
Living in the camp.....	31
Leaving the camp site.....	37
Burying academic freedom .....	39
Chapter 3: Contesting neoliberal hegemony with spatial consciousness .....	41
3.1. #OccupyKossuth is over – reflections on writing the occupation.....	41
3.2. Possibilities for ‘another politics’ .....	43
3.3. Reclaiming a sense of space and of (spatial) political activism.....	47
Conclusion.....	50
Bibliography.....	52
Appendix: Consent Form .....	57

## INTRODUCTION

*Budapest, Hungary – in the center of Europe – Winter 2018.* Ice-cold rain is preventing a far sight. Pulling my face deep in the hood of my warm parka that a friend lends to me, at 3:30 am, I arrive to Kossuth Square in front of the Hungarian Parliament to my night shift at the occupation camp *#OccupyKossuth*, set up the evening before. A handful of people are dancing to keep themselves awake, others clean the tent site and pull the tent strings tight again against the wind. The atmosphere is cheerful and heart-warming but the occasion for this occupation is a sad one. The Central European University (CEU), an American-Hungarian independent institution of higher education with a strong commitment to critical thinking and open society, finds itself close to being ‘kicked out’ of the country after failing to reach an agreement to secure the university’s stay in Budapest. A year earlier, the Hungarian government implemented the law *LexCEU*,<sup>1</sup> which specifically threatened CEU’s existence in the Hungarian higher education landscape,<sup>2</sup> aligning with the current authoritarian government strategy that strives to become an “illiberal democracy.”<sup>3</sup> Under Viktor Orbán’s rule, the Hungarian government gradually dismantles political and civil rights, the functioning of NGOs, and just lately the cultural sphere, the education sector, and academia.<sup>4</sup>

“If there was ever a chance to make Orbán sign an agreement that would allow CEU to stay, we had to try,”<sup>5</sup> says another person affiliated with the *Szabad Egyetem*<sup>6</sup> collective of CEU

<sup>1</sup> CEU, “Timeline of Events,” accessed March 27, 2020, <https://www.ceu.edu/istandwithceu/timeline-events>.

<sup>2</sup> Gábor Halmai, “Legally Sophisticated Authoritarians: The Hungarian Lex CEU,” *Verfassungsblog - on Constitutional Matters* (blog), March 31, 2017, <https://verfassungsblog.de/legally-sophisticated-authoritarians-the-hungarian-lex-ceu/>.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Wilkin, “The Rise of ‘Illiberal’ Democracy: The Orbánization of Hungarian Political Culture,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 24, no. 1 (March 22, 2018): 5–42, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2018.716>.

<sup>4</sup> Gabi Göbl, “Democracy Is out of Order: CEU Forced to Leave Hungary,” *Heinrich Boll Stiftung* (blog), December 5, 2018, <https://www.boell.de/en/2018/12/05/democracy-out-order-central-european-university-forced-leave-hungary>.

<sup>5</sup> *Szabad Egyetem* Collective, “#stories of Resistance – *Szabad Egyetem*: A Story of Student Activism and beyond in Hungary,” *Civic Space Watch* (blog), November 25, 2019, <https://civicspacewatch.eu/stories-of-resistance-szabad-egyetem-a-story-of-student-activism-and-beyond-in-hungary/>.

<sup>6</sup> The collective was originally named *Students4CEU* and renamed itself after the occupation to *Szabad Egyetem*, Hungarian for ‘Free University,’ as the fight for academic freedom in Hungary is not only concerned with the case

students organizing the occupation. And so, after hundreds of thousands took the street in 2017 and the government did not back down, between November 24 and December 1, 2018, with a group of about 70 students of CEU, we conducted a week-long legal occupation in the center of the Hungarian capital as last expression of dissent. Filling the occupation with life and purpose, with more than 80 academic and cultural events around the clock, the space of the occupation was turned into an ‘Open University,’ that aimed at inviting people to experience and enjoy the freedom of academia, culture and the arts, in a reflection of how students of CEU saw the relevance of their university for a striving civil society in Hungary – before it leaves.

In Fall 2020, CEU will move most of its US-accredited programs to Vienna, Austria. My time as a student at CEU will be over once this thesis is written. Nevertheless, besides an intellectually intriguing experience, an emotionally powerful memory will remain: The feelings of being part of a collective that creatively engaged in a political protest different to conventional short-term direct actions. For me, this experience turned into a lively memory while constantly reflecting on how our alternative space for dissent was produced through living a life in the occupation in opposition to the power structure around us, here under the national-conservative and suppressive politics of the Orbán regime since 2010.

Being part of the organizing student collective meant having conflicts with professors who would have appreciated me attending classes instead of being at the camp site, and it meant organizing and planning events and logistics in a time-sensitive manner with a collective that functions with the principle of consensus-based decision-making, resulting in respectful but lengthy debates. Organizing and living the occupation entailed the discomfort of the cold and little sleep, but it also brought the joy of having a voice in a horizontal and leaderless structure among friends and strangers. In addition, it entailed difficulties of discussing the logistics that

---

of CEU. I use both names, depending on the time. The quote in this sentence stems from an article written after the occupation ended.

were necessary to build an infrastructure that made life in the tents possible, as for example a waste selection system, a food corner, a toilet, Wi-Fi, and power.

The occupation was experienced as more than an image of dissent and a site of unrest, which picturesquely positioned itself in front of the massive Hungarian parliament. Not only for me but for others as well, it was a physically and emotionally challenging experience for whose life, study or working place and well-being was affected by the illiberal ruling of the Hungarian government. Exploring and making sense of how the lived experiences of the occupation, as a nuanced and reflected way of understanding the political world we inhabit and co-constitute, and grasping struggles of everyday lives and the politics of it, my thesis is contributing to questions on the potential for alternative lives to be lived in space-taking forms of political dissent. My primary research question *What roles does the notion of space play in making sense of the lived experiences in the student occupation #OccupyKossuth?* refers to the relationship of ‘space’ and politics in ‘space-taking’ forms of political dissent. Following also my secondary research questions *Why Occupy?* this research aims at understanding the practices of how ‘space’ is produced and how the configuration of ‘spaces’ is of co-constitutive character to understanding politics. In the particular context of Hungarian politics, but also in other ailing and failing democracies, the observation of shrinking civil society ‘space’ frequently arises<sup>7</sup> and the study of the struggle for ‘real’ democratic spaces is therefore crucial in the fight against these regimes.

Space, as a material and social concept, is political and politicized, also in everyday life. Imagine the gathering of 100,000s for a joyful rock concert – in opposition to the gathering of thousands of protesters in the streets of Cairo, New York, or London – whereby only the latter would be considered and recognized as a political event. The study of ‘space’ in occupations as

---

<sup>7</sup> Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, “Independent Civil Society under Attack in Hungary,” September 12, 2017, <https://hclu.hu/en/articles/independent-civil-society-under-attack-in-hungary-1>.

form of political protest appears to be promising because ‘space’ is not only taken and occupied but camping in an occupation means creating a life there. This idea thus connects to a rethinking of life aspects that would otherwise be lived in the safe four walls of one’s ‘usual’ life with less critical awareness to the politics of it. In occupations, this ‘usual’ life gets interrupted and possibilities for a more conscious experience of life and the effects of political structures on everyday lives arise. In this relation to ‘space,’ the focus on individual spatial stories and experiences then becomes an intriguing aspect of this research as the experiences of these spaces of the occupation and subsequently the spaces itself are constructed through lived experiences.

In previous research on political occupations, the notion of ‘ruptures’ is often limited to the occurring image of disruptions of seemingly well-ordered city life<sup>8</sup> as these events are frequently depicted as sources of disorder and chaos in the perceived ‘normal’ life of a specific geographic location.<sup>9</sup> In general, occupations as a subject of academic research have mostly been aiming at understanding the role of networks, the internet and modern technology in the mobilization of occupiers,<sup>10</sup> and the significance of pertinent slogans, logos or other images for reaching local and global awareness on persisting inequalities.<sup>11</sup> This said, little attention has been given to the small-scale notions of life in an occupation itself, and how resistance is embedded in the reconfiguration of life in an occupation camp. Following on from these considerations, this thesis sets out to engage in a more critical inquiry into the politics of the

---

<sup>8</sup> The presence of occupations is often seen as a phenomenon in urban capitalistic cities. The history and context of occupations is, however, much broader as for example huge movements on South America’s country sides, see for example Gabriel A. Ondetti, *Land, Protest, and Politics: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for Agrarian Reform in Brazil* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Tamara Steger, “Occupy Wall Street: A Counter Discourse,” vol. 2 (Rethinking Urban Inclusion, cescontexto, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Sheetal D. Agarwal et al., “Grassroots Organizing in the Digital Age: Considering Values and Technology in Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street,” *Information, Communication & Society* 17, no. 3 (March 16, 2014): 326–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.873068>.

<sup>11</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, “Image, Space, Revolution: The Arts of Occupation,” *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 1 (September 2012): 8–32, <https://doi.org/10.1086/668048>.

space of occupations, while examining the occupation of *#OccupyKossuth*, which I have been a part of.

Identifying as both, a participant in the occupation and a researcher on it, has not only driven me to develop this research project but it has consequently informed my research process in which the collection of stories and the making sense of individual experiences play a key role in understanding how ‘spaces’ are understood and made. *#OccupyKossuth* is therefore an important site of investigation because it allows me to reflect on the balancing between my subjective experience and the goal to produce a writing that gives back the emotions of ‘space’ being shaped by individually experienced social relations and interactions, hence ‘space’ being a relational and lived reality.

Chapter 1 will therefore, introduce the literature at the intersection of ‘space’ and politics, especially highlighting Henri Lefebvre’s concept of the ‘production of space,’<sup>12</sup> with his triadic notion of ‘space’ as the concrete and abstract, the perceived, and the lived. According to Lefebvre, desired social change of all kinds cannot happen without challenging our “*sociospatial relations*”<sup>13</sup> – hence producing a new space. In addition, I will make the case for engaging with experiences as research concepts to accommodate both the different layers of political and cultural forces driving activities of political dissent, as well as allowing to reflect on the possibilities for a variety of experiences lived in the occupation. Considering and reflecting on emotions in this process of making sense of lived experiences are increasingly recognized as fruitful research method to underline arguments about representations and the workings of power streams of politics.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Mark Gottdiener, “A Marx for Our Time: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space,” *Sociological Theory* 11, no. 1 (March 1993): 133, <https://doi.org/10.2307/201984>.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, “Theorizing Emotions in World Politics,” *International Theory* 6, no. 3 (November 2014): 491–514, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971914000232>.

After understanding how ‘spaces’ are created through active pathways, Chapter 2 will then bring the experiences of the occupation *#OccupyKossuth* into new life, transforming reflections and memories, taken from nine unstructured interviews and fieldnotes, into a narrative that will allow the reader to grasp the variety of experiences of life in the occupation. In this research, storytelling and a narrative writing style have become part of the process to make sense of the personal experience and to render it in a way that allows appreciation for creative and alternative ways of political resistance. Pursuing a narrative writing style, which also includes autoethnographic notions, allows me to express my feelings and ways of realizations throughout this research process.<sup>15</sup> This, as Naeem Inayatullah suggests, makes social processes more precisely tangible.<sup>16</sup> It thus allows me to exhibit nuances of realized limits and obstacles deriving from my positionality as both a participant in this occupation and a researcher on it, to embrace my vulnerability to it in the most honest way.<sup>17</sup>

My unique positionality warrants for a particular style of engagement and writing that underlines the non-linear nature of the message and feelings that this research produces for the reader. Narrative writing challenges the separations between academia as knowledge producers and activism as reactionary forces and fosters a creative practice in reading and feeling this research.<sup>18</sup> While I have my own personal memory of the time of the occupation, I would not want to present my version of the occupation story as supporting facts to a certain research claim but I aim at engaging in a form of writing that allows for possibilities of creative

---

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Dauphinee, “The Ethics of Autoethnography,” *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 03 (July 2010): 799–818, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000690>.

<sup>16</sup> Naeem Inayatullah, “Falling and Flying - An Introduction,” in *Autobiographical International Relations - I, IR* (London: New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 5.

<sup>17</sup> For more about the interrogation of the relationship between researcher and research subject, see for example Inayatullah, “Falling and Flying - An Introduction”; Megan Daigle, “Writing the Lives of Others: Storytelling and International Politics,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 1 (September 2016): 25–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829816656415>.

<sup>18</sup> Jenny Edkins, “Novel Writing in International Relations: Openings for a Creative Practice,” *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (August 2013): 281–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613491304>; Erzsébet Strausz, *Writing the Self and Transforming Knowledge in International Relations: Towards a Politics of Liminality*, Interventions (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

imaginations – since the attempt of giving back the lived experiences of the occupation will ultimately result in a text with carefully chosen words and arbitrarily elevated stories and opinions of occupiers. Reflecting on these ideas and on my positionality in its various layers will therefore be a crucial part of Chapter 2.

Finally, Chapter 3 will reflect on and deconstruct the narrative with regards to the process of making sense of the lived spatial experiences of the occupation and on the process of producing a narrative from my position. Having created possibilities for imagining ‘alternative lives’ while producing new spaces, this chapter argues as to how life lived in the occupation offers paths for exploring more about how politics affects our lives and how forms of resistance offer more than reactionary images but their configuration makes a case for alternatives to the prevalent suppressive systems. An afterthought on radical solidarity and critical self-reflexivity follows.

CEU will leave Hungary soon after this thesis is submitted. What stays, stays - maybe. For me, there is an incredible feeling of thankfulness to everyone who joins this struggle in any possible form – the readers and non-readers, the listeners, the heart-warming supporters and challenging critiques.

## CHAPTER 1: POLITICS, SPACES, AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

Interest in the aspect of ‘space’ in political sciences has recently been developed in a variety of fields,<sup>19</sup> for example regarding the role of performances and spatial dimensions in theater and performance studies,<sup>20</sup> in questions of relational perspectives in architecture and geography,<sup>21</sup> or the role of space for enhancing public debates in art studies.<sup>22</sup> Precisely because ‘space’ appears in political studies in various fields, no shared understanding of ‘space’ as a concept or framework exists. Acknowledging this, for the purpose of this research, the following literature review explores how geographers and political scientists rework the notion of ‘space’ around political questions of power, of the public, and of democratic activities.

### 1.1. *The everyday politicization of space*

Building on Rancière and his notion of space in politics,<sup>23</sup> geographer Mustafa Dikeç argues on the one hand, that ‘space’ is political because it can accommodate power or opposing interests, and on the other hand, that public space, as opposition to private space, is the place “where a wrong can be addressed,”<sup>24</sup> whereby the subjectivity of the ‘wrong’ illustrates the possibilities for the affirmation of ‘the right’ and the contestation to the ‘wrong’ in seemingly neutral spaces. Addressing ‘the wrong’ understood as the expression of the subjective ‘wrong’

---

<sup>19</sup> Mustafa Dikeç, “Space as a Mode of Political Thinking,” *Geoforum* 43, no. 4 (June 2012): 669–76, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.01.008>.

<sup>20</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte and Benjamin Wihstutz, eds., *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology*, Routledge Advances in Theatre & Performance Studies, no. 24 (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Ahmed Z. Khan, Frank Moulaert, and Jan Schreurs, “Epistemology of Space: Exploring Relational Perspectives in Planning, Urbanism, and Architecture,” *International Planning Studies* 18, no. 3–4 (November 2013): 287–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2013.837138>; Clive Barnett and Murray Low, eds., *Spaces of Democracy: Geographical Perspectives on Citizenship, Participation and Representation* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Rosalyn Deutsche, “Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy,” *Social Text*, no. 33 (1992): 34, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466433>.

<sup>23</sup> Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics,” *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>24</sup> Dikeç, “Space as a Mode of Political Thinking,” 171.

treatment among social groups and status, and other power relations of all kinds, one can understand power relations as relations of differences, of different needs and desires, of social statuses, race, gender and struggles for identities, that our daily lives are bound up with.<sup>25</sup>

“Thinking spatially”<sup>26</sup> is, however, not only about the possibilities for visibilities of differences, but politics in itself is “inherently spatial”<sup>27</sup> because its functioning is based on negotiations for the distributions of legitimacy, recognition, freedoms, functions, communities, possibilities, and activities.<sup>28</sup> In any configuration of distributions, power is exercised,<sup>29</sup> and this is how space is political and politicized.<sup>30</sup> To illustrate this, Stuart Elden and Ross Beveridge describe how modern capitalism constitutes the organization of life, divided in work, consumption and leisure, for example in the physical and economic space for crops and industry, and social space for housing, in temporary spaces where critical masses, dumpster diving and co-housing occur.<sup>31</sup> Thus, with ‘space’ as a necessary condition of basic needs of life, it became an inherently capitalistic commodity, which should be understood as the “locus and medium of [democratic] struggle.”<sup>32</sup> In this view, the lens on ‘space’ serves as an alternative vision of democracy as “technocratic elitism.”<sup>33</sup> Happenings and encounters in public space, although deemed as solely ‘local’ at first sight, are therefore performances of balancing acts where the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ meet.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: The One-Volume Edition*, One-vol. ed (London: Verso, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Dikeç, “Space as a Mode of Political Thinking,” 670.

<sup>27</sup> Mustafa Dikeç, “Space, Politics, and the Political,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, no. 2 (April 2005): 186, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d364t>.

<sup>28</sup> Dikeç, “Space, Politics, and the Political.”

<sup>29</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> Stuart Elden, “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space,” *Radical Philosophy Review* 10, no. 2 (2007): 101–16, <https://doi.org/10.5840/radphilrev20071022>.

<sup>31</sup> Ross Beveridge and Philippe Koch, “Urban Everyday Politics: Politicising Practices and the Transformation of the Here and Now,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 1 (February 2019): 142–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818805487>.

<sup>32</sup> Elden, “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political,” 107.

<sup>33</sup> Simon Springer, “Public Space as Emancipation: Meditations on Anarchism, Radical Democracy, Neoliberalism and Violence,” *Antipode* 43, no. 2 (March 2011): 525, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00827.x>.

<sup>34</sup> Springer, “Public Space as Emancipation.”

Following this, possibilities to resist the violence of power streams exist in spaces where everyday life is lived and experienced,<sup>35</sup> and where moments of interruption of the seemingly ‘normal’ occur. As Dikeç argues, “space [is] not only an integral element of the defining moment of the political, but an integral element of the disruption of the normalized order of domination as well.”<sup>36</sup> If the hegemonic democratic culture and hierarchical order is challenged, it happens “spatially and that space makes a difference.”<sup>37</sup> Springer therefore sees “public space as a vision for radical democracy,”<sup>38</sup> full of opportunities for contestation, (re-)appropriation, presentation, and encounters of differences and communities. This is of interest for a democratic politics when understood as a constant struggle against presupposed hierarchies.<sup>39</sup> Thus, a more democratic future seems promised not only when tackling the most visible and conventional instruments of democracy, such as campaigns and elections, but the way hierarchies and orders are lived in everyday lives.<sup>40</sup> After studying communities across Italy, Robert Putnam calls these engagements in a variety of participatory activities the “social capital”<sup>41</sup> that “make democracies work.”<sup>42</sup> This idea thus reflects the tight relationship between politically distributive aspects of space and the social, political and individual differences affecting our everyday lives.

This very democratic condition of public space is accentuated by the image of social movements occupying spaces,<sup>43</sup> asking for spaces, roles, and voices<sup>44</sup> in the existing political structures. The images of people taking to the streets in New York, London, Frankfurt, Beijing,

---

<sup>35</sup> Sophie Watson, “Cultures of Democracy: Spaces of Democratic Possibility,” in *Spaces of Democracy* (London: SAGE Publications, 2004), 211.

<sup>36</sup> Dikeç, “Space, Politics, and the Political,” 171.

<sup>37</sup> Watson, “Cultures of Democracy: Spaces of Democratic Possibility,” 211.

<sup>38</sup> Springer, “Public Space as Emancipation,” 525.

<sup>39</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> Peter Hopkins and Liz Todd, “Creating an Intentionally Dialogic Space: Student Activism and the Newcastle Occupation 2010,” *Political Geography* 46 (May 2015): 31–40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.10.008>.

<sup>41</sup> Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, 5. print., 1. Princeton paperback print (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Watson, “Cultures of Democracy: Spaces of Democratic Possibility,” 137.

<sup>43</sup> Nancy Duxbury, “Rethinking Urban Inclusions, Spaces, Mobilizations, Interventions” (cescontexto, 2013), 12.

<sup>44</sup> Steger, “Occupy Wall Street: A Counter Discourse.”

Cairo, or Madrid are just a few recent examples. Whereas prevailing political structures and power dynamics are the results of global processes, occupations and political protests are often portrayed as local actions, with space-taking activities reduced to actions targeted solely at generating attention, media coverage, and limited local outrage.<sup>45</sup> Refusing the firm distinction of local actions and global issues, as mentioned above, one will be able to understand protests with the political dimensions of a variety of spatialities involved,<sup>46</sup> namely scale, place, networks, positionality, or mobility, as suggested by Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin Sziarto.<sup>47</sup>

### ***1.2. Occupations as a form of political resistance***

Spatialities, however, are often only a trivial aspect of occupation research. Even though the 2011 protests on Tahrir Square in Cairo, or every occupation inspired by Occupy Wall Street around Zuccotti Park in New York “[shook] the planet,”<sup>48</sup> much research only examines the role of images and media,<sup>49</sup> or technology and the internet in the mobilization and transformation of the local action to a global protest wave.<sup>50</sup>

Whereas Leitner’s framework for contentious politics offers independent perspectives on ‘spaces,’ Colin McFarlane argues that spatialities are less lineal from each other, and he develops a spatial framework of “translocal assemblages”<sup>51</sup> to accommodate transgressive

---

<sup>45</sup> Faranak Miraftab, “Invited and Invented Spaces of Participation: Neoliberal Citizenship and Feminists’s Expanded Notions of Politics,” *Wagadu* 1 (2004).

<sup>46</sup> Maurice Stierl, “‘No One Is Illegal!’ Resistance and the Politics of Discomfort,” *Globalizations* 9, no. 3 (June 2012): 425–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2012.680738>.

<sup>47</sup> Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin M. Sziarto, “The Spatialities of Contentious Politics,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Duxbury, “Rethinking Urban Inclusions, Spaces, Mobilizations, Interventions,” 14.

<sup>49</sup> Mitchell, “Image, Space, Revolution.”

<sup>50</sup> Agarwal et al., “Grassroots Organizing in the Digital Age.”

<sup>51</sup> Colin McFarlane, “Translocal Assemblages: Space, Power and Social Movements,” *Geoforum* 40, no. 4 (July 2009): 561, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.05.003>.

dynamics, while looking at processes of transformation and dispersion of spatialities across networks. This results in not only different understandings of the theme of ‘spaces’ in politics existing, but also different approaches to creating a framework to analyze the relationship between ‘space’ and politics.

In occupations, much more than in any other short-term activity of political dissent, the shift away from ‘taking space’ or ‘claiming space’ for the expression of political demands, towards ‘creating a space’ with activities that constitute an occupation, becomes tangible.<sup>52</sup> The political demand to ‘have a political voice,’ packed in occupying a privately-owned public space and thereby contesting the privatization of public space, as was the intent of the Occupy Wall Street protest,<sup>53</sup> should not be discredited. With the notion of “you cannot evict an idea,”<sup>54</sup> as an Occupy Wall Street protester said, this spatial tactic of occupying does justice to the claim of winning back “the political power of the citizen worker.”<sup>55</sup> However, it does much more than that. In line with Springer, Tamara Steger finds that Occupy Wall Street “reflects an experiment in radical democracy,”<sup>56</sup> not only because of its space-taking tactic but because of the life and structure of the being together within the occupation, the non-hierarchical nature of decision-making and happenings within the ‘space’ of the occupation. It follows that the nature of a space to be filled with life, as it happens over some days or weeks in an occupation, requests and allows a reconfiguring of life and being-together, alternative to the ‘normally’ lived life in the prevalent hierarchical power regimes.

---

<sup>52</sup> John L. Hammond, “The Significance of Space in Occupy Wall Street,” *A Journal for and about Social Movements* 5, no. 2 (2013): 499–524.

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Kohn, “Privatization and Protest: Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Toronto, and the Occupation of Public Space in a Democracy,” *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 1 (March 2013): 99–110, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592712003623>.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Steger, “Occupy Wall Street: A Counter Discourse,” 332.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*. (New York: Argo-Navis, 2012), <http://grail.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=931436>.

<sup>56</sup> Steger, “Occupy Wall Street: A Counter Discourse,” 330.

As highlighted above, space is political and politicized in everyday life and it is not only the place where the political occurs. Following Michel Foucault, the relation between ‘space’ and the political is co-constitutive because a spatial organization only makes the exercise of power possible.<sup>57</sup> As much as politics is spatial in its sense of being concerned with distributions – “of activities, authorities, functions, names, individuals or groups, and places,”<sup>58</sup> as Mustafa Dikeç explains, it is also political because it carries the power relations shaped by political activities. “Thinking spatially”<sup>59</sup> therefore offers new ways to explore power regimes and the political organization - and in addition, its co-constitutive nature allows space and politics not only to be studied, but also to be lived and thereby reconfigured.

### **1.3. The production of space**

One of the most popularly respected readings in critical geography studies and social theory is the theory on the ‘production of space’ by French Marxist scholar Henri Lefebvre. He develops the influential meta-philosophical epistemology of space as a “complex character”<sup>60</sup> that transgresses all possible boundaries of social relations. Lefebvre was convinced that orthodox Marxism did not offer a comprehensive theory on the relationship of mental and real ‘space,’ with which he refers both to the under-theorization of the relationship of theorizing and practicing ‘space’ and the under-theorization of the diverse realities of ‘space.’ Marxist political economy, he argues, overlooked the dynamics of the commodification of ‘space,’ which happens in modern capitalism.<sup>61</sup> Intensely studied and analyzed for example by Stefan Kipfer, Stuart Elden, and Christian Schmid, Lefebvre does not offer a “finished theory of urban political

---

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

<sup>58</sup> Dikeç, “Space, Politics, and the Political,” 186.

<sup>59</sup> Dikeç, “Space as a Mode of Political Thinking,” 670.

<sup>60</sup> Gottdiener, “A Marx for Our Time,” 131.

<sup>61</sup> Elden, “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political,” 105.

economy”<sup>62</sup> either, but “an embodied, passionately engaged, and politically charged form of critical knowledge.”<sup>63</sup> While neither discrediting the aspect of ‘time’ and the ‘event’ of politics, nor overprioritizing the aspect of ‘space’ in politics, Lefebvre simply extended the modes of seeing and thinking politics by theorizing how the “social, [the] spatial and [the] temporal [...] are shaped by each other.”<sup>64</sup>

In this sense, Lefebvre makes the case for ‘space’ being theorized as a blurred unity with a “triadic”<sup>65</sup> notion, that “ties together the physical, the mental, and the social.”<sup>66</sup> This said, the ‘Lefebvrian space’ is the simultaneity of ‘space’ as materiality, as knowledge and ‘space’ as imagination, and as ‘space’ bound up with meaning in the lived ‘space.’<sup>67</sup> In other words, his space is seen as “the perceived, the conceived, and the lived.”<sup>68</sup> Building upon an understanding that space, history and time cannot be separated from each other, this spatial framework creates a complexity of the ‘truth’ of space, one which reads ‘space’ through three lenses, hence offering a truly radical inquiry into the politics of ‘space.’

Referring to the capitalist commodification of ‘space,’ which has become visible through the spatial organization of work, leisure, and the private life, Lefebvre names his concept the ‘production of space.’ While neoliberal capitalism’s success lies in its “flexibility in constructing and reconstructing the relations of space and the global space economy in constituting the world market,”<sup>69</sup> as Elden Stuart finds, the reference to the term of ‘production’ makes sense in regard to an understanding of no space ever being preemptive. The Lefebvrian

---

<sup>62</sup> Stefan Kipfer et al., “On the Production of Henri Lefebvre,” in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, n.d.), 7.

<sup>63</sup> Kipfer et al., 3.

<sup>64</sup> Elden, “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political,” 112; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

<sup>65</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 411.

<sup>66</sup> Gottdiener, “A Marx for Our Time,” 131.

<sup>67</sup> Elden, “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political.”

<sup>68</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39.

<sup>69</sup> Elden, “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political,” 106.

‘space’ is constantly (re-)produced. Elden understands Lefebvre’s thinking as being “anxious”<sup>70</sup> of being misunderstood, when Lefebvre brings his concept to his point that “a social space is not a *socialized* space,”<sup>71</sup> because it has not existed earlier as a space without social features, but “it is produced by social forces.”<sup>72</sup> Following the Lefebvrian triadic notion of ‘space,’ the conclusion is that ‘space’s reality lies in the experienced space, in the experiences in and around a space and therefore in the individual, subjective memories, emotions, and feelings towards a spatial experience.

#### **1.4. Analysis through ‘experiencing space’**

Understanding ‘space’ in its entirety through the lived experiences contributes to understanding the effects and power dynamics of hierarchies, violence, and other processes induced by political activities,<sup>73</sup> and also allows one to think of possible ways to resist creatively and sustainably.<sup>74</sup> With ‘experiences’ and ‘emotions’ being tightly linked to each other, the theme of ‘emotions’ in activism is frequently used in questions of mobilizations and commitment.<sup>75</sup> However, taking emotions as signifiers of a “productive process,”<sup>76</sup> that is, with a Foucauldian eye, neither positively nor negatively loaded, aims at “promoting more fully conscious human beings,”<sup>77</sup> as citizens, as activists, as protest participants, as observers, as dissidents, as researchers, as political entities – as human beings. The reincorporation of

---

<sup>70</sup> Elden, 108.

<sup>71</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 190.

<sup>72</sup> Elden, “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political,” 108.

<sup>73</sup> Doreen Massey, “Thinking Radical Democracy Spatially,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 (1995): 283–88.

<sup>74</sup> Chris Dixon, *Another Politics: Talking across Today’s Transformative Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> Dakota K. T. Raynes et al., “An Emotional Landscape of Place-Based Activism: Exploring the Dynamics of Place and Emotion in Antifracking Actions,” *Humanity & Society* 40, no. 4 (November 2016): 401–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597616669757>.

<sup>76</sup> Elspeth Probyn et al., “Productive Faces of Shame: An Interview with Elspeth Probyn,” *Feminism & Psychology* 29, no. 2 (May 2019): 322–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353518811366>.

<sup>77</sup> Laura Pulido, “The Interior Life of Politics,” *Ethics, Place and Environment*, Act of Ethics: A special section on ethics and global activism, 6, no. 1 (2003): 46.

emotions into studies on the politics of activism<sup>78</sup> is thus fruitful for my research purpose as it contributes to an “architecture of consciousness,”<sup>79</sup> which is being built on the ground<sup>80</sup> and extends the realm of motivations for activism but also in how activism is lived, and underlines how politics are “always simultaneously personal and structural.”<sup>81</sup>

Critical scholars such as Kye Askins,<sup>82</sup> Elspeth Probyn,<sup>83</sup> or Laura Pulido<sup>84</sup> engage in making ‘emotions’ central to their research because it inhabits the variety of ‘forces,’ that carry notions of political, cultural and social constructs – that ultimately results in motivations to start being active and to conduct activism in a certain way. Emotions are then, as Askins formulates, “both a physical feeling and a conscious making sense of that feeling.”<sup>85</sup> In her particular research, she incorporates her feelings within activism to study her positionality in different settings, as both a researcher and activist, reflecting on questions of her setting the research theme and time, and the tension of the relevance of her research in relation to the relevance of her activism for the case. For the purpose of this research, I am going to engage in creating a narrative of the student occupation *#OccupyKossuth*, while looking at emotions of lived experiences as signifying “moments of rupture” in the everyday life lived in the tents, reflecting on how the conduct and experiences of life make the case for our student occupation to be more than a ‘celebration and presentation of democracy’ but a radical experiment of imagining life differently.

---

<sup>78</sup> Pulido, “The Interior Life of Politics.”

<sup>79</sup> Michael Kimmelmann, “In Protest, the Power of Place,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/16/sunday-review/wall-street-protest-shows-power-of-place.html>.

<sup>80</sup> Kimmelmann.

<sup>81</sup> Lynda Johnston and Gordon Waitt, “The Spatial Politics of Gay Pride Parades and Festivals: Emotional Activism,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Lesbian and Gay Activism*, Ashgate Publishing (Routledge, 2015), 105–20.

<sup>82</sup> Kye Askins, “‘That’s Just What I Do’: Placing Emotion in Academic Activism,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 1 (July 2009): 4–13, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2009.03.005>.

<sup>83</sup> Elspeth Probyn, “Glass Selves: Emotions, Subjectivity, and the Research Process,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Self* (Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199548019.003.0030>.

<sup>84</sup> Pulido, “The Interior Life of Politics.”

<sup>85</sup> Askins, “‘That’s Just What I Do,’” 8.

### **1.5. Interim Reflection: (Not) being an ‘activist’**

At this point I feel invited to reflect on a notion that often occurred to me when I speak about my ‘activist’ friends from *Students4CEU/Szabad Egyetem*. After the occupation was over and the rector of our university asked the ‘activists’ to stand up to receive an applause, we did not even think about not standing up. The action to get up just happened, as if our legs would have ears and would work on command. It took only a few seconds, until I felt extremely uncomfortable about being in the spotlight and receiving applause from my classmates and other students. Also, later, I realized that I feel uncomfortable being called an ‘activist,’ both as an individual and as a part of the collective. Being an ‘activist’ or a ‘student activist’ felt like being uplifted to another level or having received special entitlement to ‘do activism.’ Having lived in the occupation camp, and trying to make sense of individual and collective memories and feelings, it would stand in conflict with my message of not attributing any possible experience of ‘everyday life ruptures’ solely to those deemed or (en)titled as ‘activists,’ while making the case for possibilities in everyone to imagine politics differently in everyday lives. The above-mentioned and constant struggle for a radical consciousness of my political agency, therefore, inspired me to refuse the term ‘activist’ when I talk about those – who participate in the occupation in one way or the other – human beings. Instead, I will call them ‘interviewees’ or ‘occupiers.’

In light of the aspired reflexiveness about my research, my positionality, the purpose and implication of it, the following narrative chapter will invite on a path to discover possibilities for imaginations. As formulated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, there might be “as many spaces as there are [...] spatial experiences,”<sup>86</sup> and consequently, the stories taken from

---

<sup>86</sup> Merleau-Ponty cited in Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2013), 118.

the interviews conducted aim at openly co-constituting and co-creating the story of what has been lived by the interviewees and me.

## CHAPTER 2: OCCUPYING KOSSUTH SQUARE, OCCUPYING MINDS AND HEARTS

I met nine interviewees in casual settings, some while sharing a cake, others in a hidden corner of the university. The atmosphere was mostly friendly, everyone seemed to like the idea to meet up and chat about the occupation again. We had discussed the occupation already a lot. It is part of our friendships. We call each other jokingly ‘comrades’ or ‘activist friends’, although, as earlier described, I felt uncomfortable with the categorization of ‘activist students.’ It just does not resonate with my experienced personal impact, which was much more *post*-actionary than *reactionary*, as ‘activists’ are often portrayed as reactionary political actors. And in addition, the so-called ‘activist’ actions we engaged in were, as will be shown, political not (only) because of the case we were fighting for.<sup>87</sup>

Defining what was to be gained from the occupation thus lies in ways that try to make explicit the realities that were lived. The task now is to do justice to the ‘reality’ of the occupation, which was made possible through (re)actionary motivations, collective challenges and individually lived experiences. I recognize that processing my own experiences has, throughout time, rarely happened in silent self-reflection but in collective modes of interactions, which diversified, challenged and helped clarify the *Why*’s and *How*’s of the feelings and emotions I experienced after the occupation. Deciding for relational interviewing as a research method thus speaks to the desire and need to find an ethical and accommodating way to process lived experiences while rendering the relational context of the sense-making process visible.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> For more about the tension between identity and action and the political significance of differentiating between the two, see for example Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Warwick Studies in European Philosophy (London : New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>88</sup> Margareta Hydén, “The Teller-Focused Interview: Interviewing as a Relational Practice,” *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice* 13, no. 6 (November 2014): 795–812, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325013506247>.

The story of the occupation can thus only be recounted collectively with others. Following this, the challenge is to narrate the lived experiences as both exposing the uniqueness of everyone's experience and expressing the shared reflection processes.<sup>89</sup> As such reflections are transformative and transforming over time and consequently never-ending, and as the production of the occupy 'reality' or experience is "necessarily intermittent and fragmentary,"<sup>90</sup> as Adriana Cavarero suggests, it is not unreasonable that the following narrative does enjoy only limited (wordcount) space to accommodate fragments of the immense relational accounts of the occupation from the interviews – mine not excluded.

I anonymized the names of the interviewees and, where possible, did not indicate their gender. In exchange, I do not assign fictive names to my interviewees, but leave them nameless, which will result in a writing from where the reader will not be able to identify relations between single parts of the narrated story. While this results from the struggle to anonymize as I promised my interviewees, I am also making the case for this to be beneficial. By not naming the interviewees, the narrative – albeit written by me but told by many – will appear as if the reader would listen to random and chaotic voices in a subway while trying to understand what it means to take a subway ride. This, in turn, represents the political community that, as Jenny Edkins argues, although always incomplete, renders the collective nature of the occupation and its experiences intrinsic to the writing as a "collective body of text."<sup>91</sup>

Following such mode of writing, all quotes in this chapter are marked with single quotation marks, in order to engage in diminishing the distance between a conventional text in which citations are more clearly separated from the text body with double quotation marks. The text body is not indented. Spoken comments by my interviewees are right-indented, whereas sequences of the interviews spoken by me are left-indented. Subheadings are unnumbered.

---

<sup>89</sup> See Adriana Cavarero for the intersection of the political and narrative writing, Cavarero, *Relating Narratives*.

<sup>90</sup> Cavarero, 63.

<sup>91</sup> Edkins, "Novel Writing in International Relations," 287.

While taking up Chakravorty Spivak's notion that a text receives a function first when it is read,<sup>92</sup> these textual ruptures thus employ the very method of what the text wants to describe, the disrupted, incomplete, but collective nature of the sense-making process of the lived experiences in the occupation.<sup>93</sup> Hence, the present narrative aims at creating an atmosphere and an experience of reading this chapter, which allows the reader a glimpse of what I and others recount to have felt.

### ***Building up the occupation***

CEU had been in trouble since *LexCEU* 'happened' on March 28, 2017. Somehow, however, this trouble was not very visible to me with the beginning of the Fall Term in 2018.

Having recently joined CEU as a student, I found myself in a new environment. New professors, new classroom structures, new requirements, new responsibilities – and it somehow felt like a safe place. I had just signed a form which officially made me a student eligible to study International Relations – the struggles of the world - for two years, in Budapest. At this point, I and many around me felt reassured that despite all political tension with the Hungarian government, CEU would stay in Budapest. On October 26, 2018, scrolling through my new CEU Facebook groups, I saw a post saying 'I made this group for those who want to mobilize online/offline :)’ – Wow, I think, and continue scrolling.

A few days later on November 16, 2018, one of the smaller liberal political parties organized a protest against the impending 'kick-out' of CEU. I join with friends. A guy approaches us. I have seen him on campus. He hands me a flyer and talks in pretty nicely sounding Hungarian,

---

<sup>92</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Other Asias* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008) as referenced in Edkins, "Novel Writing in International Relations," 283.

<sup>93</sup> Edkins, "Novel Writing in International Relations," 287.

something like ‘Join us next week for the struggle for CEU.’ I am still fascinated by foreigners speaking Hungarian despite me having succeeded in learning it almost fluently. A few days later, I see him on campus again, and without thinking much I ask him what’s up with the struggle for CEU. ‘Come now, we will have a meeting in three minutes.’

And I find myself in the Auditorium of CEU amongst around 50 other students, most of whom I have never seen before. There is one guy whom I have briefly chatted to at a party, and I recognize the guy who started the Facebook group.

‘So, all those in favor of doing an occupation of Kossuth Square starting from next Saturday until December 1<sup>st</sup>, raise their hands.’<sup>94</sup>

Not knowing whether I had a voice, I raised my hand. I liked the idea. The group, originally named *Students4CEU* would commit to horizontality and consensus-based decision making. The question of whether I had a voice was thus quickly answered but I still felt strange.

---

Jumping forward, I meet my interviewees 15 months later, in February and March 2020. I start the so-called unstructured interviews in a formal way, explain what my research is about and why I do interviews. I ask them to read the consent forms and we talk about it. I also mention that each interview would be more like a chat or a conversation – but I also say that I have questions prepared in case we did not know what to say. I later regret this as most of my interviewees felt more comfortable with being asked *my* questions instead of allowing for a more random conversation.

---

<sup>94</sup> Ifra Asad and McKenzie Nelson, *Szabad Egyetem*, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ\\_3TspD-uo&t=42s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ_3TspD-uo&t=42s), 01:57.

Whether the danger of CEU being kicked out was real?

‘I didn’t think it would happen during the time that I study here.’

‘You know, when friends of family asked, I always said it’s gonna be fine. And I felt assured, that my networks believed and trusted in that.’

When they say that, I nod. I have never thought about the possibility that *it* could really happen. But *it* happened. We found ourselves in this weird state of being students at a university, which did not really seem prepared either. I am not sure exactly what my worries were, but I remember being surprised hearing about the worries of friends, about their visa, about their legal status in Europe.

---

I joined *Students4CEU* at the very moment when I raised my hand to signal being in favor of an occupation. No one offered or asked me to participate, no one questioned me being there. I was just there, and I was in. I had no particular feelings about my classmates not joining, just for myself, it felt good to join. Later, when I asked other members why they joined, they had too had difficulties remembering.

‘I was actually so convinced to get some breakthrough knowledge through my studies at CEU. [...] And I did some activism in my undergraduate studies, but at CEU, I really wanted to focus on my studies. [...] But then, it somehow got me engaged when I saw that they are really doing something.’

---

‘Why occupy?’ – I would ask, curiously wondering how the idea to occupy came up – in winter, as I was not there during that time.

‘There was this very sweet girl in my class who said she’s just so mad about this case. And all she wanted to do was to go out and study, just taking out her books and study on Kossuth Square. I wished I had a coffee with her but then it never happened.’

‘So, I remember after the first meeting, which was crazy good energy, that I talked to one of the others and I was like ‘I see us occupying ... like even if none of the others want to come, we’ll just go and do it.’

‘It was just having tents there and the students would go there, you know... and gradually, things came up.’

‘With *Students4CEU*, we talked about hunger striking, and occupying, just something different and maybe with a glimpse of something more radical.’

‘I remember one of us saying ‘Let’s just have tents on the street and occupy it.’

And they remember that moment of sitting in a room with dozens of confused, worried, motivated and engaged students, and feeling very energetic about the idea of being in a tent, ‘leaving the \$24 million-dollar building’ of CEU and just do what ‘the sweet girl’ wanted to do.

### ***Making the camp happen – The Open University***

We had a handful of days to plan the occupation, maybe seven. As it was a legally registered event happening for seven days on Kossuth Square, some forms of engagement had to happen 24/7 – and sleeping could not be part of that.

Turning the occupation into the Open University did not only happen because we were legally required to do *things*, but because the occupation in itself was not perceived as political protest.

‘I can only say that with hindsight, but do you really think we created political tensions while being in tents? No, we were occupying, but not literally because we got the permission to be there.’

In the interviews, I discovered a tension between the occupation and the Open University being the purpose or means of this protest. But people liked the idea, and some tell me how they were not thinking that CEU would be able to stay anyways and all we could do was to do and show what we liked: life as students at a critical institution. At that time, I remember sitting in the classroom and not being able to follow the seminar. And I remember how I had this thought that it was ridiculous that I would silently and calmly sit in a classroom while something really big was happening: a university was being kicked out and what I saw as my home would not be my home anymore if I, along with CEU, left the country.

I remember being nervous about asking my professors to allow me to skip class. I did not feel comfortable finding myself in this complicated position of being an enrolled student but also feeling uncomfortably angry about CEU’s struggles and what this meant for me. When one of my professors answered my e-mail saying that he would prefer having me participating in his seminar, I think it strengthened my motivation to get involved in the so-called fight for academic freedom. Why? Maybe because it just added to this notion of feeling uncomfortable and unable to sit concentrated in a classroom, while I felt good in the collective organizing of the occupation. Maybe.

When planning the occupation and the unfolding Open University, I mentioned I knew Hungarian and felt useful with it in the group as most of the others were non-Hungarians with limited language skills – so, my task became to contact some NGOs, and I soon got a list of professors who would love to bring a class to the Square. I was not ‘asked’ to create a schedule, I got no direction, I just called and invited whomever people of the collective had in mind.

Finding myself in that horizontal structure was challenging. The design of the occupation, the content and conduct of the Open University was a constant negotiation. It was the negotiation between the tents of the camps being the disruptive element of dissent and the daily structure of the Open University symbolizing the meaning of the struggle for academic freedom in Hungary. It became a negotiation of energies, levels of commitment and more.

One interviewee tells me how we had borrowed equipment from another activist group - I had no idea - and how for him the whole occupation started with a two-hour-long, very heated argument about 'our' relationship with this group. This other group was experienced in occupying, mainly fighting for similar goals and also opposing the Orbán regime... And my interviewee tells how tense the talk was because they accused us of not knowing how to facilitate a demonstration, but on the other hand, we also very much appreciated their equipment.

'It was a terrible two hours of mediation and trying to talk to them because overthrowing [sic!] our relationship with them would have been very bad....'

'Yeah, I remember I was so happy not to be in there because it felt very tiring,' I allow myself to reminisce.

'And the occupation didn't even start.'

And we laugh a lot about it. We also laugh about how he would use his 'diplomatic negotiation skills' in later job applications.

---

Lots of planning preceded the occupation, and even during it, I ended up spending most of the day on my phone or computer. I joined the game night, some films in the evening, a workshop

led by the human rights organization Amnesty International and one by Transvanilla, a trans advocacy group. When the Wi-Fi on the square worked, I sat in the little tent that was dedicated as organization camp, or in a coffee place nearby when my fingers started freezing. I missed most of the other events, the academic lectures, and the occupy disco. I knew they happened because they eventually got into the schedule through me, but I have no experience of living through them.

In another interview, I share this notion with my interviewee when we talk about how much time we spent at the occupation or what we did there. I was a bit sad when I thought about the occupation in this way because I felt I missed a lot. For example, missing the disco was a decision which I strongly regretted later. Maybe I will find words to express that soon. Anyhow, we exchange some thoughts on this.

‘But you were also present...’

‘I was, but actually not so much.’

‘Me neither, but that happens when you are responsible. I mean, when I was there, I was on shift. I had to, you know, organize the chairs, ... these kinds of things.’

‘Yeah, but then we became the creators of that space but then we didn’t really inhabit it,’ I said.

‘No, we inhabited it, but in a different way.’

And this was an amazing point, I felt. My mood changed. I somehow enjoyed hearing appreciation for the different ways of looking at life in the occupation. And in this way, understanding life in the occupation became inseparable from the making of that life.

---

‘How was *it* possible, how was living in the occupation made possible?’

‘You know, there were these strong personalities, those who created a wave with their suggestion to do an occupation. Those were very visible and it’s obvious who that was. But then I remember this very beautiful moment... It was shocking and inspiring that all of the people who were relatively quiet during the meetings and less forcefully expressing their opinion... they were so crucial in the organization of everything, the people from the food committee, they were going and washing the dishes every single time and making sure there was hot tea. And people just relentlessly fixing the tents and using that manpower...’

And then my interviewee lists a number of names – names that I almost already forgot, names that I was so happy to hear about, and names that I have just never heard of. I feel a bit ashamed because I feel caught in a situation in which I realize I perceived the collective as this circle of amazing people, with different and similar worldview but with open hearts, and where everyone knows everyone. I also started feeling bad about not having tried to contact some of these *invisible* people for this research. In this limbo of not being a defined group of people, many are still left out.

‘I think they were the real executioners of the project.’

And suddenly, we brag about all these little moments that just happened. I tell how angry I was about one CEU professor when he requested three whiteboards for his lecture in the Open University. I expected more ‘solidarity’ from his side - and could not understand how he was capable of making this request. And then I just shared my anger with someone from the team and it was solved. They simply went to CEU and took three whiteboards. In hindsight, it was probably less tiring to walk 850 meters to the university – and back.

Not knowing what to do was also often part of my interviewee's memory. But people just did *things*. A warm hug and a smile occurred as reward – maybe not always.

‘I just got there, you know? ... I just got there but I haven't put anything else onto the table,’

another interviewee tells me. And she continues of how she did not know how things would be and how things should be but somehow everyone committed to some task and the camp was functioning.

‘One of my favorite moments was one of the mornings. I was really happy, I remember. I arrived at the camp and it was really tidied up and it was so organized, and everything went so smoothly... like... I was just surprised and amazed by the work that went into that. I was like ‘WOW’... And I'm just walking around, seeing everything, being ‘WOW, nice job, guys.’

---

‘What would you tell your friends about the occupation...?’ would be one of the questions that I had indeed prepared to ask, besides trying not to steer the conversation too much.

... that's hard - because what can you say about it? It's like, ‘yeah, we went out with some tents and we had some classes. And then my friends would be like ‘Oh, yeah, that sounds great.’ And I'd be ‘Nooo!!! It was much more than...!’ But really, I mean, it's hard to say what more it was. Because when you start saying ‘Oh, well, you know, I had to coordinate setting up the Wi-Fi or we had to figure out something to do with all the pogácsa<sup>95</sup>...’

---

<sup>95</sup> Typical Hungarian pastry

Carrying chairs, dealing with heating, with dirty spoons, and with printouts of the daily program – the occupation was a collective organizational struggle.

---

I met another interviewee at his couch, in a very comfortable setting. We talk about one of the documentaries that was created. I tell him about one of my favorite scenes. In the scene, it is November 2018, and the start of the occupation is only a few days apart. He speaks to his mom on the phone, telling her about our plans.

‘I just went on a run and I noticed that Kossuth Square, and it’s so unfriendly, and it’s on a slant... and I felt like, fuck, it’s not great sleeping on slants!...[...] So I’m thinking how the fuck do we correct that slant, I’m studying public policy, not engineering.’<sup>96</sup>

He makes himself a new tea and remembers that scene, when I tell him how it resembles a lot of my feelings for this occupation.

‘It’s a fact. We were just so unprepared.’

And we would chat about how someone set up a Wi-Fi for us, how we struggled to get power from the parliament for which we paid unreasonably much, how we had a heating system, a mobile toilet, a selective waste system, lamps and a little decoration, all sorts of technical equipment for lectures, music, and movies.

---

<sup>96</sup> Asad and Nelson, *Szabad Egyetem*, 02:29.

### ***Living in the camp***

The horizontal structure of the occupiers was something that probably both puzzled me the most and was still a source of the biggest joy of my experience of the occupation. Sitting in lengthy General Assemblies, following slow debates and making decisions unanimously was tiring. With another interviewee, I debate a lot about how successful the horizontality worked and how the strive for it was the actual goal.

‘The most important things in such movements is that when things get uncomfortable for some of us, then there is the call for the collective. I actually realized this during this one assembly. [...] After three or four days of the occupation, I don’t know if you remember, some people felt very uncomfortable with how the occupation was moving or basically how it was functioning. Because the need of decision, rapid, fast, for the first few days it was like....’

And he makes some gestures that reminds of a storm. And when at one point some felt that decisions were taking predominantly by particular people, they called for a General Assembly.

‘They called for this emergency General Assembly. That was... somehow a historical breakthrough of the revolution. It was the revolution within the revolution, where it’s like ‘nononnooo! Everyone stops, and we discuss about what we are doing.’’

And we both smile and think about what makes the occupation political. As we were both students of some field in political studies, it happens quickly to reflect on the tensions that we find ourselves in.

‘You know, many told you how we did the occupation also for ourselves, because we think this is important for whatever reason. But why do we think it is important? Why do we want to do it? Because the point is, that there is an injustice outside our bodies

happening. Lots of things made this occupation political, the media and professors coming. But then you'd forget the fact that in the first place it's a community of people who are doing it for themselves and that why I love this revolution within the revolution so much. It is like, 'If the revolutionary goes crazy trying to do their evolution, there won't be any revolution... or there will be a crazy revolution.'

---

In the interviews, we continue talking about the horizontal structure, as it is new for most of us. It seems difficult to grasp how we occupiers committed our own horizontal structure and how trust amongst each other developed. One interviewee shares a sentiment of feeling about another occupier.

'I felt that connection with her super strongly, but I didn't know.... I had this connection that it was almost like with a good friend of mine. But then I realized that I didn't know her... didn't know what she was studying at CEU... these super basic things. So, that's the kind of bonding experience that the occupation brought. It's like you feel extremely connected to people that you actually don't know but you respect them so much. They were there in this struggle... it's like a war... you have your side of the war, the parliament is the enemy. And...'

'... you're sitting in the same sinking ship.'

And we laugh. I laugh because it resembles so much the way the occupation worked and how I felt afterwards. I felt very strongly about certain people without knowing anything about them, and the feeling of unconditional trust was still disturbing. I remember saying this after the occupation, when people saw me hanging around CEU, disoriented and tired, and asked how I

felt. And their reaction was mostly reserved, saying that this is a good feeling. ‘Wasn’t it?’ And it was, but it was also difficult, a bit shocking, and just simply surprising.

---

I meet another occupier friend in a cozy coffee place near our university. It has quickly become our favorite place to meet outside the university. It is warm inside and still, talking about the weather and the rain during the occupation seemed somehow natural.

‘The first evenings were miserable, no one came, it was raining... but... you know, then people danced, and I just thought ‘Okay, you know, just let’s see what happens...

We are gonna make it.’

And he says it in a very relaxed and optimistic way. Although when we talk about our rain-soaked boots and our freezing limbs, his face recalls how it must have felt for him.

‘This was so annoying. I remember all these sleeping bags, and the blankets. They would get all wet. And then I remember like people sleeping there with the cold wet blankets. I remember two guys sleeping there this night. I was awake, guarding the camp. And when they came out of the tents, really, I was feeling so bad for them.

They were like shivering like... because it was extremely cold ... But who was responsible for that?’

Later, when I ask him what we could do differently if we did the occupation again, he would say not to do it in winter when it’s cold. And we both laugh, and I imagine some unconcerned summer camp. I later walk home and feel confused about this thought. We had even laughed about how the government might have carefully scheduled their tension with CEU just to make it less comfortable to protest.

While I usually refuse to think the government would ever consider this in scheduling their legal changes, I think of again another interview. Also then, the theme of the coldness came up. Previously, I heard from a friend how the reconstruction of Kossuth Square in 2012-2014 also resulted in Kossuth Square being a much colder square. The big trees and bushes were removed, allowing the wind to gain speed and sweep across the granite.

‘Honestly, the cold was challenging... for everyone. Our phones died, hands and feet were cold.’ – And she giggles and continues – ‘I was always super excited to use the bathroom of that building across the street because then I could also wash my hands with hot water.’

A few minutes later, she tells me that despite us being welcomed at the basement toilet of that building, she discovered that there was be a ‘fancy looking touristic place’ on the second floor and she would go there instead, being happy about using a nice bathroom with comfortably hot water.

I smile a lot and enjoy these little anecdotes that my interviewees tell me of the occupation. These themes and ideas become what I start finding fascinating about their experiences. I had hoped to listen to lots of different emotions and feelings that they would connect with the square now, but I develop a sense for stories which I hadn’t heard. And probably, I am somewhere between amused and surprised because silently, I would have enjoyed warm water, too. My appreciation for these little stories grows.

‘It was cold as fuck. That wasn’t pleasant. But I was happy. I was happy about that the whole time. I was just happy.’

---

The rain was uncontrollable. Realizing what we were able to control (and what we were not) turned into something I kept focusing on during the interviews. For example, in the end, we did not correct the slant for sleeping, but we borrowed EURO-pallets to create a sleeping area where the sleeping mat would not be close to the granite of the square, preserving it from the cold and the rain.

‘Did you ever notice that homeless people would often be poorly covered by a blanket only but have lots of clothes and cardboard between them and the street?’

I never realized that but ever since I’m walking through Budapest seeing homeless people, I recognize the architecture of their sporadic sleeping places. In rain, however, it is just a matter of time before the warming layer would drench.

Besides this thoughtful anecdote on homeless people’s sleeping strategies, homeless people were also subject of some debate. They, as a group, as single people, came up in discussions about our food tent logistics, or in the question of the public toilet we ordered.

We ordered a portable toilet but could not position it on Kossuth Square directly due to a lack of permission. So, the toilet stood at the west end of the square, across a ditch and the tram rails. And it came with a key. I believe it was one key, but maybe that does not matter much. Using the key to close and open it or leaving it open was a question that resulted in a heated debate amongst the occupiers. I remember the debate as not being so much about the difficulty of managing to have the key at a central place, but about risking that lots of strangers – tourists – or eventually homeless people – would use it. With the use, concerns about frequent cleaning duties came up, or the duty to order a new one once it was full.

---

Openness and accessibility, however, did not only come with green grass, a ditch, tram rails, or a key.

‘Have I told you about this? Um, so a friend, who actually has a technical background came out to the square. And all of the tents were kind of like, closed down, like there were lectures going on in all of the tents. But there was nobody really around who he could talk to... probably there was one person with tea or I'm not even sure what was going on at that point. - And he said that for somebody who has even a mild social anxiety or a tiny bit of social insecurity...just to open the tent's side and to walk in alone, was terrifying. So, he just went home. And I wonder how many people did that. Or how many times that happened that people came there and errrghh.. uiiii... thinking, they'd probably know some people, but not knowing them... and then going inside? No...’

‘Tents are for weirdos... that would have been totally my view before the occupation. And everyone being in an occupation camp... pfff... ... and what are they going to say to me if I would go up to them... and even having transparent walls on the tents, I think would have helped a lot... or posting the program outside was a good thing that we did, or making the Facebook events ...but we had so little time that we set in motion this giant machine, you know, and at some point it was just like that this has to go successfully till the end...’

And again, we realize how the various aspects of the occupation were a gigantic negotiation.

Whatever ‘success’ means - I did not know it before the occupation. I somehow started to develop a thought about considering parts of it as a success throughout the occupation. For me, success would have been no changes in the schedule, satisfied visiting lecturers, no harsh confrontation with the police or unpleasant far-right media questions. Realizing how all these

aspects are concerned only with processes within the confines of the square, and how they have little to do with a possible external influence on CEU's legal status in Budapest, I see how the occupation was more about protesting in favor of our university as it is.

'If the occupation was a success, ... what do you mean? Do you ask this from all your interviewees?'

And I received lots of different answers.

'It's really hard to give you smart answers.'

And we laugh about this question, and how I asked it.

### ***Leaving the camp site***

Some fellow occupiers had strong memories about going to Kossuth Square in the morning, others about leaving Kossuth Square in the night.

'I went every day; I was there every day at least once. And I always remember this moment, like, leaving the kitchen thinking what to bring. I often brought some small foods even though there was a lot of food already.'

And I tell how I remember that even after the occupation ended, I woke up a bit in panic at seven in the morning, thinking that it's still occupation time and I had an imaginary list of 100 things to do. And others tell as well how they had a feeling of loss afterwards.

'My god, I felt, you know, something very big was missing. I felt melancholic for many days. I don't know how long it lasted, but I was super melancholic.'

And I told him about my mini-depression and my struggle to go back to ‘normal’ life, with friends, family, and at university. I felt very weird, too.

‘When I went out there, I thought that we would move there. And that we would live there. And I remember, after being out there constantly – of course I would go home to pee and shower – I realized how it’s not sustainable. But then I was still surprised when people went home – because in my mind, we were stepping out of our normal lives. It was perfectly natural to me that I wouldn’t go to class or wouldn’t do my assignments because in a sense, I had left Budapest. ‘

Somehow, I still hear him interrupting himself when saying – ‘of course I would go home to pee and shower’ – as if that was something to highlight for him.

---

I meet my last interviewee on a rainy afternoon, and I am happy to be able to talk to him. I have not seen him for a while, maybe only a few times in total, directly after the occupation. He had a job and while I was actually interested in whether it was difficult to go back to ‘normality’ and work life after the occupation, I asked how it felt to be back at home, having a long shower – as this was something that for me definitely came short. I was in a constant run against the time, and so, time for a shower – or at least a long one – was rare.

‘Nooo, I cheated a lot during the occupation week,’

he says. And he tells me how he never spent a night at the camp but actually always went home, sometimes by taxi. I am wondering what he meant with ‘cheating’ – the fact that he slept at home, or that he took a taxi? And what if? Did he feel it was ‘cheating’ because others did not ‘cheat’ in his eyes? Maybe he had long showers and did just not mention it. I am not sure what to do with this notion of cheating, but it seems that it came up more often.

Anyhow, when he spoke about occupying as a non-sustainable form of life, I summarized something for myself loudly.

‘You know what? I’m just thinking how pretty remarkable it is how much we invested in making this space like a ‘home.’ Because it was extremely uncomfortable out there. It was cold and wet. The Wi-Fi was bad, the food was always cold, and you didn’t even know what you actually ate... ‘

### ***Burying academic freedom***

The occupation ended with a so-called funeral on December 1, 2018. Friends had built a real-size coffin. On the side, they wrote ‘We are not angry, just disappointed.’ The ‘not’ was eventually crossed out, and ‘just’ got replaced by the word ‘and.’ Accompanied by drumbeats, the coffin was carried across Kossuth Square, a singer sang a sad song, speeches were held in Hungarian and English. Cameras of news outlets were positioned. In a dramatically staged ceremony, we said goodbye to ‘academic freedom,’ threw soil and flowers on the coffin. In some interviews, people tell me how they experienced it as very emotional, others were unimpressed or showed aspects of boredom because the detailed staging ‘didn’t resonate’ with the atmosphere of the occupation, which was characterized as simultaneously carefully planned and still spontaneously lived.

What was left when the occupation was over? We packed and brought stuff back to where it came from, then left Kossuth Square. The coffin, the decorative soil and the flowers stayed on Kossuth Square – and were removed by a garbage truck at dawn. The next morning, Kossuth Square appeared in its old light, without protesting students. Tourists came, passers-by glanced at the parliament – as if nothing had happened. In the following weeks, the occupiers did not

rest much but joined the workers' protest against a new repressive law implemented by the Orbán government, the so-called slave law.<sup>97</sup> Some interviewees recall how they experienced the consecutive protests as having been influenced by the atmosphere of the occupation, as carrying the notion of unconditional solidarity arising from the occupation experience. I don't feel comfortable in transforming that connection into a claim but as long as someone felt for themselves that the experience of the occupation contributed to the political climate of the following time, I believe that these experiences are worth mentioning.

And in the end, many of the occupiers of *Students4CEU* continued the struggle for academic freedom in Hungary in the collective called *Szabad Egyetem*.

‘You remember, I told you, how I forgot how the idea of the Open University emerged... but we discovered that concept and it was great... and super funny. I remember that after the occupation, many months later, we were struggling to find our place in the world as a movement. And then we were thinking about the occupation and I thought, the lectures, all these activities, that's the concept of *Szabad Egyetem*.

We should stick to that. And then it became a conscious thing.”

*Szabad Egyetem* still meets regularly and discusses issues of horizontality and academic freedom in Hungary. It organizes public lectures, reading circles, and movie screenings. CEU will leave Budapest in a few weeks after this thesis is submitted, and most of its students leave with it. Some members of *Szabad Egyetem* stay, some leave. And hopefully, they carry the experiences of the occupation with them and think of them and talk about them from time to time. I hope I will not forget either.

---

<sup>97</sup> Zoltán Kovács, “Overtime Act Sparks Series of Intense Anti-Orbán Protests in Hungary,” *Index*, December 14, 2018, [https://index.hu/english/2018/12/14/protests\\_hungary\\_budapest\\_slave\\_law\\_overtime\\_judicial\\_independence\\_parliament\\_police\\_clashes/](https://index.hu/english/2018/12/14/protests_hungary_budapest_slave_law_overtime_judicial_independence_parliament_police_clashes/).

## CHAPTER 3: CONTESTING NEOLIBERAL HEGEMONY WITH SPATIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

‘What was the occupation?’

‘It was an act of resistance...’

‘... I think. But a specific one’...

### ***3.1. #OccupyKossuth is over – reflections on writing the occupation***

When Jenny Edkins, luminary in narrative writing, develops her thoughts about creative writing, she wonders how and if a particular style of writing produces “the result we desire.”<sup>98</sup> In this sense, my text as a transformation of shared and reflected memories and experiences resulted in some transgressive processes for me but might result in other imaginations for the reader. As transformations of experiences happened (and still happen) in discourse and in interpersonal reflections, I would appreciate any discussion with the readers of this text and imaginers of the occupation as they join the struggle of making sense of the diverse experiences and the struggle of experiences co-constituting each other in shaping a collective story – through reading. The struggle was (and still is) real, on Kossuth Square and as said, later in various other settings. I chose nine interviewees ‘randomly,’ but of course, I only chose who was available and supportive of the idea to reflect on the occupation. Every interview was an incredibly nice experience. I feel thankful for enjoying these meetings, even if some memories of my interviewees did not resonate with my own, or even if some moments of the interviews were challenging. Being confronted with uncomfortable memories of occupier friends was hard

---

<sup>98</sup> Edkins, “Novel Writing in International Relations,” 292.

as it challenged the romanticized version that I had of the occupation, but in hindsight, I appreciated those reflections as they question my personal construction and transformation of memories and experiences.<sup>99</sup> This also made me think of how interviews with other occupiers who I did not get to talk with might have looked. How did those people feel who did not want to be interviewed, or who did not find time to be interviewed? What about all those who I did not even contact? In the end, I still captured only a fragment of everything that would have been possible.<sup>100</sup> In addition, it was me who chose which parts of the interviews to enter into the narrative, which sentences to elevate and which to silence. In a setting like my interviews, it was only me who could compare. What if my interviewees would have talked to each other?

From the beginning, there were restrictions to this research method, some were of a technical nature, some methodological, but other restrictions were made visible only after I conducted the interviews. Not only being interviewed or interviewing is a privilege. The production of an open space for debate and alternative lives privileges those who can.<sup>101</sup> It privileges those with time, capacity, and ability to come and speak. It privileges those who, depending on their passport, don't fear imaginable arbitrary police decisions, and those with knowledge and courage about where to ask for help if needed. It privileges those who live in the city – of Budapest – and those who are not otherwise caught with competing wills and duties. In this sense, questioning the “art or way of making”<sup>102</sup> as Michel de Certeau, French sociologist on the everyday life suggests, serves as a guide to make sense of the politics of the

---

<sup>99</sup> Askins, ““That’s Just What I Do.””

<sup>100</sup> For more on rethinking writing processes for offering alternative forms of inquiry, see Elizabeth Dauphinee, “Writing as Hope: Reflections on *The Politics of Exile*,” *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (August 2013): 347–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613492838>; Naeem Inayatullah, “Pulling Threads: Intimate Systematicity in *The Politics of Exile*,” *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (August 2013): 331–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613491305>.

<sup>101</sup> Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 1.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

space that was *made* for us and for others – here, through the lived experiences of *#OccupyKossuth*.

### **3.2. Possibilities for ‘another politics’**

CEU will leave Budapest soon. And even if a possibility for CEU to remain in the Hungarian capital would have probably been perceived as the greatest success, I argue that the one-week long occupation was successful in different terms. As the narrative portrayed, ‘success’ depends on prefigured assumptions, or better said illusions. Although

‘CEU is lost,’

the interviews, the different emotions, and various experiences showed that the occupation was successful in something else, in nerve-wrecking, shocking, and surprising transformations of social relations, and processes of questioning our assumptions of responsibility and self-control in community. People who had never worked with each previously and barely knew each other, developed unconditional trust, solidarity, and care towards each other and the collective. The notions of dealing with this became puzzling is no surprise if they represent ruptures to how social interactions occur otherwise. For example, caring for those unknown to us is not exactly how the neoliberal society functions, in which, efficiency and individualism is praised,<sup>103</sup> and where the focus on the individual has “marginaliz[ed] issues of social justice”<sup>104</sup> and had “the impact of denying a fundamental human need, the need for social interaction and a sense of belonging.”<sup>105</sup> In this sense, while experiencing that life can happen differently, *#OccupyKossuth* can be seen as a direct critical response to the neoliberal hegemonic structure.

---

<sup>103</sup> Steger, “Occupy Wall Street: A Counter Discourse.”

<sup>104</sup> Steger, 334.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

The narrative as a creative practice tried to archive some of the occupation feelings in a written form, and to allow feelings to be made sense of, to appreciate the emotional rollercoasters and cherish them as something powerful for ourselves<sup>106</sup> as they mark how social relations were formed and shaped co-constitutively with the space of the occupation. In the following paragraphs, I will reflect on identifiers of how community life was made possible during the occupation, and how it was organized. This, I argue, will be a basis for claiming how political dissent was embodied and lived in the very way the protest was conducted, much more than in the claims and messages the occupation portrayed externally. Refusing the dichotomy between internal and exterior politics of activism, meaning the separation of politics of protests as conveyer of a dissident message and the internal politics of embodied and lived protest, will, according to Laura Pulido, promote “more fully conscious human beings,”<sup>107</sup> who matter in the shaping of more fair societies.

For us occupying students in Budapest, the theme of unsatisfactory academic freedom was the primary point of concern. However, as earlier described, in the bigger picture, it is just one symptom of the Hungarian ailing democratic structure. Looking now at the protest act in its entirety, a few signs show how *Students4CEU*, or now *Szabad Egyetem*, in fact engaged in contesting the broader politics that the struggle of CEU and academic freedom is embedded in. *Szabad Egyetem* distanced itself from identity politics and party politics. It did not present itself as a political alternative, neither did it claim recognition, nor did it want to tear down the parliament. It was not concerned with politically relevant seats in the national assembly, and it did not formulate demands on issues related to academic freedom. It enacted radical equality in its horizontal organization and refused to have clear ideological standpoints but rather broadly welcomed many ideological views, although it distanced itself from racist, xenophobe, and

---

<sup>106</sup> Inayatullah, “Pulling Threads.”

<sup>107</sup> Pulido, “The Interior Life of Politics,” 46.

homophobe worldviews. Hence, the occupation was a “collectivity, but not a unity”<sup>108</sup> that, as Keith Bassett suggests, takes “characteristics of ‘insubstantial communities.’”<sup>109</sup>

This fluidity of the idea of a community that became in and through the lived act of resistance was thus more a continuous process than a fixed institution or a firm result, which resonates with the idea of seeing things constructed instead of a social or material reality. In this regard, deciding for individual stories, anonymized after interviewing, is all about this collective sharing<sup>110</sup> of the memory of the occupation and of the creation and inhabitation of the space, while still highlighting its heterogeneity. In addition, the lived equality in the horizontal structure contributed to this notion of the movement and the space being “as open as possible to new, emergent forms of consciousness and lines of actions.”<sup>111</sup> The way *#OccupyKossuth*, the space, and the life in the occupation came into existence thus employed oppositional aspects to the traditional structure of the global neoliberal life through its resonance with broader ideas of equality, politics and community. This distribution of sensibility<sup>112</sup> comes with ‘the huge unfriendly Kossuth square, the change in its granite pavement and its slant, and its ditch,’ and the reflections that the interviews enabled.

What was and is exciting in *#OccupyKossuth* is the density and variety of collective interactions that emerged with the occupation of Kossuth Square, together with the need to deal with external expectations and pressures regarding the legality of the protest and internal needs and desires in regard to the efficiency and content of the occupation. Bassett argues that “this kind of creative tension between the preplanned and the unplanned, between spontaneity and order,”<sup>113</sup> represents the negotiations that render the occupation political. Dissent packed in

<sup>108</sup> Keith Bassett, “Rancière, Politics, and the Occupy Movement,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 5 (October 2014): 892, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d5013>.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 892.

<sup>110</sup> Edkins, “Novel Writing in International Relations.”

<sup>111</sup> Bassett, “Rancière, Politics, and the Occupy Movement,” 899.

<sup>112</sup> Edkins, “Novel Writing in International Relations.”

<sup>113</sup> Bassett, “Rancière, Politics, and the Occupy Movement,” 894.

performing and living the very institutional and structural aspects of life and community, might then be seen as prerequisite for a genuine dissenting protest. If we see the contemporary problems of our modern life not in who occupies seats in the national assemblies of the world but in their legitimacy and functioning, an imagination of political change becomes ‘real.’<sup>114</sup> It follows, that the struggles that *Students4CEU* lived in *#OccupyKossuth* resonate with how the occupiers realized their ideal struggles of a preferable politics, thus dissent lying in the very way of conduct, of shaping lives and ~~in~~ spaces. Acknowledging this, *#OccupyKossuth* targets the legitimacy of the political system through offering an idea for alternative ways of organizing, living, and feeling the experiment of a life radically different to the one which suppresses our everyday lives<sup>115</sup> – without making firm claims about the specificity of the ‘alternative,’ as shown through the varieties of experiences. In addition, however, claiming that experiencing political alternatives will lead to societal change induced by those who experienced it would be a bold argument made by an arrogant scholar. As follows, this thesis does not claim equality of deliberative realizations of oneself. It does, however, much more give an idea of the sense-making potential of looking at the very life and space that is produced through dissident performances.

Focusing therein on the production of space in the occupation, this research project “highlights the ways in which the politics of events are always simultaneously personal and structural, by drawing on relational ontologies that conceive of bodies and spaces as mutually constitutive.”<sup>116</sup> Lefebvre’s framework on everydayness and the production of space, while it is concerned with the practices of how society is ‘produced,’<sup>117</sup> is thus a powerful concept in understanding life in the existing power structures and how to live resistance against them.

---

<sup>114</sup> Dixon, *Another Politics*.

<sup>115</sup> Kipfer et al., “On the Production of Henri Lefebvre.”

<sup>116</sup> Johnston and Waitt, “The Spatial Politics of Gay Pride Parades and Festivals: Emotional Activism,” 115.

<sup>117</sup> Roger Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada,” *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (June 2002): 578–601, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00255>.

Following Henri Lefebvre and Marxist urban theorist Andy Merrifield, the political utility of the ‘production of space,’ is however not “that it should tally with reality, but that it enables us to experiment with reality, that it helps us glimpse another reality, a virtual reality that's there, somewhere, waiting to be born, inside us.”<sup>118</sup> The discussion on space and the exploration of space as a result of the formation and transformation of social relations, as well as a “manifestation of relations, [hence] a relation itself,”<sup>119</sup> helps in making the case for the production of “liberatory”<sup>120</sup> space as necessary condition for the transformation of social relations, or, as Mark Gottdiener suggests, regarding those intertwined processes as “transformation of *sociospatial* relations.”<sup>121</sup> In this way, through the shaping or ‘production’ of the space of the occupation, the occupiers engaged not only in an ‘against’ but in practicing something new, something alternative, a so-called “another politics.”<sup>122</sup>

### **3.3. Reclaiming a sense of space and of (spatial) political activism**

Throughout the process of writing (about) this, and having highlighted the possibilities for different lives and alternatives to be enacted, I still constantly struggled with the possible romanticizing of collective struggles in this protest.<sup>123</sup> This also speaks to a possible danger for unpleasant outcomes or a reproduction of existing power structures and power hierarchies, which must not be ignored as the underlying power structures lay at the basis of what is actually contested in dissent. It is part of any protest and consequently also an inherent task to interrogate between dynamics that “destabilize or reinforce existing power relations.”<sup>124</sup> With

<sup>118</sup> Andy Merrifield, “The Right to the City and beyond: Notes on a Lefebvrian Re-Conceptualization,” *City* 15, no. 3–4 (August 2011): 480, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2011.595116>.

<sup>119</sup> Gottdiener, “A Marx for Our Time,” 130.

<sup>120</sup> Gottdiener, 133; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

<sup>121</sup> Gottdiener, “A Marx for Our Time,” 133.

<sup>122</sup> Dixon, *Another Politics*.

<sup>123</sup> Stierl, “‘No One Is Illegal!’ Resistance and the Politics of Discomfort.”

<sup>124</sup> Carl Death, “Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest,” *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 3 (August 2010): 249, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2010.493655>.

the words of John Holloway, this thesis thus boldly confesses not being able to and not wanting to write a handbook for sustainable social and political change:

“Do we now know how to make the revolution? No, we do not; and only a charlatan would claim that we do.”<sup>125</sup>

Although I deliberately decided to use words such as ‘radical’ and ‘revolutionary,’ and still commented on their romanticizing potential, I believe this thesis contributes to this notion of radical protest or radically alternative lived politics, which became visible to me in one of the interviews. On *#OccupyKossuth* only one substantial article appeared in Hungarian,<sup>126</sup> but some followed in English or in the foreign press.<sup>127</sup> Observing this dynamic, together with a sentiment that arose from critiques of the occupation that devalued the political significance of the occupation as it was ‘little,’ ‘unspectacular’ from the outside, and ‘useless’<sup>128</sup> as it did not seem that CEU would have a chance anyway, play into this reworking of the ‘radicality’ of this protest activity.

The protest in itself was local, as it happened in the local place of Kossuth Square in the center of Budapest. Surely, many other aspects of the protest could be criticized, about the limited making use of possibilities – on the design of the camp and the program of the Open

<sup>125</sup> John Holloway, “Change the World Without Taking Power,” *Capital & Class* 29, no. 1 (March 2005): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508500112>.

<sup>126</sup> Gergely Izsák, “Miénk Itt a Tér! [The Space Is Ours!],” *Trafik.Sk*, December 6, 2018, <https://trafik.sk/10736/mienk-itt-a-ter/>.

<sup>127</sup> See for example Zoltán Kovács, “Why Are Students Occupying Kossuth Square?,” *Index*, November 27, 2018, [https://index.hu/english/2018/11/27/ceu\\_protest\\_higher\\_education\\_solidarity\\_occupy\\_kossuth/](https://index.hu/english/2018/11/27/ceu_protest_higher_education_solidarity_occupy_kossuth/); Judith Langowski, “Für Freie Universitäten in Ungarn (For Free Universities in Hungary),” *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 28, 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/studentischer-protest-in-budapest-fuer-freie-universitaeten-in-ungarn/23688268.html>; Jakub Gawkowski, “Pour Sauver l’université Hongroise, Construisons Des Alliances et Organisons-Nous (Alliances to Be Formed to Save Hungarian University),” November 27, 2018, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/chroniques-deurope-centrale/article/271118/pour-sauver-l-universite-hongroise-construisons-des-alliances-et-organis>; Massimo Congiu, “L’ateneo Di Soros Lascerà Budapest, Il Mondo Universitario in Lutto (Soros’ University Will Leave Budapest, the Academic World Is Mourning),” *Il Manifesto*, December 2, 2018, <https://archiviopubblico.ilmanifesto.it/Articolo/2003232723>.

<sup>128</sup> A professor of mine, when I asked for permission to miss two classes during the occupation week, confronted me with this initially, saying that it would be more appreciated if I would be active in the classroom, and that CEU will leave anyways, implying that engaging in such form of protest is useless.

University, on the internal and external communication, on everything. Referring to the global Occupy movement, Slavoj Žižek and others argue that due to a lack of “organization and discipline,”<sup>129</sup> such occupying movements almost always fail to bring real change. However, I believe I am directly responding to this critique with my research as it breaks with the internal-external dimension of an occupying movement, as hope also derives from the international nature of the *Szabad Egyetem* movement, whose members leave Hungary and go back to their home countries or live elsewhere, taking that spirit with them. Because, in the end, there was never a claim for *Szabad Egyetem* to present the alternative – which would be contextual and local. This thesis thus also just calls for ways more generally of thinking about ‘revolutions’ differently. The notion about the ‘revolution within the revolution’ from the narrative is a great example of that. Although my interviewee calls the occupation a ‘revolution’ also independently from the rupture of rethinking what feels good, it might allow for a glimpse of rethinking our activities as political or revolutionary in more nuanced ways. Big, global, violently confrontative protests are more often depicted and reported as revolutionary actions as they bring attention to often hidden issues arising from underlying structural problems. However, as elaborated earlier on, Lefebvre and this research are the case to be made for appreciating smaller, peaceful, seemingly insignificant protest activities. Richard Day advocates for an understanding of ‘radical activism’ as “attempts to alter, impede, destroy or construct alternatives to dominant structures, processes, practices and identities.”<sup>130</sup> This does not seem to be limited to the prominent and global movements, but to every experienced notion of a perceived impossibility of alternative lives to be lived. This thesis thus adds to the call for appreciating seemingly insignificant forms of protest and allowing to investigate their effects on and experiences of the contributors, the passers-by and the local context and space.

---

<sup>129</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London; New York: Verso, 2012).

<sup>130</sup> Richard J. F. Day, *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London; Ann Arbor, MI: Toronto: Pluto Press; Between the Lines, 2005), 4.

## CONCLUSION

‘Occupy is not our strategy – it is our identity.’<sup>131</sup>

Having drawn on Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the production of space, this thesis showed how the occupation *#OccupyKossuth*, and in particular its lived experiences allowed new social spaces to arise while emphasizing the significance of “transforming space as a means of transforming social relations.”<sup>132</sup> Narrating experiences of the occupation and analyzing aspects of the ‘production’ of the occupation and its spaces helped understanding how the transformative social experiences contribute to a disruptive notion of grasping the hegemonic political structures, and hence contesting them.

The challenge to follow is where to move on and how? With broadening the perception from the ‘occupying’ activity as a tactic to a strategic identity, this research explored the significance of space in political resistance, in particular in the student occupation of *#OccupyKossuth*. Claiming spaces, taking streets, or negotiating for the right to have a space are recurring visions of popular accounts of dissent, as it is a mode to make oneself seen and heard. It is, as shown, much more than that and this thesis reworked itself through the layers of ‘political moments’<sup>133</sup> of the occupation through the processing, narration and transformation of lived experiences – in a methodological attempt to do this as collectively as possible in the frame of this thesis. The significance of dealing with lived experiences is, I trust, both conceptual and empirical. The theories on space in its various dimensions of material realities and micro notions, and the theories on emotions and experiences allow us to, I believe, to build fluid, active, and thus open political consciousness about ourselves, our actions, and the results

---

<sup>131</sup> *Szabad Egyetem* Member, *Szabad Egyetem* General Assembly, May 20, 2020.

<sup>132</sup> Puneet Dhaliwal, “Public Squares and Resistance: The Politics of Space in the Indignados Movement,” *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 4, no. 1 (2012): 251.

<sup>133</sup> Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics.”

we produce with and through our engagements. This, as I have shown, contributed to furthering imaginaries for the political implication of resistance practices. Finally, this research allowed for a nuanced and therefore powerful path of making sense of the feelings, experiences and emotions that occurred to me and to others, but mainly my interviewees throughout and around the occupation. In reworking those notions, *#OccupyKossuth* and this thesis present a ‘space’ for allowing political and *sociopolitical* change to be discovered and reworked.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agarwal, Sheetal D., Michael L. Barthel, Caterina Rost, Alan Borning, W. Lance Bennett, and Courtney N. Johnson. "Grassroots Organizing in the Digital Age: Considering Values and Technology in Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street." *Information, Communication & Society* 17, no. 3 (March 16, 2014): 326–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.873068>.
- Asad, Ifra, and McKenzie Nelson. *Szabad Egyetem*, 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ\\_3TspD-uo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ_3TspD-uo).
- Askins, Kye. "'That's Just What I Do': Placing Emotion in Academic Activism." *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 1 (July 2009): 4–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2009.03.005>.
- Barnett, Clive, and Murray Low, eds. *Spaces of Democracy: Geographical Perspectives on Citizenship, Participation and Representation*. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2004.
- Bassett, Keith. "Rancière, Politics, and the Occupy Movement." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 5 (October 2014): 886–901. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d5013>.
- Beveridge, Ross, and Philippe Koch. "Urban Everyday Politics: Politicising Practices and the Transformation of the Here and Now." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 1 (February 2019): 142–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818805487>.
- Cavarero, Adriana. *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. Warwick Studies in European Philosophy. London : New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2013.
- CEU. "Timeline of Events." Accessed March 27, 2020. <https://www.ceu.edu/istandwithceu/timeline-events>.
- Congiu, Massimo. "L'ateneo Di Soros Lascerà Budapest, Il Mondo Universitario in Lutto [Soros' University Will Leave Budapest, the Academic World Is Mourning]." *Il Manifesto*, December 2, 2018. <https://archiviopubblico.ilmanifesto.it/Articolo/2003232723>.
- Daigle, Megan. "Writing the Lives of Others: Storytelling and International Politics." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 1 (September 2016): 25–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829816656415>.
- Dauphinee, Elizabeth. "The Ethics of Autoethnography." *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 03 (July 2010): 799–818. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000690>.
- . "Writing as Hope: Reflections on *The Politics of Exile*." *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (August 2013): 347–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613492838>.
- Day, Richard J. F. *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*. London; Ann Arbor, MI : Toronto: Pluto Press ; Between the Lines, 2005.
- Death, Carl. "Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest." *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 3 (August 2010): 235–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2010.493655>.
- Deutsche, Rosalyn. "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy." *Social Text*, no. 33 (1992): 34. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466433>.
- Dhaliwal, Puneet. "Public Squares and Resistance: The Politics of Space in the Indignados Movement." *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 4, no. 1 (2012): 251–73.
- Dikeç, Mustafa. "Space as a Mode of Political Thinking." *Geoforum* 43, no. 4 (June 2012): 669–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.01.008>.

- . “Space, Politics, and the Political.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, no. 2 (April 2005): 171–88. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d364t>.
- Dixon, Chris. *Another Politics: Talking across Today's Transformative Movements*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
- Duxbury, Nancy. “Rethinking Urban Inclusions, Spaces, Mobilizations, Interventions.” *cescontexto*, 2013.
- Edkins, Jenny. “Novel Writing in International Relations: Openings for a Creative Practice.” *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (August 2013): 281–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613491304>.
- Elden, Stuart. “There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space.” *Radical Philosophy Review* 10, no. 2 (2007): 101–16. <https://doi.org/10.5840/radphilrev20071022>.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika, and Benjamin Wihstutz, eds. *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology*. Routledge Advances in Theatre & Performance Studies, no. 24. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 2nd Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Gawkowski, Jakub. “Pour Sauver l’université Hongroise, Construisons Des Alliances et Organisons-Nous [Alliances to Be Formed to Save Hungarian University].” November 27, 2018. <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/chroniques-deurope-centrale/article/271118/pour-sauver-l-universite-hongroise-construisons-des-alliances-et-organis>.
- Göbl, Gabi. “Democracy Is out of Order: CEU Forced to Leave Hungary.” *Heinrich Boll Stiftung* (blog), December 5, 2018. <https://www.boell.de/en/2018/12/05/democracy-out-order-central-european-university-forced-leave-hungary>.
- Gottdiener, Mark. “A Marx for Our Time: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space.” *Sociological Theory* 11, no. 1 (March 1993): 129. <https://doi.org/10.2307/201984>.
- Halmai, Gábor. “Legally Sophisticated Authoritarians: The Hungarian Lex CEU.” *Verfassungsblog - on Constitutional Matters* (blog), March 31, 2017. <https://verfassungsblog.de/legally-sophisticated-authoritarians-the-hungarian-lex-ceu/>.
- Hammond, John L. “The Significance of Space in Occupy Wall Street.” *A Journal for and about Social Movements* 5, no. 2 (2013): 499–524.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Declaration*. New York: Argo-Navis, 2012. <http://grail.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=931436>.
- Holloway, John. “Change the World Without Taking Power.” *Capital & Class* 29, no. 1 (March 2005): 39–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508500112>.
- Hopkins, Peter, and Liz Todd. “Creating an Intentionally Dialogic Space: Student Activism and the Newcastle Occupation 2010.” *Political Geography* 46 (May 2015): 31–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.10.008>.
- Hungarian Civil Liberties Union. “Independent Civil Society under Attack in Hungary,” September 12, 2017. <https://hclu.hu/en/articles/independent-civil-society-under-attack-in-hungary-1>.
- Hutchison, Emma, and Roland Bleiker. “Theorizing Emotions in World Politics.” *International Theory* 6, no. 3 (November 2014): 491–514. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971914000232>.
- Hydén, Margareta. “The Teller-Focused Interview: Interviewing as a Relational Practice.” *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice* 13, no. 6 (November 2014): 795–812. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325013506247>.
- Inayatullah, Naeem. “Falling and Flying - An Introduction.” In *Autobiographical International Relations - I, IR*. London : New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011.

- . “Pulling Threads: Intimate Systematicity in *The Politics of Exile*.” *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (August 2013): 331–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613491305>.
- Izsák, Gergely. “Miénk Itt a Tér! (The Space Is Ours!).” *Trafik.Sk*, December 6, 2018. <https://trafik.sk/10736/mienk-itt-a-ter/>.
- Johnston, Lynda, and Gordon Waitt. “The Spatial Politics of Gay Pride Parades and Festivals: Emotional Activism.” In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Lesbian and Gay Activism*, 105–20. Ashgate Publishing. Routledge, 2015.
- Keil, Roger. “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada.” *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (June 2002): 578–601. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00255>.
- Khan, Ahmed Z., Frank Moulaert, and Jan Schreurs. “Epistemology of Space: Exploring Relational Perspectives in Planning, Urbanism, and Architecture.” *International Planning Studies* 18, no. 3–4 (November 2013): 287–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2013.837138>.
- Kimmelman, Michael. “In Protest, the Power of Place.” *The New York Times*, October 15, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/16/sunday-review/wall-street-protest-shows-power-of-place.html>.
- Kipfer, Stefan, Kanishka Goonewardena, Christian Schmid, and Richard Milgrom. “On the Production of Henri Lefebvre.” In *Space, Difference, Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge, n.d.
- Kohn, Margaret. “Privatization and Protest: Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Toronto, and the Occupation of Public Space in a Democracy.” *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 1 (March 2013): 99–110. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592712003623>.
- Kovács, Zoltán. “Overtime Act Sparks Series of Intense Anti-Orbán Protests in Hungary.” *Index*, December 14, 2018. [https://index.hu/english/2018/12/14/protests\\_hungary\\_budapest\\_slave\\_law\\_overtime\\_judicial\\_independence\\_parliament\\_police\\_clashes/](https://index.hu/english/2018/12/14/protests_hungary_budapest_slave_law_overtime_judicial_independence_parliament_police_clashes/).
- . “Why Are Students Occupying Kossuth Square?” *Index*, November 27, 2018. [https://index.hu/english/2018/11/27/ceu\\_protest\\_higher\\_education\\_solidarity\\_occupy\\_kossuth/](https://index.hu/english/2018/11/27/ceu_protest_higher_education_solidarity_occupy_kossuth/).
- Langowski, Judith. “Für Freie Universitäten in Ungarn [For Free Universities in Hungary].” *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 28, 2018. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/studentischer-protest-in-budapest-fuer-freie-universitaeten-in-ungarn/23688268.html>.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *Critique of Everyday Life: The One-Volume Edition*. One-vol. Ed. London: Verso, 2014.
- . *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991.
- Leitner, Helga, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin M. Sziarto. “The Spatialities of Contentious Politics.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 2008.
- Massey, Doreen. “Thinking Radical Democracy Spatially.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 (1995): 283–88.
- McFarlane, Colin. “Translocal Assemblages: Space, Power and Social Movements.” *Geoforum* 40, no. 4 (July 2009): 561–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.05.003>.
- Merrifield, Andy. “The Right to the City and beyond: Notes on a Lefebvrian Re-Conceptualization.” *City* 15, no. 3–4 (August 2011): 473–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2011.595116>.
- Miraftab, Faranak. “Invited and Invented Spaces of Participation: Neoliberal Citizenship and Feminists’s Expanded Notions of Politics.” *Wagadu* 1 (2004).

- Mitchell, W. J. T. "Image, Space, Revolution: The Arts of Occupation." *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 1 (September 2012): 8–32. <https://doi.org/10.1086/668048>.
- Ondetti, Gabriel A. *Land, Protest, and Politics: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for Agrarian Reform in Brazil*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2008.
- Probyn, Elspeth. "Glass Selves: Emotions, Subjectivity, and the Research Process." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*. Oxford University Press, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199548019.003.0030>.
- Probyn, Elspeth, Vivienne Bozalek, Tamara Shefer, and Ronelle Carolissen. "Productive Faces of Shame: An Interview with Elspeth Probyn." *Feminism & Psychology* 29, no. 2 (May 2019): 322–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353518811366>.
- Pulido, Laura. "The Interior Life of Politics." *Ethics, Place and Environment*, Act of Ethics: A special section on ethics and global activism, 6, no. 1 (2003): 43–78.
- Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. 5. print., 1. Princeton paperback print. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- . "Ten Theses on Politics." *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3 (2001).
- Raynes, Dakota K. T., Tamara L. Mix, Angela Spotts, and Ariel Ross. "An Emotional Landscape of Place-Based Activism: Exploring the Dynamics of Place and Emotion in Antifracking Actions." *Humanity & Society* 40, no. 4 (November 2016): 401–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597616669757>.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Other Asias*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008.
- Springer, Simon. "Public Space as Emancipation: Meditations on Anarchism, Radical Democracy, Neoliberalism and Violence." *Antipode* 43, no. 2 (March 2011): 525–62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00827.x>.
- Steger, Tamara. "Occupy Wall Street: A Counter Discourse," Vol. 2. cescontexto, 2013.
- Stierl, Maurice. "'No One Is Illegal!' Resistance and the Politics of Discomfort." *Globalizations* 9, no. 3 (June 2012): 425–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2012.680738>.
- Strausz, Erzsébet. *Writing the Self and Transforming Knowledge in International Relations: Towards a Politics of Liminality*. Interventions. London ; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.
- Szabad Egyetem Collective. "#stories of Resistance – Szabad Egyetem: A Story of Student Activism and beyond in Hungary." *Civic Space Watch* (blog), November 25, 2019. <https://civicspacewatch.eu/stories-of-resistance-szabad-egyetem-a-story-of-student-activism-and-beyond-in-hungary/>.
- Watson, Sophie. "Cultures of Democracy: Spaces of Democratic Possibility." In *Spaces of Democracy*. London: SAGE Publications, 2004.
- Wilkin, Peter. "The Rise of 'Illiberal' Democracy: The Orbánization of Hungarian Political Culture." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 24, no. 1 (March 22, 2018): 5–42. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2018.716>.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*. London; New York: Verso, 2012.

## OTHER REFERENCES TAKEN FROM:

### **Field notes:**

*#OccupyKossuth* occupation, November 24 – December 1, 2020, Budapest.

*Szabad Egyetem* General Assembly, May 20, 2020, online meeting.

### **Interviews:**

Interviewee 1, February 6, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 2, February 7, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 3, February 7, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 4, February 9, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 5, February 11, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 6, February 12, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 7, February 13, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 8, February 16, 2020, Budapest.

Interviewee 9, March 11, 2020, Budapest.

## APPENDIX: CONSENT FORM

### **Interviewing Consent Form: The student occupation #OccupyKossuth and the politics of space (2 pages)**

#### ***Brief summary of the project***

Between November 24<sup>th</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, students of Central European University (CEU) and other universities from Budapest occupied Kossuth square to raise awareness on the growing threat of academic freedom in Hungary. Cheering critical thinking and political participation, the occupation named #OccupyKossuth turned into a space for more than 80 academic and cultural events, and into a space for political participation and contestation. For the purpose of her Master Thesis, Charlotte Drath, MA student at the Department of International Relations at CEU in Budapest, Hungary, is conducting research on the politics of the production of space, as she conceptualizes the experiences of this student occupation. Charlotte, therefore, interviews individuals, who actively organized and shaped #OccupyKossuth, to share their experiences in and around these events.

***If you agree to participate in the research project described above, please kindly indicate below your consent and preferences regarding the process of interviewing and the use of personal data:***

- ☐ I consent to participate in an informal, unstructured interview with Charlotte on the above-mentioned topic.
- ☐ I understand, that the main goal is to get to know my personal experience as a participant of the processes around this occupation. Charlotte is not interest in “hard data”, such as numbers, exact dates etc., but my own narration, feelings and views.
- ☐ I understand that all my information provided will be processed for the thesis purposes only, and will be anonymized and treated with confidentiality. No person with the exception of Charlotte and her thesis supervisor will have access to this data.
- ☐ I understand that my responses will be anonymized, and I will provide my agreement in a separate writing if I wish my actual name to be published.
- ☐ I take note of the possibility of taking a break and/or withdrawing from the interview.

☐ I will post any additional questions if applicable, and I acknowledge that I may contact Charlotte's supervisor Professor Erzsébet Strausz (StrauszE@ceu.edu) in case I have any doubts regarding the purpose, technique, or fairness of this interview.

***Charlotte would like to record and transcribe the interview. As stated, the recording will not be shared with any other person and will be treated anonymously, so that no one can be identified.***

☐ I agree to be recorded.

☐ I don't agree to be recorded.

Thank you very much for your help and cooperation, I very much appreciate the time and information you share with me. Your choices and preferences will be respected!

NAME (OF INTERVIEWEE):

CONTACT INFORMATION:

DATE AND PLACE:

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWEE: