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Emilia Palonen

Politics of Memory in the City-Text of Budapest

“An enthusiast of the Revolution once proposed transforming Paris into a map of the world: *all* streets and squares were to be rechristened and their new names drawn from noteworthy places and things across the word.” Pursue this in imagination and, from the surprising impression made by such an optical-phonetic image of the city, you will recognize the great importance of street names. Pinkerton, Mercier and C.F. Cramer, *Ansichten der Hauptstadt des französischen Kaiserreichs vom Jahre 1896 an*, vol.1 (Amsterdam, 1807), p. 100 (ch.8, “Neologie,” by Pinkerton.). (Walter Benjamin 1999: 517 [P1,7])

When I walk the streets of a city, the meanings of the streets have been layered by my own personal experiences and memories and the encounters with the city and its people and multidimensional histories. Equally they have been layered for each citizen and user of the city. (Saarikangas 2002: 55, *my translation from Finnish*)

The city-text¹ is a set of everyday political symbols, which shows the official discourse of commemoration. Levinson (1998) argues, that the changes in public symbols, such as statues, are indicative of a changing society, even if these societies were assumed to be stable, such as the US. This paper argues that there are two ways in which the memory in the city-text is political. First, it looks at the city-text as the arena of political contestation, where different political actors aim to get representation for their discourses, fix the meanings of heroes and other reference points. Secondly, it sees city-text as marking space and forming a public collective memory, which affects the construction of political identities through an encounter where the subjective and collective memories are moulded. Therefore, public commemoration not is an issue of elite discourses, but affects political identities within the polity at large. In order to meet this challenge I look at the

¹ First used by Milo in 1986, to refer to the street names, and later by Azaryahu in 1991 to include the statues of the city, the research on *the city-text* has mainly focused on outlining the manifestation of the elite discourses in the city, or in the national public space. Daniel Milo (1986), Kevin McCarthy (1975) and Kari Palonen (1993b) have looked at the development of street naming in the capitals of France, Tunisia and Finland respectively, and Azaryahu’s research on the city-text has also been vital for highlighting political changes, for example in the contexts of building of Israel (1992), communist and postcommunist Berlin and post-war Vienna (e.g. 1991). Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (1988) has studied the city-text of Paris to show how the revolution changed the street names and how the image of the city as a revolution is imprinted in

postcommunist politics of rewriting the city-text, the street names and statues, in Budapest. I use a cairological perspective of time by Walter Benjamin, in relation to discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and a Skinnerian reading of situational politics.² Through this combination of theoretical tools, I aim to highlight the multidimensional character of the politics of memory in the city-text.³

I first look at history as a discourse, and the role of city-text in the politics of sedimenting an official history. Then I show how the city-text as a tool of commemoration tries to establish an official reading of history. The second part discusses the city-text as forum of politicking⁴, redesigned by new power holders, and tools with which to establish power position, even legitimacy. I'll see how it can form points of (dis)identification, forum for contestation, and, finally, how this public reading of history is finally sedimented into the subjective perspective of history. The final, empirical part looks at the contestation of discourses in the city-text of Budapest, through the concepts of frontiers, nodal points and redescription.

1 – History as a discourse

City-text is a forum for official remembering or commemoration, which links memory to politics. First I will explore some relations between politics and memory. History-writing, in general, aims to understand past events.⁵ In this sense histories, while they may question earlier conceptions of the past, also seek to establish new truth about things.⁶ Histories, when acknowledged as the story of what happened, or as truth claims, construct frontiers and fixes meanings. From the point of view of the analysis of political ideologies

the street names. Heino Nyssönen (1992, 1993) has observed the change from communism to postcommunism in the street names of Budapest.

² For Benjamin see Benjamin 1999, 1968; Lindroos 1999, A. Benjamin & Osborne (1994), Gilloch (1996). For Laclau see Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Laclau 1990, 1995, 1996, 2000; Howarth et al. 2000. For Skinner see Skinner 1996, 1997, 1999, K.Palonen 1999, 2000.

³ This paper, still work in progress, is a theoretical part of my PhD Thesis, which I started in the Department of Government, University of Essex, in autumn 2001.

⁴ I am following here the distinction of four modalities of politics (politics, polity, politicking and politicization) by Kari Palonen (1993a).

⁵ See for example 'Introduction' in Timothy Garton Ash (1999).

⁶ In a newly published and, in the context of Hungarian historiography, fresh collection of articles Romsics et al. (2002) aim to reveal 'myths, legends and misbeliefs of 20th century Hungarian history. Here the truth seeking is not only on what happened and how certain legends have been used but also how the previous interpretations were *wrong*. Similarly the Museum whose leaflet was quoting Attila József aimed to reveal the truth about past events of Arrow Cross fascism and communism in Hungary – just before the general elections where nevertheless the Socialist Party made it's way to the government from opposition.

and discourses, I follow here, the frontiers and nodal points are vital in the creation and maintenance of discourses (see Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis 2000). This explains also why the discussion over the past or, often associated with reconciliation, for example, in postcommunism, also attempts to close of the debate.

In his work on public symbols, Levinson refers to the Millennium monument in Budapest. Built for the Budapest Expo 1896, this monument on the Heroes' Square celebrated a set of figures of Hungarian history. Crucially, the changes of power in 1919, 1930s, 1945 or 1989/90, did not change all of these figures, only modified the set. Similarly in the street names of Budapest a certain – fairly tightly articulated – core of national heroes continues to be commemorated. Looking at the postcommunist changes, therefore, it is important to see what has been preserved, as well as changed. Furthermore, the contestation over the city-text not only deals with the names and statues but also the meanings and who can claim them.⁷ Here I want to look at the construction of a discourse, first, through the frontiers of history or memory and, then, through the nodal points.

Images and limits of the past

There is only politics where there are frontiers. Ernesto Laclau (1990: 160)

The Past must be acknowledged. Attila József⁸

Ernesto Laclau argues that making and preserving as well as crossing frontiers is politics. Writing history is an inherently political activity, an attempt to establish a political discourse. Because of the commemorative character of both street names and statues or memorials in Budapest, the rewriting the city-text is also rewriting official history. Vitally, every attempt to write an official history is an attempt to form a discourse with fixed key points and borders (Laclau 1990).

The above quote by Attila Jozsef⁹ from the leaflet of the Terror Haza Museum, opened during the general elections campaign of 2002 in Budapest, presupposes that it is possible to recognise and accept as facts, acknowledge, certain events of the past. Unlike debate or

⁷ Nyysönen (1999) has illustrated how the meaning of the '1956' has been contested during communism and after.

⁸ Quoted in Terror Haza Museum leaflet (2002: 1)

⁹ Jozsef, Attila (1905-37) is a major political thinker in Hungarian history, already judging by the number of street names he has in Budapest and in rest of the country.

contestation, acknowledgement entails besides action, a claim of truth. Quite like taking a photograph. Pictures, as well as stories and histories, are interesting for historical and political analysis. Roland Barthes (1983 [1980]) has drawn attention to the way in which photographs always can be reread. They contain factual information, which might have escaped from the historian: while they never might have made it to an oral account of history, they are as evidence for the future observers. Similarly, we can anticipate that something has escaped the photographer's lens or focus, and in this way, photographs also bring evidence of what has been omitted. For Barthes, and Walter Benjamin, the politics of memory or history is the reading of past by describing a photograph or articulating experience in a city, where-by certain things of the past get recalled, while others are being ignored.¹⁰ Ultimately, talking about memory, one should then not omit forgetting. In the public symbols and, for example, in the creation of national identity one can even talk about institutionalised forgetting. Hobsbawm argues on similar lines:

... Ernest Renan observed more than a century ago, 'Forgetting, even getting history wrong, is an essential factor in the formation of a nation, which is why the progress of historical studies is often a danger to nationality.' For nations are historically novel entities pretending to have existed for a very long time. Inevitably the nationalist version of their history consists of anachronism, omission, decontextualization and, in some extreme cases, lies. To a lesser extent this is true of all forms of identity history, old and new. (Hobsbawm 1997: 357)

There are two different types of frontiers: one between the remembered and forgotten, which in the city-text appears as the celebrated or added and the removed street names and statues, and another between the remembered and ignored, between the undebated names, whether they actually are in the text or just potentially could be and the debated ones. The former is easier distinguishable in politics, whereas latter more resembles a frontier between the known and unknown. Generally speaking, however, the contingent and contested borderlines between the remembered and the forgotten or ignored are precisely the political limits of history.

The remembered and contested nodal points

Seeing history as a discourse with nodal points take us further to ideological debate of politics of commemoration as it enables us to look at the process of representation and

¹⁰ This claim will gain some flesh by empirical research, when I study the photographs of Budapest, in another context.

sedimentation. To sediment itself a discourse needs nodal points, or points of reference,¹¹ that can be popularised. The concept of nodal point is derived from Lacanian psychoanalysis where these are called *point de capiton*, ‘the point in the signifying chain at which “the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of the signification” and produces the necessary illusion of fixed meaning.’ (Evans 1996: 148; see also Howarth, et al., 2000: 8.) In the city-text different political groupings fight over nodal points as well as their rearticulation as integral parts of their own discourse. Political forces aim at monopolising certain personalities, both give them meaning and use the conception of them to legitimate their own ideologies. Furthermore, interestingly for political analysis political groups or parties besides make reference, both verbal and visual, to certain figures, also gather around certain statues or spaces declaring them as their ideological property.¹²

In postcommunist Hungary, these nodal points are traditionally historical personalities through which the political discourses seek representation and fix meaning. In practise, in a city like Budapest, people are surrounded by statues and street names (great majority of which are commemorative) that function as nodal points of different discourses. They date from different times and have been largely approved of by the current power holders. As everyday political symbols, the city-text is deeply imbedded in the everyday experience of people (Billig 1995, Azaryahu 1991, Levinson 1998). Thus, it works not only as a reminder of political ideology, but in fact popularises and helps to sediment political ideologies. Changes in the city-text will show the changes in key points of reference of the elite discourses, and the action against the statues or street names also tries to put in question these discourses through contesting the meaning of the reference points.

2 - Memorial politics

The norm is that national memory is integrated into both officially controlled channels of social communication and spheres of human activity that appear to be exempted from ideological modulation. Memorial spaces [...] are prominent example of officially controlled sites of memory

¹¹ Here I would emphasise the nodal points instead of empty signifiers – which Laclau has focused on recently – as I study of the construction of discourses in general, rather than mere hegemonic struggles of already identified blocks or players, or changes in party ideology. This would enable one to identify different already existing and emerging discourses. Note that in the context social and political changes of postcommunism the groups also seek to construct their our identities and establish themselves as key players in politics.

¹² This is an interesting area of study, which I have briefly addressed elsewhere (Palonen 2002).

that are charged with extraordinary collective meanings. Commemorative street names [and statues] are an example as to how national memory is introduced into ordinary settings of everyday life. (Azaryahu 1999: 342)

History is not only a form of politics but also an arena or object of politicking. Official history-writing is visible in the city-text and other forms of official commemoration (e.g. Azaryahu 1991, 1999). When history becomes an officialized the political character of history becomes apparent from another perspective. Taken into the public realm of (national or state institutional) museums and exhibitions, as well as street names and statues, these discourses are being projected on people. Once on the public realm, they will be debated, confronted or – as the creators or proponents of the discourse would hope – sedimented as part of everyday experience.

In this light, it is hardly surprising that one of the main preoccupations of postcommunist politics has been the continuous rewriting of the past, where different groups want to establish their history as the official one. Levinson has usefully outlined the logic of changes to the city-text, emphasising that the changes are far from obvious, but rather decided by the state (power holders) in a certain context and taking into consideration the potential appeal of the new symbols by the population.

Changes in the political regime – sometimes awesome, as from Habsburg monarchy to Communist dictatorship and then from Communism to (some version of) liberal democracy – often bring with them changes in the organization of public space. States always promote privileged narratives of the national experience and thus attempt to form a particular kind of national consciousness, yet it is obvious that there is rarely a placid consensus from which the state must draw. In particular, organisers of the new regime must decide which, if any, of the heroes of the old regime deserve to continue occupying public space. And the new regime will always concern if these heroes might serve as potential symbols of resistance for adherents among the population who must, at least from the perspective of the newcomers, ultimately acquiesce to the new order. (Levinson 1998: 10-11)

Contestation and naturalisation

To analyse political action in the city-text besides action *by*, it is important to consider how is it possible to act *towards* statues: contestation and confrontation. Politics is the contestation of the meanings of statues, tied to concepts of (national) ‘history’ and collective ‘memory’. Crucially, the city-text is selected by appointed agents. Usually the emphasis has been on the role of a (new) power elite in the construction of the city-text

(Azaryahu 1991, Nyysönen 1993, K. Palonen 1993b). Levinson distinguishes perspectives to name changes, they can be either a ‘censurable act of state sponsored silencing’ or a ‘the state’s recognition of cultural liberation’ (1998: 18). His emphasis is on the way in which the city-text provides a forum of representation for certain discourses, or political identities. In this way, the changes in the city-text reflect so called ‘identity-politics’.¹³ This view to rewriting of the city-text assumes the creation, existence and promotion of certain discourses. It should not, however, be separated from the active role certain political actors play in the rewriting of the city-text, or from the wider influence of the city-text on political identities and identification (not simply recognition). The former I will tackle here, the latter is the main subject of the next part.

Politics of commemoration is not characteristically a postcommunist phenomenon, but occurs at every major political change in Eastern Europe. And even in societies that are generally considered more stable, it still occurs in conjunction of rearticulation of political discourses and identities (Levinson 1998). On a more concrete level, besides new power holders changing street names, mass action of reversing statues is a tradition in the revolutions in Eastern Europe (Sinkó 1992).¹⁴ It is this politics of rewriting the past Benjamin refers to when he writes:

Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

Consequently, whereas in, for example, Western Europe the city-text is generally unchanged and depoliticised, in Eastern Europe it – or at least some parts of it – are always potentially subject to politicisation and changes. When the street names and statues have been changing recently, the current order does not appear as a natural. The city-text precisely aims at eternal, timeless, representation of heroes. However, although monuments are created to last, to resist the change of generations and of transitoriness and to represent a coherence of beliefs (as Nietzsche (1997) characterised ‘monumental

¹³ Levinson 1998: 26. Tuija Pulkkinen made a point about politics of nationalism – as national liberation – as a form of ‘identity-politics’: ‘Identities are to be understood as moments in politics in the context of the presence of some specific wrong. ... more inclusively they could be thought of as situations in which a claim for universality is presented, but a significant group among those who supposedly belong to that universality have no chance of meeting the standards of that universality’ (Pulkkinen 2001: 54). For me here *identity politics* in more general sense is politics of identification: the creation and promotion certain nodal points of a discourse, through which subjects identify themselves.

¹⁴ For the necessity of destruction and Benjamin’s philosophy see Andrew Benjamin and Osborne, eds., 1994.

history'), they allow for contestation of the image of history, which a particular statue represents.¹⁵

When arguing for a rhetorical view of conceptual changes Skinner distinguishes between four aspects of change: renaming, revision of the meaning, reassessment of the significance and re-evaluation of the normative connotation of the concepts (K. Palonen 2000: 19; Skinner 1996: Ch. 4). These are also witnessed in the study of city-text. For Skinner, concepts are strategic instruments for political action: 'they shape the horizon of political possibilities in situation, within which the agent has to form a policy, but can also be used in critical situations as a means of politization, of revisiting the horizon of the possible and by this means the range of policy choices' (K. Palonen 1999: 47). Therefore, a study of conceptual change increases our understanding of the author's intentions and the more general, constructive role of ideas in politics.¹⁶ Skinner mentions two ways of studying conceptual change: the possibility of tracking the extent or degree of change in the normative vocabulary employed over time,¹⁷ and attempts to modify existing social perceptions and beliefs reflected in the language of evaluation, in 'the capacity of a normative vocabulary to perform and encourage particular acts of appraisal either alters in direction or else in intensity' (Skinner 1999: 64-65). These reflections on conceptual change are important for the study of the city-text as well, as the politics of it, in essence, is about redescription, contestation, and the lack of it, preservation, as becomes clear in the last part of this paper.

Let us first frame out the two arguments of the debate: contestation, advocated by Gillis, and preservation discussed by Levinson. For Gillis identities are political and social constructs.¹⁸ 'Identities and memories are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*.' Their historical relationship can be traced through the political and social activity of commemoration. (Gillis 1994: 5, emphasis original) He argues that, especially in the era of 'post-nationalism', a civic space which enables the discussion of different point of views is essential to democracy and to negotiating the past and defining the future. (Ibid.:

¹⁵ For vandalism against statues see Matthaidesz 1999, Sinkó 1992; for a conservative approach consult Reynolds 1996.

¹⁶ Compared to the conceptual history of Koselleck, for example, Skinner's writings with the emphasis on the use of concepts and their active redescription instead of their development in time, are better suited for our study of conceptual definition, re-evaluation, and redescription of concepts within a limited time-scale.

¹⁷ Either by looking at how new vocabulary has been introduced to suit new forms of social behaviour, or revealing, through the disappearance of concepts, how a society has lost the sense of a particular style of behaviour. (Skinner 1999: 64-65)

¹⁸ '[I]dentities and memories are highly selective, inscriptive rather than descriptive, serving particular interests and ideological positions.' (Gillis 1994: 4)

20)¹⁹ In other words, statues exist to provide a starting point for discussion and negotiation. Levinson considers whether it is ‘Stalinist’, to pull down statues in Eastern Europe, and compares these changing societies to the case of the US, or to ‘the self-conscious recognition of the multicultural status even of stable political states.’²⁰ In the latter case, ‘symbols have become, in the language of contemporary philosophy, “essentially contested,” with significant political energy put into achieving one or another resolution of such contests.’ He suggests: ‘We must decide to what extent we wish to acknowledge, or to repudiate, our symbolic ancestors.’ (Levinson: 130-2)²¹ This argument is also visible in Schöpflin’s concern that the continuous changes in the public symbols would lead into social unrest. Gillis argues, however, that the city-text provides a reference point to a certain conception of history and their contestation is a healthy way for democracy to discuss its past, which, in turn, would enable a social and political change to take place.

The reverse action of decontestation or naturalisation of the city-text, to follow Laclau’s thinking (1990, 1995), would project a conception of the past which would then be hegemonised to unite all the particular conceptions through common points of reference, nodal points, which assume the representation of the various ways of thinking. In this sense, for example, the key national heroes may have different meanings for different groups of people while standing manifestly on the squares. Consequently, the meaning of these heroes are being contested, when they become politicised, or subjected to political debate. On the other hand, however, a core of national (or civic) heroes, might not have to change, as they, with their varying meanings, have become part of the hegemonic structure of nationhood or (statehood).

To continue this logic, however, the items of the city-text would never simply mirror some discourses or personalities, but through the process of representation redescribe and thus change the meaning of the represented. Writing in the postcommunist context, Schöpflin (2000) argues that besides bringing legitimacy and it also should reflect the society as a

¹⁹ Alex King shows in his study on British War Memorials that contestation does not have to end: Instead, the conflict he studied ‘served to highlight the characteristic and persistent differences between the groups who participated in commemorative acts.’ It became an ‘instrument for creating desired forms of co-operative social relationship, in the absence of common values.’ (King 1998: 247-248)

²⁰ ‘Just as one person’s “terrorist” is often another person’s “freedom fighter,” so might one person’s “vandal” be another’s “cultural liberator”.’ (Levinson 1998: 18)

²¹ Levinson takes the example of the Monument for the fallen Confederate soldiers in Austin, Texas, and offers a list of nine possibilities, from leaving untouched to destroying it, to deal with the monument which appears as offensive, or insensitive to some citizens. (Levinson 1998: 114-129)

whole, and not to alienate minorities. Crucially, however, because of the impossibility of (representing) the society as a totality,²² its fullness can only be achieved through a representation that also shapes the represented. On this point we can get a bit further following the Benjaminian thought, the interpretation of the experience of the city-text, or the redescription of the Now, momentarily fixes its meaning. These collective memories become part of the subjective reading. In the next part I will explore more precisely how this happens, and, in the following, how this experience is linked with the legitimacy.

Collective and subjective memories

...Through its street names, the city is a linguistic cosmos. (Benjamin 1999: P3, 5)

If one can “read reality like a text,” then the line between the two appears to become relativized. Interrupting the act of reading is compared to interrupting a dream through the act of awakening, and for Benjamin, every historical presentation should begin in this Proustian way. Reading or seeing a text without introducing a subjective experience into it is comparable to a dream state, which is composed of time but lacking in experiences or moments of Kairos. (Kia Lindroos 1998: 52)

As interpreted by Lindroos, Walter Benjamin offers us the earlier outlined political connection to memory and history whereby every *experience*²³ of the city, or every writing of history, is a reading or interpretation. Furthermore, he brings this act of reading to the level of the subject connecting her with the surrounding city and memory. Lindroos argues that Benjamin offers an anti-linear or anti-chronological perspective of time, or a *cairological*, qualitative conception of time where ‘instead of the presupposed linearity, several indexes between the past and present moments could be introduced’ (Lindroos 1998: 49).²⁴ The Now-time (*Jetztzeit*) of Benjamin acknowledges the past in the moment

²² The point of departure for this work is that ‘society’ is not a pre-existing organic entity but always incomplete, imagined and represented construction that is tied to the situation of its articulation. For Laclau, the “impossibility of society” relies upon a more general account of the impossibility of the full constitution of any identity, and is drawn from both the psychoanalytic and deconstructive traditions’ (Norval 2000:331 fn).

²³ Lindroos argues that Benjamin critiques the move from *Erfahrung*, mediated experience, to *Erlebnis*, ‘a modern disconnected form of experience’ which is linked to sensation (1998:70, 75). “Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the subjective past combine with material of the collective past.” (Benjamin 1968: 160) When I refer to experience in this text I aim to keep with the original sense of *Erfahrung*.

²⁴ Lindroos distinguishes four different possibilities of temporal experience in Benjamin’s work: 1) ungraspable past as an abstract concept and a field of experience; 2) the past ‘as an object of acknowledgement’ or ‘as crystallised in singular objects’; 3) the present understood through temporal

of present (Lindroos 1998: 61), and thus different times are not made available chronologically but as a pile of moments that make the Now. The subject's experience of the Now where the past, present and future are linked, is similar to his or her experience of the city, where old parts and the memories of the past seek representation next to the newly built. In the same fashion, the experience of the city-text blends in different pasts and the contemporary setting, our presence in the present. The city-text, which represents different epochs of commemoration selected in various times, demonstrates the claim also present in Benjamin's work: no point of time can be present and experienced by itself, but is always tied to the existence of other times.

The street names and statues are an exhibition decided by certain people (at certain times) for a collective to use and live around. The set of figures commemorated are those the city remembers and its inhabitants are encouraged to remember and honour. We can observe the limits of memory in the city-text, because it can only be a selection of the heroes. It is the prime example of the arbitrariness of official histories (c.f. Azaryahu 1991) and incomplete history. In the same way, the reading of it also cannot be total.²⁵ In Budapest, even if a certain canon of street names has remained uncontested and repeats itself in the districts of the city, it is a disruptive reading because of the incoherence of removed street names and statues – which still remain in the memory of the citizens. When one considers the arbitrary character of the exhibition and history, or more particularly the fact that cities are full of street names and statues, it becomes clear that ideologies cannot be simply imposed on the subject.

Legitimacy through the city-text

The city-text, besides being the space of representation and exhibiting the currently canonised conception of history, works as a space of contestation. While declaring the official view, its statement-like presence also has potential for politicization and contestation. The city-text is in traditional analysis described to as a building bloc of collective identity and thus sources of legitimation for the power elite (e.g. Azaryahu

knowledge; and 4) 'the moment of Now, in which the acknowledgement/insight between the singular moment of the present (Now) and the past (Then) occurs.' (Lindroos 1998: 61)

²⁵ 'Couldn't an exiting film be made about the map of Paris? From the unfolding of its various aspects in temporal succession? From the compression of a centuries-long movement of streets, boulevards, arcades, and squares into the space of half an hour? And does the flaneur do anything different? ∞ Flaneur ∞' (Benjamin 1999: C1,9)

1991, Levinson 1998).²⁶ This has been predominantly the experience of postcommunism, when much of politicking focused on the construction of national memory and the rewriting of history (e.g. Nyysönen 1999). I argue that an account of the existence of ideology and political structures in the everyday political symbols such as the street names and statues might not suffice for an analysis of the city's politics and memory. Therefore, I use Benjamin's concept of the Now-time to go beyond the more traditional historical and political studies of the city-text. The legitimacy²⁷ the city-text provides for the ideological elite is carried out through the Now-time experience.

Legitimacy is established when the official history that becomes an accepted (legitimate) part of the subjective Now through our experience of the city-text. When living in a city surrounded by the city-text, the subject incorporates the times of the city-text exhibition into her daily experience of history and starts to perceive these as her memories of the past, whether she agrees with them or objects to them. For her, the subjective and the collective memories melt together. Crucially, the official past is then not only present in the city but also in the subject's daily experience of the city and of the Now. The process of legitimacy is not simply the acknowledgement (as descriptive universalistic reading of history) of what happened, but acceptance and the melting of the collective and subjective memories or views, which, in turn, affects the citizen's identity.²⁸ Vitaly, political legitimacy is achieved through the incorporation of elements of the 'official history' in the subject conception of the Now. This, is similar to the banal nationalism Billig (1995) has described, but, crucially, it also can be applied in the context of changing societies.

The rituals with their ceremonies, their festivals (quite probably nowhere recalled in Proust's work) kept producing the amalgamation of these two elements of memory [subjective and collective experience] over and over again. They triggered recollection at certain times and remained handles

²⁶ Although they could also address democratisation as Koselleck (1979) has argued, but here I will look at legitimacy. For example Schöpflin (2000) argues that these symbols should not be changed because it would be a change to the underlying thought structures of the society, and this type of dislocation would have negative impact particularly in the often turbulent East Central Europe.

²⁷ William Connolly has distinguished a few conceptions of legitimacy. The more traditional conception of legitimacy, also associated with the study of postcommunism, entails consent for 'conventions that govern the relation of the citizen to the state, and to secure that legitimacy through the rational consent of citizens.' The more discursive, Habermasian formulation 'insists that conventionalization of norms and standards have penetrated into all areas of live and then attempt to apply a criterion of discursive consent to an entire way of living.' (Connolly in Miller 1991: 279)

²⁸ This builds grounds for thinking political identification as the collision of collective and subjective memory and experience of in the Now. As is clear from the above, and especially from the problem of representation and reception, the subject's interpretation of public space or affairs goes before any general understanding. In the final instance, then legitimacy in my Benjaminian reading approaches the concept of political identification. I do not, however, intend to tackle this theme in this paper.

of memory for a lifetime. In this way, voluntary and involuntary recollection lose their mutual exclusiveness. (Benjamin 1968: 160)²⁹

3. The city text of Budapest

The above described theorization gains flesh only when applied and assessed in a context. While comparing politics of city-text in different contexts would be useful, due to the constraints of space, I focus here in the case of Budapest. In brief, the postcommunist changes were administered from above in Budapest. The mayor's office called in 1990 for certain street names to be changed in all the districts of the city. The Budapest gallery founded a statue park for the communist statues, securing them away from the city before they became objects of fierce vandalism.³⁰ On the whole, two main trends can be recognised in the reforming of the city-text in Budapest: the return to the late 19th century, with its bourgeois, noble and Habsburg elements, and the 1956-ism, which is particularly strong in the public sculpture of the first half of the 1990s.³¹

Frontiers and Fashions

The difference between post-communist street naming and post-WWII street naming is that after the war, an attempt was made to introduce a new street name vocabulary, the option which seems to have been deliberately ignored by the post-communist reformers. The fact that 'depolitisation' meant the reintroduction of Habsburg and royalist vocabulary, was rather the consequence of an aimed consistence: return to the nearest 'neutral' names in the history. Thus, the new names mirror the first post-communist governments' concept of a 'neutral' Hungarian history. As a result, many of the 19th century nobility regained their position on the streets.

It can be argued that Holocaust memorials made the transition from communism to post-communism in Budapest's public sculpture, starting with the Raoul Wallenberg statue in

²⁹ Voluntary and involuntary are in Freudian language 'consciousness' and 'the unconscious'. For some more discussion see Rochlitz 1996: 210-1.

³⁰ Some statues suffered the fate of vandalism: the statue of Ferenc Münnich became the prime object of political protests, as the tradition of overthrowing of governments has it (Sinkó 1992).

1987 and finally developing into the recognition of the Hungarian Jewry as a whole in 1990.³² The Wallenberg memorial ordered by the city committee was erected a good distance away from the centre, in an ambiguous location in the II district.³³ The lack of the commemoration of the non-communist victims of the WWII was discussed in the Central Committee as late as February of 1989 (Nyysönen 1999: 204). During the communist period the Soviet Liberators and the communist resistance were officially recognised. Only in 1990, the victims of the Hungarian Holocaust were remembered by the erection of the Imre Varga Holocaust memorial just behind the Dohány Street's synagogue. In 1991, yet another new Holocaust memorial was erected by the Budapest city, on Dob utca, near the Synagogue and to an area where there had been a ghetto (Boros 1992a: 31).

In the centre districts, post-communism restored 64 per cent of the 53 changed names from the late 19th century. Seven of the streets were blessed with a new name. Only one, or maybe two of these refer to the events of 1956. The surroundings of the Parliament building got many new 1956-statues, some old statues of the 1948/49 or the World Wars included 1956, and memorial plaques swamped around the town to commemorate the victims of the revolution. The street names include only few 1956 oriented entries. There is one 'Imre Nagy Square', 'Square of '56-ers' and '23rd October Street' (Nyysönen 1999: 216). In other words, the martyrs the revolution were poorly represented on the streets. Of the three Martyrs' Streets of the late 1940s, only two remain, in the 4th and 20th district. The most central, *Mártírok útja* changed its name to *Margit körút* in 1992. In this case the Martyrs were those deceased in the Margit körút's penal institution for war criminals, where many prominent Hungarians were treated from the 19th century until the Second World War. Today, many of the houses on the street carry both the ticked

³¹ The data on the street names is, if there is no other indication, from the *Budapest teljes utcanévléxicon* (1998) encyclopaedia. On the statues I have used three catalogues on the statues of Budapest published by the Budapest Gallery.

³² Wallenberg was a Swedish diplomat, who helped over 400.000 Jews to Sweden in 1944. Zinner Tibor (1987) 'Raoul Wallenberg. Emlékmű. Budapest 1987', *Historia* 1987, 4., pp. 31-32.

³³ After WWII, there was an attempt largely by the surviving Jewish community, to commemorate Wallenberg. A street in the Swedish quarter of the 8th district was named after him, and permission to erect a public statue by private funding was asked. However, the private sources of funding disappeared by the collectivisation of factories and banks and the erection of the statues was delayed. The sizeable work of art by Pál Pátzay was finally set up in Szent István's park, near the Danube and the former Swedish quarter, but it was never exposed to the public as it vanished the night before the ceremony in April 1949. After WWII, the 33-year-old Wallenberg was captured by the Russians and, according to the Soviet Government in 1957, died in prison in 1947. Thus the erection of the statue of Wallenberg was as much an anti-Russian as an anti-fascist act. After the case of the Wallenberg statue, the initiative to erect statues in Budapest was centralised as a duty of the Mayors Office. (Pótó 1989: 59-62) Katalin Sinkó (1992) argues that it has been unveiled and removed by Russian soldiers two weeks later. See Pótó for discussion.

communist and the new post-communist street sign, undermining the complete authority of the new political elite.

Margit körút is also an example of the ownership related to naming: who's memory, or who's martyrs, should be commemorated. A close study on the topic of freedom in street names reveals that half of the street names incorporating words free (*szabad*) or freedom (*szabadság*), ever used in Budapest, were introduced after 1945.³⁴ During the communist era, however, the number of 'freedom streets' was limited in Budapest. For every two post-war 'freedom' street names, the communist replaced one with a new name, leaving the city with 18 street names with the 'freedom' theme in 1990. The change was directed towards the streets named before 1945, as if 'their' type of freedom was removed instead of 'our' freedom. The putsch of the *Szabadság tér* and *utca* was at its busiest during the years 1953 and 1954. Post-communism, finally, removed one freedom name, without introducing any new. The two liberation squares, *Felszabadulás tér*, and the Liberation Street were effaced from the map in 1966 and 1991.³⁵

The *Felszabadulás tér* shows the problem of picking a suitable name from the past. The metro station of Liberation Square was renamed Franciscan Square after the political changes of 1990, but the old street signs, however, were not ticked with red to correspond with the change. It was assumed that the square, divided by *Szabad sajtó út* leading to the Freedom Bridge, the southern, would kept in two parts, and *Mihály Károly utca* side would carry the new name while the old name of the northern part would be preserved (Nyüssönen 1992: 13). What happened, to the annoyance of some people in Pest, was that the two parts were joined on 30 April 1992 and the Liberation Square disappeared. The history of the two squares was long and many names could have been considered already from the historical point of view. The northern part had been called *Búza tér*, Wheat Square, the southern Monks' Square, in 1700. Before becoming Franciscan Square the southern square was named after the university, the main building of which still borders the square; the northern half had been called White Roses Square or Snake Square (named after a pharmacy) and was named after count and minister Apponyi in 1921. In other

³⁴ 'Freedom' itself is a 20th century phenomenon in street name vocabulary, although in the previous century the name *Freye Gasse*, *Szabad utca* appeared. During the 1948/49 revolution, the present-day *Kossuth Lajos utca* in *Belváros* was called *Szabad Sajtó utca*, Free Press Street. The name was returned to the map in 1948 and *Szabad sajtó út* still connects *Kossuth Lajos utca* to Freedom Bridge.

³⁵ According to an already quoted survey from the 1980s, Hungarians remembered the freedom of the press better than any other of the 'Twelve Points' of 1848/49 revolution, with 94 percent of the respondents mentioning it (Csepeli 1997: 184-185).

words the square could have been named more neutrally, for example University Square, but the difficulty would have been that, like in any modern capital, the university was no longer located in one place: it would have been a misleading name for a metro station. Franciscan monks had a church on the square 1690-1715, and its cloister became part of the 'Franciscan market' in the late 19th century. This illustrates how by deciding which not to have on square fixes the borders of the discourse of what to remember.

Nodal points and process of change

[T]he content and structure of a city-text supply the reader with valuable information of the past. In contrast to textbooks, which present both heroes and 'antiheroes' ... city-text comprises heroes only. ... [It] is thus a one-dimensional representation of only those historical figures who are located on the 'positive' side of the 'good'/'evil' axis characterizing a particular rendition of the past. (Maoz Azaryahu 1992: 354)

In Hungary, street naming has concentrated around certain famous figures, who, almost hierarchically occupy the main streets of towns, cities and in Budapest districts.³⁶ As Budapest is composed of districts, each of which is responsible for street naming, the same few names tend to dominate the city-text in each district. Even when a new shopping centre was opened next to Budapest Nyugati station in 2000, the names of the 'shopping streets and squares' tended to follow the tradition of Szechény's, Petôfi's, King Matthias' and József Attila.³⁷ For example during the communist era General Bem and Karl Marx had their names nine times on the streets, while the Hungarian Endre Ságvári had a street in eleven districts (Nyysönen 1999:118-9). These central names work as nodal points of discourses. The certain 'national' canon is not removed from the streets, rather, the different groupings try to make them part of their discourse, some more important than others.

Institutionalised forgetting is important in Hungary where, the discredited figures are expunged from the city-text. As a result, the history writing becomes one sided and aims, even under post-communism, to provide an 'official' history. The unpleasant side of the

³⁶ Already in the 1970s, the concern about the monotony of street names was voiced (Hajdú 1975: 49, 17). For street naming in socialist times, see also (Kálmán 1967:182-4).

³⁷ This enormously long complex in the 'promised land of shopping centres' is called 'West End City Center'.

national history is ‘forgotten’ by the omission of the ambivalent figures.³⁸ Consequently, in Budapest, there is no streets named after, for example, the most contested Hungarian leaders, such as Béla Kun, Miklós Horthy or János Kádár.³⁹ Besides the unfashionable political leaders, there are prominent groups of people excluded from the map: few women have made their way to the map other than by a rather anonymous first name.⁴⁰ Equally difficult is it to find representation of the Hungarian minorities, such as the Roma, although there is for example *Cinka Panna utca*, from 1929, in the 14th district named after a gypsy musician.

The city code on street naming has the institutionalised rules for what to remember and how. The city code on street naming of the municipality of Budapest states that, besides carrying directing, geographical and security value, the street names establish memories and guard tradition. When naming streets, historical tradition, geographical environment and language correctness must be respected. Memory-carrying street names must give priority to the directing and locally connected names.⁴¹ Hungarians who gain recognition in the streets of Budapest must have played a positive role in the national history, earned it by an outstanding performance in the fields of science, arts, sports or society, or played an outstanding role in the history or life of the capital or one of its districts. Non-Hungarians must have had a an outstanding role in the whole history of the humankind in order to get their name on the streets of Budapest. (*Budapest teljes utcanévlexicona*, 1998: Utcanévrendelet, 1§2; 5§1, 2; 8§1-2)

³⁸ The classical example on opposite policy is Paris, where the streets names are not changed but each period of history is present. The fall of communism, brought one change, though, as the Street of Leningrad Street was changed into St. Petersburg Street, as the name refer to the city.

³⁹ In March 2000, one of the political parties aimed campaigned for the renaming of *Bartók Béla út* in the XI district after Horthy as it used to be before the Second World War. The district council replied that Bartók would remain, but Horthy might get a smaller street somewhere in the district. There is a *Kádár utca* in the XIII district, but it does not refer to the communist leader, being from the 1890s. Accordingly, the only remaining *Kun utca* is from the 1870s. Of the seven street names commemorating the president of the first Hungarian republic, Mihály Károly, an approved figure under Kádár, only one is still in use.

⁴⁰ A closer look at the street name lexicon suggests that for a woman to get her name on the streets, she should be an actress, a famous writer or pedagogue, or the wife or daughter of a famous Hungarian (19th century) politician – preferably, of a king. Modern woman’s chances seem bleak, by no means should she be something as daring as a politician!

⁴¹ From 1993, dates have not been allowed in street names (Ibid.:). Thus, the *Október huszonharmadika utca* (*October 23rd Street*) in the XI district from 1992 was the last of its kind under the current code (Ibid.: 297). The seventh and eighth articles of the city code on the street names deal with the naming after persons: a street can be named after a person only 25 years after his or her death; the family name can only be used when the person was widely know by that (e.g. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky) or when it refers to a whole family (e.g. Eszterházy). As a comparison, this differs from the German tradition where street can carry only a family name with changing memorial tablets indicating who is remembered in which part of the street. (*Budapest teljes utcanévlexicona*, 1998: Utcanévrendelet, 4.§2; 7§1, 3)

The change of the city-text was simultaneously from below and above. Removal of Ferenc Münnich to *Nádor utca* in 1990 that the system change in the street names started; quite like the change in the statues, which began when people started to act out their aggressions to the statue of Münnich. Contrary to some popular anticipations, all street names given during the communist era were not changed. The first list of street names, published in *Magyar Hírlap*, 3 September 1990, clearly indicated that the manifestly communist street names would be removed from the map.⁴² The names of the communist martyrs of the 1956 revolution were removed in the first wave of decommemoration. Also the roads of Red Army, the road of the Red October, as well as the communist holidays, 7 November and even the First of May, were removed from the map, mostly to be replaced by Habsburg time names. This was a period of intended de-politicisation of the street names, which could according to Maoz Azaryahu's terminology, be called 'de-canonisation', but because of the strong Habsburg influence it might be closer to 're-canonisation' (Azaryahu 1991: 31). The proper names from the communist era (1950 and after) which still remain in the centre are mostly those of artists and scientists. Almost all politicians or political writers were removed.

The lists of new street names make rather boring reading: in the centre districts, 64 percent of the 'new' names are from the period 1870-1900, while 9 percent are from the following 18-year period; the names first introduced in 1990s constitute 13 percent of the changed names. Almost all changes in the centre took place in 1990 and 1991.⁴³ The second wave of renaming removed for example the street of Rosenberg's couple (who spied for the Soviets in the US), Tito, *Tanács körút*, Gorki, Jenô Landler and Imre Mezô. In other words, most of the proper names introduced during communism disappeared from the maps.

The most contested case of the renaming process was that of *Hercegprimás utca*, the former *Alpári Gyula utca*. In 1989, it was proposed that the name *Nagy Korona utca*, Big Crown Street, would be returned to this street named after the communist martyr of the Second World War. It took several years for the capital's general meeting to give an answer and in October 1991 the street got its old name. A few months later the council of

⁴² The list contained well known names like Lenin, Marx, Engels, Thälmann, Dimitrov, Tolbuhin, Ferenc Münnich, László Rajk, Béla Kun, Mihály Károlyi, and other Hungarian communists and martyrs as László Rudas, Endre Ságvári, Otto Korvin, János Asztalos, Katalin Haman, and Sándor Sziklai.

⁴³ Exceptions include *Marx tér* by *Nyugati tér* and *Biermann István tér* by *Szomorú Dezsô tér* and *Martinelli tér* by *Szervita tér* in 1992, and *Groza Péter rakpart* by *Várkert rakpart* as late as 1997.

the 5th district came to the conclusion that the street, which passes the Basilica should be called after archbishop Mindszenty instead. After a lot of discussion the street was finally renamed Prince Archbishop Street in 1992 whereby the street name vocabulary got a Christian flavour. It is noteworthy that the name does not indicate which archbishop is commemorated. The process probably inspired the adaptation of a new rule in the city code for street names in 1993, according to which the streets can only be renamed after 10 years.

The most visible of the remaining communist time names *Moszkva tér*, Moscow Square, which was called *Szell Kálmán tér* 1929-1945, is an intriguing case. Kálmán Szell (1843-1915) was a politician (PM 1899-1903). *Moszkva* is, according to the street name encyclopaedia, only a geographical name. Even if *Szell Kálmán tér* only existed for 16 years, whereas *Moszkva tér* for 45 in 1990, the latter however established itself in the popular vocabulary only slowly, finally as one of the main stations of public transport. The old generation used the pre-communist name and the young people, students from the near-by schools used to meet at 'Kalef' (Nyüssönen 1993: 70). These reasons, however, have not prevented the city councils from changing the street names earlier.⁴⁴ If *Moszkva* was treated solely as a geographical name, why was not *Berlin tér*, the pre-1945 name for another main point of transport, restored when Karl Marx Square was renamed *Nyugati tér* (Western Square)? Maybe Berlin and Nyugati, Western, are synonymous. Perhaps then, geo-political balance is achieved by the preservation of *Moszkva tér* in Buda.⁴⁵

Metamorphosis, or redescription, in city-text

Politics of the city-text can also be noticed in the changes meaning. A 1956 related name is the Vértanúk tere, near the parliament. Although the name originates from the 1930s, it can be seen as referring to the revolution of 1956, especially as the square hosts the statue of Imre Nagy. The name 'square of Blood witnesses' itself is, however, of earlier origin: it was first introduced in 1936, when a statue for the 'national blood witnesses' of the years 1918-1919 was also erected on the square. It would therefore be an error to believe that the square was named after the martyrs of the revolution of 1848/49 who were held in

⁴⁴ Revealingly, the street name lexicon defines *Szofia utca* and *Belgrad rakpart* as named after the capitals Sofia and Belgrade; these remain in the map, and in Újpest *Berlin utca* was restored.

⁴⁵ This does not sound strange knowing that it was suggested in the *Magyar Nemzet* in 1990 that *Marx tér* became *Európa tér* (Nyüssönen: 1999: 217).

prison in the *Újépület*, the ‘New Building’, one corner of which was on the *Vértanúk tere* of today. When the names were ‘democratised’ after the war, the square got its new name after a martyr of the WWII, Endre Ságvári. It remained on the map until 1990.

This change of meaning has been more typical of statues. Unlike the removed street names, the removed statues do not need an immediate substitute. The plinth will remain, and continue the symbolic function. Sometimes the plinth is modified into a new statue, or incorporated into a new memorial. Metamorphosis has offered a solution to at least two post-communist problems, which deal with statues: the lack of monuments for the Second World War and the high number of ‘Liberation’ monuments in every corner of the town.⁴⁶ Boros also distinguishes a further problem concerning statue problems to be solved by the metamorphosis: the clearing away and setting up of plinths and statues requires funds (Boros 1992: 28-9).

When talking about a metamorphosis of an existing statue, Boros (1992) makes a distinction between spontaneous and bureaucratic processes. Examples of spontaneous modifications of statues include Ferencs Laborcz’ Liberation monument, the female figure of which got a black-and-blue bikini and a punk hairdo from a graffiti ‘artist’.⁴⁷ An intriguing case of modification was the Liberation monument (*Felszabadulási emlékmű*), renamed statue of Freedom (*Szabadság szobor*) after the statue of Soviet soldier who used to keep guard in front of the monument has been removed to the Statue Park (Kováts 1992: 40-44). Szentjóby, a young artist, hid the communist system’s most important public sculpture, the Liberation monument on the Gellert Hill into a white sheet to illustrate phantom of liberty for few days 29 June to 1 July 1992.

By doing this Szentjóby effected a peculiar distancing, changing the tone, extinguishing and transmuting the meaning, providing at one and the same time a concrete and abstract, blasphemous and reflective solution – if only for couple of days – to the dilemma of whether sculptures should be pulled down, taken away or kept. (Boros 1998: 10)

⁴⁶ Boros has categorised six of them: 1) The First World War memorials integrated the spirit of the Second World War (Viktor Vass’ in 1928 built memorial in the Orczy park). 2) Liberation monument has been turned into a WWII monument. 3) Liberation monument has become a monument for Peace. 4) Liberation monument becomes a statue of Freedom. 5) The Soviet Heroes’ monuments have been turned into cemetery memorial place. 6) Some of the Republic of Council’s memorials are now in commercial or technical use (1992: 28-9).

⁴⁷ Another example is from the City Park, where until 1992 stood the Soviet Republic memorial. Its remaining plinth got a plaque, which had the far-visible text: ‘Here stood the Regnum Marianum Church. Mátyás Rákosi demolished it in 1951.’ (Boros 1992a: 28) The Church was built before WWII, during the Horthy years to commemorate victims of the Republic of Councils. (Sinkó (1992) p. 84)

The project was incredibly popular among the inhabitants of Budapest, and many of them wanted to see the ghost on the hill longer than three days (Boros 1992b: 12). This is also an important way in which official and popular memories meet and are politicised.

Metamorphosis in the city-text also shows the layers of history. To what extent will the symbolism of the old statue dominate the symbolic message of the new statue which uses the old as its base? Even if statues are demolished, the plinths often remain. Moreover, in Budapest there are places, which have always hosted important statues. The removal of the statues of the former regime leaves empty spots. The dominant places in the centre of the town are soon refilled by statues carrying as important a value to the current regime as the removed statues had to the former. The memory of the previous items of the city-text remain, at least for a time, in the daily use of language and experience of the city. This also indicates how the city-text is a good example of the *Now-time* of Benjamin.

The solution for the problem of remembering the past and the communist statues was found when in December 1991 the Municipal Assembly decided to establish a statue park in the 22nd district, on the edge of the town. In August 1992, a list of the statues to be deported to the park was published in *Magyar Hírlap* (8/8/92). The winner of the design competition, Ákos Eleőd named the park after Gyula Illyés famous poem, *One Sentence about Tyranny*. It was composed of a 'scene wall', with Marx and Engels, and 'ending wall', with Captains Steinmetz and Ostiapienko, between which there were 'endless walks' containing the individuals and concepts of the workers' movement (Szücs 1994: 104). This, reflects the experience in the ideological space in a Benjaminian fashion. For Attila Zsigmond, the director of the Budapest Galéria, Szoborpark is a museum of an unfortunate era, and not built to joke about the past: 'The public statue is always "a means of representing power, ... the park is interesting from the point of view of the period, political and art history"'. These statues were born in this town, were part of this town, some even for more than four decades.'⁴⁸

The Soviet liberation monuments and the memorials of the Red Army were the most obvious manifestations of the Soviet control over Hungary. There were six Soviet liberation monuments and 16 Soviet heroes monuments erected in Budapest after 1945. During post-communism, 'freedom monuments' have replaced the function of 'liberation monuments'. Around the city, there are a number of tall pillars with the magic turul bird

⁴⁸ *Magyar Nemzet* 7/7/1992, Zsigmond Attila interviewed in Kurcz Béla 'A politikai okokból összeárt szobrok skanzene. Nem gúny mementő'.

flying at the top. In the recent years the fate of the last remaining liberation monument in front of the US embassy and near the Parliament has been discussed.

Emerging logic of change and legitimacy

There are major differences between the politicking nature of the statues and the street names, that emerged in my study. The latter group is usually first subject to the change: they are most actively used in everyday life, from the addresses and tourist maps, thus functioning as a window to the foreigners. Where as the streets need an immediate substitute, the statues can be simply removed from sight, but because creating a piece of public sculpture is time-consuming, and there are usually no new statues available. The plinth may remain on the spot indicating the change and the still undecided nature of official values.

Azaryahu demonstrates by the examples of street naming from post-war Haifa and East Berlin, how the timings of the changes can be used in politicking. First, the objective of the change is decommemoration, the 'mopping up' of the city-text. By postponing the change the regime gains time: 'striving for recognition and legitimacy, [the regime] was not interested in assuming another unnecessary burden: eliminating acknowledged and popular national heroes from the text...', while preparing for the 'renamings at last', making them official celebrations of the newly established political order (Azaryahu 1992: 363). Exactly the opposite happened in Budapest, where the post-communist regime aimed to gain the support of the people by the fast removals of the communist names. The later politicking is by the public sculpture or entirely new street names.

In the final instance, however, the effect of the changes or their legitimizing force can be seen when the rewritten city-text has become part of the everyday thought-world: the new street names are being used casually, and the statues are no longer contested. Here one may ask the question Gillis and Levinson pointed out: whether the function of the city-text is to be a space of contestation or whether, following Schöpflin the public symbols should be left in peace to ensure a harmonious society.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to stress that the processes of remembering and forgetting (and the ignorance, which has not been fully explored here) are important in the times of political changes. Memory present besides in the official construction, which I have explained here in the context of Budapest, also instituted in the public spaces by the city-text. It melts with the other memories reflected in the cityscape and with the personal memories of the past: the experience and world views. This aspect is important when thinking how the public projection of memory, the redescription of history at the time of political changes actually affects the construction of political identities. In this paper I hope to have explained the way in which city-text is a discourse of history, which tries to provide representation for one or many conceptions of memory, through the setting of the limits of what should be remembered and who would be the key personalities for the discourse would sediment itself.

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