

ABSTRACTS

Zsombor Bódy: Homes in the Focus of Research in Modern Urban History

The study surveys publications on the twentieth-century history of residential architecture and policy primarily in German-language publications. The subject of homes is a complex research area, which encompasses various disciplines including the economic history of residential development and the real estate market, the social history of patterns of unequal residential circumstances specific to social strata, cultural historical approaches to the history of homes and home-making, residential development as a social issue in political discourse, and modes of residential practice in the study of everyday life. The diversity of possible analytical approaches make the history of homes a challenging, but fascinating research area. The present survey provides a summary of recent scholarship in this field.

Béla Kerékgyártó: Modern Homes – Modern Living. The Transformation of Normative Models in Residential Architecture in Hungary and Abroad between 1890 and 1940

The study examines the evolution of normative models of modern housing in Hungary and abroad from the perspective of the history of ideas and the history of architecture from the 1890s until the outbreak of the Second World War. It begins with a brief discussion of the social and cultural criteria of modern homes, with special attention to the English influence on Central Europe and Hermann Muthesius and Adolf Loos as its major transmitters. This is followed by a detailed account of the flourishing of the movement and modernist architecture in the 1920s, which also brought questions of residential architecture into the limelight. The discussion includes an introduction to the groundbreaking and influential thought of Le Corbusier, as well as the 1927 program of the Stuttgart Weissenhofsiedlung and the concept and reception of its completed buildings. At the core of these initiatives was the idea of creating rationally organised small flats, built of modern materials and structure, and equipped with modern infrastructure, household appliances and machines. There was an increasing demand for creating standards, patents and industrial-scale production. The second half of the study is devoted to the Hungarian architectural scene in this period. The development of modern architecture and homes is analysed in articles published

in the influential *Tér és Forma* journal, especially the writing and architectural work of the editor Virgil Bierbauer, as well as two other eminent architects and writers of architecture, Farkas Molnár and Lajos Kozma.

Gergely Kunt: “We’re Moving Then. To a Three-room Flat.” A Family’s Strategies of Home Acquisition in a Pest Apartment Building from the Second World War to the 1956 Revolution

The study is an analysis of the diaries of the Roman Catholic teenage sisters Margit and Judit Molnár (fictitious names), to describe a family’s strategies to move from a one-bedroom flat into a two-bedroom one in a Budapest apartment building. Their home acquisition strategies were fundamentally influenced by their perceptions about the society they lived in. One of the primary motifs was the family’s profound anti-Semitism, which rested on the dichotomy of ‘poor Christian Hungarians’ versus ‘rich foreign (i.e. non-Hungarian) Jews’. For them, the Jewish neighbours personified Jewry, and they projected their experience of them onto the entire Jewish population. In 1943 and 1944 they came to assume that the Jewish neighbours’ flat can be obtained through their own connections within the building prior to the flat’s official seizure by authorities. Their strategy based on personal persuasion remained unsuccessful because the neighbours refused to relinquish their right to live in their home until the summer of 1944 when they were forced to move into a segregated Jewish building (one of the so-called Yellow Star Buildings) by the authorities. Finally, the Molnár family was able to swap with a Roman Catholic neighbour and move into a two-bed room flat after the war. Following the nationalisation of real estate, they tried to hold on to this larger flat using the same strategies they previously observed in their Jewish neighbours with malice: they justified their right for the flat by increasing the number of residents registered at the same address.

Ágnes Nagy: The Optimal Spatial Distribution of the Population. Perceptions of the Distribution of Living Space in Hungarian Society in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

In relation to rent-controlled housing policies, the study examines the continuity and changes in the discourse, ways of thinking, and organisation of linguistic forms concerning the spatial distribution of living spaces in Hungarian society between the First World War and the end of the Second World War. According to the basic premise of the study, the changing discourse reflects the process of mental transformation in society, which, in this period, primarily

concerns the transformation of Hungary's social and political environment. To describe these processes, the study briefly summarises the effects of the government's housing regulations on social norms of housing during the First World War and the rationale behind the housing standards between the two world wars. These shed light on the evolution of the normative perception, which converged in the experience of 'narrowing' and 'contracting'. This experience was expressed in spatial metaphors dominating the discourse, which at the same time fundamentally perceived housing conditions in terms of a Jewish-Christian dichotomy.

The second part of the study gives an analysis of the linguistic forms in this discourse during the Second World War, when the return of state-controlled housing policy brought about a proliferation of new images and the ultimate transformation of the perceptions of spatial distribution. The changes in perceptive schema and linguistic forms point to a new pattern: the idea of 'propriety' was replaced by 'entitlement' as the main determinant of the relationship between the size of dwelling and social status. Furthermore, social status was replaced by a Jewish-Christian dichotomy and the concept of 'social value', which meant that entitlement was beginning to be perceived according to increasingly merit-based principles.

András Sipos: Who's the Master of the House? Conflicts of the Tenancy Law in Budapest from the 1860s to the 1930s

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, apartment buildings as business investment, as well as the concept of rented apartment as a housing option and living space, became increasingly common, which was one of the key elements of modern urban lifestyle. At the same time, housing also became one of the major areas of social conflict. In cities, the detailed regulation of tenancy, which defined the rights of and power structure between landlords, lessors and tenants was largely laid out in municipal ordinances. In Budapest, tenancy law underwent comprehensive revision first in 1882–85, then in 1909 and 1936. The latter two revisions were undertaken in a period when urban housing was beginning to be perceived as a social problem in politics, public discourse (a matter of heated disputes even), which were soon buried under nearly impenetrable layers of agendas and interpretation. The study examines the concepts and ways of argumentation which emerge in the legislative process. This methodology allows the long term examination of various research questions, such as how the inherently commercial relationship between landlords and tenants became a matter of public policy, what changes the interpretive framework underwent in the period, and what legal means were considered acceptable within this framework.

Erika Szívós: Tales of Dobócia: Popular Images of the Inner 7th District of Budapest in the Interwar Period

The author discusses popular images of Belső-Erzsébetváros, the Inner 7th District of Budapest, between the two world wars, attempting to determine the prestige and reputation of the neighbourhood in the interwar public mind. The neighbourhood – which is often termed “the Old Jewish Quarter” of Budapest today – used to be nicknamed Dobócia after its characteristic street Dob utca (“Drum Street”). Dob utca has been *the* stereotypical residence of Jewish characters in several classic Jewish jokes, part and parcel of Budapest urban folklore up to this very day; that fact in itself indicates something important about the social and ethno-religious character of the neighbourhood, at least in the historical sense.

The main question of the article is how the Inner 7th District related to other districts of Budapest in terms of its reputation, compared especially to those areas which were also noted for their Jewish residents in the 1920s and 1930s; how the position of “Dobócia” was perceived in the intra-Budapest social hierarchy in the interwar period, and how it was represented in Jewish urban folklore. First the author summarizes the results of recent scholarship in urban and social history (including her own research), aiming to characterize the Inner 7th District by its social composition, professional and economic profile and denominational mixture. She also comments on the neighbourhood’s physical condition and residential architecture, relative to the prestige of the area on the real estate market. Relying on the context provided by urban history, the author then presents various images of the Inner 7th District through three different types of narrative sources, namely interwar fiction, short stories and anecdotes written in the late 20th and early 21st centuries which portray interwar Jewish neighbourhoods from a retrospective angle, and a memoir published in the 2000s by a one-time resident. The author argues that the use of such subjective sources combines ideally with classic methods of urban history when recovering the past image of a historic neighbourhood.

Krisztián Ungváry: “Bloodlands”

The Trials and Tribulations of András Kovács between 1939 and 1951

In general, autobiographies are peculiar constructs which, expressly or tacitly, are created with an assumed customer in mind. Biographical materials prepared for the communist state security speak as much about the party’s expectations as the actual living conditions of their subjects. This study looks at historical events which decided the fate of millions in this period through the lens of the story of one individual. The protagonist, András Kovács, was born a Hungarian Jew in the Lower Carpathian region, which doubly destined him to a minority existence. From 1939 onwards, his Jewish origin forced him into hiding and Kovács remained unable to escape his fate

even though he assumed new identities repeatedly. Even though he tried his level best to integrate into the communist regime, his vicissitudes and the series of new identities he was forced to assume continued after 1945. Kovács' story is far from unique in this period. The primary source for this study is the recruitment dossier of the state security, which contains documents of special value as a historical source. Since these documents reveal as much about their creators as their subjects, individual source criticism for each separate case is of crucial importance.

American historian Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*, an influential, albeit academically often criticised, book on Eastern European history describes the region in the light of the destruction by totalitarian dictatorships. This present study may also serve as a contribution to the debate that this controversial book elicited in scholarly circles.

Judit Valló: "To Live in Peace Somewhere, where All My Stuff [...] is in One Good Place Together."

A Housing Career in 1930s Budapest in an Architect's Reminiscences

The study surveys the housing career of Budapest architect Károly Hegedős between 1933 and 1939, based on his diaries and reminiscences richly illustrated with floorplans and drawings of interiors and furniture. Hegedős started his life in the capital living hand to mouth from one grant to another in a room for weekly rent. The first part of the study focuses on the two sides of the coin: families making ends meet by marketing part of their property for tenants on one hand, and tenants renting rooms due to a lack of regular and sufficient income on the other. The second part of the study follows the architect's housing career to the next phase, when he was able to rent a studio for himself. His reminiscences contain ample description and criticism of his immediate environment in an apartment block in Újlipótváros (Budapest's thirteenth district). This is followed by an account of the period following his years of studio accommodation, when Károly Hegedős married, developed a steady professional career, and thus was able to move into a modern two-bedroom flat with his wife Erzsébet Stoffa. This section provides an analysis of the interpretations of gender and spousal roles in the growing Hegedős family, as well as the difficulties arising from the modern double-income family model in this period. Hegedős' diary is used to compare the costs of living in rented rooms, studios or multi-bedroom accommodation with contemporary earnings. The housing career described in the text begins in rented rooms for a young man with irregular income, through a studio flat for the single educated male, to the rented two-bedroom flat for the family man. Based on the diary, the study also examines these life models and the ways they were associated with certain types of accommodation.