

## ABSTRACTS

### Angelika Bálint: Strike for Housing: Issues of Addressing the Budapest Housing Crisis in the Early Twentieth Century through the Example of the Hétház Tenement

Budapest housing shortage, which had been deepening from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, brought on severe tensions causing a series of housing movements by the early twentieth century. The present study examines the story of the residents of Hétház, primarily by reconstructing their strategies to improve their housing situation. The conflict broke out in the tenement following a rent increase in May 1910, and several violent episodes ensued. The situation remained unresolved for months until significant police force was deployed and all tenants were evicted during a raid. The Hétház case directed the limelight on the city's housing crisis and escalated into social issues and concerns for public safety. In addition to tracing the changing perceptions of the residents and the factors that turned the initial sympathy to criminalization, the study analyses news coverage in daily newspapers and police reports to reveal how the residential strike assumed political overtones over time.

### Gábor Buzgó: At the End of Life: The Welfare of the Elderly in Nagyléta, Bihar County, in the 1930s

The study focuses on the society of the village of Nagyléta in Bihar County between the world wars, when agrarian workers constituted two thirds of the economically active population. The subject of analysis is the layer of elderly people who entered the latter years of their life cycle in the 1930s. Based on surviving wills and records of council meetings, Gábor Buzgó presents two seemingly conventional ways of care for the elderly: family care and council support. Through the analysis of contemporary aid provision, Buzgó's study reveals which individuals were perceived as most vulnerable by their local community. Further, it also demonstrates how the vulnerable elderly of interwar Nagyléta selected their own carer from their family members, and in what ways they took care of passing on their belongings.

## Tamás Csíki: From Poverty to Destitution: Agrarian Proletariat during the First World War

The study examines the condition of agricultural wage workers, the agrarian proletariat, during the First World War. The reasons for their pauperization were diverse: natural disasters, disadvantageous regional conditions for farming, overpopulation, and unemployment were among the many factors that negatively affected them even before the war. After 1914, however, the military mobilization of family breadwinners, the appropriation of draft animals, increasing prices, requisitions, and looting deepened their impoverishment.

The increasing uncertainty of self-reliance called for state intervention, the governmental-political and local practice of which both demonstrate the macro- and microlevels of the poverty policy. Traditional poverty relief such as providing subsidised corn and seed was complemented by centralised food distribution and rationing. Flour rations were higher for agrarian workers than for urban consumers (maximum 400 grams/day in 1916) which was set at this level to preserve labour capacity and was based on the tenacious official categorization, which – based on consumption habits and demand – maintained that bread was the most important, even exclusive, type of food consumed by agrarian workers. State support granted to the families of enlisted soldiers was also used as a tool for labor coercion and discipline.

The last part of the study presents collective protests (food riots) brought about by destitution, which can be used to grasp contemporary mentalities associated with the poor as a subculture. The perceived or real corruption of the authorities, feelings of social injustice (favoritism of the rich), and the increasingly assertive voice of military wives all played an important role both in the outrage caused by inflation, black market prices, and food shortages, and in violent actions such as looting shops or public unrest. Together, these constituted a collective experience and subsequent actions through communication, and a discourse unfolding in the streets, squares, and marketplaces of the city.

## Anita Káli: “It Rose from Raw Life, like Sulphurous Vapours from the Swamp”: The Relationship between Social Sciences and Twentieth-Century Sociographic Prose

In the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century, the literary representation of poverty returned to the frontline of Hungarian fiction as various aspects of poverty emerged as subject matter in contemporary prose and a new type of poetics developed in depicting poverty. However, in the twentieth century, poverty is not simply a theme within contemporary prose but a recurring epical tendency with manifold relations to the social sciences. The most important aspect

of sociographical literature, the nature of the relationship between reality and fictionality, is a potential experimental field for creating a language and an epical world. Based on works written by Zsigmond Móricz, Zsolt Csalog, and Sándor Tar, the study sheds light on how this genre – written texts that can be perceived and interpreted as documentary sources – may become literary, fictional works of prose.

### Janka Kovács: Poverty, Illness, Madness: Treating the Mentally Ill in the Hungarian Hospitals of the Brothers of Mercy (1740–1830)

The paper addresses the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century practices of care for the mentally ill in the Hungarian hospitals of the Brothers of Mercy, highlighting the connections between illness and poverty and the approaches towards the mentally ill in a period when new means of clinical treatment and specialized care were underway. The order settled in Hungary in the middle of the seventeenth century to provide care primarily for poor people. They were traditionally specialized in the care of the mentally ill, and even though standardized care and systematic therapeutic regime were not yet in existence in this period, the practice of registering and sectioning the “insane” within general hospitals is already detectable.

Besides recording information about the social background of the patients, the surviving documents (patient statistics, registries and regulations) provide a glimpse into how mental illnesses were labelled and classified in the hospital. In addition, they also contain references to sectioning the “insane” and their classification based both on social and financial status, and on their mental state.

Using documents of hospital administration and narrative sources reflecting on the daily routine of the hospital (such as newspapers, medical topographies, and travelogues), the study discusses medicalization and the practice of specialized care through the examination of a severely marginalized and stigmatized subgroup of hospital patients.