

# Abstracts

## Class/Structure

*Márk Áron Éber and Anikó Gregor: Class/Structure: What Do We Know about the Class Structure of Hungarian Society Today? Introduction*

**Abstract:** This brief introduction conceives the development of the class structure as a historical process and the relations and processes of (re)production of life as unfolding in their historicity. It emphasizes the impact of both longer-term processes and events marking turning points in the organization of class relations. This historical-sociological approach to the study of class structure is intended to make the context of the studies that follow the introduction more comprehensible.

**Keywords:** class, class structure, history, agency, social change

*Dániel Kömüves: The „Death of Class” Debate in the Light of G. M. Tamás and the Value-critique*

**Abstract:** My paper examines the discourse of the “death of classes”, including Ulrich Beck’s concept of the risk society, in the light of value-critique. Drawing on the insights of Moishe Postone and G. M. Tamás, I present an interpretation of Marx which offers the possibility to distinguish between two different theoretical approaches, the ‘traditional Marxist’ and the “value-critical”. The former refers to those theories that conceive capitalism in terms of class relations rooted in private property, mediated by the market, and define the category of domination within the terms of class oppression. The value-critical perspective, on the other hand, captures the structure of capitalism through a critical analysis of value and abstract labour. It does so by assuming an abstract form of domination that can be traced back to historically specific forms of value and value-producing labour. I argue that the class concept used by late Marx grasps the structural features of capitalism but is less suited for mapping the socio-cultural aspects and unequal relations of different social groups. Ulrich Beck and the “death of class” arguments make relevant observations about the distribution of wealth and related social phenomena, but these critiques can only be applied to traditional Marxism.

**Keywords:** social structure, class, value, value-critique, Postone, Tamás, Marx, Beck

**Abstract:** This paper examines the concept of the “middle class” from the perspective of the antagonism of capital and labor. The “middle class” is not a category of relational class analysis. Although the concept of class is included in it, it is not suitable for relational class analysis, because it just obscures the relationship between capital and labor. Thus, this paper intends to solve the problem of the “middle class” through the concept of intermediate and intermediary classes in the capital-labor relation.

The category of the “middle class” also contains normative elements and ideological pre-suppositions: it appears as the social base of stable democracy and the market economy. The “middle class” is a mobilizing ideal for the catching-up efforts of the (semi-)peripheral region of Central and Eastern Europe, an ideological tool of political projects aiming catching up with the West (or with Western Europe). It expresses the ideal of dissolving class conflicts by living in prosperity and freedom, affluency and existential security, because workers and entrepreneurs, employees and employers, civil servants and business owners alike can share material and consumer welfare.

The affluence associated with the “middle class”, a secure existence, stable life conditions, material well-being, independence, autonomy, and even “civic” virtues – public-political activity, civic courage, open-mindedness, and common sense – are far from identical with the living conditions and the situation occupied by the intermediate and intermediary classes of the capital-labor relations of semi-peripheral societies. However, the ideal of the “middle class” is an ideology mobilizing the catching-up ambitions of these intermediate-mediating classes and thus to serve as an ideological glue for political projects.

**Keywords:** middle class, intermediate-intermediary classes, class structure, classes, capital-labor relation

*Ákos Nagy and Klára Nagy: Borrowed Lives: Temporary Work Agencies and Fuzzy Class Relations in Hungary*

**Abstract:** Our study seeks to answer how temporary work agencies organize class relations. We approach this question in our research mainly from a theoretical perspective but supported by statistical data, information from temporary employment agencies’ websites and secondary literature. The claims of our study are the following. The Marxian approach to class is relevant in the analysis of contemporary societies to explore the material drivers of society and the causes of seemingly insurmountable inequalities, which are, according to meritocratic thinking, downright “natural” or “necessary.” In this analysis, fuzzing the class situation is a means of class conflict. We must consider the temporary work agencies as autonomous exploitative agents since they perform a triple function: fuzzing of class relations, the effective fulfillment of their role of leveling out fluctuations in production and recruiting workers on loan from the reserve labor force. Temporary workers doing manual labor are in a particularly vulnerable position. This situation is reflected in the fact that a significant number of temporary workers are low-skilled, work as unskilled and semi-skilled laborers and have limited or no access to their citizenship rights. In our research, we also argue that the institution of temporary work agencies does not provide a stepping stone to secure

employment for low-skilled manual workers, whose vulnerable position is reproduced by temporary work agencies.

**Keywords:** Class, temporary work agencies, Marx, fuzzy employment relations

*Ákos Huszár: Subsistence Level and Class Analysis*

**Abstract:** In 2016 the Hungarian Central Statistical Office announced that after several decades it would stop calculating and publishing the minimum subsistence values. In my paper I argue that it is important to have up to date information about the minimum values and that they are also of great importance from the viewpoint of social theory. First, I show that the subsistence minimum indicator is an important tool for investigating poverty, then I examine two theoretical contexts where the minimum values play an important role, and finally I argue that by monitoring the minimum subsistence level we can also get important information about the transformation of social structure.

**Keywords:** subsistence level, class analysis, minimum wage, exploitation

*Márk Áron Éber: Promises, Illusions, Ideologies: The Middle Class, Embourgeoisement and the Ideals Of Catching Up in Júlia Szalai's Retrospective (Self-)Analysis*

**Abstract:** The review presents and criticizes the main claims of Júlia Szalai's book published in 2020. It examines and critiques her views on the middle class and its (failing) embourgeoisement. It initiates a debate on the unsuccessful processes of Hungary's modernization, its catching-up with the "west" and "Europe", by challenging the fragmentary explanations of Júlia Szalai.

**Keywords:** Middle class, embourgeoisement, catching up, westernization, modernization, west, Europe

## Lukács's Theory of the Novel

*Boglárka Daradics: Terminological Web of Georg Lukács's Novel Theory*

**Abstract:** In this paper I focus on The Theory of the Novel by Georg Lukács, with particular attention to the concepts that have organizing force on the composition. According to my thesis, novel theory can be reconstructed in a relevant way through the analysis of terminology, and this approach lead to illuminating and novel findings in several instances. The paper is divided into two main parts: in the first part, I contextualise the novel theory of Lukács and its terminology. Firstly, I position my thesis methodologically based on Theodor W. Adorno's reflections on philosophical terminology. After that outline the features that may have been decisive in the construction of the concepts of novel theory along three aspects (disciplinary definition, synthetic approach, Weberian ideal types). In the second part of the essay, at first, I am going to discuss the so-called multilevel conceptual construction that I have created, and in which I suppose the terms used by Lukács can be adequately illustrated.

Thereafter I will examine the concepts of novel and epos, together with the related concepts (closed world, organicity, essentialism, contingent world, problematic individual, loss of essence, age of perfect guilt, transcendental homelessness, biographical form), and I present the theoretical considerations of novel theory. Finally, I will turn to two concepts what have repeatedly defined The Theory of the Novel: the concepts of totality and irony.

**Keywords:** Georg Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, Hungarian history of ideas, conceptual analysis

### Among “Whites”

*József Böröcz: “Eurowhite” Conceit, “Dirty White” Ressentment: “Race” in Europe*

**Abstract:** This paper offers tools to rethink global critical insights on “race” in the contemporary structural transformation of European identity politics from the perspectives of postcolonial global historical sociologies. “Race” regimes rest on the following background assumptions: (1) The claim that humankind consists of a finite number of disjunct (non-overlapping) “groups,” “populations” or, in the extreme, “races”; (2) The presumption that it is valid to arrange those “groups,” “populations” or “races” in a system of moral super- and subordination; (3) The contention that the resulting moral hierarchy forms a single constant, irrespective of socio-historical contexts, criteria, or purposes of comparison; (4) Insistence that single, ahistorical/decontextualized hierarchy can be mapped on to body shape, skin pigmentation or other epiphenomenal “features” of “groups,” “populations,” or “races,” such that (5) “Whiteness” is always already at the top, “Blackness” is always already at the bottom of that hierarchy. This paper focuses on the workings of “Whiteness” as amoral-geopolitical superiority claim, whose defining element is an ahistorical/decontextualized claim, indeed demand, for unconditional global privilege. “Whiteness” is an unfounded, un-found-able – hence eminently unstable and contested – identity category. It is a relational category whose core is fixed as a constant, inaugurating the “White” subject’s relations (“superiority”) to its constitutive outside. I introduce two conceptual innovations: “eurowhiteness” – result of an internal structuring of the category of “Whiteness” whose purpose is separating an even more exalted, even more superior “cultural” – “racial” distinction within the universe of “Whiteness” and “dirty whiteness” – to capture the epistemic position of quantitative undervalued, positions within the moral quasi-community of “White” claims for global privilege, especially in their east European variants.

**Keywords:** blackness; dirty whiteness; European identity politics; eurowhiteness; global privilege; “race”.

*Loïc Wacquant: Resolving the trouble with ‘race’*

**Abstract:** This article sketches a neo-Bourdieuian framework for rethinking racial domination. It proposes that we need to historicize the notion of “race” to disclose the ongoing complicity between common sense and science; to expand the geographic scope of the discussion (by bringing together West and East, and metropole and colony) and to dislodge the

United States from its Archimedean position; to forsake the logic of the trial; to break with racial common sense yet repatriate in our model ordinary racial constructs; and to disaggregate ethnoracial phenomena into “elementary forms” of racial domination, namely, categorization, discrimination, segregation, seclusion (including ghettos, camps, and reservations), and violence. This analytical approach makes it possible to grasp “race” as a denegated modality of ethnicity entailing the denial of honor and the naturalization, eternalization, and homogenization of inequality. It sets for the sociology of racial domination the central task of uncovering how a system of ethnoracial classification is created, inculcated, and mapped onto a system of ethnoracial stratification, that is, of grasping “race” as a particular modality of “group-making.”

**Keywords:** racial domination, classification, stratification, social theory, Bourdieu

## Review

*Csaba András: The Hegemony of a Sociological Discourse*

**Abstract:** The review offers critical insights about the 30th issue of the Hungarian journal *Fordulat*, entitled “Culture and Capitalism.” Following the acknowledgement of the articles’ merits in contributing to critical discourses concerning the material aspects of cultural production, it reveals some crucial tensions between the aims of the publication and its proposed methodology by focussing on the introductory piece and the programmatic paper of the issue. The review points out that despite its declared goal of providing a sociology of cultural production that includes the analysis of cultural products and art works, the emphasis on the political economy of cultural production crowds out entire traditions of critical discourses that have meaningful things to say about the specifics of the culture produced.

**Keywords:** political economy, cultural production, theories of culture

