



**SMALL FLATS IN POZSONYI STREET
(DISTRICT XIII)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI POZSONYI
(XIII. OBVOD)


Source Zdroj: BTM Kiscelli Museum
collection

Room, Kitchen, Kitchen Garden. The History of the Municipal Housing Project in Budapest, 1909 – 1913

Izba, kuchyňa, záhradka.

História komunálneho sociálneho
bývania v Budapešti 1909 – 1913

Laura Umbrai

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V druhej polovici 19. storočia zaznamenala Budapešť v dôsledku rýchlej industrializácie výrazný skok v hospodárskom raste a počte obyvateľov. Rast počtu obyvateľstva miest bol v prvom rade dôsledkom sťahovania veľkého počtu ľudí z vidieckych sídiel v nádeji na lepší život v meste. Okrem nedostupnosti potravín patrilo bývanie medzi kľúčové problémy komplikované nedostatkom a rastom cien.

Bolo to obdobie, keď sa obyvateľstvo búrilo a štrajkovalo proti vysokým nájomom a niekedy dokonca obsadzovalo a demolovalo budovy. Práve to nakoniec prinútilo vedenie samosprávy, aby začalo presadzovať aktívnu politiku v oblasti hospodárskeho a sociálneho života. Hoci úradníci mali ešte stále pochybnosti o aktívnom zasahovaní do hospodárstva, postupne začali zastávať názor, že sociálna starostlivosť ide ruka v ruke s intervenciou. Hnutia protestujúce proti vysokým nájomom boli priamym dôvodom tu prezentovaného projektu bývania, ktorý mal na svoje obdobie nezvyčajný rozsah. (Okrem takmer 6 000 bytov, ktoré vybudoval budapešťiansky magistrát, tu bolo aj štátom postavené sídlisko Wekerleho kolónia s 3657 bytmi).

V marci 1909 predstavil starosta István Bárczy ambiciózný plán na zlepšenie bytových podmienok v meste a predbežné územné plány, ktoré sa mali stať súčasťou rozvojového balíka vo výške 297 milión korún. Výstavba mala trvať 5 rokov a začať hneď v roku 1909. Pôvodný plán zahŕňal aj výstavbu škôl a navrhovaný rozpočet bol 95 miliónov korún, avšak výstavba, ktorá sa naozaj zrealizovala, bola zredukovanou verziou plánov.

Stavali sa dva typy obydli. Na jednej strane to boli relatívne centrálné umiestnené troj- a štvorpodlažné budovy s jedno-, dvoj-, troj- a štvorizbovými bytmi. Tie mali aj predizbu alebo predsieň, ako aj kuchyňu, komoru a toaletu. Trojizbové a štvorizbové byty mali aj izbu pre služobníctvo a kúpeľňu. Tento typ bol určený pre vyššie postavených mestských úradníkov.

Na druhej strane sa budovali malé byty usporiadané do sídlisk a práve tomuto druhému typu sa tu venujeme. Tieto sídliská sa nachádzali na pozemkoch ďalej od centra a pozostávali z jednopodlažných alebo dvojpodlažných budov. Vyžadovali si podstatne menšie kapitálové investície vďaka využitiu lacnejších pozemkov, ktoré mali ešte pomerne dobrý prístup k mestskej doprave. Nižšie investície znamenali nižšie nájomy, a tak boli tieto byty skutočne cenovo dostupné na bývanie aj pre tých, čo to najviac potrebovali.

Na týchto sídliskách sa nachádzali len jednoizbové byty s prístavanou kuchyňou a typické bolo aj to, že toalety boli umiestnené v skupinách (jedna na dva byty) v zadnej časti budov. Všetky tieto byty boli určené pre domácnosti s nízkym príjmom.

Z finančného hľadiska si projekt vyžadoval kapitálové investície, ktoré muselo zabezpečiť mesto (ktoré tak urobilo pomocou troch úverov), a štát mal poskytnúť daňové úľavy. Pri výpočte nájomného mesto zohľadňovalo účtovnú hodnotu pozemkov, keďže však tieto nebolo potrebné získavať, tento faktor nájomné nezvyšoval. Nízka hodnota pozemkov navyše nepodnecovala výstavbu budov všade, kde to len bolo možné, takže pomer zastavanej plochy bol 50 % a v niektorých prípadoch len 20 %. Táto situácia bola vítaná z hľadiska verejného zdravia a umožnila obyvateľom založiť si aj zeleninové záhradky. Takéto usporiadanie malo byť príkladom aj pre súkromných investorov.

Na koordináciu všetkých sociálnych aktivít hlavného mesta bol zriadený spočiatku tzv. Prezidiálny odbor mestskej správy (od roku 1912 Odbor č. 14). Toto oddelenie zamestnávalo správcov, dozorcov a ďalších zamestnancov, ktorí sídliská spravovali.

Nájomníci sa so svojimi problémami obracali najprv na dozorný orgán domu, následne na dozorný orgán kolónie.

Podľa nariadení z roku 1912 mali správcovia dohliadať na dozorcov sídliska, viesť administratívu o prenajatých bytoch vrátane nedoplatkov a uskutočnených platieb. Tieto sumy museli odvádzať do ústrednej pokladnice. Správcovia sa museli starať aj o záležitosti, ktoré presahovali možnosti dozorcov sídliska.

Medzi nájomníkmi sa uskutočnil rozsiahly zber údajov. Výsledky zaujímali na jednej strane tých, čo sa profesionálne zaoberali podobnými otázkami bývania, na druhej strane boli údaje potrebné na presvedčenie politikov a verejnej mienky o tom, že pokračovanie programu je možné. Mesto potrebovalo v súvislosti s programom výstavby dokázať dve veci. Po prvé, bola tu požiadavka hospodárnosti, t. j. preukázať, že daňoví poplatníci Budapešti neutrpeli žiadne straty. Inými slovami, čísla mali odrážať, že program nebol charitatívnym počínom. Očakávalo sa tiež, že takýto program by mohol byť príkladom pre tých, čo investujú do výstavby domov. Platilo by to, ak by výpočty ukázali, že chudobné rodiny sú ubytované najlepším možným spôsobom a že za bývanie vo verejne vlastnených bytoch platia najnižšiu

možnú, no stále trhovú cenu. V prípade bytových kolónií bol rozdiel ešte zjavnejší: v prípade jednoizbových bytov nájomné, ktoré žiadali úrady, predstavovalo sotva viac ako polovicu ceny, ktorú nájomcovia platili majiteľom súkromných domov. V prípade dvojizbových bytov bol tento podiel dvojtretinový.

Bárczyho stavebný program vo svetle podobných akčných programov v zahraničí

Literatúra o rozsiahлом stavebnom programe Budapešti nastoľuje otázku, prečo sa mestská samospráva vzhľadom na svoju históriu konzervatívnej politiky v oblasti sociálnej starostlivosti zrazu stala priekopníkom komunálneho bývania a predbehla viaceré iné mestá. Program malých bytov v Budapešti predchádzal programom, ktoré reagovali na podobné výzvy, hoci v ešte väčšom rozsahu, vo Viedni, Berlíne, Amsterdame, Rotterdame, Frankfurtu atď.

Odpoveď na túto otázku je zložitá. Na jednej strane došlo v Budapešti k rýchlemu demografickému rastu, na ktorý súkromné hospodárske subjekty neboli schopné reagovať, a preto si vyžadoval verejný zásah. Na druhej strane sa politické prekážky k intervencii zmenšili a niektorí členovia mestskej rady boli priamo alebo nepriamo konfrontovaní s nedostatkom bytov a jeho dôsledkami. Dôležité je, že si boli vedomí aj toho,

že Budapešť je v tomto smere v horšej situácii ako Viedeň. Zlomový moment nastal, keď do funkcie starostu nastúpil István Bárczy, ktorý citlivo vnímal ťažkosti, akým obyvatelia mesta čelili, a neoblomne hájil ich záujmy. Zaviedol nástroje komunálnej politiky, ktorými nielenže prevzal tie podniky, ktoré mali zabezpečovať verejné služby a boli v monopolnom postavení, ale využil príjmy z nich a úvery, ktoré vďaka tomu mohol získať, na verejné investície zlepšujúce podmienky veľkej časti obyvateľov mesta. Okrem bývania a škôl založil množstvo podnikov na zlepšenie zásobovania potravinami. Prekročil hranice, ktoré stanovili predchádzajúce administratívne postupy, a urobil z Budapešti poskytovateľa služieb. Mesto aj podnikalo, v roku 1911 založilo Mestskú továreň na spracovanie konského mäsa, Mestskú továreň na výrobu chleba a Mestský podnik na zásobovanie potravinami. Mnohé z nich nemali v Európe obdobu. Hlavným cieľom Bárczyho politiky však nebola intervencia. Skôr chcel ísť príkladom a dokázať, že je možné prevádzkovať vhodné byty s nízkym nájomným alebo vyrábať kvalitné potraviny za nízke ceny. Bárczy formoval svoju politiku ako reakciu na sociálne problémy a chcel tak riešiť vznikajúce sociálne napätie. Samozrejme, starosta nebol osamelým aktérom. Jeho zamestnanci boli starostlivo vyberaní a dokázali sa postaviť proti obchádzaniu administratívnych nariadení.

In the second half of the 19th century, Budapest witnessed a significant jump in economic output and population due to rapid industrialization.¹ The demographic growth was mostly the result of extensive migration from rural settlements, moving to the city in hope of better life. This boom formed a serious challenge for those branches of the economy that wished to supply the consumers in Budapest. Apart from problems with the availability of foodstuffs, housing was also among the crucial markets where contemporaries experienced price hikes. Contemporary opinion also believed² that the level of housing and nutrition was below that of Vienna. Indeed, quantifiable assessments show that, for the population at large, the living standards were indeed higher in Vienna than in Budapest.³

The phenomena known in this era as “usury rent” triggered resentment among the people in Budapest in the end of the 1900s. Protests against high rent ranged from rent boycotts to



HOUSING RENT-STRIKE

ŠTRAJK PROTI VYSOKÝM NÁJOMOM

Source Zdroj: BTM Kiscelli Museum collection – János Müller



DISTRICT X, WEKERLE-ESTATE

X. OBVOD, WEKERLEHO KOLÓNIA

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet, (6), 1910

demonstrations, sometimes going as far as occupying and even demolishing buildings⁴. Eventually, this wave of protests pushed the municipal leadership to launch active policies in the field of economic and social life.⁵ In fact, while officeholders still had misgivings about active involvement in the economy, they gradually began to endorse the idea that social care could go hand in hand with intervention.⁶ As such, movements protesting high rent immediately brought about the housing project presented here, moreover on a scale highly unusual in the period. While the focus of the present contribution addresses the nearly 6000 flats that the municipality of Budapest constructed⁷, there was also the “Wekerle-estate” (Wekerletelep),⁸ an undertaking of the national government providing 3657 flats.⁹ Gábor Gyáni, the historian who was a pioneer researcher of the subject of this study, estimated that by the mid-1910s, at least 10% of the workers in Budapest lived in public tenement constructed within the framework of the project.¹⁰

The Construction Project

Initially, at the time when preparations began in 1907, the capital city’s Department of Civil Engineering believed the project would consist of separate houses for each family, an aim fully in alignment with the idea of the Garden City then popular in England. However, it soon became obvious that such a design would occupy too much land and require the wasteful multiplication of public utilities. Thus, the new concept preferred tenement houses consisting of one- two, and three-bedroom flats, as well as estates made up of small flats grouped together. In March 1909, Mayor István Bárczy presented an ambitious plan and preliminary layouts for improving the housing conditions of the city that would be part of the 297-million crown development package. The duration of the construction would last 5 years and start immediately in 1909.¹¹ The initial plan also included the construction of school buildings with a proposed budget of 95 million crowns¹². However, the constructions that actually took place were a reduced version of the plans.¹³

Two types of dwellings were realized. The first typology involved relatively centrally located three- and four-storey tenement buildings with flats of one, two, three and four bedrooms. These also included a vestibule or small hall, as well as a kitchen, a larder, and a toilet. Flats of three and four bedrooms, as the model intended for higher-ranking municipal officials, also had a servants’ room and a bathroom.¹⁴

As for the second typology, it consisted of an estate-like arrangement of buildings with small flats, this latter type being the one discussed here in detail. These complexes were located on plots further from the centre and made up of single-floor or two-storied buildings. Due to the cheaper land, yet still with reasonably good access to public transport, such projects required significantly less capital investment. Lower investment, in turn, meant a reduced level of rent and, thus rendered these flats genuinely available for those most in need. Moreover, the municipality of Budapest made use of plots that it had already owned, for which their value would grow as the result of

SMALL FLATS IN TELEPY STREET (DISTRICT IX)

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI TELEPY
(IX. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: BTM Kiscelli Museum
collection (János Simonffy, 1964)



development. This was one of the considerations behind designing some of the buildings using a structure and technology that allowed for these estates to be moved to a new location if the city decided to use the land for other purposes in a few decades time.¹⁵

During the later stages of the programme, more solid building materials and structures became prevalent, even though these buildings were only designed to stand for thirty years. In reality, most of them still stood in the 1970s, and a part of the estate on Ciprus Street remained inhabited until 1995. In these estates, we only find one-room flats with an added kitchen; typically, the toilets were jointly shared (one per two flats) at the rear of the buildings.¹⁶ All of these flats were meant for low-income households.

The Stages of Realizing the Plan

Financially, the project required capital investment that the city needed to secure (and did so taking three loans)¹⁷, while the state was to provide tax concession. Paragraph 12 of the legislative act of the Hungarian Parliament about the development of Budapest (Law no. XLVIII of 1908) granted the latter on the condition that rent would not exceed the cost of construction and maintenance.¹⁸ While calculating the rent, the city considered the book value of the plots, yet since these did not need to be purchased, this element did not contribute to any increase in the rent. Moreover, the low value of the plots did not encourage high-density construction to exploit the land value to the fullest, so that the ratio of built area was 50 per cent and in some cases as low as 20 per cent. A welcome situation from the point of view of public health, it also allowed residents to establish kitchen gardens, an arrangement intended to serve as an example for the private developers, too.¹⁹

Designing the Program and Managing the Construction

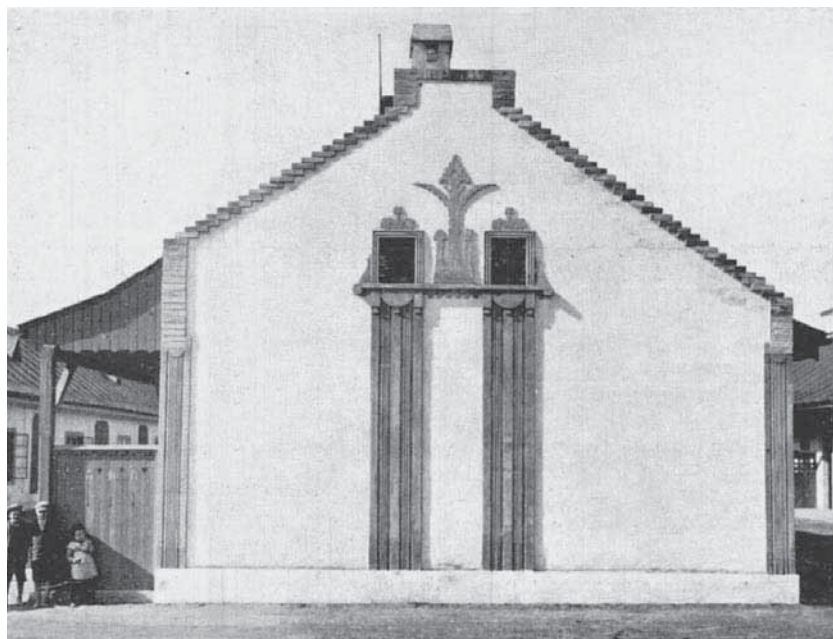
It was the task of the Presidential Department within the municipal government to plan the action programme. The head of this operation was Gyula Kabdebó, a civil engineer. The detailed layouts were mostly the work of private civil engineers.²⁰ The process of construction was divided into a number of tasks and, depending on the estimated costs, the authorities organized open or invitation-based tenders. Once they selected the contractor, the Office of Civil Engineering took over the supervision of the construction.

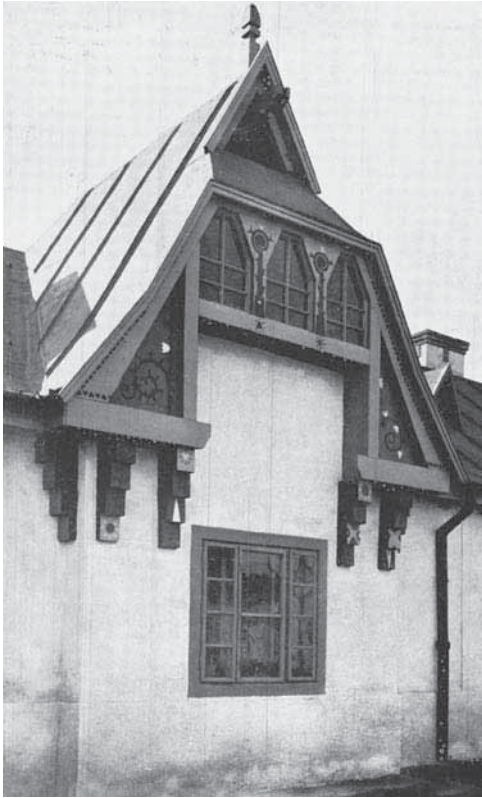
While selecting the contractors, the declared policy of the city was to give preference to small-scale artisans, this being the reason why the authorities broke down the construction process into relatively limited tasks. However, if we look at the course of the construction, it appears that prominent firms with established links to the City Hall tended to win the bids and sometimes there was no competitive tender at all.²¹

SMALL FLATS IN SZÁZADOS STREET (DISTRICT VIII)

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI SZÁZADOS
(VIII. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
5(10), 1910

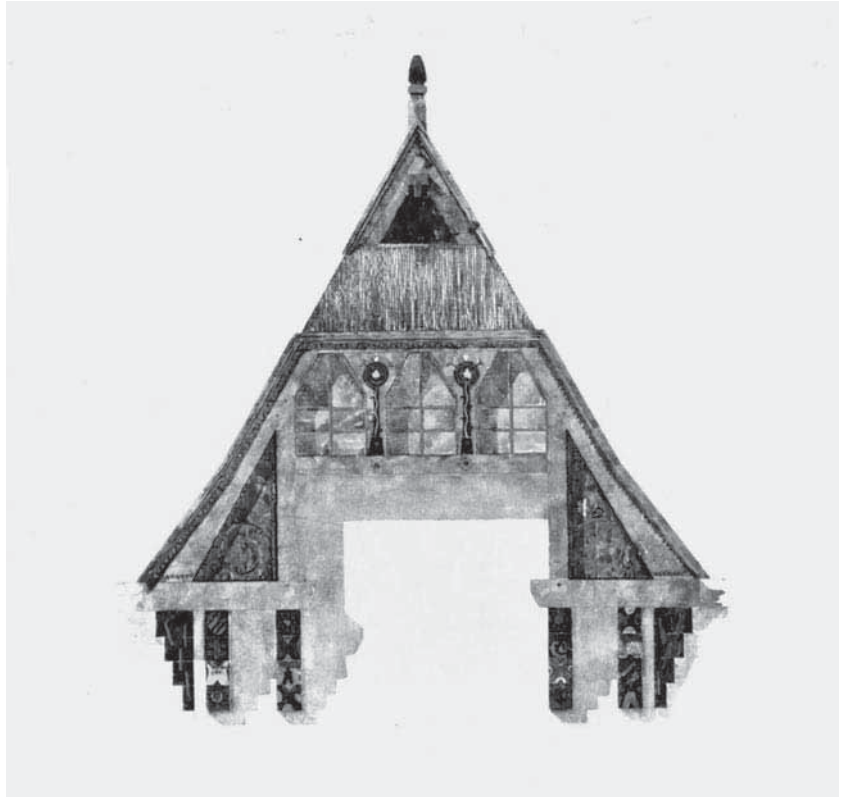




**SMALL FLATS IN SZÁZADOS STREET
(DISTRICT VIII)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI SZÁZADOS
(VIII. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
5(10), 1910



**SMALL FLATS IN SZÁZADOS STREET
(DISTRICT VIII)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI SZÁZADOS
(VIII. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
5(10), 1910

In the first phase, the city published a tender for constructing houses on two sets of plots. Soon thereafter, the works on the so-called “Tattersall” area near the horse track and the Mihalkovits Street estate were also underway. In that phase, 483 one-bedroom flats with kitchen were to be constructed. The contractors that eventually won the tender had to be among the six lowest bidders. In fact, those selected for the first phase kept winning the later bids, too. During the first phase, each contractor was to complete 32 flats, or in other words eight barracks. In the second phase of the action programme, the plans assumed the construction of 1000 flats within single-storied barracks. Apart from the ones consisting of emergency housing, estates also appeared on the Budafoki Road, Bécsi Road (in Buda) and Százados Road, Kőbányai Road as well as at the quay of Újpest. Moreover, a 28-flat estate (one- two and three-bedroom types) for artists also appeared on Százados Road.²² The third phase consisted of the construction of three larger estates made up of multi-storied buildings. Apart from these, there were minor works and the so-called workshop tenement building serving artisans on Villám Street.²³

Facilities and Outbuildings of the Estates

While realizing the plans, authorities needed to consider the hygienic conditions as well as the growing number of children and the resulting increase in demand for schools and kindergartens.

Throughout much of the 19th century, the municipal administration felt that issues of public health were among its key tasks.²⁴ Hence, the contractors were required to build a certain number of laundry rooms, since without them families would have washed and dried clothes in the rooms, a significant health hazard in such small flats. Laundry rooms were either attached to the houses or built separately as pavilions. These facilities had box mangles in them to help pressing and smoothing clothes.²⁵



**SMALL FLATS IN SZÁZADOS STREET
(DISTRICT VIII)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI SZÁZADOS
(VIII. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
(10), 1910



**SMALL FLATS IN SZÁZADOS STREET
(DISTRICT VIII)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI SZÁZADOS
(VIII. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
(10), 1910

Equipping the estates with bathing facilities was an important milestone on the road to encouraging tenants to adapt a hygienic lifestyle and a feature that distinguished the newer estates from the earlier emergency housing projects.²⁶ Five of the estates had bathing pavilions consisting of a bath, a shower, a pedicure spa, and a medical surgery. Moreover, the same building hosted a library, a caretaker's room and even an office providing legal advice.²⁷

According to the rules and regulations of the Estate on Vágóhíd Road, the bath was available from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. (on Sundays only until 5 p.m.). The bath supervisor allocated exact time slots at least a week before the planned bath. People with infectious diseases and their relatives could not enter, as well as those who had engaged in indecent behaviour earlier. After taking a bath, the bather was obligated to clean the tub with alkaline water and wipe it with a dry cloth or pay the bath supervisor to do this job for 30 fillérs. For those who cleaned the tub themselves, the supervisor would then check if the cleaning was done properly. Although the use of the bath facilities was free of charge, tenants needed to bring their own fuel for heating the water.²⁸ Another estate, the one on Palotai Road, charged 40 fillérs for a family (only one adult and three children younger than 12 years old) to take a bath, with the bathing time limited to 40 minutes. Showering was significantly shorter and cheaper, priced at 10 fillérs and limited to 20 minutes. Bath-goers had the possibility to rent a towel for 6 and a larger sheet for 16 fillérs and might receive a bar of soap for another 2 fillérs.²⁹ While this large estate could boast the presence of a separate building for social care besides the bath, many such estates were notably weak in their utility infrastructure. Most

**SMALL FLATS IN ARÉNA STREET
(DISTRICT XIII)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI ARÉNA
(XIII. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: BTM Kiscelli Museum
collection (Mór Erdélyi)



of them had gas lighting installed but some still only had petroleum lamps;³⁰ electricity became accessible only in the 1920s.

Among elements of cultural policy, the establishments of schools and kindergartens were the most important and urgent. Although Mayor Bárczy also launched a school development programme,³¹ the housing estates often had tenants in residence well before the school buildings were completed in their neighbourhood. Thus, teaching mostly began in temporary barracks, which were used for other purposes (e.g., as orphanages) once the school building had been completed.

Managing the Small Flats

Initially, the Presidential Department of the municipal administration, then after 1912, Department 14, established for coordinating all the social activities of the capital city, managed the small flats while further planning and construction was the competence of Department 13 (Construction). In the capital, it was the task of Department 14 to propose new sites for future construction work, the types of flats to be built and setting the rate of rent in the already completed estates based on ensuing changes of housing conditions. Additionally, Department 14 was the employer of the caretakers, estate inspectors and other staff to manage the estates.

If they had an issue, tenants first approached the inspector of the house, then the inspector of the estate. Inspectors reported to the caretaker and to the specific department (at first to the Presidential Department, then to Department 14.). They were entitled to in-kind benefits in return for their services (a one-room or two-room flat depending on the size of the family) and also received money from the tenants (2% of the rent). In addition, they also received the so-called inspector's fee.³² One estate supervisor had to deal with a maximum of 150 flats.³³

Inspectors of estates were responsible for ensuring that the rules of the estate were kept. Accordingly, they investigated into suspected unauthorized sublets and domestic animals. They also informed the Council if a flat became vacant, informed the caretaker about technical issues, supervised auxiliary staff, such as the vice-housekeepers responsible for cleaning. They were the ones that found places for new tenants and, chief among the estate inspectors' duties, were obligated to collect the rent. Estate inspectors had to represent the interests of tenants in the City Council.

According to the terms of the rules of 1912, caretakers had to supervise the estate inspectors, keep a register of the flats rented, including arrears and payments made, and then to transfer these sums of money to the Central Treasury. Caretakers also had to take care of issues that went beyond the capacity of estate inspectors: submitting requests for restoration works, directing small-scale repairs, and informing the Council about public health and public order issues in the estate. The caretakers maintained the inventory of the buildings and kept contact with Auditors or launched legal procedures if a case of unauthorized sub-letting came to light. The City Council requested their formal opinion about applications for swapping flats, and examples have been preserved of

their proposing that a certain flat should be rented out to a particular person. Ideally, each estate had their own officers who were employees of the municipality of the capital³⁴ and received 1% of the yearly amount of rent, thus cc. 400 – 1000 crowns.³⁵

The Issue of Rent

A large-scale effort was made to collect data from and about the tenants. On the one hand, the results were of interest for those professionally involved with similar housing problems. On the other hand, the data was indispensable for convincing politicians and the public opinion about the feasibility of continuing the housing development programme. It was one of the members of the Department of Social Policy, Imre Ferenczi, who arranged and processed the data and his work is of considerable empirical worth in drawing relevant conclusions. The municipality needed to prove two things regarding the construction programme. First was the requirement of economy, that is, to show that taxpayers of Budapest did not suffer any loss. In other words, the figures were expected to reflect that the programme was not a charity action. Second was the expectation that such a programme could set an example for those that invest into construction of houses. This would hold if the calculations showed that poor families were housed in the best possible way and that they paid as little as possible, but still a market price, while staying in publicly owned flats. Ferenczi juxtaposed the rent of the new flats and the rent paid in similar conditions in neighbourhoods close to the estates. It turned out that the rent for one- two-, three and four-room flats were 35%, 20%, 10% and 5% lower in tenement buildings of the project than in the control group.³⁶ In case of estates, the difference was even more spectacular: for one-room flats, rent demanded by the authorities was hardly more than half of the price people paid to owners of private houses, while the proportion was two-thirds for two-room flats.³⁷

For the purposes of pricing, the city administration set three categories for flats in the estates. Taking floor area in m² as the point of reference, those who lived in flats with an area of 34m² for 230 crowns were the best off. In these areas, the relatively low cost of construction was coupled with the low value of plots. Coming in second place the tenants of multi-storied buildings constructed in the last phase, who paid 180 crowns for flats of 25m². In these buildings, the value of investment was relatively high, while the land was cheap. The worst off were those who paid 200 crowns for 24 m². This relatively high rent was the result of constructing specific estates on relatively expensive plots with good public transport access. From reports about the first years



**SMALL FLATS IN CEGLÉDI STREET
(DISTRICT X)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI CEGLÉDI
(X. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: BTM Kiscelli
Museum's collection (Mór Erdélyi)

of operation, it also appeared that the budget of the city had something of a surplus, even if only because land that had been previously used in agriculture produced more money as a result of the programme.³⁸

Importantly, the law about tax exemption set the upper ceiling of rent. Since this act regulated prices for entire buildings and not individual flats, the city administration still had the possibility to apply preferential pricing for the tenants of smaller flats, thus putting a somewhat larger burden on the tenants of larger apartments, yet this room to manoeuvre was much narrower in estates that were made up of virtually identical apartments.

If a tenant did not pay the rent for an extended period, and the city administration could not collect it through other channels, the tenant was evicted.³⁹ From data on departures from the apartments, we find that administrative evictions made up only 7% of all the cases of departing tenants, and within this figure, only 1.5% occurred because of rent arrears. In the estates, the figures were worse than in tenement buildings: in the former we see that non-payment was the reason of 11% of evictions. Although tenant departures concerned 12% of all tenements, a figure that looks relatively high⁴⁰, we should consider that in this period a significant portion of the population (especially those renting cheap apartments) tried to keep their expenses low by agreeing on a lease every quarter of the year, a practice often resulting in frequent moves.

The Principles of Renting Apartments

The primary criterion for renting the apartments was the social policy objective. The city administration had its own ranking the groups of potential beneficiaries, in which families with many children were the most preferred group, since for them it was particularly hard to find an apartment to rent. The authorities assessed the material conditions of the potential tenants, including their ability to pay. Employees of the municipality also had an advantage. The administration preferred to create long-term tenancy for social groups able to pay regularly but were drifting towards the periphery of society, aiming to lend them a helping hand in securing their living conditions. A key factor the public health concerns present for decades among policy objectives in the form of efforts to curb overcrowding.⁴¹ It was for this latter concern that authorities put a limit on subletting, and especially letting beds, on the estates.⁴² Anti-overcrowding policies further assumed that families with more than one child should be placed in two-room flats. However, at this point there was a tension between the objectives of social policy and economic feasibility since families with

SMALL FLATS IN JANICSÁR STREET (DISTRICT XIII)

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI JANICSÁR
(XIII. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: BTM Kiscelli
Museum's collection (Erdélyi Mór)



many children were the poorest and could not afford renting apartments of a higher rent category. The administration addressed this paradox by designing the one-room flats with relatively large floor areas and high ceilings that would increase the cubic volume of air per person.

If someone wished to become a tenant in such an apartment, it was necessary to apply to the city administration stating and detailing where they would like to rent, specifying the type of apartment and the reasons for choosing it, how much they had paid at their previous place, as well as declaring if they had sub-tenants and if they suffered from any infectious disease.⁴³ Successful applicants signed a contract for the rental, at which time those who paid weekly had to deposit an entire week's rent, while in case of monthly or quarterly collection this sum was 20% of the full amount.⁴⁴

New tenants received an information booklet about the purposeful use of facilities, which also contained information about hygienic practices that tenants of private buildings could also apply. In total, the city had 25 000 copies printed and distributed in private tenement houses free of charge.⁴⁵

When the city administration assessed the programme, it also gathered data on the condition of tenants, the composition of families, occupational patterns etc. Based on this data, 44% of the inhabitants on the estates were children under 14 years old. 75% of the family heads were employed as auxiliary staff. As a result of the policy of preferring employees in public administration, 39% of them worked in industry and the rest in public service (the ratio between employees of the city and the state skewed 2:1 for the former, with state employees employed either as postmen or policemen).⁴⁶

Quality of Life in the Apartments

The city administration placed much emphasis on inspecting the public health situation on the estates, a task primarily assigned to the caretaker. The records reveal that problems in this area were the cause for most administrative evictions of tenants. For example, garbage was a recurring issue. In this period, the city already managed waste management directly through its disposal company.⁴⁷ Waste collection containers were installed at various points of the estate depending on the number of inhabitants, but at times tenants had to place their waste on the waste collecting vehicle. In the latter case, the garbage had to be kept inside the house until the time of collections, which occurred two times a week.⁴⁸ This practice made the estate near the Újpest embankment unhappy and they simply threw the garbage on the streets.⁴⁹ In other locations, it was the activity of domestic animal slaughtering that caused uproar as "in warmer periods of the year, the estate became a pond of stench and flies."⁵⁰ Authorities intervened out of fear from cholera, and banned butchery at the estates, even including the smoking and frying of meat.

Park-like gardens played an important role in both the social life and the hygienic conditions of estates. The administration tried to encourage inhabitants to beautify their gardens by organizing floral competitions. The municipality itself also placed emphasis on the environment as each estate had its individual gardening plan, with a private contractor responsible for the long-term

SMALL FLATS IN KŐBÁNYAI STREET (DISTRICT X)

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI KŐBÁNYAI
(X. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
5(10), 1910





**SMALL FLATS IN KŐBÁNYAI STREET
(DISTRICT X)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI KŐBÁNYAI
(X. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
5(10), 1910



**SMALL FLATS IN KŐBÁNYAI STREET
(DISTRICT X)**

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI KŐBÁNYAI
(X. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
5(10), 1910

care of the parks created. As a result of public health measures, mortality among inhabitants of the estates was better than the average in Budapest: 15.9 per thousand versus 18.5 per thousand.⁵¹

Bárczy's Construction Programme in the Light of Similar Action Programmes Abroad

Literature about the large-scale construction programme has posed the question of why the city administration suddenly became a forerunner of community housing, overtaking a number of other cities that had undergone long-term development of social policies⁵², particularly given its own history of conservative policies in social care policies⁵³. The small-flat programme in Budapest preceded the ones responding to similar challenges, albeit on an even larger scale⁵⁴, in Vienna, Berlin, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Frankfurt etc.⁵⁵

The answer to this question is a complex one. On the one hand, there was the rapid demographic growth in Budapest to which the private economy was unable to respond and required public intervention. On the other hand, political barriers to intervention diminished and some of the members of the City Council directly or indirectly encountered the lack of housing and its outcomes. Importantly, some members were also aware that Budapest was in a worse situation than Vienna in this regard.⁵⁶ The moment of change arrived with István Bárczy as assuming the office of mayor. Sensitive to the hardships that the inhabitants of the city had to face, he forcefully represented their interests, developing his political programme in an environment in which the state itself also began to respond to the idea and practice of improving the social condition of workers. Though on the national level, Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle initiated a program for housing that produced notable results, it was Bárczy introduced communal policies that reached beyond mere takeovers of companies in a monopolistic position that were to provide public utilities⁵⁷: the municipality utilized the income from these and the loans that became available to it for public investments that improved the conditions of large sections of the urban society. Besides housing and schools, Bárczy founded several bodies to improve food provision. He crossed boundaries that earlier administrative practices had set, turning Budapest into a service provider. The city became an actor in the real-estate market when it built apartments, or when it founded the Municipal Horsemeat Processing Factory,⁵⁸ the Municipal Bread Works and the Municipal Food Provision Company in 1911, many of which had no parallel in Europe at the time.⁵⁹ However, the main goal of Bárczy's policies was not state intervention. Instead, he wished to set an example and prove to the private sector that it was possible to provide appropriate apartments at low levels of rent or produce quality food at a low price. Bárczy wished to address the emerging social tension as he formed his policies from the perspective of social issues.⁶⁰ Of course, the mayor was not a lone actor: his staff was select group, able to oppose or circumvent the bureaucratic rules.

Epilogue

In the interwar period, the housing programme continued albeit within a different framework and with new goals. In the years immediately following the war, the main challenge was to settle refugees from formerly Hungarian territories coming to the capital. Responding to this need, the state turned hospitals into emergency housing estates (thus constructing about 4500 flats), moreover, it undertook the construction of some new tenement buildings consisting of 400 flats in total. Due to the scarcity of financial resources, the capital could only launch a housing project when domestic banks financed the construction of 3000 small-scale flats in tenement buildings in the second half of the 1920s. The second half of the 1930s brought about a new turn, when the national government transferred its own housing estates to the city of Budapest, which had already completed 1000 emergency housing units by then. Moreover, the municipal authorities also aimed at realizing settlements consisting of family homes with garden plots attached near the administrative boundaries of the city, a programme forming part of what was termed “productive” social policy promoting work-based entitlements and Christian ethics. The last tenement housing programme launched by the capital commenced just before World War II, creating 1200 emergency flats located in four different multi-story buildings. Apart from these realisations, the municipal authorities also had 1800 low-quality one- and two-room flats constructed. Among the housing projects of the capital during World War II, we shall also list that 1700 one-story buildings were to replace the barrack estates that the state built in the early 1920s.⁶¹

Although cultural aspects of social policy aimed at uplifting the needy were integral part of the programmes of the Bárczy era, these were omitted from the housing programmes in the interwar period, as financial assets were in increasingly short supply. In this latter period, the housing projects realised in Budapest were considerably inferior to the European examples both in quality and scope.

1 In 1810 (well before the unification of the capital), the number of inhabitants in Pest-Buda was 60,259 (index 100), in 1830, 103,702 (170), in 1851, 178,062 (295), 280,349 (465), in 1880, 370,767 (615), in 1890, 506,384 (840), in 1900, 733,358 (1217), and in 1910, 880,371 (1460). I. ILYEFALVI I., Lajos. 1925. *Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Évkönyve*. Budapest: Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Hivatala, p. 33.

2 NEMÉNYI, Ambrus. 1883. *Jelentés a budapesti lakásügy tárgyában*. Budapest, p. 19.

3 KATUS, László. 2009. *A modern Magyarország születése*. Pécs: PTE, p. 465; UMBRAI, Laura. 2022. *Miért lett lómészáros a főváros? Századok*, 156(4), pp. 739 – 762; UMBRAI, Laura. 2008. *A szociális kislakás-építés története Budapesten 1870 – 1948*. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, pp. 27 – 28; SIPOS, András. 1996. *Várospolitikai és városigazgatás Budapesten 1890 – 1914*. Budapest: BFL, p. 220.

4 MOLNÁR, Ferenc. 1909. *Forradalom a kültelkeken. Pesti Napló*, (44), pp. 1 – 2; GYÁNI, Gábor. 1992. *Bétkaszárnya és nyomortelep*. Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, pp. 90 – 93.

5 Sipos, A., 1996, pp. 5 – 11.

6 Earlier, the municipality only constructed temporary housing for emergency situations, primarily built with the intention of slowing the spread of cholera. From the 1880s, permanent buildings began to replace the temporary wooden barracks and provided a precedent for subsequent

construction projects. Umbrai, L., 2008, pp. 73 – 146.

7 Eventually, there were 2103 1–4–room apartments constructed in tenement buildings, while in housing estates, 3563 one-room and 99 2 – 3-room apartments were realized. Umbrai, L., 2008, pp. 336 – 349.

8 GYULA, László. 1926. *Wekerle Állami Munkástelep monográfiája*. Budapest: A „Hangya” Házinyomdája, KÖRNER, Zsuzsa. 2004. *A telepszerű lakásépítés története Magyarországon 1850 – 1945*. Budapest: Terc, pp. 64 – 68.

9 The Act no. XXIX of 1909 ordered the construction of 10000 apartments in Budapest by the state. However, the construction in Óhegy of Kőbánya was cancelled due to the high prices of plots.

10 Gyáni, G., 1992, p. 55.

11 BÁRCZY, István. 1909. *Előterjesztés a fővárosi lakásviszonyok javítása tárgyában*. Budapest: Székesfőváros Házinyomdája, pp. 1 – 82.

12 Az eredeti tervek a következő egységek megvalósítását tűzték ki célul: 3 emergency barracks (60 inhabitants), 3 barrack settlements for seasonal workers (400 flats), 5 public hostels and 2 public home (2200 cabinets), flats for better paid workers (3000), flats for employees of the capital city (1600), apartments sold on the market (500), schools and kindergartens (90 buildings). Bárczy, I., 1909, pp. 83 – 84.

13 For example, the plan to construct tenement houses for municipal employees was cancelled on the ground that, from the point of view of social policy, it would be unfortunate to have officials of various ranks in a single block of tenement houses. Yet some of these apartment blocks were eventually built. Houses intended for eventual market sale were not built. Special boarding houses were intended to reduce the number of those who rented beds, though only two of these were realized. Umbrai, L., 2008, pp. 115 – 116.

14 The height of rooms in the three- and four-storey buildings was set at 3.2 meters and each building was designed to have shops, cellars, store-rooms and workshops.

15 By that time, some companies in Hungary, such Danubius, Walla, Árkay, Popper, Válaszfal építő rt., were also able to produce such structures. Earlier, the British Humphreys and the German Döcker companies were known for similar buildings. Budapest already had experience with these types from barrack hospitals and barrack schools constructed. However, since the cost of setting up portable estates was higher, this technology was only used in the first phase.

16 Az elnöki ügyosztály előterjesztése a népszállók, népotthonok és 7 csoport kislakás építése iránt, 1909, Budapest, pp. 1 – 9, 16.

17 The conditions of these loans were favourable. The 2 million Pound Sterling facility that Budapest took in 1910

was at 4%, and this was the interest on the 105 million French franc loan in 1911, too. Finally, the 134.3 million Reichsmark loan facility was priced at 4.5%. ERDEI, Gyöngyi. 1991. *Fejezetek a Bárczy-korszak történetéből*. Budapest: Fővárosi Önkormányzat – Budapest Főváros Levéltára – Budapest Történeti Múzeum – Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár, pp. 12 – 13.

18 BASCH, Imre. 1914. *A fővárosi lakásügyi akciójának eredményeiről. Városi Szemle*, 7, pp. 12 – 13.

19 Imre Ferenczi prepared a concept of rented family gardens in 1912 based on British, German, and French examples. The purpose of these was to reduce the amount that families spent on groceries. The plan materialized in 1915. FERENCZI, Imre. 1912. *Családi kertbérletek ügye. Fővárosi Közlöny*, (76), pp. 3471 – 3481, 3478.

20 Members of the Civil Engineering Office of the city made the designs for the estates, while the tenement buildings were designed by private architects. This was partly because of the workload that the office would have been unable to cope with, and partly to have buildings that the programme can be proud of and this required high quality work.

21 *Hogyan épít a főváros? Építőmunkás*, 6(23 September 1909)1.

22 *A Százados úti műtermes házak vállalatba adása*, BFL IV. 1407/b. 26954/1911-Eln, Budapest City Archives

SMALL FLATS IN KŐBÁNYAI STREET (DISTRICT X)

MALÉ BYTY NA ULICI KŐBÁNYAI
(X. OBVOD)

Source Zdroj: Magyar Építőművészet,
5(10), 1910



23 Villám utcai műtermes ház építése 1912., (BFL) IV. 1407/b. 42226/1920-XIV. Budapest City Archives.

24 In these years, Budapest was one of the most miserable among European cities in terms of crowding and tuberculosis. UMBRAI, Laura. 2009. A budapesti zsúfolt lakások, Sic Itur ad Astra, 60, 137 – 148, 139 – 141.

25 For example, the estate on Ernő Street there were 16 laundry pavilions, 2 rooms for pressing and smoothing, and 2 bathrooms. These served 347 families from three nearby estates (Mihálkovits Street, Telepy Street and Haller Street) as well, who took turns. BFL IV. 1407/b.81084/1914-XIII., u.o. 33269/1914-XIII.

26 Earlier, inhabitants used wells and public baths.

27 The water block of the community building on Százados Road included 9 bathtubs and a shower room as well as a changing room and clothes storage facility. According to specifications, the heaters had to produce 50 litres of 40 Celsius warm water per minute.

28 A Vágóhíd úti szükségtelep fűrdőszabályzata, BFL IV. 1407/b.3337/1913-XIV.

29 At the end of the 1910s, daily turnout was 57 persons per day at a bathhouse built to serve 4000 people. A Palotai úti népfürdő bővítése, BFL IV. 1407/b. 22643/1919-XIV.

30 Such as the estates at Tattersall, Váci, Aréna and Ciprus Street.

31 Most schools were still built as host institutions with educational functions. Erdei, G., 1991, pp. 62 – 73.

32 Miniszterelnöki rendelet a települégyelölő díj beszüntetéséről, 4288/1919 M.E. 19.§. BFL IV. 1407/b. 101016/1919-XIV. Those inspectors that oversaw less than 50 flats only received the right to stay in one of these apartments as an in-kind benefit. Those with 51-100 apartments under their supervision received 3% of the yearly rent collected, from which the Council then deducted the cost of their rent. Inspectors working on more than 101 apartments received 3,5% of the yearly

rent collected but were also subject to the same deduction.

33 FERENCZI, Imre. 1913. *A lakásügy állása és haladása Magyarországon az utolsó három évben.* Budapest: Budapest Székesfőváros, p. 81.

34 Their ranks included financial controllers of the municipality as well as penners, notaries and even a retired chief notary. Gondnokok listája, BFL. IV. 1409.c 140813/1942-IX.

35 Ferenczi, I., 1913, p. 81.

36 This was only an average figure but the table also showed data by construction sites. From these, it appears that works on the Buda side were considerably more expensive and the rent in the estates there was sometimes even higher than the market price in the neighbourhood, because these multi-storied buildings were constructed in areas that were underdeveloped and had only single-floor houses.

37 Ferenczi's statistics are a bit biased as sometimes they compare rent in estates with rent in tenement houses. For more details, see: Umbrai, L., 2008, p. 141.

38 *A tanács XIV. Ügyosztályának jelentése a kislakások bérházak, telepek és a Népszállóköltségeiről és jövedelmezőségéről, Budapest: Székesfőváros, 1913, p. 23.*

39 Official reports generally believed that poverty of tenants and large number of children were the causes of rent arrears.

40 Umbrai, L., 2008, p. 142.

41 GYÁNI, Gábor. 1999. *Az utca és a szalon.* Budapest: Új Mandátum, pp.183 – 185; Umbrai, L., 2009, pp. 139 – 141.

42 From Ferenczi's data collection, we learn that there were 88 sublets in the estates (72% of these in single-room flats) through which families could cover two-thirds of the rent. In private tenement houses, there were proportionally far more sublets. Ferenczi, I., 1913, Táblázatok 6. For more details, see: Umbrai, L., 2008, p. 142.

43 Ferenczi, I., 1910, p. 397.

44 Kislakások házirendje 1912. BFL IV. 1407/b. 99211/1917-XIV.

45 FERENCZI, Imre. 1911. Tanácsadó a lakások helyes használatáról. *Városi Szemle*, 4, pp. 389 – 391.

46 Ferenczi, I., 1910, p. 396.

47 For more details, see: UMBRAI, Laura. 2014. *Így szemeteltek Budapesten. A hulladékgazdálkodás múltja a fővárosban.* Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 244 p.

48 A székesfővárosi fuvartelep levele a tanácshoz, BFL IV. 1407/b. 93759/1910 Eln.

49 The municipality had the garbage removed daily in other parts of the capital. Dissatisfaction probably had its roots in this circumstance.

50 Jelentés a Gubacsi úti pocsolya állapotáról BFL IV. 1407/b. 32825/1914. XIV.

51 This ratio was 5.2 per thousand in tenement houses of Budapest.

52 MELINZ, Gerhald and ZIMMERMANN, Susan. 1994. A szegényügy „szerves” fejlődése vagy radikális szociális reform? Kommunális közjótékonyág Budapest és Bécsben (1873-1914). *Aetas*, 9(3), p. 44.

53 HORVÁTH, J. András. 2010. A megigényelt világváros. Budapest hatósága és lakossága a városegysítés éveiben. Budapest, pp. 375 – 383; UMBRAI, Laura. 2018. A budapesti hatósági népkonyhák története az 1860-as évektől az első világháborúig. *FONS*, (3), pp. 305 – 345.

54 Due to the very different political and economic environment, it would not be fair to compare the quality and quantity of construction in Budapest between 1909 – 1913 to later foreign examples, but such comparison is justified when criticizing the construction taking place between 1926-29 in the Hungarian capital. Umbrai, L., 2008, pp. 221 – 241.

55 For more on this topic, see: KERÉKGYÁRTÓ, Béla. 2014. Modern lakás – modern életforma. A lakás

normatív modelljeinek változása 1890-1940 között a nemzetközi és a magyar építészetben. *Korall*, 58, p. 22; MORAVÁNSZKY, Ákos. 1998. *Versengő látomások.* Budapest: Vince Kiadó, pp. 270 – 271; PANEK, Sandy and STEIMETZ, Mark. Wien, *Der Architektur Führer*, Wien: Verlagshaus Braun, pp. 158 – 163; VERŐ-VALLÓ, Judit. 2021. *Garzonok, garzonlakások, garzonlakók. Új kislakások otthonok a két világháború közötti Budapesten.* PhD thesis. Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem, pp. 34 – 36.; DAUNTON, Martin. 1987 – 1988. A lakásviszonyok Nagy-Britanniában (1850 – 1939). *Történelmi Szemle*, 30(5), 351 – 365; DAUNTON, Martin, J. 1987 – 1988. Lakásviszonyok Nagy-Britannián 1850 – 1939. *Történelmi Szemle*, 3, pp. 351 – 365; RODGER, Richard. 1898. *Housing in Urban Britain 1780 – 1914.* London; POOLEY, Colin G. 1992. *Housing Strategies in Europe, 1880 – 1930.* London: Leicester University Press, pp. 331 – 332.; Umbrai, L., 2008, pp. 209 – 221.

56 Sipos, A., 2005, p. 220; Umbrai, L., 2008, pp. 72 – 73.

57 Ownership of a power station in 1914, acquisition of majority shares in one of the railway companies, taking over the gas factory in 1910 and waste management company in 1913. Sipos, A., 1996, pp. 163 – 181; Umbrai, L., 2014, pp. 104 – 153.

58 The Horsemeat Processing Factory was launched in 1905, prior to Bárczy's term, indicating that the possibility of public intervention in the market was already in the making in municipal politics.

59 Pooley, C. G., 1992, pp. 331 – 332.

60 SIPOS, András. 2005. Szociális középítkezések Budapesten a Bárczy-korszakban. In: Csendes, P. (ed.). *Bécs-Budapest. Műszaki haladás és városfejlesztés a 19. században.* Bécs-Budapest, p. 219; UMBRAI, Laura. 2017. Budapest: Mit evett Budapest? A főváros élelmiszerpolitikájának kialakulása és működése az első világháború éveiben. In: Egry, G. and Kaba, E. (eds.). *A fordulat éve? Tanulmányok a Nagy Háborúról.* Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, pp. 277 – 328.

61 For more on this topic, see: Umbrai, L., 2008, pp. 185 – 328.