

ABSTRACTS

Éva Bodovics: Sanitary Conditions and Public Health Affairs in Miskolc in the Late Nineteenth Century

It is hard to maintain sanitation standards in crowded conditions. On the one hand, it must be decided whether maintaining cleanliness is the authorities' or the inhabitants' responsibility, on the other hand, the minimum standards must be specified. Throughout history, cities were never exactly known for their cleanliness, quite the contrary: even well into the nineteenth century, people in bigger cities faced nightmare conditions.

The study examines municipal sanitation conditions in a mid-size town in Hungary in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. This period is relevant here for two reasons: on the one hand, this was a time of progress in medicine, as the miasma theory was superseded by the new understanding of bacterial approach. After this paradigm shift, public health was no longer fighting visible dangers and this discovery changed common perceptions of cleanliness and health. The scientific breakthrough brought about significant changes in municipal governance as well, primarily in water use and sanitary regulations enforced in urban spaces.

On the other hand, the period is significant also because a major flood in August 1878 revealed the poor public sanitation and health conditions plaguing Miskolc. Partly for reasons of flood protection, but even more so on account of the much needed protection of public health, the leadership of the town pledged to push for a complete overhaul of the drinking water and sewage system. The study describes the prevailing public health conditions in the town and explores how both the new discoveries in pathology and the natural disaster's role in unmasking the terrible sanitary conditions transformed the locals' perceptions about cleanliness. It also addresses the measures that fostered this change as well as the challenges that they faced.

Gábor Demeter – Ádám Magyarosi – Róbert Bagdi: Tuberculosis, Lice, and Night-Soil: Schoolchildren's Health, and Living Conditions in the Greater Debrecen Area during the Great Depression

What is the social historical relevance of a 1931 health survey targeting the "marginal social group" of children? This kind of data can prove to be a treasure trove if it goes beyond the simple record of the prevailing methods of

medical diagnosis and physical condition, and enables the researcher to compare health status with other variables, such as comparing social, religious, regional groups or their broader social and political background. To some extent, Debrecen clinician Ede Neuber's survey, undertaken between 1930 and 1937, makes this possible. Moreover, since he expanded the original "medical registry" of elementary school students to university students, and later to the children of the elite families of Hajdú County, comparative analysis is possible. The reason for the breadth of Neuber's data collection was that he specifically designed the survey to fight tuberculosis and syphilis, with the broader aim of optimising human resources.

This was the broadest, non-governmental initiative between the world wars, which eventually received governmental support as well. Data from altogether ten thousand elementary school students, three thousand university students, and 947 children from elite families was collected – unfortunately not in consistent detail. Neuber recorded with relative consistency the health status as well as data revealing social background (parent's occupation), personal hygiene (lice, fleas, unwashed body), living conditions (size of dwelling, number of beds, size of family, quality of water supply and sewage removal, material and dampness of flooring, number and size of windows, access to yard or garden). This allows the comparative analysis of various segments of Debrecen elementary students (two-years' cohort of 3500 students between 1930 and 1932) in relation with their living conditions, determined by the parents' social status, religion, occupation or the infrastructure of their residence (residential or school district).

Eszter Kaba: Sound Mind in Sound Body? Hygiene in Russian Captivity during the First World War

Hundreds of thousands Hungarian soldiers were taken as prisoners of war on the Russian front in the course of the First World War. They spent significantly more time in captivity than prisoners in French or Italian camps because in many cases their release, hampered both by the Russian civil war and the unconsolidated Russian-Hungarian diplomatic relations, did not take place until the mid-1920s. During the years spent in lagers of Siberia and Turkestan, the prisoners' priority was maintaining physical and mental health, since their physical condition was their only assurance that they would ever make it home to their loved ones. Maintaining health was dependent on the climate, as well as on the accommodation, clothing and nutrition provided for the prisoners – although none of the latter was readily available for them. Tens of thousands succumbed to various epidemics or to extreme weather conditions. The physical challenges were further aggravated by their uncertainty about the time of their release and

the prolonged period away from home which led to psychological illness and captivity neurosis.

Based on archival sources found in the Austrian State Archives (*Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*) in Vienna (*Kriegsgefangenen-Fürsorge* 1915–1921, *Rote-Kreuz Mission* 1917–1921), as well as prisoner of war memoirs, diaries and correspondence, the present study examines the soldiers' responses to the challenges of captivity, survival strategies of individuals and groups, and the support provided by international aid organisations.

Ilona Kappanyos: Enameled Bathtubs and Wooden Troughs: Infant Bathing Counselling in the Hungarian Child Care Literature of the Early Twentieth Century

Bathing and cleaning a baby is part of the daily routines of infant care. However, the precise method of bathing infants is far from self-explanatory: after questions of nutrition, bathing was the leading topic in the increasing number of infant care publications around the turn of the twentieth century. No longer treating them as intuitive routine activities, definitive prescriptions were drawn up, which considered bathing (and infant care in general) a skill that can be both learned and mismanaged. A prescriptive narrative emerged, whereby a well-intentioned but ignorant mother, untrained in the scientifically proven methods of bathing, could endanger not only the life of her own child, but the health of the entire nation.

The study of publications targeting parents – the *School for Mothers* pamphlets and textbooks for healthcare workers such as the *Guide for Mother- and Infant Healthcare Workers* – provides an insight into various discourses related to public health and parenting. The advice dispensed reveals the conflict between the popular tradition about the routine and details of bathing (at least of the first bath of a newborn) and the considerations of modern science and anti-septic medicine. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this, too, raised the question whose duty and competence infant care routines such as bathing were. Who had the right to prescribe and control these routines? Finally, what concerns and theories should inform basic infant hygiene guidance and what are the long-term public health and pedagogical aims that they were meant to serve.

Hajnalka Kovácsné Magyari: From Laundry Soap to the “Electric Orange”: Cosmetology and the Services of Professional Cosmetics in the 1950s and 1960s

Following the shortages and forced puritanism of the 1950s in Hungary when cosmetology was branded as “bourgeois passtime” and treated as a political question, visiting beauty parlours and using professional beauty services was becoming increasingly acceptable in the 1960s. State-ran and cooperative beauty outlets were mushrooming and their services were accessible for everyone. High-quality pre-war cosmetic services were simplified and standardised, the treatments and products used were showing the signs of socialist shortage economy, for which beauticians compensated either with their own creative solutions or resorting to the black market.

After 1956, cosmetic care was no longer a political issue: it came to be opposed by the more conservative layers of society, whose general hygiene was often as much behind the times as their mentality. In the early 1960s, presentation series organised on a national level enlisted trained beauticians to advise about cosmetics at home, but instead of dispensing beauty tips they concentrated more on reforming basic personal hygiene. Based on archival sources, council resolutions, contemporary press and photography, reference books and cosmetics publications, as well as interviews with women working in or using the services of the beauty industry at the time, the present study examines the journey from carbolic soap to trendy cosmetic treatments such as the popular “electric orange” of the socialist era. How did a luxury sector such as the beauty industry operate in shortage economy? What opportunities and limitations did beauty services have to deal with in this period?

Ágnes Németh: Canals of Health: The Dawn of Sewage System Reform in (Buda)Pest and the Role of Károly Beivinkler in the Early 1870s

The study explores environmental control in Budapest’s public health through the concepts of sewage system development from 1860 onwards. In this article, the author concentrates on the Hungarian adaptation and influence of the 1840s *Sanitary Movement* of England. Edwin Chadwick’s *Sanitary Idea* emphasized the importance of cleanliness of everyday living conditions, which was underpinned by the popular miasma theory of nineteenth-century science. This new approach, which had a major impact on the development of London’s water system, set two main goals for the engineers: securing the amount

of water necessary for maintaining sanitary lifestyles and the fast removal of miasma contamination from the system. Following London's example, the first wave of sewage system development was rolled out in Europe's largest cities from the 1860s onwards. In Budapest, the initiative was first tabled in 1869, and the works began in 1891. During these two decades the discourse about the water system was constantly on the agenda with minor stops and starts. Several substantial plans were proposed, which all agreed on the necessity of improvement, especially in light of the repeated cholera outbreaks, but adopted different perspectives which led to significant variations in the possible implementation.

On one hand, the study sets out to investigate how the sanitation movement and sewage development issues were presented for the contemporary public and in the press. How did it fulfil its information and opinion forming role and how did it affect the decision makers of the time? What kind of information was available for them about the Western European developments and how? On the other hand, related questions are also examined concerning the theories and approaches that influenced the development plans as well as the planning engineers' access to and potential understanding of these. Special attention is paid to Károly Beivinkler's 1872 sewage system plan and its background. The plan was never realised and is now largely forgotten but it was conceived in the spirit of the times, so the present study also queries whether its theoretical approach was one of the potential reasons for the proposal's failure to launch.

Gabriella Vámos: Health Education for Children and Young People from the 1960s to the 1980s

In the 1960s, social sciences and medicine were becoming increasingly important in health education research. Scholarly publications analysed the Hungarian population's general knowledge about health, as well as the motivating factors and dynamics of healthy lifestyles. The biomedical approach to health issues was gradually superseded by new perspectives considering social, economic, environmental, psychological, and pedagogical considerations. This meant that rather than simple dissemination of knowledge, they were raising awareness of the complex, habit forming effect of acquiring such knowledge. In the second half of the 1960s, analyses and surveys showed that the physical condition of the population was stagnating in spite of the accessible medical treatments, technical development, and state investment in public health. The main reason for this was found to be the people's lifestyle, and prevention was promoted in lifestyle programs, health competitions, television shows, clubs, as well as health weeks and health months. In 1977, in the framework of the Fifth Five-Year Plan, the

Health Information Center of the Ministry of Health developed a long-term strategy that set out to educate the population from an early age, in the thematic of personal hygiene, sport, and healthy nutrition. Based on medical research, contemporary media (especially the *Egészségnevelés* [Health Education] journal), textbooks, pedagogical guides, educational slide films and short films (for example, the adventures of the well-known acorn figures representing the Hungarian equivalent of the phrase “fit as a fiddle”), the present study explores the perceptions of the correlation between cleanliness, personal hygiene, and health in the 1960s and 1980s.