In a society different lifestyles develop and change in close relationship with existences, with modes of livelihood. The lower strata were and have been constituted by modes of livelihood that miss security; whereas the life of people above them is protected by some kind of socially accepted and particularly respected 'guarantees'. Ever since their birth, European societies have been characterized by the possibility of maintaining a lifestyle that is taken possession of by a large part of the people and their families at a given point of the world that is their own. This point with everything people could collect and their lifestyle may be bequeathed to the next generation. This security was and has been often endangered and even temporarily upset by some kind of violence.

Lifestyles, points that may be possessed and goods that may be accumulated are not at all equal, they are not distributed 'equitably', yet even the scantest one does contain elements of security. Sets of institutions have been built for mutually guaranteeing security; such as laws protecting ownership, the family and marriage, regulating specialized knowledge, the order of school education and so on.

These societies however, have produced almost at the moment of their birth a minority that has no assured livelihood\(^1\) because their lifestyle is not protected by institutions; they have no assets and acceptable specialized knowledge. The strata of the pauper of changing dimensions have been integrated by society and economy as uncertain existences, only loosely linked to a locality. They have their own separate history in the history of societies and economies; in addition to the accepted and approved forms of life their specific lifestyle has also evolved, following the changes in those of the society and economy above them.

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\(^1\) By the end of the Hungarian Middle Ages about 30 per cent of the rural population were villeins, paupers without any land. (Szabó, István: *A falurendszer kialakulása Magyarországon.* [The Evolution of the Village System in Hungary.] Budapest, Akadémia, 1966.)
The crowd of the destitute has been in constant change. In favorable periods some families may join those of safe existence, entire groups may create new, hitherto nonexistent forms of life, and vice versa: individuals or entire groups may lose their earlier stable position and slide down to a state lacking acceptance, to the lower strata.\(^2\)

The “culture of poverty” is a flexible adjustment to the living conditions. It consists of customs, contacts, tastes, attitudes and behavioral patterns by which people are able to support themselves and even to make their life tolerable, which offer chances for joy and even festivities. The poor of Budapest can hardly live differently under their present living conditions but to rely on the order of that tradition.

It is not good to “be at the bottom”. Those who are located upper brand the habits of the lower strata sinful. It is particularly true for the middle strata that are not very far from them. They do not want to get down to the bottom. They do not wish to be missed for members of the lower stratum, and they do not want people coming from poverty to occupy their status, to squeeze them out or to devaluate their social rank.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* described the poverty of the 19th-century English industrial workers as of enormous dimensions. The majority of workers living in cities had uncertain livelihood, their way of life was that of the poor and they constituted a crowd mostly migrating from the countryside. With the invention and introduction of the power loom the livelihood and way of life of rural weavers became nonexistent. Cotton industry was taken over by the unskilled poor, not having a livelihood. The larger the proportion of unskilled labour is in industry, the bigger is the lower stratum of the “poor” workers. Conditions similar to those of the nineteenth-century Britain emerged for the Hungarian industrial workers in the first decades of the 20th century.

The development of industry would temporarily push certain strata into an uncertain position, and some of them may never, whereas others may acquire new security, a new and stable way of life only after some time. This is what happened to our rural craftsmen too, who were not needed any longer. The rural blacksmiths were among them. And the same situation emerges whenever a colliery is closed down. At the same time industrial development creates new, hitherto nonexistent safe careers that would absorb ever newer groups of paupers who have only some uncertain livelihood.

When, for instance, the oil fields of Zala County were explored and the extraction began, several landless and unskilled poor gathered there from the territory of the County. No other labour was available for the company. Some of the labourers were trained, houses with gardens were built for them, and after some time the oil miners, who became permanent workers there, established an honoured, appreciated, if not envied way of life for themselves. Similar processes took place when collieries were opened up, or, when a new industrial city was born. On such occasions not only new opportunities of work, but also new and safe ways of life are created.

One should quote by way of example the heroes of László-Bencsik’s highly successful book (Történelem alulnézetben. [History from Bottom-view.] Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1974.), the Szegvári-brigade. An ever growing shortage of labour ready to do heavy manual work under difficult conditions forced the industries of the capital to grant jobs, labour organisation and security earlier “due” only to skilled workers, to transport workers if they wanted their products to be packed. This job was made a “skilled work”. It was not done legally, on paper, but in the unwritten order of customs.

\(^3\) “And I took a simpler view of our life, and perceived that an approach to the poor is not difficult to us through accidental causes, but that we deliberately arrange our lives in such a fashion so that this approach may be rendered difficult. Not only this; but, on taking a survey of our life, of the life of the wealthy, I saw that every thing which is considered desirable in that life consists in, or is inseparably bound up with, the idea of getting as far away from the poor as possible.

… Education consists of those forms and acquirements which are calculated to separate a man from his fellows. And its object is identical with that of cleanliness,—to seclude us from the herd of poor…” (*THE MOSCOW CENSUS—FROM “WHAT TO DO?”* by Count Lyof. N. Tolstoi. Translated from the Russian by Isabel F. Hapgood. This text was produced by David Price, from the 1887 Thomas Y. Crowell edition.)
existence of those in a medium position offers relative security. It is based on some small assets accumulated and bequeathed from generation to generation, on values of skills and prestige. Their way of life, customs and mentality are in the service of preserving this security and of enhancing those values. In difficult times it is not easy to maintain those values and lifestyle. Sometimes it is only customs of compulsory validity and traditional mentality that preserve and save the status of the family. (We could experience it after the “year of change”, when the new power divested crowds of people of their minor existence, and half of the country became uniformly poor. It was not only assets and ownership that were lost but also the value of specialized knowledge and “being generally respected”.)

Therefore the order of habits and values of the middle strata mean “proportion” itself to them, even though it is not always a pleasant one. The lifestyle of the different strata, built around different interests and opportunities, is usually in moral confrontation. Those above are inclined simply to assess and characterize the poor as if they lacked ‘virtues’, and as if their entire life, including the reason why they are poor, would be explained by these shortcomings.4

4 “Who guarantees that willingness to work shall suffice to obtain work, that uprightness, industry, thrift, and the rest of the virtues recommended by the bourgeoisie, are really his road to happiness? No one”. (The Condition of the Working Class in England. Panther Edition, 1969.)

These virtues were meaningless in the life of the proletarians of big British cities because their livelihood was insecure. People of uncertain livelihood have been repeatedly encouraged to become more upright, industrious, thrifty, and then they would find their happiness.

Social science has been engaged in the issue of “poverty” since the last century. It attempts to describe the regularities of the life of the poor, of the lower strata, and to explain the causes of poverty, to find a cure of that “social evil”.

It is particularly in the Anglo-Saxon countries where the governments try to eliminate poverty by significant investments through social policy, and to ensure subsistence for the “poor” set on the basis of careful calculations, whereas several social scientists, having seen that the specific way of life of the poor survives even under these conditions, trace it to psychological traits.

The “Non-Deferred Gratification Pattern”, figuring in the above quoted paper describes the characteristic features of the lifestyle of the poor as follows: a relative inclination towards the use of violence, a free expression of sexuality, minimum efforts to study, a low level of aspirations. They spend freely, and care little for good manners and obedience. Members of the middle classes on the other hand consider it their duty to save up and to refrain from a series of enjoyments.

S. M. Miller and Frank Riessman challenge these views. Most members of the middle classes do not economise, they do not refrain from enjoyments, and do not like to work hard either. The Deferred Gratification Model characterises the norms but not the practice of the middle class. Enjoyment is worth deferring only by those who are convinced about what they are doing and that postponed enjoyment would ultimately be achieved and multiplied.


In Hungarian sociology István Kemény traces back the origin of the stratum of unskilled paupers, their way of life and current position in the social division of labour to partly settled, and partly migrant poor of uncertain livelihood that had emerged during the course of the economic and social development of the European Middle Ages.
A vast majority of the present Hungarian society aggressively rejects its poor. A significant part of the middle strata of this society, grown big, has come from the “culture of poverty,” for poverty had been of enormous dimensions. Major socio-economic changes have caught them up and put them down one or two steps higher than the one where they were born, obviously none without personal effort. Is there a “mobile person” on earth who would not lay stress on his or her personal achievement even to him- or herself? No one would willingly take into account the favorable external forces because it may reduce the individual’s personal merit. The specific psychology accompanying mobility is supplied by arguments and justification of the official ideology, which glorifies old poverty but stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the existence of poverty embedded in our social and economic structure. There are only “lumpens,” partial skivers who do not avail themselves of our unlimited opportunities. At the most only that much of mitigating circumstances are granted to them that can be deducted from the “heritage of past consciousness”.

Not everyone projects hatred and rejection. Many people feel sorry for the poor and there are some who regard poverty as idyllic. They respect the world of the poor as something purer, being outside the authority of disliked virtues, without hypocrisy. In fact strata and cultures inevitably are in touch. Only they mutually do not understand each other.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE POOR

It was accidental that the following scene was recorded on tape in a settlement of the poor consisting of a dozen of dilapidated multi-storied houses (built as temporary lodgings around World War I, planned to be pulled down at least for ten years):

(The kitchen of the Fodor family, opening from the corridor. The woman neighbor, living in a one-room flat developed from a laundry is working on a sewing machine pulled out to the corridor and put under the window. Several members of the Fodor family are conversing in the kitchen, the neighbors in the corridor, under the kitchen window of the Fodors, in the courtyard. Suddenly an unknown young man dressed in a suit arrives. He carries a briefcase. Two old women, one with a benevolent face and another strict, prim one with a bun accompany him. The young man knocks at the open kitchen door, steps over the threshold and stops.)

Young man: I’m X. Y. council member. I’ve come because a complaint was lodged in relation to the children. (Noise, exclamations.) Please, please, I myself don’t like to talk aloud. Therefore I expect you too to talk quietly. This is precisely the


5 In the Fodor family the head of the family, Uncle Fodor has been the coal mover of the State Fuel Trading Company, abbreviated as Tüker. He has been doing the same job for thirty years. Formerly he had helped his father who was mover. His eldest son is an unskilled labourer. Aunt Fodor is currently a “housewife”, before marriage she used to work in a factory, next on a construction, helping masons, she also went to clean and wash for others. For periods of time she also took up jobs after marriage.

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trouble, here people have divested themselves of their human form! *(Speaking ever louder in order to suppress those present.)* With one another … humanely … quietly. Thank you, I don’t sit down, I am used to talking standing. *(He succeeds in taking the lead.)* I’m not an old man but my life experience shows that children would return everything to their parents what they’ve received from them. And those who permit everything to their children, would get back the same … would not get that back. Because children would return only what was bad, please! You must not permit everything to a child! You must warn the child and explain things! Those who permit everything to their children do not love them!

*(Aunt Fodor who is at least 20 years older than the council member, has four children and soon would have grandchildren even, has been so far listening to the tutoring with a respectful face because at the very beginning, when she tried to answer she was cut short.)*

Aunt Fodor: Well. It’s true that the children are lively, after all they’re children. But how could I nicely tell them not to do something, when Aunt Kemenes would immediately shout *(she is also shouting)* “Go to your slut of a mother!” Surely the child would not let his mother be cursed, and I agree with him, because I’m not a cheap whore, I was not picked up from the street either! Then Aunt Kemenes…

*(General pandemonium is unfolding again. The voice of an old woman breaks through.)*

1st old woman: … because a child should be cared for! My son was also brought up here, even my grandchild is 20, but he has never done such a thing!

*(Aunt Fodor is explaining to the woman of benevolent face.)*

Aunt Fodor: Well, Aunt Kovács, speak up! Isn’t it that Aunt Kemenes interferes into everything? I’ve seen with my own eyes when she was collecting pebbles in the courtyard, put them on his balcony *(namely it is the section of the corridor in front of the door of the flat that is called 'balcony')* and next she said that the children had thrown them up there…

*(Meanwhile the council member would like to go but the neighborhood, gathered in honor of the event, holds him up in the corridor. Everyone would like to have a say.)*

Council member: I say there should not be problems! Let us try to live side by side peacefully and there should not be such voices!

1st woman neighbor *(she is a night porter in a textile mill, a mother of three, a charwoman in her leisure, but goes to work only for better off families of faraway parts of the city):* As soon as an atom bomb hits this leper colony there would be no fault here!

Council member: Excuse me but …

1st woman neighbor: Because my son is also among them, you know? *(Against whom there was a complaint.)*

Council member: It should not be solved with an atom bomb; even the big powers have taken out the atom bomb from the means of … solution.

Voices: That’s what is needed and nothing else!

Council member: What is needed is…

1st old woman: What is needed here is that parents should try not to permit everything to their children!
Council member: Excuse me that we disturbed you for so long, that’s all I wanted to say. We would meet repeatedly, at meetings of residents and at other such occasions, I am expecting the residents there and to broach their problems there…

Voices: I’ll go there! There are lots of them!

Council member: Well, you know, I have many official hours…

Aunt Fodor: Only we have no time. (Her third son comes in with one leg in plaster bandage.) Goodness comes out from his leg.

1st neighbor woman (she is still stuck at a former phase of the quarrel with a group of people): Children are warned but the adults also throw bones and paprika to the courtyard! A big c…! They throw out everything! It’s like a junk-heap!

Others: Whereas in front of building 1! That one is visible, there’s even grass! And flowers are planted!

Council member (already from the courtyard): I’ll launch a movement! We would dig up the courtyard! We would plant grass! I’ll launch it!

2nd neighbor woman (from a sewing machine): Sir! A loo for those who live in the laundry! A loo!

(Meanwhile a separate quarrel emerges between neighbor 3, an old Wallachian Gypsy woman and the 1st neighbor woman. The old Gypsy woman quietly noted that the other one had already sent that certain Aunt Kemenes to the cemetery. The 1st neighbor woman is said to be cursed by the Gypsy woman: “You’ve sent cancer on my foot and on my son’s foot, too!”)

Aunt Fodor (already peacefully, in the kitchen): I’ve seen this man (the council member) for the first time. May he live somewhere nearby? The problem is that unfortunately the children are persecuted here. They cannot stay on here. They cannot play with a ball, they cannot run to and fro, they must not shout either, well, I’ve no idea what is wanted of us!

A boy around twenty (who succeeded in holding up the council member in the courtyard): My problem is that the police come here and we cannot play football anywhere. You should solve this! Really, I’m twenty and I like to play football. On Sunday morning too the residents came and made a scene. Shall we quarrel with the residents? There’s no sense in it. When the police come they take away the ball. And it costs me 50 to 60 forints all the time!

1st neighbor woman (defeating the others with a louder voice, addressing the 3rd neighbor woman): … I don’t talk to you, you wanted to f… me in the head! So I didn’t dare come along the corridor for a year! If you are not warned you would f… me in the head! And you f…d that eight year-old girl also in the back! And called that little girl a whore! What is she? An eight year-old!

Council member (totally desperate): I don’t understand! Would people not understand here that quiet, order … that people among themselves…

1st neighbour woman: Why am I not allowed to passing along that corridor? Am I coming from shit? You’ve never washed that stone floor!

Council member: Be quieter, what’s the point in raising a dispute? The problem is that people … You can say what you want but not this way!

1st neighbour woman: Look here, there’s never any quarrel on this side! Here everyone washes the corridor!
2nd neighbour woman: I’ve never heard any quarrel in my neighbor’ s! (She also starts to attack the old Gypsy woman, who has been sitting quietly all the time, after having successfully upset the others.) Listen! You’ve quite often fed us with cancer! Did you wish to see Aunt Kemenes in the cemetery? Well, one should not be surprised at things like that!

1st neighbor woman: I didn’t say to the cemetery but that she should go to a sanatorium if she cannot stand children. One may go there, too! And to the alms-house! There are vacancies there, too! Me? I love children, and would deliver at least another twenty! I would deliver another twenty! I adore children!

2nd neighbor woman: Only there should be a person to support them.

Council member: That’s what the state would want, too, because it needs citizens.

2nd neighbor woman: ‘cause there are millions for everything, but the Hilton Hotel is more important than building one or two loos!

1st neighbor woman: And seventy million pubs. Only this one over there is not f….d, so that there should not be so much argument here! It’s said that children are needed else Hungary would die off. Then why are you so much against children? One cannot bind their hands and feet, or gag their mouth!

2nd neighbor woman: Only with food.

Twenty year-old boy (elbowing from outside at the kitchen window): I don’t know what this council member wanted…

2nd neighbor woman: Well, that’s his duty. After all a complaint was lodged. Occasionally some little order should be kept!

1st neighbor woman: Let the children play! Let them do what they want. These buildings are not even worth zip! And let the children play! Let them play with a ball, play football and spray water! They can run and turn the house upside down that’s why they’re children! I love children, they don’t disturb me!

Let us get a little more acquainted with the figures and location of this scene!

There are one-room flats with a kitchen in the twelve houses built on a big oblong plot. And there is a single-premise flat in each house. They were evolved from the common laundry by people arbitrarily occupying those premises. Families have been living in some of them for ten years “without entitlement”. No one is given a regular document of allocation and residence permit because there are no toilets attached to the former laundries.

In the building of Aunt Fodor the laundry is inhabited by a family of three, a married couple with their teenage daughter. All the three of them work in a factory. Their immediate neighbor is the currently seven-member Fodor family. (Two babies are expected in the near future and then there would be nine of them in the one-room plus kitchen flat.) The Fodors have permitted the residents of the laundry to use their toilet. They moved into this building from a flat in an equally crowded colony to this premise, similarly to the others of the ‘laundries’. They can live somehow, similarly to the others, due to the benevolence of the Fodors and other neighbors.

At the front of the houses there are open, portico-like corridors run along two stories and the flats open from there. Two houses each face each other, thus the portico-like corridors enclose a bigger space which is the courtyard. At the end of the courtyards a series of sheds built of bricks is attached to the sides of the houses. There is a shed allocated to every flat meant to store fuel for winter. There are no cellars for the houses.
The rather limited space of the rooms and kitchens is extended to the corridors and the courtyard from spring to autumn. The “lower strata” have never lived in flats where the activities of the family and the household could be housed. Part of their life was and is still conducted in an open, common space in the country as well as in the city.

The tiny area closest to one’s flat of the common spaces of the closed courtyards of the long, single-storied houses of the densely built poor colonies of Budapest is planted with flowers by the residents. The single-storied buildings are whitewashed and painted by the inhabitants themselves on their own. Even the series of sheds, indispensable for the lack of cellars are ornamented in many places: creepers and vine grow over them and it even happens that they are used as a ‘weekend house’ in summer. In the less intimate several storied barrack-like house of Aunt Fodor the common corridor is green and flowering the whole summer. In most of those wretched houses people organise their life for themselves. The external features of self-resignation and disintegration are manifest rather around the over-sized blocks of rented flats.

Life in the common space brings about total publicity. There is hardly any intimate sphere that may remain hidden to the others. Though this is literally a physical compulsion yet it is well shaped. It complies with several functions at a time: it serves the common, joint solution of different problems and tasks as well as the demand of the locals for company and entertainment.

In Aunt Fodor’s house the permanent stage of the common spaces can be viewed from the corridors as if they were galleries, where something always happens among so many people.

In people who were born in such flats and spend their life there the situation itself evolves a theatrical, over-emphasized behavior. Happiness, sorrow, tenderness and conflict cannot be kept secret for there is no room for it; therefore they rather perform it to each other. This trend of the “commedia dell’arte” can be identified also in the scene presented by us. The quarrelling parties add a little bit of a benefit performance to their real grievances. An extensive shouting dissolves tension, everyone may shape and express oneself (consider what points are made by the woman living in the laundry at the proper moments!), and at the same time entertain the others.

This elaborated style functions well in its proper place whereas in another environment, such as a school or office, it may at best evoke aversion but often repugnance and sometimes even reprisal. One may witness such scenes daily when ‘two cultures’ are confronted.

One may also consider how far this stage situation favors forms of symbolic self-expression. It is known that a good play can be produced by a rapid flow of action and situations. A good stage figure would not project the character by words, and there is not much space for too much of explanation on a good stage. Viewers sitting in a real theatre would not kill their adversaries, only in a sublimated way or in their sleep at the most. But they would take it badly if Romeo did not kill Tybalt on the stage, but would only dream about it, and Tybalt also would only narrate his objections against the Montagues. Similar rules prevail in theatrical life as well. It rather encourages the personality to be expressed by gestures, movements, tone of speech, and mostly by activity than putting one’s thoughts and emotions in pronounced, written, or only thought-over words. Symbolic product (such as solving an arithmetic problem, or
making sacrifice in the interest of the future) cannot offer satisfaction to the individual that would be equivalent to direct action that is immediately appreciated.

Continuous co-existence with others brings about the need for “being always together with a companion” and it does always satisfy that need. Those of the ‘lower stratum’ usually do not feel happy without the well-known faces. They do not like to remain totally alone even for a moment if possible; they do not mix with unknown people alone. They draw security, strength and justification from each other’s company: “we are together therefore I exist”.

A certain amount of self-assurance, a sense of strength and confidence in the rightness of behaviour are needed by all. These are ‘social’ emotions. Everyone can have access to it only socially; by being acknowledged and accepted by others, at least in one’s imagination. Constant physical co-existence however, does not make one adjusted to symbolic, transformed ‘society’, to incorporate the others into oneself and to build up conscience out of them and hence to represent ‘more souls in one body’, and that one should not lose ground when left alone.

The housing conditions of the poor by themselves profoundly determine the behavioral forms of culture and influence the personality structure. Naturally people are by far not uniform in Aunt Fodor’s house either. Just as people are not uniform on the Belgrad Embankment or on the Rózsadomb. Theatricality for instance, is only an emphatic possibility but not everyone would utilize it. (Aunt Kemenes for instance, would rather pull back to her flat.) And the reverse is also true: in another environment one has to organize the stage suited for role playing with hard work, yet there are some who are attracted to it. The immediate need for company is also only a frequent and characteristic feature of the poor colonies that are open inwards and isolated outwards, but it is not an unknown personality type elsewhere either. It is well known how characteristic it is of children at a given age, and that it changes at different periods of time and to a different extent. Introverted individuals reserved for themselves and vigorous characters that are not at all characterized by being filled with uncertainty may develop under conditions of the constant physical proximity of others. Only it happens rarely.

These communities of courtyards locked among walls are not only intensive ones, that is physically real and full of impulses, but they are closely knit as well. They penetrate into life behind the doors of flats. Mostly through contacts with relatives.

Relations mean an important social contact for every social stratum6 (Susmann 1953; Lituak 1960a, 1960b). Among the poor it is definitely the most important one. It is capable of filling the entire social horizon of the poor because it is usually a populous one. An individual may find a companion suitable in age and character among the relatives as well. A person may meet forms of life similar to one’s own, or different, new and interesting ones among the relatives. (Different forms of life may not be accessed otherwise at all.)

Some of the relations live in the neighborhood, often in the same colony, or even courtyard. A spouse is often chosen from nearby, and it is not easy to find one

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Geographical Mobility and extended family cohesion. Ibid., pp. 385–394.
elsewhere for a young, penniless person coming from “a bad family” is a non-desirable partner in other social circles. Several colonies are slowly being organized into a conglomerate or relatives and in-laws. As there are a lot of jobs nearby one would leave the given environment only exceptionally.

Aunt Fodor’s mother and two younger brothers live for instance, in another flat inside the same house. Her married son and his wife live with her in the same flat. Her daughter’s fiancé lives in another house of the colony with his grandmother, so her daughter would move only two houses further when she gets married. Aunt Fodor was born here. Her first fiancé was the relative of a local woman. When she got married she moved to her husband’s family who lived a few streets away from here. They lived congested there, too. There were her mother-in-law, father-in-law and several, already married sisters and brothers of her husband. When she was a young bride, she kept on shunting between her mother-in-law and mother at first with one child, and later on with two. She repeatedly occupied flats arbitrarily, already with three children, when finally the already occupied bachelor’s flat was officially allocated to her. Later on she swapped it for the present one-room flat with kitchen (without comfort but bigger ground plan) in her mother’s immediate neighborhood. The fourth child was born here. Being energetic and clever sooner or later she would obtain accommodation in the same circle for his grown children as well. Elsewhere she would be unable to do so but here she can.

They mutually help each other with her mother, with her daughter-in-law, daughter. sister-in-law that is her younger brother’s wife. They cook and do the shopping for each other and take loans from each other. Each woman regularly minds the small children belonging to the other family. (Currently there are two, the youngest Fodor child is four years old, the little one of Aunt Fodor’s younger brother, and her daughter-in-law is expecting in any minute, and according to rumors her fiancée daughter is also pregnant.) There are several other similar organizations of relatives in the colony.

An almost similarly closely knit relationship emerges among neighbors as well. The difference is that relations bridge over a certain and not too big geographic distance whereas neighborhood relations last only until the neighborhood exists.

The neighbor woman sewing in the corridor was working on Aunt Fodor’s sewing machine in our “scene”, doing the work she got from Aunt Fodor. Aunt Fodor is working for an apron maker on contracting-out basis, making a little money with her sewing machine, in keeping with the needs of the family. Currently the neighbor woman run short of money so she gave her some work and also lent her sewing machine until she was busy with something else.

Aunt Fodor’s and the neighbor woman’s daughter are of the same age. They went to school together and then, at the age of 15 they went to work for an ironworks as machine operators and later on they changed their place of work together.

Co-operation of relatives and neighbors has innumerable variants in this house, too. For instance a grandmother lives in the same flat with her married son but she cooks for the entire big family in the next flat where her daughter who also has a family, lives. Or: an already retired mother cooks lunch for her son living in the next flat because his wife goes to work during the day. The grandchild stays with the grandparents during the week because his mother living in the next house works during the day and she would have her dinner together with her elders and child. And it goes on like this.

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