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Associations and Communities in Hungary in the Second Half of the 19th Century



Summary

The 19th century saw a boom in the organisation of civil communities in all European countries. Legislative changes gave room for the institutionalisation of associations, clubs and circles, and as a result the number of these organisations multiplied. Research on associations is a multifaceted task, as they cover a range of disciplines depending on their type. Their literature and approaches are therefore diverse. Cultural history, social history, sociology, statistics, legal history, literary history and ethnography can all play a role in the study of associations. The present study examines the types, number and membership of associations in Hungary in the 19th century in a European comparison.

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INTRODUCTION

The process of civil enlightenment in Hungarian country side began in the reform era and took place in a highly complex way. For centuries before, the society and culture of the Hungarian peasantry had been organised by institutions mediated by tradition - family, kinship,

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neighbourhood, rural community. In the process of civil enlightenment, traditional communities were transformed and new types of communities emerged from the second half of the 19th century. The first associations and circles were established, which played a decisive role in cultural and community life in the following decades. It is indisputable from the sources that from the 18th century onwards, the various associations, societies and circles increased and strengthened the social - economic, political and cultural - public sphere, and at the same time accelerated the process of civil enlightenment itself (Bősze, 1997:5).

The need to be connected is an important human need. Csányi (2012) interprets the formation of human communities as an evolutionary innovation, as an active formation that is both a biological and a cultural construct. He believes that for human nature, being in community is the optimal space for functioning, and thus interprets belonging to a community as a basic need. Historically, communities have existed in all European countries, but their organised, institutionalised forms have been recorded from the 17th century onwards. British clubs, according to Clark (2000), were formed for recreation and leisure, but they were also a place to discuss official business, to hear the latest news and to hear gossip. The members joined a community to get away from their daily work, family worries and to relax. Alexander Hamilton, a Scotsman, sums up the activities of the clubs as follows: "we meet, converse, laugh, discuss, smoke, drink, socialise, argue, agree, philosophise, inspire, pun, sing, dance and have fun together ... we are really and truly a club."¹ Warren (1963) distinguishes five functions of communities:

- socialisation or value transmission,
- economic empowerment or social participation,
- the possibility of social life,
- social control or norm enforcement and,
- mutual support or cooperation to achieve common goals.

According to Kocsis (2000), communities are a multifunctional social group to which members are linked by birth, marriage and many other ties. In Hungary, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, various civic, social and reading circles and associations played an increasingly important role in the organisation of public and social life. Most of them had their own or rented premises for meetings, usually subscribed to newspapers together, and sometimes had their own small library. They were also responsible for organising balls and entertainment evenings. According to Szilágyi (2000), these organisations, which were fundamentally not peasant in origin, were able to integrate into the rural institutional system because they were able to adapt to the bourgeois social environment and to local peasant needs. The associations and communities of Western Europe and Hungary thus had similar functions, but the former tended to operate in cities, while the latter played a dominant role in rural life.

The associations and circles in our country covered almost all aspects of everyday life. In addition, if their membership was drawn from people of the same class, stratum or group, they were also suitable for the development of the sense of identity of the given social class. The excellence of the associations lay in their role in creating communities and traditions, in maintaining communities, in self-organisation and in carrying on traditions. Membership of

an association also meant status, recognition of the individual and a positive social image in the community. The communal strength of associations, their ability to preserve traditions, by raising awareness of belonging to a narrower patriarchy, also did much to foster patriotism (Bószé, 1993:74).

Rural communities in our country were based on traditional economic cooperation before the 19th century. The peasant family was a natural framework for daily work and the organisation of farming, but also an accepted unit in relations with the outside world. However, the individuals born into a traditional community could not be autonomous and independent of others by virtue of their productive work. They had to cooperate with other families in an organised and regular way, and he had to be integrated into the rural community. The many different subtasks of production and livelihood work were inherently unsolvable within the family framework because they required more labour and specialised skills (Szilágyi, 2000:558-559). One of the most important types of rural associations in the second half of the 19th century was the farmers' group, which placed the earlier spontaneous cooperative efforts within an institutional framework. At the same time, the headquarters of the farmers' group was also the main arena for cultural and entertainment activities. It expressed an effort to transcend traditional cultural ideals (it had a reading room, card games, chess, billiards, a courtyard for skittles, and girls and boys entertained the rural people with artistic performances), but it also fully served the community entertainment possibilities sanctified by local tradition (balls were held in its large hall) (Szilágyi, 2000:575).

The various venues of association life - assemblies, readings, lectures, debates, discussions and art performances - gave the events a forum character. Community members could use these occasions for public speaking, speaking out, expressing their opinions and, as a result, indirectly influencing the life of the community. Another form of community cooperation and sacrifice was the voluntary discipline undertaken by the membership, often reflected in the statutes. There were several associations in which the implementation of the basic function stood or failed to comply with it. For example, the need for teamwork in fire-fighting associations, which required military discipline, and the team spirit of sports clubs was indisputable (Bószé, 1993:77).

ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Associations and societies can be found in many European countries from the earliest times and have played a significant role in political and cultural life everywhere. Examples of organised groups of traders or religious groups can be found as early as antiquity. Later, in Renaissance Florence there were more than 150 major groups, and in the port of Genoa 134. In addition to organising social gatherings, these groups also played a patronage role in Mediterranean countries, mainly by presenting plays by young authors. In the late Middle Ages, literary communities flourished in the cities of the German Lowlands, and played a significant charitable and economic role. In Germany in the second half of the 18th century, we find a large number of middle-class societies, most of them patriotic societies concerned with social reform, reading societies (430 were formed up to 1800), musical societies and political societies (Clark, 2000).

The mass appearance of organised associations can be dated back to the 19th century throughout Europe. While earlier, traditional social relations were mostly informal, the 19th century saw the emergence of formal social life and the institutionalisation of communities. Along with the process of civil enlightenment and the formation and development of the civilian public, respectively associated with the name of Habermas (1993), the ideal of freedom of association and assembly, which limits the power of the state, and the closely related right of association were formulated.

In the 19th century, these rights appear in most European civil constitutions. First the Dutch constitution of 1814, then the Belgian constitution of 1831, which is considered to be the model civil constitution, then the French constitution of 1848 and the German imperial constitution of 1849 provided for the right of association. The Austrians settled this issue in 1867. They were followed by Serbia, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Portugal and Finland (Bószé, 1997:17).

The situation of leisure associations in 19th century France was also the result of a long process of positive change. Laws passed in 1791 and 1795 banned all professional associations and tightened the state's control. Later, the Penal Code of 1810 stipulated that only with the approval of the government could an association with more than 20 members be formed to organise regular meetings for religious, political, literary or any other purpose. As a result, the French associative life only began to flourish in the second half of the 19th century. The 1848 constitution was the first to declare the principle of freedom of association. According to the legal regulations, it was not easy to establish an association even later, from 1852 this required prior approval, and finally in 1868 the free establishment of professional associations was allowed (Baker, 2017).

McLean (2000) traces the antecedents back to the first half of the 18th century for Scotland. In Glasgow, it was a particular phenomenon that from the 1740s onwards the university played a significant role in the formation of associations. The main players in community life were professors and city merchants, but clergymen also appeared in some societies. By this period, an urban and socially engaged middle class had already emerged, whose members wanted to impart knowledge and demonstrate their own knowledge at social occasions. Societies also played a role in shaping the style of the period in areas such as conversation, fashion and housing culture. Urban social life later gave rise to a very lively organised social life, with literary and scientific clubs at its heart. In addition to the university professors, the citizens of the city were also involved in these societies, so that the topics of social life were organised around literary criticism, art and music, as well as academic issues. This process facilitated the cultivation of talent and the development of commerce and industry. Many clubs provided not only channels for the exchange of ideas, but also for networking and patronage, as in the Mediterranean countries. It also provided an opportunity for a social experience for those who wanted to forget the worries of everyday business on social occasions.

Not all communities in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries chose the path of institutionalisation. Many forms of public social life were urban phenomena (theatrical performances, balls, concerts, scientific lectures), while in the country side there were fewer clubs, mainly for charitable purposes. Urban societies were also characterised by the fact that the majority of

their members were almost exclusively men, while women were encouraged to join philanthropic organisations and music clubs if they wished to play a social role.

In Hungary, the issues of the right of association were addressed by the liberal ideology that emerged during the reform era. The theoretical and practical development of the benefits of association was carried out by István Széchenyi. In the 1840s, Lajos Kossuth began to emphasise the importance of associations in organising society and uniting the bourgeoisie. Despite this, comprehensive legal regulation had been squeezed out of the Hungarian law (Bószé, 1997:17). However, the increase in the number of associations required their regulation after a while. The first detailed legal regulation in Hungary was in 1868, which left the language of the association to the founders and minimised state supervision. Favourable conditions made the formation of associations flourish. Thereafter, no new law on associations was enacted in the period under review, and lower-level legislation and ministerial decrees governed these organisations (Kósa, 1998:296). As a consequence, the meaning of the concept of association itself is contested, as it was not defined in the legislation of the period.

THE CONCEPT OF AN ASSOCIATION

In the 20th century, several attempts were made to define the concept of association precisely. They have been interpreted as free associations that pursue the collective interests of society beyond the scope absorbed by the state, or as a type of bond between society and the individual. According to Dékány (1943), the most important criterion is that the members of an association join the community voluntarily, and therefore these associations are artificial social organisations, which acquire their members through voluntary membership. The organisation is formed for a specific purpose, so the association is an artificial, single-purpose entity. Dobrovits (1936), using the exclusion method, narrowed down the scope of associations. He considered them as social organisations of a permanent nature, based on free association and not formed for a specific, non-profit-making purpose. Reisz (1988) emphasised that an association is a spontaneous expression of the needs and expectations of a micro-community in local society, and that it represents a common interest, action and the voluntary nature of its members.

Conceptual uncertainty was a challenge not only in our country, but also in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Clark (2000) has also attempted to explore the concept of association, drawing on modern anthropological and sociological definitions. According to him, English clubs are voluntary associations, informal organisations in which participation has no financial implications, periodic or regular meetings are typical, and therefore an important characteristic is their organisation, and their leadership is characterised by a tendency towards oligarchy and a lack of regulatory roles. In addition, the clubs and societies are predominantly male and meet regularly and in an organised way, mostly in pubs, where they are active socialites. The purpose of the gatherings may be free-aged, locally themed, educational, political, philanthropic or any other.

The most comprehensive definition of the term in Hungary is that of Sándor Bószé: “A voluntary association established by natural and legal persons for the realisation of economic,

social, political, cultural, scientific, professional and other common objectives, with a self-government, a defined organisational structure and independent management, whose members pay a fixed membership fee, established by officially authorised and controlled statutes. The association does not engage in activities of an explicitly economic or profit-oriented nature and does not generally pursue political aims. As an interest protection institution, it also represents the common interests in relation to the objectives set out in its statutes vis-à-vis third parties. It acts as an intermediary between government or political parties and local aspirations. The rights of members of an association are generally not equal, depending on the level of the membership fee paid. The association may operate in the administrative area defined in its statutes“ (Bószé, 1993:69-70).

TYPES OF ASSOCIATIONS

In addition to the definition of the concept, another problematic issue is the classification of types of associations. The reason for this is that many associations had complex, multi-faceted functions. A point of reference for us can be found in the statutes of associations, in which, at the time of their formation, they set out the common objectives - economic, social, political, cultural, professional, scientific, etc. - that their members wished to pursue (Bószé, 1997:18).

The categorisation of associations is difficult not only in our country but also in other European countries. In France, for example, Baker (2017) categorised 19th century associations as follows:

- communities linked to occupations (for example, seasonal workers' groups),
- communities formed to carry out larger economic tasks (e.g. construction),
- linked to recreation (for example, family and neighbours' winter evening gatherings, or informal gatherings of young men),
- social gatherings where members of the community have fun and play games (communities for playing cards, singing and chatting),
- religious communities (e.g. devotion and charity fraternities).

According to Clark (2000), there were over 130 different types of associations in the British Isles in the 18th century, the main types being:

- alumni associations (for schools, colleges and universities),
- arts organisations,
- book clubs,
- charity clubs,
- debating clubs, gambling clubs,
- horticultural societies,
- literary societies,
- Masonic and pseudo-Masonic societies,
- music societies,
- neighbourhood clubs,
- philanthropic societies,
- professional associations,

- regional and ethnic associations,
- sports clubs,
- scientific and cultural societies.

In Hungary, the plan to census associations first appeared in 1848 in the programme of the National Statistical Office led by Elek Fényes. However, the first census of associations - prepared by the Statistical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences - was not published until 1862. However, this was not a targeted census but was based on the use of various official data (Domokos, 1968:221). In the following, the categorisations are listed in chronological order.

From a statistical point of view, the earliest information on associations and societies in Hungary is based on the data of the 1874 survey, published by Gyula Vargha (1880). On the basis of this nationwide survey, Vargha defined the following types of associations:

- self-help associations,
- charitable associations,
- educational and training associations,
- social associations,
- practising associations,
- Industry associations,
- producer cooperatives,
- consumer associations,
- economic associations,
- trade associations,
- water regulating associations
- fire-fighting associations,
- scientific and literary associations,
- art associations,
- religious associations,
- mixed associations.

Vargha's categorisation defined and at the same time closed the field of scientific investigation for almost a century, and it was in fact only in the second half of the 20th century that attention was again focused on the subject of associations. Since the 1980s, however, there has been an increased interest in the subject. This is particularly true of the lively research movement to investigate the associations of the individual counties during the period of the Austrian- Hungarian Dualism. The authors of the summaries of the counties of Vas, Somogy, Baranya and Nógrád attempted to classify the types of associations.

Based on Attila Márfi's research in Baranya, he highlights the following two categories of associations:

1. Grouping by regulatory supervision
 - Workers' associations,
 - Benefit, sickness, funeral, burial, marriage and pension vouchers,
 - Political, national and other associations.
2. Classification by legislation

- Joint-stock companies, cooperatives and other associations for profit regulated by the Commercial Code,
- Special associations governed by special law: health insurance funds, mining associations, industrial associations and trade associations,
- Ordinary associations, associations with an ideological purpose, formed by the voluntary wish of the members, without coercion, but not for commercial purposes (Márfi, 1985-86:195).

Based on his research in Somogy County, Bősze (1986) takes several aspects into account when classifying associations. These are the common purpose, the community of interest, the intermediary role, the official authorisation and control, the rights of membership, the membership fee, the municipality and the geographical location. These are used as a basis for defining types of associations, with the proviso that not all of the types of association were found in the county under study (e.g. no nationality-based associations were found):

1. economic (e.g. agricultural),
2. professional and vocational self-education clubs (e.g. farmers' associations, professionally organised associations of intellectuals and employees)
3. political,
4. cultural-educational (e.g. reading, singing, folk art, nursery),
5. socio-social (e.g. casinos, social clubs, table societies),
6. public benefit (e.g. spa, beautification, fire, ambulance),
7. aid provider (e.g. self-help, philanthropy, funeral),
8. worker (e.g. worker training, self-help and trade associations),
9. sporting circles,
10. other associations (Bősze, 1986:37-38).

In a later research Bősze (1993) analysed the archival records of Somogy County during the Austrian- Hungarian Dualism period (1867-1918) and further refined the above categories based on the overall picture obtained. Group 2 included the associations of craftsmen and merchants, Group 4 the cultivating, public culture and free education circles, Group 6 the housing and health associations, and Group 7 the women's associations (Bősze, 1993:70).

Reisz (1988:933) established four categories to define types of associations:

- grouping by nature or purpose,
- grouping by social class,
- grouping by nationality,
- grouping by denomination.

The possibility of grouping them by nationality or denomination is obvious, but both types of associations have also fulfilled other roles based on their purpose and nature. Reisz classifies the following types of communities by character and purpose:

- casino as a social club with special functions,
- advocacy,
- culture, self-education,
- sports, entertainment, social,
- charity.

It sets up the following categories by social groups:

- youth,
- women,
- civic-intellectual,
- artisan-worker,
- agricultural,
- cannot be associated with any social group (Reisz, 1988:934).

Brunda (1993) presents a specific type of associations, the cultural associations, in the following grouping:

- Public cultural associations (folklore, cultural associations, music and singing groups, drama groups, nationality associations),
- Social circles (people's circles, reading circles, casinos, officers' and non-commissioned officers' social circles, table societies),
- Economic, professional associations (farmers' associations, industrial associations, trade associations, workers' associations, intellectuals' associations)
- Religious and charitable associations,
- Youth, stag and hen clubs,
- Associations with political and patriotic content (the so-called 48 Conservative Party circles, the Independence Party circles, and the so-called Deák Political Circles, civic circles, and patriotic associations).

NUMBER OF ASSOCIATIONS

All the studies on the subject of associations note that the number of such organisations had increased dramatically by the end of the 19th century. In England and Wales, the number of newly founded scientific societies almost doubled between the 1870s and 1900s. Between 1860 and 1880, the number of British musical societies increased by 50 %, rising from 478 in 1900 to 960 in 1929. Horticultural societies also flourished, with at least 70 operating in London at the end of the 19th century, while there were 300 fishing clubs and 2,000 pigeon clubs in the capital. The number of working men's clubs belonging to the National Federation, founded in 1862, rose from 68 in 1870 to 710 in 1900 and to 2007 in 1920, and the number of registered drinking clubs quadrupled between the 1880s and just before the First World War. The number of clubs registered to sell drinks almost doubled between 1914 and 1935 (to 15,657), although part of this increase may have been due to a reduction in the number of licensed pubs. The Scouts tripled the number of their local groups between 1910 and 1938, when they had nearly half a million members, mainly in South England. The number of new hobby and sports clubs formed during the period also increased as the demand for such leisure activities grew. In the 1880s there were over 100 amateur football clubs in Liverpool and well over 300 in Birmingham. Between 1870 and 1900, nearly 270 rugby clubs were formed, and a further 86 were formed over the next 20 years. The number of amateur football clubs in England rose to 30,000 by the 1940s. In 1930, a survey of popular leisure activities in Liverpool found that going to club events was the second most popular form of

recreation, second only to reading the newspaper. This was a popular form of leisure among both the middle and working classes (Clark, 2000:474-477).

The role of associations in civil society in Hungary also varied in the period under study. In this diversity, we can distinguish between economic, political, professional, cultural, social, charitable, benevolent and leisure associations. Of these, the largest number of associations were industrial associations, with 1 247 being set up by 1878. This represented 32,1 % of the total number of associations. The number of charitable associations (475) and cultural associations (433 reading associations alone) were also very significant. Most of the associations were concentrated in settlements with a population of 10-50 000 inhabitants. According to the 1878 survey, the average duration of associations was 10 years. The sub-surveys show that in many cases a citizen was a member of several associations at the same time. The average of different collected data gave an average of 169 members per association in 1878 (Kósa, 1998:296).

It is estimated that in the second half of the 19th century, the number of associations in Hungary reached the tens of thousands during the gradual, steady growth period. After a period of more intensive association formation, the trend slowed down somewhat in the late 1900s, and the number of associations reached a peak of around 20,000 in the years before the First World War. The years from 1912-1914 were marked by a decline, and in the first year of the war the number of remaining associations were around 14,000 (Sebestény 2003:383-384).

In the period under study, there were only two more accurate statistical surveys of the number of associations in Hungary, in 1862 and 1878. 18According to a survey of the Statistical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in 62 of the 12,600 settlements in Hungary, only 194 had associations. At that time, the names of the associations, their headquarters and the number of members were recorded. A total of 579 associations were found in the country, of which 96 were in the capital, another 377 in larger towns and only 16 in the country side (Dobrovits, 1935: 28). Table 1 shows that the most popular were the social clubs, but charitable associations also played a significant role.

Table 1: Associations in Hungary in 1862 by main groups

Type of association	Number of associations
Conversational	264
Charitable	156
Scientific, industrial and commercial	75
Other	46
Economic	38
Total	579

Source: Dobrovits, 1935: 28

The next data collection was carried out by the National Statistical Office in 1878, during which 3,995 associations were counted. Table 2 shows that the survey and the classification of associations into types was much more detailed. The number of industrial associations had increased dramatically by this time, but the number of social clubs and charitable societies remained significant.

Table 2: Associations in Hungary in 1878 by main groups

Type of association	Number of associations
Industrial	1275
Social	964
Self-help	535
Practitioner	312
Firefighter	246
Charitable	225
Educational and instructive	131
Economic	82
Scientific and literary	59
Religious	43
Other	43
Commercial (sales)	42
Water regulatory	19
Consumption	12
Art	4
Producer co-operative	3

Source: Dobrovits, 1935:29.

A century later, in 1988, the 1878 survey data were re-examined by the Office for National Statistics and the data were reinterpreted to produce a reinterpreted set of data. Table 3 shows the top ten most popular types of associations. The percentages show that advocacy is a very effective community-building force for industry associations. And the popularity of reading circles was an indication of the social demand for education and learning that emerged in this historical period.

Table 3: The first ten most numerous types of associations in our country in 1878

Type of association	Number of associations	Proportion of associations
Industrial	500	12,64 %
Reading circle	458	11,58 %
Self-help	252	6,37 %
Volunteer firefighter	240	6,07 %
Casino	232	5,86 %
Funeral	231	5,84 %
Shoemaker	206	5,21 %
Charitable	183	4,63 %
Glee club	154	3,89 %
Conversational	124	3,13 %

Source: Reisz, 1988:942.

Examining the number of members of associations completely changes the popularity ranking, as shown in Table 4. The predominance of self-help is evident from the data, as in these associations, the payment of membership fees guaranteed financial assistance in case of hardship. This was a realistic possibility when the number of members was large.

Table 4: The first ten types of associations with the largest number of members in Hungary in 1878

Type of association	Number of members of the association	Ratio by number of members
Funeral	14,6679	21,80 %
Self-help	11,9357	17,74 %
Charity	41,205	6,12 %
Volunteer firefighter	40,853	6,07 %
Industrial	35,114	5,22 %
Reading circle	30,871	4,59%
Casino	24,534	3,65 %
Art lover	24,166	3,59 %
Glee club	18,812	2,80 %
Shoemaker	16,413	2,44 %

Source: Reisz, 1988:943

Later statistics show an explosion in the number of associations. In the first half of the 20th century, their number quadrupled compared to 1878, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Change in the number of associations

Year	Number of associations
1862	579
1878	3,995
1932	14,365
1937	16,747

Source: Dobrovits, 1938:414.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Civil society flourished throughout Europe in the second half of the 19th century. The many associations, clubs, societies and circles played a key role in economic development, cultural promotion and community life. Research in different countries shows similar results, but also differences.

Several attempts have been made to define the concept of an association, as this definition has generally not been provided in the legislation. This is why the typology of associations also varies widely. In all countries, there are professional associations, charitable associations, associations for scientific, cultural and educational purposes, and associations for leisure and recreation. The above types can be found in many places, depending on religious denomination and nationality.

By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the number of associations and their membership had tripled in many parts of Europe, or quadrupled in some types. This process was halted by the First World War and then completely stopped in Hungary after the Second World War.

If you compare the club scene in the Anglo-Saxon countries with that in Hungary, you will also find differences. British clubs and societies were predominantly urban phenomena in the 19th century and have remained so, with only a few types appearing in rural areas. In Hungary, club life is at least as varied in the country side as in the towns. There is a striking difference in the types of associations. In many cases, the British population was concentrated in academic circles linked to universities, and much more often formed associations for recreational, leisure or sporting purposes. In Hungary, on the other hand, industry associations linked to the professions and agricultural associations and farmers' associations were more predominant, due to the rural nature of the country. In all countries, these organisations strengthened the social public sphere, thus accelerating the process of civil enlightenment. In Western Europe, however, their uninterrupted development led them to follow a very different path from that in Hungary.

NOTES

¹ The original quote is: 'we meet converse, laugh, talk, smoke, drink, differ, agree, argue, philosophize, harangue, pun, sing, dance and fiddle together ... we are really and in fact a club.'

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