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Models of European Civil Society:

Transnational Perspectives on Forming Modern Societies

Edited by

Adam Jarosz and Katarzyna Kącka

This Volume is dedicated to Professor Ralph Schattkowsky
on the occasion of his 65th birthday

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CIVIL SOCIETIES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE— CASE STUDIES OF KOŠICE, PÉCS AND TIMIŞOARA

ANDRÁS MORAUSZKI

Civil-society organisations have, in previous decades, once again become natural parts of the social environment of people living in Central and Eastern Europe. In the years after the regime changes, plenty of organisations, associations and foundations have been established in all the post-socialist states by majorities and minorities alike. Such organisations continue to appear and disappear, even if in smaller quantities than in the first years. Parallel to the re-emergence of these organisations, research on civil society and its development, composition and role in the societies has started, and mainstream theories of the civil society and the non-profit sector have been adapted and fitted to these institutional systems.

The role of civil society organisations is possibly even more important in cases when other forms of institutions—public institutions, political parties, churches, etc.—cannot be used, or at least not efficiently, by groups of people or communities to further their specific interests, such as in the case of ethnic minorities.

At least in the case of certain national and ethnic minorities, we know a relatively large amount about the composition, size and operation of their institutional systems. This is especially true for the ethnic Hungarians living in Romania, but also those in Slovakia. However, there is a lack of recent studies, and in the case of other minorities we have even less information about the size, the composition of the institutional systems, and the resources they are able to mobilise. Furthermore, studies have

often not reflected on the relevant theories of civil society and the non-profit sector, and only implicitly accepted them.

This chapter aims to contribute to the discussion on ethnic civil society organisations and explore, on one hand, how the concepts of "civil society organisations" and "non-profit non-governmental organisations" are constructed, and on the other how the legal forms of associations, foundations and similar are used by the representatives of these organisations in the perceived interest of the members and minority communities, in order to foster the reproduction of the community, strengthen ethnic and national identity, tackle stereotypes and discrimination, contribute to social integration, substitute for the missing public institutions, acquire funding for different activities or whatever purposes they consider important, and how the members and leaders of these organisations try to adapt the concept and legal form to the specific conditions in which they are able to operate.

The chapter is based on the study of ethnic organisations operating in three ethnically diverse cities of Central Europe. Interviews were conducted with the representatives of organisations established by the ethnic groups living in these cities to explore how these organisational leaders see their position and role in their respective societies and how they construct a self-representation of ethnic civil society, which help us to understand the role of these organisations and their conditions of operation, as these are evaluated by the leaders of these organisations.

First, we will look through the literature on civil society and the non-profit organisations in general, and then the literature about ethnic civil societies in particular, to explore the concept of ethnic civil society organisations as a category of analysis.[1] Based on the literature, civil-society organisations can be primarily characterised as autonomous and voluntary, and in the society they usually play a mediating role between the different spheres of the state, market and society. Several studies on ethnic institutional systems however argue that the mainstream theories of civil society or the non-profit sector are inadequate in the case of ethnic organisations, inasmuch as these fail to account for the special role as substitutes for public institutions these organisations play in their respective communities, their dependence on public funds and the vertical relationships among formally equal organisations. Therefore, scholars propose other theories for their study. The analysis of the interviews shows, that—similarly in accordance with the mainstream concepts of

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[1] R. Brubaker, "Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: a Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (1) (2013).

civil-society organisations—the notions of autonomy, voluntariness and, to a lesser degree, mediation between the community and the state/administration/majority were mentioned as the defining characteristics of CSOs by representatives of minority organisations as well, while an additional characteristic which seems to contradict the notion of autonomy—being grant-funded—was also universally mentioned.

Ethnic Civil Societies in the Light of Theories

In the introduction, we used the term "civil society organisation" to describe the non-profit organisations and unregistered associations of ethnic minorities. But can we call them civil society organisations, and if yes, in what sense? It is evident from the interviews that most of the respondents see their organisations as parts of the respective ethnic civil society, and especially in the Hungarian language, *civil szervezet*—meaning civil society organisation (CSO)—is the term used most frequently in public discourse to describe these organisations. In cases when CSO is not the dominant term used to describe the organisations of this sort—and instead the terms "non-profit organisation" and "non-governmental organisation" are used (in Slovak and Romanian languages)[2]—its meaning does not differ significantly from that of "civil society organisation" provided by the ethnic Hungarians in Košice and Timişoara and the respondents in Pécs. It is, however, important to bear in mind that CSO as a category of analysis and CSO as a category of practice may differ significantly.

    Also in academic discourse, "civil society organisations" is only one of the variety of terms used to describe these organisations. Others include non-profit organisations (NPOs), third-sector organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and voluntary organisations. All of these concepts emphasise different aspects of more-or-less the same set of organisations: their autonomy, voluntariness, their forming an independent sector alongside the state and the market, or that they are not motivated by profit.[3] Nevertheless, these concepts are often tied to different theoretical traditions, and among these, "civil society" is one of the dominant

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[2] The term used most frequently in Slovakia is *mimovládna nezisková organizácia* (MNO), meaning non-governmental non-profit organisation, while in Romania it is *organizaţie neguvernamentală*, meaning non-governmental organisation.
[3] É. Kuti, *Hívjuk talán nonprofitnak* (Budapest: Nonprofit Kutatócsoport, 1998); A. M. Bartal, *Nonprofit elméletek, modellek, trendek* (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 2005), 11–13.

traditions, beside the "non-profit sector" and "social movements."[4] Looking at the works on civil society, we have to accept that, as Michael Edwards pointed out, civil society is "a confusing and contested concept,"[5] which can be conceptualised in several different ways, and for different purposes, not only scientific inquiry.[6] The concept can denote a "part of the society," namely the civil-society organisations—usually equated to the voluntary organisations, the third sector—"a type of society" in which specific norms are accepted, or the public sphere of voluntary activity and engagement.[7]

As this chapter is about the organisations of national and ethnic minorities, the works on the civil society as part of the society are the most relevant. These usually conceptualise civil society as the third sector: that is, organisations that are institutionalised, private, non-profit-distributing, self-governing and voluntary.[8] Others also include businesses in the civil society, of which the civil sphere, consisting of the organisations of the third sector, is a part. In these definitions, civil society is often a residual category, defined in a negative way by the exclusion of the institutions of the other sectors. Others emphasise certain characteristics and that the institutions of the different sectors operate according to a different logic. In general, autonomy and voluntariness are the two characteristics of these organisations that are most emphasised.[9]

Regarding the social role and position of these organisations, scholars speak of their being a mediating sphere,[10] or in other words an intermediate area of complex interactions with the state, the market and

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[4] Y. Hasenfeld, B. Gidron, "Understanding Multi-purpose Hybrid Voluntary Organizations: the Contributions of Theories on Civil Society, Social Movements and Non-profit Organizations," *Journal of Civil Society* 1 (2) (2005): 98.

[5] M. Edwards, "Introduction: Civil Society and the Geometry of Human Relations," in M. Edwards (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

[6] J. Keane, *Civil Society: Old Images New Visions* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1998); A. B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[7] M. Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2004), 19–20.; M. Edwards, *Introduction: Civil Society*, 7–8.

[8] H. S. Tice, L. M. Salamon, R. A. List, *Finding a Sacred Bard: Portraying the Global Nonprofit Sector in Official Statistics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 2001), 9.

[9] M. Fennema, "The Concept and Measurement of Ethnic Community," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30 (3) (2004): 431–3.

[10] J. L. Cohen, A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), x.

the households.[11] The other sectors provide resources to the non-profit organisations. In the case of the civil-society organisations, their relationship with the state and political society is an especially important object of study. Based on Foley's and Edward's article on the "civil society argument,"[12] Hasenfeld and Gidron propose a typology of civil-society organisations. Civil society I comprises organisations that have a neutral relationship with the state, while civil society II denotes those that are in a conflictual relationship, and either oppose the political system in general or specific policies. Finally, civil society III stands for the organisations that have a cooperative or even dependent relationship with the state. The authors associate these types with the dominant theoretical traditions of civil society, social movements and the non-profit sector, respectively.[13]

Multiple functions are attributed to the civil society, ranging from economical to political and social functions. Lester Salamon and his associates enumerate the organisations' service provision, their innovative, advocacy and expressive function, and their role in community-building and democratisation, as non-profits simultaneously contribute to diversity and integration.[14] Their contribution to diversity is especially relevant in the case of ethnic organisations that "provide a framework for the development and maintenance of cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, ideological, etc. identity."[15]

Although there is no consensus regarding the meaning of civil society in the literature, and despite the wide variety of organisations falling under the category, there are some aspects of CSOs that are universally emphasised. Dealing with CSOs, we expect them to be autonomous private organisations that are voluntary to some meaningful extent and respond to the perceived demands of the minority society left unsatisfied by other institutions. The typical forms are registered or unregistered associations and foundations, but often also other types of organisations.

Most scholars agree that ethnic organisations differ in some important aspects from mainstream civil-society organisations. The main difference

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[11] A. Evers, "Part of the Welfare Mix: the Third Sector as an Intermediate Area," *Voluntas* 6 (2) (1995): 165.
[12] M. W. Foley, B. Edwards, "The Paradox of Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* 7 (3) (1996): 38–52.
[13] Y. Hasenfeld, B. Gidron, *Understanding Multi-purpose Hybrid*, 100–1.
[14] L. M. Salamon, L. C. Hems, K. Chinnock, *The Third Sector: For What and for Whom?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 5–7.
[15] É. Kuti, "Szükséges és lehetséges-e éles határvonalat húzni a civilek és a pártok, a civilek és a kormányzati szféra között?" *Civil Szemle* 10 (4) (2013): 45.

between majority and minority civil societies is not only in their different compositions or the amount of financial resources. These scholars conceptualise ethnic organisations based on the combination of attributes, such as the language they use in internal and external communication, the ethnic composition of the membership and/or leadership of the organisation, the composition of the target group, the self-definition of the organisation as a minority organisation, its mission statement or the ethnic character of its actual goals and activities.

   The emphasised differences compared to the mainstream theories on civil society, and the conclusions derived from these vary, however. Hasenfeld and Gidron argue that ethnic and other identity-based organisations combine the purposes and structural features of civil-society organisations, non-profits and social-movement organisations, and therefore the study of these organisations should also incorporate the propositions of the three aforementioned theoretical traditions.[16] These "hybrid multi-purpose organisations" promote cultural values typically "at variant with dominant and institutionalized values," "offer services to members and the public ... as catalysts for social change" and "aim to meet expressive and social identity needs."[17] Fennema finds the theory of the civil society a suitable analytical framework for the study of ethnic—in this case, migrant—organisations in general, but with the addition that among them there are many state-funded organisations created for the lack of autonomous ethnic organisations that in themselves cannot be considered civil-society organisations due to their lack of autonomy, but facilitate the formation of ethnic civic communities.[18] Others argue that the theoretical tradition of civil society is inadequate in the case of most ethnic organisations. Hegedűs, similarly to Fennema, bases his argument on the multiple dependencies of minority organisations—at least those of ethnic Hungarians abroad—towards different donors (home-state government, kin-state government, political representation of the minority, etc.), and therefore reaches the conclusion that these organisations cannot be considered CSOs.[19] It depends on the definition of civil society, if we consider financial dependence to disqualify organisations from being CSOs, or consider them to be parts of what Hasenfeld and Gidron call

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[16] Y. Hasenfeld, B. Gidron, *Understanding Multi-purpose Hybrid*, 102–8.

[17] Ibid. 97.

[18] M. Fennema, *The Concept and Measurement*, 432–3.

[19] D. Hegedűs, "Egy rendezetlen viszony fogalmi dichotómiái. Civilek a kisebbségi vagy kisebbségek a civil társadalomban?" in M. Szabó (ed.), *Civil társadalom: elmélet és gyakorlat* (Budapest: Rejtjel Kiadó, 2005), 121–2.

civil society III.[20] Indeed, there is a considerable strand dealing with the effect of government funding on non-profit organisations.[21] Biró stresses the distance of these elite-led organisations from the minority societies and the one-directional relationship between the two spheres, in which the organisations give and the society receives.[22] Dénes Kiss argues that these organisations should be studied in an entirely different theoretical framework.[23] In his model, the legal form of an organisation is secondary to its field of activity, based on which organisations form institutional sub-systems.[24] While the majority of these institutional sub-systems consist of non-profit organisations, these usually function as substitutes for non-existent public institutions, and furthermore there are not only horizontal but also vertical relationships among organisations, for which the mainstream theories of civil society fail to account.

While there are also scholars who accept the self-identification of these organisations as CSOs, and argue that civil society is a suitable category of analysis for minority organisations, and also admit that there may be such—typically smaller—organisations that fit into the mainstream theories of civil society, the concerns raised by others make it clear that whichever theoretical tradition we adhere to, certain significant differences between CSOs/NPOs in general and those of the minorities should not be overlooked. In our chapter we do not aim to settle the debate regarding the validity of theories of civil society in the case of ethnic organisations, and instead analyse the interviews made with organisational leaders to reconstruct their notion of civil society as a category of self-identification in practice, and on one hand contrast it with the theories, and on the other to examine the relationship between these notions and their conditions of operation.

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[20] Y. Hasenfeld, B. Gidron, *Understanding Multi-purpose Hybrid*, 101.

[21] T. M. Ali, S. Guld, "Government Funding to the NGOs: a Blessing or a Curse?" *Research in Business and Social Science* 5 (6) (2016): 51–61.

[22] A. Z. Biró, "Intézményesedési folyamatok a romániai magyar társadalomban 1989-1995 között," in A. Z. Biró (ed.), *Stratégiák vagy kényszerpályák? Tanulmányok a romániai magyar társadalomról* (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Kiadó, 1998), 48.

[23] D. Kiss, *Az erdélyi magyar civil*, 143–4.

[24] Kiss enumerates these sub-systems: administration, political, economic, religious, research and educational, and cultural.

Methods of Research

This chapter is based on qualitative expert interviews with representatives of ethnic non-profit organisations in three localities: Košice (Slovakia), Pécs (Hungary) and Timişoara (Romania). It is the first part of a research project that aims to analyse the organisations of several national and ethnic minorities in multiple countries. The research cities were selected for their multi-ethnic character—in each of these cities, several ethnic communities live together. In fact, the selected cities are, in their respective countries, among those where the most ethnic communities live and operate their institutions, such as schools, theatres and media.[25] This makes it possible to study the organisations of these minorities in relation to not only their own institutions, the public institutions and the majority kin states, but also to other minorities and their organisations operating in the immediate environment.

The three locations are also similar in other ways. In all cases, the minorities constitute only a small portion of the population, and therefore these minorities have less impact on local and national politics, and are unable to use most public institutions—except their own schools and cultural institutions—to further their interests, and have to rely more on non-profit organisations. According to the latest census in 2011, in Košice, from the total population of 240,688, the largest ethnic groups are the Hungarians (2.65%) and Roma (2%), but there are also Rusyns (0.68%), Czechs (0.65%), Ukrainians (0.3%), Germans (0.13%) and other smaller national minorities (Bulgarian, Polish, etc.). The total population of Pécs was 146,990 in 2011. The largest communities are the Germans (4.47%), Romani (2.14%), and Croats (1.31%). Other nationalities include the Serbs, Romanians, Russians, Arabs, Poles, Bulgarians, Greeks and others. In Timişoara, of the 319,279 residents in 2011, Hungarians (5.12%), Germans (1.37%), Serbs (1.3%) and Roma (0.69%) form the biggest

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[25] In Hungary, the data on the minority grants of the Ministry of Human Capacities can be consulted. The most applications came from the capital, but Pécs occupies second place. Pécs has the third most ethnic communities operating minority institutions in general and civil society organisations in particular, after Budapest and Szeged. However, Szeged has fewer and less active organisations in total. In Slovakia, the results of the grants for the culture of national minorities provide data: Košice is third based on the total number of applications and total number of applicants, but second, after the capital, in the number of nationalities. In Romania, no such data are available. In this case, the aim was to choose a city that is home to several minorities and is suitable for comparison.

minority communities, the other nationalities being Ukrainians, Slovaks, Jews and others.

But of course, there are also differences among the localities and among minorities in the same city. One such difference is the legal environment: a significant difference is the presence of elected minority self-governments in Hungary that are meant to foster cultural autonomy, maintain the cultural institutions of the represented minority and represent its interest towards local self-government.[26] There are also significant differences in the size of the minorities both locally and on the level of the country inasmuch as some constitute a higher proportion of a population in the country than others, in some parts of it even a local majority (e.g. the Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania, the Roma in Hungary), which means they are potentially part of a larger institutional system which may affect their room to manoeuvre, their attitudes towards politics in general and the political representation of the minorities in particular, and local cooperation with other minorities. Finally, the Roma and non-Roma organisations differ significantly as the two need to reflect on different issues that concern their respective communities: social exclusion on one hand, and the issues of the cultural reproduction of the community on the other.

This chapter is based on individual and group interviews in the first stage of the research with 31 persons representing 34 organisations. The respondents represent all the larger minorities living in the three cities and one of the smaller minorities in Košice. In Košice (eleven respondents) representatives of Hungarians (seven), Roma (two) and German (one) organisations, and an interethnic organisation (one) were interviewed. In Pécs (ten respondents) the respondents were representatives of Croat (four), German (four) and Roma organisations (two). Unfortunately, in Timişoara only the interview with the Hungarian organisations (ten respondents) is available.[27] The respondents represented a wide variety of

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[26] For more information regarding the system of MSGs in Hungary see B. Dobos, "The Minority Self-Governments in Hungary," *Autonomy Arrangements in the World: Online Compendium* (2016).

[27] Most interviews were conducted in small, ethnically homogeneous groups of usually two to four people, with the exceptions of the ethnic Hungarians in Košice and Timişoara, which have the most organisations: the number of participants was seven and ten, respectively. The aim was for the respondents to reflect the heterogeneity of the minority civil spheres in the three cities. Unfortunately, not all smaller minorities could be included in the first stage. In another stage of the research, questionnaires were filled out by 20 organisations in Pécs, 25 organisations in Košice and 23 organisations in Timişoara. Beside the

organisations ranging from traditional cultural and community-building associations, youth and women's organisations to umbrella organisations and foundations and welfare organisations. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian or Slovak.[28] The main topics of the interviews were the self-definition of these organisations, their field of activity, and the main goals and resources they are able to mobilise in the pursuit of these goals. The interviews provide us with the self-representation of the minority civil society organisations and the concept of "minority CSO" as a category of practice, and make it possible to explore the attitudes and opinions of the representatives of these organisations on their perceived role in modern societies and their conditions of operation, and also to compare the organisations of various ethnic and national minorities in three countries.

Minority Civil Society Organisations
as a Self-representation

Based on the interviews we identified four main characteristics of civil society organisations that are of course interrelated: autonomy, voluntariness, state funding and close contact with people. At first glance, these criteria—except state funding—seem to mirror the characteristics of CSOs derived from mainstream literature on the topic. However, the inclusion of the fourth criterion and it's elevation to the status of defining characteristics indicate significant differences. In the following section, we elaborate on these main characteristics and explore how these characteristics are linked with other aspects of the operation of minority organisations.

Autonomy of Organisations and Political Neutrality

The most emphasised characteristic of minority CSOs is their "independence," "which they should have in every aspect" (interethnic organisation, Košice), which was, however, mentioned primarily in

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aforementioned minorities represented in the first stage, Czechs and Rusyn-Ukrainians in Košice and Greeks in Pécs participated in the second stage of the research. A systematic analysis is not provided in this chapter, but the results of the survey are compared with the interviews. The new results confirm the conclusions derived from the interviews. In Timişoara, the representatives of other minorities, representing the Roma, Germans, Slovaks-Czechs, and others, were contacted but were unwilling to participate.

[28] The interviews have been transcribed in the language of the interview and selected parts translated to English by the author.

relation to politics in general, and political parties in particular—in the sense of neutrality—but also in terms of the free choice of activity.

Most of the organisations' activities are, indeed, politically neutral and compatible with most political values: they organise cultural events and lectures on history, operate choirs and folk ensembles and celebrate national holidays and other days of commemoration. Still, several respondents emphasised that the CSOs should be neutral, and not choose sides in politics, "because one can never know" (Roma women's organisation, Pécs). This neutrality is often presented as a necessity, which is related to the fact that most organisations draw on public resources, distributed in the form of project grants and grants for general operating expenses. The perceived danger and fear of losing access to resources are also mentioned in the literature among the factors potentially contributing to the depoliticisation of civil society.[29]

Yet, the organisations' relationship with politics is more ambivalent: "we mustn't engage in politics, yet we have to engage in politics," said a representative of another Roma women's organisation in Pécs. As the representative of a German organisation in Pécs said, the civil society organisations "can't afford to stand left or right ... If they do so, they only get support, financial or moral, if that side is in power." But later, the same representative added, that "it is hypocritical to say that they shouldn't— every civic organisation leans either left or right."

This emphasis on political neutrality, expressed as independence from political parties, can be seen as an effort to avoid being seen as fostering the interests of one or another political party. Especially, but not only, in Hungary there is an ongoing discourse on "fake civils" and an expectation to separate politics from the sphere of civil society.[30] Civil-society actors that engage in political conflicts, even if only on certain issues concerning the minority, risk being compromised and labelled "fake," the fear of which may motivate the leadership of a CSO to abandon advocacy in favour of service provision and community building, activities that are also favoured by the grant systems. Thus, the expectations of the general public, the structures of the grant systems, and the preference of most organisations to focus on community building and issues of national identity reinforce each other. While there were some among the representatives of Hungarian organisations in Košice who argued that

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[29] M. Chaves, L Stephens, J. Galaskiewicz, "Does Government Funding Suppress Nonprofits' Political Activity?" *American Sociological Review* 69 (2) (2004): 295.
[30] M. Gerő, Á. Kopper, "Fake and Dishonest: Pathologies of Differentiation of the Civil and the Political Sphere in Hungary," *Journal of Civil Society* 9 (4) (2013): 367–70.

ethnic non-profits should more actively influence political processes concerning the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, or play some social movement role, these opinions were outnumbered by those opposing taking part in political conflicts. In the case of the respondent organisations, the achievement of some change in policy is not a priority.

By emphasising their independence from partisan politics, the representatives also expressed the idea of an undivided civil sphere contrasted with the fragmented realm of political competition. This way, the distancing from politics and the potential giving up of advocacy, which may also be seen as a more-or-less self-imposed restriction of their autonomy, often get an additional, positive meaning in the form of the "moral superiority" of civil society above politics: "Because political parties have emerged, which, in my opinion, are rather based on individual ambitions, than really trying to further the interests of the Hungarians in Slovakia. Petty fights between the parties, between persons, and the important things are completely forgotten" (Hungarian cultural organisation, Košice). However, this idea of an undivided civil sphere is not necessarily supported by the reported relationships among organisations. In the network of the Hungarian organisations in Timişoara, sympathies for one or another Hungarian party appear to constitute a dividing factor. The representatives of ethnic Hungarian organisations in Košice also discussed the issue of politician-members and their influence on the organisation in the group interview, and while accepted the presence of active politicians, even in the leadership of a minority CSO, as natural in the case of such small communities, emphasised that the two realms of politics and civil society should and can be separated, and it is harmful if the logic of the former becomes too influential on the latter. The ties of non-profit organisations and political parties as a topic, however, often arise around elections and in relation to home-state and kin-state funding. In other cases, competition for scarce resources in itself results in conflicts within the civil sphere.

Neutrality was primarily emphasised in Timişoara and Pécs among the German and Roma organisations, and was less emphasised, but also present, in Košice and the Croats in Pécs. Also, the relevant parties differ: in Hungary and among the non-Hungarian communities that do not have strong ethno-regional parties that could provide political representation, neutrality is understood in relation to the mainstream parties, while the Hungarians in both Košice and Timişoara were more concerned with their own political representation, especially its fragmentation. Another difference is that, in Hungary, a system of minority self-governments was established, which was intended to provide the institutional basis for

cultural autonomy, but these self-governments are often treated as more or less legitimate representatives of the ethnic communities, as they are elected and therefore often included in various advisory bodies. As a result, organisations often delegate the political and advocacy roles to these organisations, while the ethnic organisations in Slovakia and Romania do not have this option. But even in these cases, and if they perceive the need for advocacy, they are unwilling to take it upon themselves and would delegate the task to another organisation.

The Financial Situation of the Organisations

As mentioned above, the other aspect of "independence" is the free choice of activity, which however seems to be potentially constrained by the organisations' financial situations. The organisations draw most of their resources from different grants. This form of funding was mentioned in several instances as a defining characteristic of civil-society organisations: "We are not an enterprise; we don't earn money, so to say. From grants, a non-profit organisation gets money from grants" (Hungarian cultural organisation, Košice).

These grants are often specifically established for the financial support of ethnic institutions, such as the support programme of the Government Office of Slovakia "culture of national minorities," or the grant of the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary, which is also reserved for the organisations of nationalities.[31] In Romania, the Communitas Foundation, established by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), offers grants to Hungarian organisations and private persons. These separate grant systems, however, usually finance only the cultural and community-building activities of ethnic organisations, the media and publishing. Welfare organisations usually apply for general grants, where they have to compete with non-ethnic competitors. Another important source of finances are the grants of the kin-state, for instance in the case of ethnic Hungarians, Croats, Czechs and Slovaks, but also, under different conditions, ethnic Germans. Of course, there are also organisations that successfully access EU structural funds, but these seem to be the exceptions and typically happen in a partnership agreement with the local government or other institutions.

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[31] While in the Slovak case any organisation may apply with a project concerning minorities, in Hungary only organisations that explicitly state their being an organisation of a nationality in their statute are eligible.

Although these grants targeting the minorities usually more-or-less fit the mission and needs of the organisations, there were some who said that there were instances when they felt pressure to apply for grants that did not fit the activities of the organisation, as otherwise they would not have sufficient resources to maintain the operation of the organisation, and also, as visibility is perceived as an important criteria in the evaluation of grant applications: "We have been forced into it [the application], because we have to produce something each time, to get a grant next year" (German youth organisation, Pécs). This pressure was said to be especially strong in the first years of operation: "In the first couple of years we have applied to every possible call that was published, to ensure survival" (Roma women's organisation, Pécs).

But organisations that have paid employees or for a property also mentioned that they feel pressured to apply. The latter is often mentioned as being a financial burden instead of an asset. On the other hand, there are organisations that share their property with others, or have the opportunity to use the property of other organisations free of charge, which is a typical form of cooperation among the respondents: it was mentioned by the Croats, who often use the premises of the August Šenoa Croat Club for their events, which is the property of the Croat self-government. The Lenau House plays a similar role for the Germans in Pécs, while in Timișoara there is the Kós Károly Community Centre and the so-called Hungarian House, but also the premises of the local Hungarian lyceum are used by several organisations, while the Hungarians in Košice also share their properties, such as the recently established House of Hungarian Presence, the Csemadok headquarters, and the Márai Commemorative Room.

Despite this pressure, the organisations usually do not perceive their reliance on these grants as threatening their autonomy, as in most cases the funded activities match the typical activities of the ethnic organisation. However, on the level of the system, the grants are seemingly among the most important factors influencing the formation of the ethnic institutional systems by reinforcing the status quo: "Of course, most organisations are cultural, that's for sure, and this might also be because culture is what you can get funding for" (Croat cultural organisation, Pécs).

In accordance with previous studies on the composition of ethnic institutional systems,[32] the activities of the organisations typically

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[32] D. Kiss, *A romániai magyar nonprofit szervezetek—2009–2010: A szervezetek adatbázisának bemutatása és a nonprofit szektor szociológiai elemzése* (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul Pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2010), 14–15; K. Tóth, *Szlovákiai magyar kulturális intézmények?*, 233–5.

encompass cultural activities, especially different events such as celebrations of national holidays, the operation of different choirs, bands, (folk) dance groups and amateur theatres, the maintenance of cultural traditions, the dissemination of information on the minority culture or history, community building, the support of minority schools, advocacy and other similar activities. Being an ethnic organisation was usually defined not on the basis of the composition of the membership or leadership, nor on the language (although these may be relevant), but on the basis that the activity of the organisation is related to the issues concerning the minority societies. In most cases, this meant that the organisations are somehow connected to the culture or history of the particular minority. These organisations contribute to the cultural offer with events, performances and publications related to the culture and history of the particular nation in general, or the national or ethnic minority in particular. But more than this contribution to the cultural offer, they intended to contribute to the development and maintenance of ethnic or national identity as well by providing information, cultivating a positive image of the particular nation or ethnic group and building community. This was, however, secondary in the case of the interviewed Roma organisations, especially in Pécs, that focus primarily on the welfare and empowerment of the Roma communities. Of course, community building as part of these efforts was equally important for the sake of maintaining identity.

As stated, in both cases, the available grants more-or-less match the needs of the organisations, however they do not provide financial stability as they usually cover the costs, or more often just a part of the costs, of only a specific short-term project or contribute to the general operating expenses of the organisation. However, these grants usually do not enable long-term planning. Interestingly, this was the main criticism of EU funds too, given that the three-year cycles are too short for a welfare project to become self-sustainable.

Despite this, the respondents were often dissatisfied with their organisation's financial situation, and other ways of fundraising were not mentioned. As a representative of a Croat organisation in Pécs said: "So we always expect, in Hungary, it is always like that: we associate, and someone will give the money." If other forms of fundraising were mentioned, they were dismissed as requiring too much effort and because the returns are doubtful. Only small organisations strongly attached to some community—such as the association of Hungarian Catholics in Košice or the Calvinist choir—or schools were financed from other sources of income: typically donations from parents, members of the

congregation and the organisation, and their income-tax designations.[33] Organisations targeting an audience beyond the membership were all financed primarily from grants.

Voluntariness

In connection with the financial instability of the organisations, the non-profit form was explicitly mentioned as a way to tide over periods without external resources and also as a legal form that entitles one to apply for different grants: "For us it is easier. A civic association, that in 99% of the cases does not employ people, doesn't have to pay contributions; there is no financial burden of operation for a civic association. I apply each year; the association applies to different ministries and institutions for grants. No one is entitled to get them, but if one gets them, one realises a project" (Roma cultural organisation, Košice).

The voluntariness of the organisations is central in this aspect, and was also mentioned as one of the defining characteristics of a civil society organisation: "For civic organisations, voluntary work is the most characteristic. There is no reward, actually, only that yes, we have achieved something, shown something, but usually we do all this as voluntary work" (Hungarian cultural organisation, Košice). In the case of the interviewed organisation, this meant not only that the organisation works with regular, long-term or occasional volunteers, but also that most often the whole operation of the organisation is based on the voluntary work of the leadership, and having paid employees is an exception. But, interestingly, even if an organisation has paid employees, some degree of voluntariness, selflessness and enthusiasm was said to play a role, as working for a non-profit organisations usually also means lower salaries.

This reliance on voluntary work characteristic for most interviewed organisations, together with the financial situation, has far-reaching consequences on the operation of the organisations. The leadership typically operates the organisation in its spare time, which certainly limits the time and energy that they can offer, and as a result also its potential to attract funding and manage projects, and the level of professionalism is usually low. This low level of professionalism is a consequence, but also one of the causes, of financial instability.

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[33] In all three countries, private person—and companies in Slovakia—can designate 1% (in Hungary and most companies in Slovakia) or 2% (private persons in Slovakia and Romania and some companies in Slovakia) of their income tax to eligible civil-society organisations.

The respondents, when asked about their motivation to donate their free time, energy or even money to the organisation, usually emphasised commitment to a cause, and a sense of responsibility either for the community as a whole and its survival, or its members: "Evidently, such people go to work for a civic organisation, and these associations, foundations are established by people, who are committed, or at least we hope so" (Roma welfare organisation, Pécs). Especially among the representatives of youth organisations, however, other motivations were also mentioned: they do their volunteering as a hobby, and also mentioned the importance of belonging to a community of people with similar interests and values: "as in hockey and football teams. You have to belong somewhere" (Hungarian youth organisation, Košice).

Although some of the organisations may have many members, recruitment of new members was never mentioned as a priority, and only a small number of core members seem to play a defining role in the operation, and often the role of a charismatic leader was emphasised as a crucial condition for a successful organisation. The leaving of the charismatic leader was said to sometimes even lead to the dissolution of the organisation. The charismatic leader or the small core of active members is, as mentioned above, often surrounded by a bigger number of inactive members, who are satisfied with the actual or symbolic benefits of paid membership in a minority association. As membership fees can be important sources of income, this is a mutually advantageous situation. While the conditions of operation of foundations might be different from associations, as Biró mentioned in his study of ethnic Hungarian institutions in Romania, the difference between these two organisational forms soon blurs, and their activity, social role and relationship with their environment is very similar.[34]

Relationship with the Environment

The relationship of organisations and their environment was an important topic in the theories of civil society as well. These see civil society or the non-profit sector as an intermediary, mediating sphere. We have already dealt with the relationship with the political society. Another interesting question is the relationship of the organisations with the people. This may take various forms, and mediation is only one of them, which was also mentioned in the interviews, but interestingly not as often as the other three aspects of being a civil-society organisation. The only exception

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[34] A. Z. Biró, *Intézményesedési folyamatok*, 45.

were the Roma organisations in Košice and in Pécs which put a strong emphasis on their role of mediators between the majority or public institutions on one hand and the Roma communities on the other. This may be—and often is—explained by the great interest of both Roma and non-Roma organisations in the issues connected with the situation of Roma people. In a competition among organisations active in the field of social-welfare programmes, this emphasis on the Roma organisations' direct contact with the targeted communities and the criticism of other actors for their lack of this direct contact as well as lack of relevant information and skills (such as the command of a Romani language), their incompetence and irresponsibility towards these communities, may be understood as a way to gain advantage in this competition. "For me it is ridiculous, that an organisation from Bratislava, often non-Roma, or those that have access to these amounts of money, and they don't have an idea, don't know the localities, but they have the money ... And it is sad, because when their projects are over, they leave. Often they do a lot of harm, harmful activism, infect the people, and ruin the communities, and then leave, because they reorient themselves on another project" (Roma media organisation, Košice).

The interviewed Roma organisations indeed not only claim this role of the mediator, but also often play it in different projects implemented in cooperation with the local self-government, public institutions and others when they simply provide information about the communities.

This aspect of being an ethnic civil-society organisation was surprisingly missing from the interviews with the representatives of non-Roma organisations in all three localities. We do not have definite explanations for this, but we will attempt to provide some hypothetical explanations based on the interviews. One possible, if partial, explanation may be that, compared to Roma organisations, non-Roma organisations do not perceive the aforementioned competition for projects concerning the particular ethnic community.

As we have seen, most of the non-Roma organisations' activity is focused on ethnic culture and history, and if they cooperate on a project with other organisations it is usually with those of the same ethnic community, and typically for the sake of pooling their resources. This focus on cultural and other events also means that the people mostly play the role of a more-or-less passive audience. Furthermore, in this case it is often not even a paying audience. As most of their resources come from external sources instead of the immediate environment, the organisations are neither dependent on nor financially responsible to the ethnic communities. We have already mentioned the effect on their autonomy,

but it may also affect their relationship with the ethnic communities. As a result of this form of financing, the relationship of the ethnic institutional system and the minority society became one-directional: the institutions—non-profits included—"give," and the ethnic community "receives," while the organisations provide services and organise events, and the community is the consumer, beneficiary or audience. The organisations do not have to adapt to the demands, values, or even needs of the ethnic communities. This, of course, does not mean that they do not adapt or that they are not at all open to impulses coming from the ethnic community. This question could only be answered if we knew more about the demands of the communities towards these organisations. But a telling idea was that expressed by a representative of a Hungarian cultural organisation in Košice that the organisations should "guide the community somehow." This kind of philanthropic paternalism is surely not unique to ethnic organisations but is often ignored or neglected in the case of civil-society organisations. Lester Salamon traces this voluntary failure back to the funding of organisations—in his case it concerned private charity and the consequent control of the wealthy donors over the activities of the receiving organisation.[35] But this remark can be generalised to other cases when the most important resources do not come from the target group.

Organisations as Substitutes of Public Institutions

While the organisations without exception speak and think of themselves as civil-society organisations, for many of them what Dénes Kiss claims is also true—that they are more often than not primarily substitutes for the non-existent minority institutions, and their legal form of association, foundation, or other non-profit organisation is incidental.

The lack of institutions was mentioned among the most serious issues, the communities face: "Well, as I see that, basically the biggest problem of the Hungarians in Slovakia is that there is no functional institutional system ... In the past Csemadok seemed like that, while it was getting regular funding from the state ..." (Hungarian cultural organisation, Košice).

As Kántor argues, all national minorities aim to establish their own institutions that can be used to address their specific needs, which he calls

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[35] L. Salamon, "Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government: Toward a Theory of Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 16 (29) (1987): 41–2.

institutional segregation.[36] These parallel institutional structures play an important role in the ethno-cultural reproduction of the minority.[37] As the minorities can use the public institutions as their own in only certain cases—schools and some museums where they constitute the local majority—they strive to establish their own institutions, often in the form of non-profit organisations: "The lack of institutions means that civic organisations substitute them and do what should have been done by institutions" (Hungarian umbrella organisation, Košice). And in many cases, the respondents see their organisations as such substitutes, as the following dialogue between the representatives of an umbrella organisation and a cultural organisation shows:

> 1st Respondent: But [name of organisation] is basically a cultural centre.
> 2nd Respondent: Well, not exactly.
> 1st Respondent: Its activity … It's a cultural centre, but without the budget.
> 2nd Respondent: See, that's the thing.

The lack of institutions was primarily mentioned by the representatives of Hungarian organisations, but also Roma organisations in Košice, especially in relation to a non-profit media organisation: "Unless the institutions that would deal with the community will be established the situation wouldn't improve … For years we have requested a system of funding of the Roma media, because Roma media shouldn't and cannot function as a project" (Roma media organisation, Košice).

As we can see, the non-profit form of the organisations can be understood as a necessity. This legal form has several advantages, and is certainly an adaptable form. It entitles the organisation to apply for different grants, including those specifically established for the support of the cultural activities of ethnic and national minorities, but also to access other sources of income (donations, sponsors, membership fees, etc.). But it also makes it possible to tide over periods without funding by keeping the expenses at a relatively low level. This is however usually achieved by not having paid employees, which carries the danger of philanthropic amateurism.[38] If we look at the organisations through this lens, as quasi-institutions in non-profit form, we can more easily understand why they

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[36] Z. Kántor, "Kisebbségi nemzetépítés: A romániai magyarság mint nemzeti kisebbség," *REGIO* 11 (3) (2000): 234–5.
[37] T. Kiss, "Increasing Marginality, Ethnic Parallelism and Asymmetric Accomodation: Social and Political Processes Concerning the Hungarian Community of Transylvania," *Minority Studies* 18 (2015): 34.
[38] L. Salamon, *Of Market Failure*, 42.

propose some form of normative funding, and why they would not consider it as a threat to their autonomy. This latter demand was expressed not only in Košice but also in the other localities. Some of the organisations expressed their opinion that, "Those who have proven themselves for years could be given normative funding" (German advocacy organisation, Pécs).

Conclusion

Previous studies on ethnic institutional systems showed, on one hand, that the majority of ethnic institutions function in non-profit form but, on the other, questioned whether the adaptation of mainstream theories of civil society or the non-profit sector would be adequate for understanding their emergence and operation. While some scholars consider the theory of civil society an adequate framework for the study of ethnic organisations, and others argue for the combination of the three dominant theoretical traditions of "civil society," "non-profit sector" and "social movements," there are also scholars who say that these theoretical traditions are inadequate, and that ethnic organisations should be studied in another theoretical framework.

In this chapter, we attempted, based on interviews conducted with the representatives—usually the leaders—of ethnic non-profit organisations of various ethnic and national minorities in Košice, Pécs and Timişoara, to construct the category of minority civil-society organisation as one of self-identification in practice, to compare it with the concept of CSOs as derived from the literature and link the elements of the self-identification with some relevant characteristics of the operation of ethnic organisations. Based on the interviews with the representatives of minority CSOs, we identified four defining characteristics, as expressed by the respondents: autonomy/neutrality, voluntariness, grant funding and, to a smaller degree, contact with the community and mediation. Despite the variety of respondents in terms of country, nationality, size and type of activity, the elements of self-representation were the same. Three of the four characteristic traits seem to mirror the image of CSOs from the literature, while grant funding is considered to be a threat to autonomy.

Indeed, the interviews showed that the autonomy of the organisations may be somewhat constrained by their dependence on external funding from the government. Nevertheless, the organisations did not perceive this as an issue to be solved, and there were no signs that they intend to diversify their sources of income. This may be due to the fact that most organisations rely on the voluntary work of their leadership and an active

core membership, and, with the exception of a few organisations, they do not have professional, paid employees. As a result, the organisations are able to tide over periods without financial support. However, they suffer from philanthropic amateurism, as the leadership lacks either time, skills or motivation for the development of the organisation. The relatively easily accessible governmental grants make it possible for the organisations to realise short-term projects, cultural and community events, lectures, and projects for social integration, but do not provide a stable basis for operation and even less for long-term planning and development. Finally, the organisations seem to be more-or-less detached from the minority societies due to external—home state and kin-state, or possible EU—funding, and are not financially responsible to the minority societies, while the relationship between the organisations and the societies is one-directional, putting the minority societies in the role of the beneficiaries and consumers of their services and the audience of their events. In cases when organisations perceive a strong competition from non-minority organisations for the projects, the relationship with the community and the role of the organisation representing the community are emphasised. However, further research is needed to contrast this claim with the perceptions of the represented community.

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