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Ethnic Organisations in Central Europe: A Stable Instability?

Ethnic organisations in Košice, Pécs and Timișoara and their conditions of operation

Abstract. Previous studies have shown that non-profit organizations and unregistered associations constitute the majority of the institutional systems of ethnic minorities. The present paper is focused on the organizations of autochthonous ethnic minorities in three Central European cities, using interviews made with the representatives of ethnic non-profit organizations. Based on the interviews, we look at the non-profit organizations as possible substitutes of missing public institutions, and therefore we focus primarily on their conditions of operation and their consequences on the activities of the organizations. We argue that the non-profit form of the organizations, instead of being an indicator of stronger civic ethos of minority communities, is on the one hand a way to access different sources of funding, and on the other hand – a way to keep the costs of operation on a minimal level and if necessary, tide over time periods without external funding, thus stabilizing the organizations in a disadvantageous financial situation.

Keywords: ethnic organization, civil society, non-profit organizations, grant system, interorganizational relationships

While there is a significant proportion of people that belong to some ethnic or national minority in the countries of Central Europe, the theoretical or empirical studies on the institutional systems or some specific institutional sub-systems

(e.g. the cultural institutions, the non-profit organizations) of these autochthonous minorities are scarce. The institutions of ethnic Hungarians, especially in Romania and Slovakia, are relatively well known, but we know significantly less about the composition and operation of the institutions of other ethnic communities. However, the available data on the ethnic Hungarian institutions show that their majority operates as a non-profit organization or as an unregistered association (Fábri, 2005, pp. 99–100; Tóth, 2005, p. 35).

Non-profit organizations are probably the most widely studied parts of the so called civil society, and the two terms are often treated as synonyms. Although there are several different ways, civil society is conceptualized (Edwards, 2004, pp. 19–20; Edwards, 2011, pp. 7–8; Keane, 1998; Seligman, 1995), the dominant understanding of civil society is that of the third sector, the non-profit organizations (Edwards, 2004, Salamon et al., 2003). These are organizations that are **institutionalized** to some extent; **private**, institutionally separate from the government; **non-profit-distributing**; **self-governing**, able to control their activities; and **voluntary**, i.e. non-compulsory and including some meaningful degree of voluntary participation of the members, leaders or voluntary donations from various donors (Tice et al., 2001, p. 9). In practice, organizations that fall into specific legal categories, i.e. associations, foundations and similar organizations, are considered parts of the civil society.

There may, of course, be several reasons for choosing the non-profit form for one's organization – the form that is the most often associated with civil society – with its advantages and disadvantages. However tempting it is to assume that these organizations, without exception, constitute what could be called the minority civil society, several scholars question this assumption and point out that it would be a mistake to suppose that the **civic ethos** is stronger or more widespread among the representatives of ethnic minorities (Kiss, 2006, p. 144). These scholars question on different grounds the assumption that the number or proportion of non-profit organizations within the institutional systems of ethnic and national minorities would indicate a strong minority civil society.

The basis of Hegedűs' argument is the multiple dependencies of most ethnic Hungarian minority organizations on different donors: the home-state government, kin-state government, and also the political representation of the minority, among others (Hegedűs, 2005, pp. 121–122). Biró, on the other hand, puts the emphasis on the relationship between the ethnic organizations and their environment, namely, as Biró points out, the organizations are led by the elites and are distant from the minority societies, furthermore, the relationship is one-directional, in

which the organizations “give”, while the society “receives” (Biró, 1998, p. 48). Last, but not least, Kiss argues for another theoretical framework, in which minority non-profit organizations and the associated activities should be analyzed, and proposes an alternative model of the minority institutional system consisting of specific sub-systems, based on the field of activity (e.g. cultural, religious, education, etc.), each of which consists of public institutions and non-profit organizations. As Kiss argues, the field of activity is primary, and the legal form of an organization in which this activity is pursued is only secondary, and also the non-profit organizations function as substitutes for non-existent public institutions (Kiss, 2006, pp. 143–144). The non-profitness of most organizations is only the result of the lack of other options and not a conscious choice.

While these arguments are all based on different aspects of the organizations – on their sources of income, their relationship with “their” societies and the organizations’ social role as quasi-public institutions, they are not contradictory. While Hegedűs does not deal in his article with other types of institutions, Biró presents an analysis on the institutional system as a whole, with emphasis on the institutions’ relationship with the minority society, in which one of his most important claims is that non-profits do not differ in this aspect from public institutions, however they differ from minority enterprises, that – in order to achieve profit – have to be more receptive towards the demand coming from the minority society. Kiss’ model of ethnic institutional systems is compatible with these claims. We agree with Kantor’s claim that minorities in general strive for segregation: either **special** segregation or institutional segregation (Kántor, 2004). We can see the presence of non-profit organizations as materialization of these efforts, this is the legal form that is available for ethnic and national minorities to form the organizations considered necessary for the cultural reproduction of their communities.

Research methodology and locations

This paper is based on the qualitative analysis of semi-structured group and individual interviews made with the representatives of ethnic organizations. Three localities have been selected, where the representatives – typically leaders – of ethnic non-profit organizations were contacted and asked to participate. The localities are Košice, Pécs and Timișoara. The three selected cities are in different

states: Košice is in Slovakia, Pécs in Hungary and Timișoara is in Romania. All of the selected cities give home to several ethnic communities beside the majority.

In Košice, according to the data of the latest census in 2011, the ethnic Hungarians constituted the largest minority – 2.65% of the total population of 240,688, which means a community of more than 6,000 people – followed by the Roma (2%, approximately 4,800 people) and other minorities, such as Rusyns (0.68%, cca. 1,600 people), Czechs (0.65%, cca. 1,500 people), Ukrainians (0.3%, cca. 700), Germans (0.13%, cca. 300) and others. Most of these minorities have at least some non-profit organizations. Unsurprisingly, the Hungarian institutional system is the biggest in the city, with approximately 30 institutions, including a theatre (Thalia), primary and secondary schools and church organizations. The Roma also have a theatre in Košice (Romathan) and a private primary school for Roma children. The other communities have to rely in their activities on their non-profit organizations.

Based on the 2011 census, the total population of Pécs was 146,990. The largest minority community was the Germans (4.47%), followed by the Roma (2.14%) and the Croats (1.31%), while the other, smaller minorities were the Serbs, Romanians, Russians, Arabs, Poles, Bulgarians, Greeks and others. Currently, there are 9 minority self-governments (MSG) in Pécs: German, Roma, Croat, Bulgarian, Serb, Polish, Armenian, Greek and Rusyn, and in the past there used to be a Ukrainian MSG as well. Several minorities have only a minority self-government (Bulgarians, Poles, Armenians), others also have one non-profit organization (Greeks, Serbs), while the larger communities, such as the Germans, Croats and Roma, have a more complex institutional system with community/cultural centers (Croat Club “August Šenoa”, Lenau House), primary and secondary schools, and the Croats also have a theatre.

Finally in Timișoara, out of the total population of 319,279, there were three minority communities above 1% of the population: Hungarians (4.9%, cca. 15,500 people), Germans (1.3%, cca. 4,000 people) and Serbs (1.5%, cca. 4,800 people). The smaller minorities were the Roma (0.7%, 2,100 people), Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Slovaks and others. There are Hungarian, German, Serb minority primary and secondary schools in the city and majority schools that offer education in the mother tongue of minorities. There is also a Hungarian and a German state theatre in the city, churches that are more or less tied to some minority (e.g. the Hungarian Calvinist Church, Hungarian Unitarian Church, Lutheran Church).

The situation of the ethnic communities that are as a result included in the study is of course different. On the one hand, the legal environment in which these communities live and their organizations operate is more or less different. A remarkable difference in this aspect is, for instance, the presence of elected MSGs in Hungary.¹ But there are also significant differences in the size of the communities, both in absolute numbers and in their proportion in the selected cities or in the countries, and also in some cultural aspects, the strength of the national or ethnic identity, and perhaps most importantly the use of their mother tongues. The most important difference is between the Roma and non-Roma communities: in their social positions, qualification, unemployment rates, but also age composition. On the other hand, there are also similarities. The main similarity is that every minority in the selected cities – Košice, Pécs and Timișoara – constitutes only a small proportion of the population, neither of the ethnic groups present in the three locations constitutes more than 5% of the total population, based on the data of the latest censuses. As a result, these ethnic communities do not have a significant impact on local politics and cannot use mainstream public institutions as their own, therefore they have to establish alternative institutions.

In this part of the research, interviews were made with 31 persons, representing 34 organizations: in Košice – 11 persons (representing 12 organizations) were interviewed, in Pécs – 10 persons (12 organizations) and in Timișoara also 10 persons (10 organizations). In Košice, interviews were made with representatives of Hungarian, Roma, German organizations and an interethnic organization, in Pécs with representatives of Croat, German and Roma organizations, and in Timișoara with representatives of Hungarian organizations.² Most interviews were conducted in small groups of usually 2–4 people to make it possible for the respondents to react to each other's statements. There were two interviews conducted with a larger group: 7 respondents were present on the interview with Hungarian organizations in Košice and 10 respondents on the interview with Hungarian organizations in Timișoara. The group interviews were ethnically homogeneous, with one exception: an interview with a representative of German associations and a representative of an interethnic organization. There were also 3 individual interviews with those respondents who could not participate in the group interviews. The interviews were made either in the official language

¹ For more information see Dobos (2016).

² There were attempts to make interviews with the representatives of other ethnic communities, but unfortunately, the representatives of these organizations contacted by our local partners were unwilling to participate in the interviews.

of the country or – in the case of ethnic Hungarian organizations – the minority language (i.e. Hungarian).

The main topics of the interviews were their concepts of civil society and minority organizations, their opinion on the role of these organizations in the society, the activities of the represented organization, main goals, interorganizational relationship and the mobilized resources, with special emphasis on their opinions on the available grant systems of the host states and kin-states. In the paper we will focus on the conditions of operation of minority organization, how they evaluate these conditions, and what are the consequences of these conditions on the activities of minority organizations.

Main results

It may sound trivial, but non-profit organizations do not operate in a vacuum, but are embedded in a specific political, economic and social context (Seibel, 1994). Their operation is of course influenced, regulated by different laws – laws ensuring the freedom of assembly and association, tax laws, etc. But, as they can also perform the role of an intermediary sphere (Evers, 1995, p. 165), connecting other spheres of the society, their activity may also be influenced by these other spheres. Non-profit organizations form different relationship with public institutions, government agencies, businesses, other organizations, and the society, through which they may receive important resources (information, voluntary work, financial resources, access to infrastructure, etc.), but can – and sometimes have to – learn new techniques of management. There is constant interaction among these spheres and changes in one of them may affect the other spheres, including the non-profit organizations: for instance a new regulation, the opening of new sources of funding, or the loss of another source, a change in public opinion, and so on. Based on the interviews, the financial environment had the greatest impact on the operation of these organizations, therefore we will focus in our paper primarily on the way in which minority organizations are typically funded and its consequences.

Looking at the organizations of ethnic and national minorities that operate in the selected cities, it is evident that, in accordance with previous studies on the composition of the institutional systems of ethnic Hungarians (Kiss, 2010; Tóth, 2006), most of these are mainly cultural organizations, their

activities encompass primarily different cultural or social events, lectures related to the history or the present of these communities and the dissemination of this information, the celebration of national holiday or other days of commemoration; the operation of choirs, bands, folk ensembles, theatres, community building, and other similar activities. Beside this, they may pursue other activities as well, but their main activities fall into the cultural field. The most notable exceptions are the Roma organizations, which is due to the social positions and majority attitudes towards the Roma community. Therefore, Roma organizations are more active in welfare projects and anti-discrimination projects than the organizations of other minorities. Being a minority organization was typically defined not on the basis of the composition of the membership or leadership, neither on the language – although these may also be more or less relevant – but on the basis that the activity of the organization is related to the issues concerning the minority societies. These organizations contribute to the cultural offer with events, performances, lectures, publications related to the culture and history of the particular nation in general (e.g. the Hungarian or Croat nation), or the national or ethnic minority in particular (e.g. Hungarians from Romania, Croats from Hungary) or even the history of the ethnic community in a particular city or region. 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 spaces and occasions for people belonging to the same minority to meet, form relationships – either personal or professional – and share information on the minority community with the member of the community, but also with other minorities and the majority, thus cultivating a positive image of the particular nation or ethnic group. Focusing on the cultural and historical aspects was more typical for most minorities; however, Roma organizations more often focus on social integration, empowerment, welfare, schooling of disadvantaged children, and also on the **forming** of majority attitudes towards the Roma.

While there are also some exceptions from this – especially, but not only, among Roma organizations – the general picture of an ethnic non-profit organization in the three cities is that of unprofessionalized organizations that are based on voluntary work of some active members of the community. The presence of paid employees – full-time or part-time – is not typical, not even in the case of some traditional organizations that have been present for a long time and are seen as some of the central organizations in these cities, at least from the perspective of their own ethnic community. Of course, there are some leaders, who have full-time jobs that are either compatible with the activities of the organization,

or have a flexible time schedule, but others have to manage the organization in their spare time. The membership, and especially leadership, typically consists of people who themselves declare their belonging to the specific minority and their commitment is usually attributed to their national identity – or in the case of Roma organization solidarity with the less fortunate members of their community – and feeling of responsibility for their community. In this sense, the civil society organizations and their leaders are seen as morally superior to politicians or people who do some similar job for money. However, on the other hand, even paid employees emphasize some degree of voluntariness, as working for non-profit organizations typically means a lower salary.

The respondents also reported infrastructural problems: several organizations do not have their own office, computers, or other equipment. This problem is somewhat moderated by the presence of certain institutions or organizations that on the other hand are able to function as community and cultural centres and provide infrastructure for the other organizations.

As already mentioned, the financial environment was a recurring and dominant theme in the interviews. Being able to apply for grants, and this way to get funding for these activities, was among the mentioned factors that push toward the formalization of the activity, i.e. registration as a non-profit organization, usually an association. Furthermore, this form of funding was even mentioned in several interviews as a defining characteristic of civil society organizations: a civil society organization is an organization that is funded from different grants. **“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). The low level of professionalization can be seen on one hand as a consequence of this financial situation – the organizations cannot employ professionals, because they lack the necessary funds – but on the other hand it is also one of the main obstacles for the development of the organization.

As most organizations are unprofessionalized and lack the necessary experience in grant writing, the number of grants that they can access is limited. Therefore, most organizations typically apply for those grants that are specifically established for the support of minority cultures. All three countries have established their own system for the support of minority organizations. In Slovakia, the grant program “Culture of national minorities” currently falls within the competence of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, more specifically the plenipotentiary for minority communities. In Hungary, the Ministry of Human Capacities operates grant programs for ethnic non-profit organizations

and also for the minority self-governments: there are specific grant programs to cover part of the general operating costs of organizations and MSGs and other grants that offer funding for cultural activities. In Romania, selected organizations coordinate these funding programs, in the case of the Hungarian minority it is the *Communitas Foundation*, established by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ). As Pápay has shown, the *Communitas Foundation* also funds primarily cultural activities (Pápay, 2013). In these cases the organizations do not have to compete with non-ethnic organizations for these funds, only with each other, but sometimes also with other types of minority institutions – e.g. schools, theatres – and the competition is sometimes even limited to the organizations of the same ethnic community, therefore most competing organizations are in a similar situation. Furthermore, usually most of the organizations that apply for these grants get some support; however, as a result, the amounts may be relatively limited compared to the requested amounts. Moreover, even if the funding is generous, the resources have to be spent on the specific project and cannot be used for the infrastructural development of the organizations or other related purposes.

These separate grant systems usually finance cultural and related activities of ethnic organizations, welfare organizations usually apply for general grants, where they have to face non-ethnic competitors as well. Of course, there are also organizations that successfully access EU Structural funds, but these seem to be the exceptions. Roma organizations in Pécs, and also a Croat organization, mentioned that they took part in such projects in the past, or have ongoing projects. These projects have a bigger budget and allow the employment of professionals at least for the duration of the project, which is usually three years, as well as some infrastructural developments, depending on the nature of the project. From this aspect, having a good relationship with local authorities – in the case of the Roma organizations – or having contact with institutions from the kin-state and being able to play an intermediary role between kin-state and host-state institutions – in the case of the Croats – seems to be deciding. Another important source of finances are the grants of the kin-state, for instance in the case of ethnic Hungarians and Croats, but also, if under different conditions, ethnic Germans. Hungary is among the most active kin-states, and the grant system for the support of kin minorities was established right after the regime change and, although with significant changes, operates until the present day. Nowadays, the Bethlen Gábor Fund coordinates the funding of kin minorities, but the institutions of Hungarians living in the neighboring countries may also access

other grants, such as the National Cultural Fund or some grants coordinated by the Ministry of Human Capacities. The Croats also access grants from Croatia, and the Germans receive funding, especially for infrastructural purposes and the maintenance of community centers from the German Ministry of Internal Affairs.

While there would be potentially other sources for funding, they were rarely mentioned in the interviews, and the respondents put most emphasis on the grants, other forms of fundraising were said to be too demanding to be worth the effort. As a Croat respondent representing a cultural association in Pécs said: **“So we always expect, in Hungary it is always like that: we associate, and someone will give the money.”** Especially organizations which operate in community centers or organize larger events have said that their work would be impossible without the support of the host state and/or kin-state. Smaller organizations, that do not organize so many events, and mainly focus on a specific activity – choirs, amateur theatres, dance groups – are more able to rely on the membership fees or other sources for their everyday operation, and need external funding from grants only occasionally, for instance to buy costumes, musical instruments and similar cases.

However, getting most of the resources from different grants may be seen as a serious constraint to the autonomy of the organization, and as we have seen, Hegedűs argues that it is one of the main reasons why minority organizations should not be considered civil society organizations. Based on the interviews, the respondent organizations usually do not perceive their reliance on these grants as a threat to their autonomy, or that they would have to change their activities to fit the calls, mostly because in most cases the calls themselves match the activities of these organizations. However, on the level of the system, grants seem to be among the most important factors influencing the formation of the ethnic institutional systems by favoring cultural organizations and activities over other kinds of activities, thus reinforcing the status quo and strengthening the cultural character of the ethnic institutional system: **“Of course, most organizations are cultural, that’s for sure, and this might also be because culture is what you can get funding for.”** (Croat cultural organisation, Pécs).

Although, as mentioned, grants targeting the minorities usually more or less fit the mission and the needs of the organizations, there were some who say that there were instances in the past when they felt a pressure to apply to grants that did not fit the activities of the organization, as otherwise they would not have got sufficient resources to maintain the operation of the organization. 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) Some respondents mentioned visibility as an important factor of the success of a grant application: organizations that are more visible and therefore well known for the decision-makers are said to have a better chance: **“We have been forced into it [into application for non-fitting grants], because we have to produce something each time, to get some grant next year.”** (German youth organisation, Pécs).

Especially organizations that have paid employees or some property mentioned that they feel pressured to apply to cover the costs of operation. Property is in this sense sometimes a financial burden instead of being an asset. On the other hand, there are some organizations that share their property with others, 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, which is the property of the Croat self-government, for their events, and also several Croat organizations have their seats in the building and use it for their activities; the Lenau House, which is owned by the eponymous cultural association, plays a similar role to the Germans in Pécs, while the Hungarians in Košice – for instance Csemadok and association Rovás – also share their properties and the Sándor Márai Commemorative Room can also be used by the Club of National Minorities and ethnic organizations that do not have their own property.

As mentioned, one of the aspects of being a non-profit organization is that it entitles the organization to apply for different grants established for the support of ethnic communities, and also other sources, such as the municipalities, general grants, and also to fundraising, the enrolment of sponsors and ask for 1% or 2% of the income-tax.³ The latter sources would provide more autonomy in spending of these incomes, however most organizations seem to ignore these options. The other aspect of being a non-profit organization is that it is a way to keep operating costs on a low level. This is achieved by relying on the voluntary work of the members, leaders and potentially for other volunteers as well. This was often mentioned as another defining characteristic of civil society organizations: **“For civil society organisations voluntary work is the most characteristic. There is no reward, actually, only that yes, we have achieved something,**

³ Natural persons in Hungary and legal persons in Slovakia can decide about the transfer of 1% of their income tax to non-profit organizations, natural persons in Hungary can decide about another 1% in favor of churches or other public projects and natural persons in Slovakia and Romania can decide about the transfer of 2% of their income-tax to non-profit organizations.

shown something, but usually we do all this as voluntary work.” (Hungarian cultural organisation, Košice). Some respondents explicitly mentioned this in relation to the operating costs:

For us it is easier. A civic association, that in 99 percent 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, institutions for grants. No one is entitled to get them, but if one gets them, one realises a project (Roma cultural organisation, Košice).

Of course, ethnic organizations in general and the organizations that operate in these cities are relatively heterogeneous, there are organizations that operate cultural and community centers, have plenty of events and may be seen as substitutes for the missing public institutions and sometimes also perceive themselves as such. If we look at the institutional solutions, we see several different options. In Hungary, these central organizations are usually the MSGs, especially in Pécs, where the city provides funding to minority organizations through these institutions. This is especially evident in the case of the Croats, but also small minorities (Bulgarians, Greeks, etc.) can rely on these, as their establishment – as opposed to civil society organizations – is provided by law in all those places where the number of people declaring minority affiliation is high enough. But we see other solutions in the case of the Germans, where the central organization is an association, and in the case of the Roma, whose network seems to be less centralized, with several organizations operating institutions (schools, community centers). In Košice and Timișoara we see that one or more central non-profit organizations try to assume this role. Some of these are the local branches of national organizations: Csemadok, Karpatendeutsches Verein, Český spolek, Rusínska obroda. These organizations, as already mentioned, often operate as cultural centers, however without normative funding, and often without paid employees, and can only rely on different grants from the home state and the kin-state.

“1st Respondent: But [name of organization] is basically a cultural center.

2nd Respondent: Well, not exactly.

1st Respondent: Its activity... A cultural center, but without the budget.

2nd Respondent: That's just it.” (Hungarian organisations, Košice, culture and coordination).

The operation of these organizations seems to be relatively routinized; the events are often traditional ones that have sometimes a history of several

decades. Cultural activities were usually tolerated by the socialist governments, and for example the Csemadok, which was established by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1948, has events that date back in the socialist period. These traditional events typically have the priority over new ideas, which contributes to the remarkable inertia of the general picture of minority institutional systems. While on the national level there are often new activities, social movements that represent another conception of civil society, such as the Movement for Bilingual South Slovakia, and others. However, locally – but at least in the studied localities – traditional cultural and community activities still seem to be the central actors. Other organizations that are smaller or focus on some specific activity (choirs, dance groups, amateur theatres) often work alongside these central organizations or public institutions, such as schools, and get their funding from these partners in exchange for different performances on their events.

Interestingly, most of the respondent organizations did not mention in any way their intermediary role, or even that they – as civil society organizations – have some direct relationship with the minority society. Only the representatives of Roma organizations emphasized that they are closer to, more accepted by the community, and know the community better than majority organizations and public institutions that were criticized for their incompetence and irresponsibility towards the beneficiaries. This could, however, be seen as a way to gain advantage in competition, or to ensure that they are included as mediators in the projects concerning the Roma community:

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 organizations of other minorities did not mention this aspect of being a civil society organization, it seems that for them, as Biró also states, the society plays rather the role of the audience. One hypothetical explanation may be that there is no similar competition for minority cultural activities among organizations of the minority and the majority. This can also be seen as a consequence of external funding, as the organizations' funding is not directly related to the demand coming from the minority society, the organizations do not necessarily have to take the demand into consideration, they are not financially responsible to their

immediate environment, to their audience, as it is usually not even a paying audience. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that they are not at all receptive to impulses coming from the minority community; this question could only be answered if we knew more about the demands of the communities towards these organizations. But a telling idea was that expressed by a representative of a Hungarian cultural organization in Košice, that the organizations should “guide the community somehow”. This kind of philanthropic paternalism is surely not unique to ethnic organizations, but is often ignored or neglected in the case of civil society organizations. Lester Salamon traces this voluntary failure back to the funding of organizations: in his case, private charity and the consequent control of the wealthy donors over the activities of the receiving organization. But this remark can be generalized for other cases, when the most important resources do not come from the target group.⁴

In our paper we looked at the non-profit organizations of ethnic and national minorities in three central cities, to see how these organizations try to substitute for the non-existent public institutions of the minority. Based on the interviews, we may conclude that while the minority organizations, even if we look only at the three research localities, are heterogeneous, and there are different institutional solutions, basically every minority that has the chance strives for the establishment of at least some basic institutions in non-profit form – or in Hungary as a minority self-government – to provide the community with at least some cultural events, to operate the spaces where the members of the community can meet, use their mother language, which may strengthen their identity. As we have seen, Roma organizations – at least in Pécs – were different, inasmuch their primary concern is not to preserve the cultural distinctiveness of the community, but to tackle their social disadvantages.

As mentioned, the institutional solutions may differ with the local branches of national organizations, individual local organizations or the MSGs at the center of these institutional systems, however, what seems more or less universal, the primary resources these organizations use are external, and usually come from the host state and/or the kin-state. The states established different grant systems to support the activities – primarily the cultural – of the minorities living on the territory of the state or their kin minorities living abroad. However, this funding system has its weaknesses and also potentially unintended consequences. The available resources are typically insufficient, to guarantee a stable

⁴ Salamon (1987), pp. 41–42.

financial background for the operation of an organization, while on the other hand – together with the non-profit form and the reliance on voluntary work without paid employees – has a stabilising effect that is strong enough to ensure long-term survival of these organizations. But another consequence is, that by providing funds that do not come from the immediate environment of these organizations, these grants potentially make the organizations less responsive to the needs of the community and more prone to philanthropic paternalism.

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