University of Debrecen

Edina Márkus

Sector Neutrality in the Field of Culture Nonprofit organizations serving cultural purposes in East Central European Cities

- Doctoral (Ph. D.) Thesis Outline -

University of Debrecen School of Independent Faculties Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Interdisciplinary (Social Sciences and Humanities) Doctoral School Doctoral Program in Educational Sciences Subprogram in Adult Education and Cultural Studies

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Consultant: Mihály Sári Ph.D.habil Associate Professor and Head of Department PTE FEEK Submitted by: Edina Márkus Doctoral candidate

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OBJECTIVES AND DEFINITION OF THEME

The rediscovery of civil society can be seen in research into social sciences in the 1970s. Some researchers explain its emergence by the East and Central European transformation and by its role played in the democratic transition in East and Central European countries, whereas others consider civil society to be a response and a possible solution to the crisis of the welfare state. Many researchers draw the attention to the significance of civil society, from different points of view, emphasizing its various roles. Arató (1999) underlines the operation of civil society as a control of state dysfunctions. Civil organizations have an important role in communication in society and in promoting participation in activities, which basically determines the quality of the democratic operation of a society. In certain areas the market and in other ones the welfare state have failed to work and they cannot satisfy the needs of the society in an appropriate way. Consequently, it is the informal economy which becomes dominant, on the one hand by families and households, and by small informal groups on the other (Zapf, 1984). Putnam (1993b, 2000) refers to the role of civil society in relation to his research into societal capital. According to him the relationship between the individuals and the networks, which is primarily based upon mutuality and trust, and the participation of the members of the society in formal organizations of civil society, provides a basis for societal capital.

After the political and economic changes in the regime, there have been structural changes in the field of culture as well: in addition to the state organizations the players of the market and the nonprofit sectors have also appeared, moreover the market and nonprofit organizations have become dominant in some areas, for example, music and media, with the significant decrease of the state in taking roles at the same time.

The East Central European countries were looking forward to the multi-sector model. They had nothing more to hope from the myth (Kuti, 1998; Lantos 1999), which was shaped at the beginning of the '90s by Hungarian researchers and players of the nonprofit sector in connection with the efficiency of nonprofit organizations. Research findings in the international literature do not underline the Hungarian belief, according to which the service provided in a nonprofit form is automatically more efficient than the one in a state form. The national empirical investigations carried out so far have produced quite varied results. They can be summed up mainly with the statement that the efficiency obtained by well-operating nonprofit organizations is higher than that of the over-bureaucratic state institutions, whereas the badly organized nonprofit services fall behind the well-operating state services considering efficiency and other things (Kuti, 1998; 154). The researchers could demonstrate even less advantage in efficiency of nonprofit organizations in comparison to the service providers of the market.

In spite of this, new expectations of nonprofit organizations have emerged, for example, to have a greater part in service providing, to take an employment-promoting role and to develop alternative forms of employment. We have to raise the question of what the actual situation is. Are these organizations capable of meeting these expectations, or if not, what problems do they face and what obstacles are there which hinder them from coming up to the expected roles. Are there any differences between the organizations in East German cities and in the studied organizations operating in other East Central European cities? In our research we intend to find answers to these questions, based on sociology, economics, history and politics sciences. Our *objective* is to study the Czech, Polish, Latvian, German and Hungarian nonprofit sector; to analyze the situation of nonprofit organizations serving cultural

purposes in East Central European cities¹; to understand the factors which promote or delay the development of the sector in the investigated areas; to study the employment potential of nonprofit organizations serving cultural purposes.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

When studying the national and international scientific literature, we tried to get an insight into the areas where research is being carried out to the greatest extent. The international and national research themes and basic problems related to the nonprofit sector are similar. Examples of themes concerning the research into the nonprofit sector in international relations are as follows: the study of the socio-economic environment, collaboration between the sectors, and the study of societal and economic roles. The reason for the appearance of these themes is, on the one hand, the fact that researchers from several fields of science have become intrigued with the examination of civil society all over the world and they have collaborated within the frame of international comparative research. The other reason for this is that Hungarian researchers have also been involved in discussions with international researchers and they have joined the comparative studies among the first ones from the East Central European countries². Moreover, nonprofit theories studying the origin, role and changes of the sector and investigations with a comparative view are also common in the international scientific literature.

The *nonprofit theories*, rivaling with one another and complementing one another have tried to explore the reasons for the emergence of nonprofit organizations, their economic, societal role and their development in the past decades. The nonprofit research, which was primarily empirical and had an economic approach in the beginning has become interdisciplinary in character, and accordingly the societal and political embedding of the organizations have come into focus in the analysis. In current research, in addition to the study of the service providing role of nonprofit organizations in a welfare state, the exploration of the functions of organizations in civil society is getting more and more emphasis (Zimmer, 2002). When summarizing the theories, Kramer (2000) distinguishes three groups: theories in the first group can be connected with the strengthening of the nonprofit sector in the 1960s – the spread of the organizations of the 'global association revolution' (Salamon – Anheier, 1995). They are mainly 'supply and demand' theories, which study the economic role of the sector. Theories in the second group are related to the failures of the

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¹ The research implemented with the support of the European Commission (Third System and Employment) was aimed at the exploration of the existing and further possible roles of the civil sector in employment in European countries in three fields: culture, environment protection and social services. The research project' ARCIWEB Art and Cultural Cities: New Employment Laboratories', supported by the Volkswagen Foundation in addition to the European Commission was part of the research. In the first stage of the research, led by IMED- Instituto per il Mediterraneo, West European cities (Italian, German and Spanish) were studied. In the second stage, under the leadership of the Institute of Sociology of the University of Dresden and the Institute of Cultural Infrastructure of Saxony in Görlitz and with the support of the Volkswagen Foundation other European cities such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Latvia, Germany and Hungary were included in the research. Countries participating in the second stage of the research are mentioned as East Central European countries, and even the title of the comprehensive study is 'Cultural Transition Processes in cities of East and Central European countries with special regard to the third sector.' The political and geographic interpretation, nevertheless, puts forward some dilemmas because in reality, East Germany has been part of the EU since 1990 and not of East Europe. Latvia is not always listed among the East European countries, but is included in East Europe (or the Baltic states.)

The members of the research team in Debrecen were Judit Csoba, Erika Juhász, Edina Márkus, Kálmán Rubovszky, and János Zoltán Szabó in collaboration between the Department of Sociology and the Department of Adult Education and Cultural Sciences of the University of Debrecen.

² (John Hopkins Comparative Project since 1999, later the CISONET Civil Society Network, FOCS Future of Civil Society - all these three studies are mentioned in the international technical literature)

nonprofit sector in the 1980s and its relationship with the state (e.g. theory of the failure of self-organized activity). In the third group there are the welfare mix, welfare triangle and welfare pluralism conceptions having emerged due to the development of welfare states, and according to which emphasis is put on the collaboration between the sectors.

We considered it to be important to *study the nonprofit sector of some European countries and the United States according to specific criteria* because we wanted to demonstrate the various models and to study the possible ways of development. The study of the development and situation of East Central European countries provided a basis for the questionnaire survey as well. When choosing the criteria for the analysis, we have taken the factors influencing the size and structure of the nonprofit sector as our starting point, which have been expressed through the study of the origin and the socio-economic role of the nonprofit sector in connection with nonprofit theories.

The chapter demonstrating the situation of the nonprofit sector and the organizations serving cultural purposes in Hungary provides useful information to answer the question related to the study of the relevance of the expectations of the sector. There has been extremely rapid development in the nonprofit sector, but the situation of the individual organizations has been formed differently depending on their background, their supporters and their actual activities. The cultural nonprofit organizations are very different regarding their institutional forms, territorial location and their founders, which may be related to the wide range of their aims and activities. In the second half of the 1990s they took a part not only as the institutions of community education and of civil society but also as service providers in addressing the cultural needs of the population with their supplementary and developing functions.

In the chapter on the cultural sector in the studied countries, our aim was to get an overview of the cultural policy of the countries participating in the study, to investigate the conditions of operating in cultural areas and to explore the collaboration with the nonprofit sector. To encourage collaboration with the nonprofit sector appears in declarations and in connection with the development of collaborations there are examples quoted of the collaborations of the state and nonprofit and as well the market sector in the cultural sectors of the individual countries. However, they are individual examples and a comprehensive program to encourage partnership does not appear. The analysis of the macro processes exclusively does not reveal what the every day practice is like and to what extent the cultural management considers the organizations to be partners either on a regional or local level.

METHODS AND PROCESS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The interpretation of the civil, nonprofit character is not uniform either in international or in historical comparison; therefore in the beginning a lot of research was done to define the concepts and the names, their history and interpretation. We have shaped the definition of the concepts and their usage considering the approaches in the national and international research in the past decades.

There have been changes in the thinking about the structure of society and its economy due to the reinterpretation of role-taking of the state. According to the classical institutional paradigm of thinking about economics, which is based on the principles of the operation of the institutions and their purposes, the organizations of the economy are divided into two sectors: the market (private) and the state (public). A third type of the institutions, belonging to the private sector considering their legal form, but serving public purposes (with names like third, civil, nonprofit, voluntary, non-governmental sector) has been brought into focus. This type has already contributed to the solution of social problems considerably for a long time all over the word.

According to Seligman (1997) there are two general applications of the sociological concept of civil society. One of them is related to the institutional and organizational studies in the field of political sociology, the other one has a connection with the world of values and beliefs, and therefore both the analytical and the normative approaches appear. Recently the usage of the analytical concept has been more common, according to which civil society can be interpreted as a sphere of interaction between the economy and the state. First and foremost it consists of the public sphere and the freedom of association (Arató, 1992).

The various names of the sector and the organizations such as 'civil, voluntary, organizations serving public purposes, non-governmental, nonprofit' emphasize one feature each, which can always be traced back to the scale of values of its user. Various names³ can be seen in the different countries and language regions as well, emphasizing different attributes, in the background of which no historical chance events are reflected but the differences between countries concerning the socio-economic role and embeddeness of organizations (Kuti – Marschall, 1991: 62).

The name of 'third, non-profit sector and organizations' is generally used in the literature of statistics, economics and sociology, whereas the 'non-governmental organizations' or 'civil society' term are mainly used in the literature of political science. In our study we use the term 'voluntary', 'self-organized' when giving an overview from a historical perspective and in the cases where the original interpretation is required we use the term 'civil', otherwise the term 'nonprofit' is applied.

In our research we have analyzed the data of the Central Statistical Office (henceforth abbreviated KSH) from between 1989 and 2004 and the data of the Comparative Non-profit Sector Project of John Hopkins University (1990, 1995). This statistics provides a methodologically coherent and detailed summary of the data related to nonprofit organizations (foundations, joint nonprofit organizations) at national and international level alike. In addition to this, we have analyzed the findings in the questionnaire study (N=421) carried out in the East Central European cities.

From the standard fundamental conceptions, we have used the definition of the non-profit sector - nonprofit organizations created in accordance with the criteria of ICNPO, the International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations. According to this definition, those organizations belong to the nonprofit sector which are legally existent; which are institutionalized organizations⁴; which are based on self-organization and action, which is revealed in the way of doing voluntary work, in the nature of activities and donations; which have a self-reliant leadership independent of the government; which have been established not primarily with an economic purpose and do not divide the income from their economic activities and serve public purposes. In our study we use a narrow concept of culture, which focuses only on a defined area. Its central focus is the arts, the general knowledge and the everyday behavior and lifestyle of various groups of society. We considered the organizations to be nonprofit organizations serving cultural purposes which have any reference to cultural activities in their statutes, range of activities or name.

In the first stage of the research the project partners conducted non-structured interviews with specialists (local cultural specialists- from municipalities, cultural organizations), and they prepared a part of the study on the cultural policy and nonprofit sector of the cities as well.

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³ In Great Britain: voluntary sector, charities; in France: économie sociale; in Germany gemeinnützige Organisationen, Gemeinwirtschaft, Nicht-Erwerbssektor; in the United States: third sector, nonprofit sector, independent sector, tax-exempt sector, voluntary sector, philanthropic sector; in Italy: voluntariato, associazionismo, terzo settore.

⁴ The Latvian organizations mean the organizations registered at the Department of Culture of the city. A significant part of them is not institutionalized and not registered at the court.

In the second stage of the research, the aims and objectives of the research and their implementation were agreed upon at personal meetings with project partners. The conceptual and methodological background (which contained content-related aspects and methodological measures as well) developed by the Institute of Cultural Infrastructure of Saxony and the Department of Sociology of the University of Dresden was discussed with the project partners and the German questionnaires were made available for us to study. The questionnaires were altered according to the conditions of the individual countries. It was the researchers of the given settlements who dealt with the analysis of the questionnaires on their settlements and they were engaged in the first interpretation of the data as well. The questionnaires, filled in by the managers of the organizations, were forwarded to all the organizations of the nonprofit sector working in the area of culture. On the basis of the experience of the first discussion, which was about the structure and characteristics of the nonprofit sectors of the cities, the project partners decided on preparing a partly standardized questionnaire. The main content points of the questionnaire are the circumstances of foundation, the characteristics of operation; the structure of activity, the target group; financing; the characteristics of the employment policy of the organizations; the financial background and the evaluation of the cultural and economic situation in the given region.

In the third and at the same time the last stage of the research, the organizations selected from the types set up in the second stage were studied even more thoroughly with the method of partly structured interviewing.

Samples were taken on the basis of all the organizations serving cultural purposes available in the databanks reflecting the conditions in 1999. Organizations registered by courts in their association and company registries and organizations in the foundation records of provinces provided basis for the East German research. The Czech project partner took as samples the organizations in the court register, in the register of the ministry of the interior, in the register of the Czech state authorities and in the register of the methodological centre established by organizations serving public purposes. The Hungarian partner was given the addresses of organizations relevant to the research by the Directorate of Hajdú-Bihar Country of the Central Statistical Office and the local country court. We could rely on the data made available by the cultural management of the city council of Riga, which according to Lakis (2000) provides a representative picture of the studied organizations. The background of the data bank for the research in Cracovia is not known. The number of the questionnaires which can be evaluated is 421 (the number of the organizations in the individual cities: Dresden - 97, Görlitz – 41, Weimar -30, Prague- 98, Debrecen -65, Riga -90).

In the analysis of the findings in the questionnaire survey, we considered it important to get an answer by the analysis of the situation of the nonprofit organizations operating in the cultural sector of East Central European cities if the organizations can meet the expectations — to undertake public tasks from the local governments, to take a service providing and employment- activating role. Our aim was to understand the factors which promote or delay the development of the sector in the investigated areas. We endeavored to demonstrate the information explored in the questionnaire survey and to find the correlations which can explain the explored factors.

MAJOR STATEMENTS

• The studied Czech, East-German, Latvian, Polish and Hungarian cities all serve as examples of transforming societies after the change of regime. They have similar institutional and mental patterns and traditions in spite of the differences between them (in relation to their national and regional roles, the proportion of their population); therefore we have assumed that we can experience similarities in the

situation and development of the nonprofit organizations serving cultural purposes. In spite of the historical, structural similarities, the nonprofit sector in the studied cities demonstrates significant differences, which are characteristic of the given countries (regarding the scope of operation, the activities, the size of income, and the types of employment). The German research leaders assumed that the situation of East German cities would be more favorable after the unification due to the economic support and the rapid developing of legal frames and the creating of councils necessary for operation. However, this expectation did not prove true since we had not experienced significant differences to the advantage of East German cities. Our own assumption has been verified, according to which 10 years is a short time considering changes and consequently we cannot expect great differences.

- Seifert (1996) assumed that the organizational patterns, voluntary traditions prevailing before World War Two would not appear significantly any more among the cultural organizations in the East Central European countries. After the unification, researchers studying the East German third sector shaped two contrasting viewpoints. According to one of these, the third sector is the expression of the civil society in East Germany and it is rooted in the democratic processes and based on the more and more active societal participation. According to the other opinion, the third sector is the extension of the West German nonprofit sector in the Eastern part of Germany. In this process of the so-called peaceful colonization new organizations have emerged by West German patterns without embedding into the local society (Anheier – Priller – Zimmer, 2000). The second part of the assumptions of both Seifert and Anheier has proved false. We studied this question by exploring the legal predecessors of the organizations. The number of the re-established organizations was not high indeed in Debrecen (the organizations in Debrecen, with the exception of two of them, were established newly, even if they were established in the 1980s.) However, just the organizations of the East German cities and also the organizations in Prague have been re-established organizations handing down the traditions of previous organizations and it reflects right the societal embededness since even the prohibition for several decades could not wipe out the organizational patterns.
- The legal frames are already established in Germany, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In Poland and Latvia the detailed legal regulation and/or its practical implementation are still partly missing. It affects the development of the sector and so the number of the organizations in Poland is fewer than the half of the organizations registered in Hungary. In Riga the organizations did not get institutionalized in many cases in spite of the fact that informal groups had worked as communities under the auspices of cultural institutions for years. We could experience the influence of the change in the legal conditions in the case of the organizations in Debrecen. Due to the influence of legal regulations supporting foundations, the establishing of foundations was significant. As soon as the regulation had changed, leveling was seen in regard to the organizational forms.
- In the field of the nonprofit sector, the proportion of culture and leisure organizations is dominant regarding the East Central European countries. As we can see in the comparison of international studies between the countries, the researchers believe that continuity lies in its background. This presupposition was partly proved by the survey according to which we could see a higher proportion of organizations established before 1989 among organizations in Prague and to some extent in Debrecen. However, it can be said about the studied towns that about the three-quarters of the organizations were established before 1995, so establishing organizations at the beginning of the 1990s was quite dynamic with regard to their proportion.

- Both in international (Schuster, 1985; DiMaggio, 1986) and in national studies (Kuti, 1999; Harsányi-Kovács, 2002) the proportion of nonprofit organizations among the cultural fields (arts, telecommunication, mass communication, preservation of cultural heritage, public culture, and cultural activities serving various purposes) is considered to be the most significant within art. This presupposition was proved by our research. More than 60% of the studied organizations denoted the art field as their main field of operating. There are differences between the cities. We can mention the activity in Görlitz in relation to public culture and preservation of cultural heritage and the proportion of the almost exclusive art organizations among the organizations in Riga.
- Association is the dominant legal form in our samples. Apart from that, it is exclusively the foundations that have a role worth mentioning. The number of the complicated founding forms and the founding forms with only sufficient capital stock as companies serving public purposes is insignificant in the sample. Thus it seems to knock holes into that presupposition of ours that a process has started in the examined towns where the local governments transfer tasks to the private sector (market or nonprofit) and they establish public foundations, companies serving public purposes by which the state withdraws from the area of culture.
- In a socio-economic concept, the nonprofit sector is important as a sector which provides new employment solutions. The nonprofit organizations are considered to be capable of the increase of employment mainly in household-related, personal, social and environmental services and in the cultural fields, sport and media. It was studied in Germany what potential the nonprofit organizations represent in the second half of the 1990s. It was concluded on the basis of a questionnaire study including 2400 nonprofit organizations, carried out by Priller - Zimmer - Anheier (1999) that contractual employment and voluntary work are the most characteristic in the field of culture. Sometimes it is possible to create places of employment at least for the medium run. In Germany nonprofit organizations are encouraged to open up new employment opportunities by various programs of support. After the unification, the economic support from the West and the rapid alteration of the legal system according to the already existing and well operating patterns, produced a more favorable situation for the East German processes of transition - compared to other countries once being under Soviet control. Consequently, we assumed that the German cities are in a more favorable situation considering employment.
- The expectations of the European employment policy were not proved, whereas the findings of Priller et al. (Priller-Zimmer-Anheier, 1999) according to which the contractual employment and voluntary work are characteristic of the studied organizations were verified. We can conclude on the basis of the research findings that the nonprofit organizations have created new places of employment only sporadically. There are differences between the organizations concerning the circumstances of employment and the maintenance of workplaces. Whereas the permanent employment in the nonprofit sector in Debrecen and Cracovia indicates rather an exception, it is common practice in Riga (88% of all the institutions). In Prague (51%), in Dresden (32%), in Görlitz (23%) and in Weimar (20%) the permanent employment is more or less characteristic. The supported programs of employment do not play a decisive role in the sector, in spite of our starting presuppositions. They are characteristic in the East German cities only to a limited extent (in Debrecen and Prague), whereas in otherEast Central European countries only minimally or they are not characteristic at all (in Cracovia and Riga).
- In the studied towns we have found a diversified system of organizations with significant achievements but not with solid capital, therefore their role in undertaking

services, the increase of the employment potential and the mass appearance of undertaking state tasks cannot be expected if the financing policy (providing support in addition to or instead of project financing) related to the organizations does not change. In Hungary the introduction of the National Civil Core Program in 2003 is considered to be an attempt for this, which promotes the permanent maintenance of the operation of organizations by providing support for the operation of organizations.

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