

Chapter 8

The Role of the Civil Sector in Contribution to Social Well-Being and in Shaping Active Citizenship



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Abstract Nowadays social and economic issues can have unfavourable consequences; social problems both at the global and local level are outstanding and it is essential to find solutions because of the efficient functioning of the economy and the society. Also, state and for-profit actors can take part in solving these problems, but there are lots of services which can be provided only by civil organizations. The first part of the paper presents the concept of civil organizations and current issues of them in Hungary. After that, it describes the way of their contribution to the active citizenship and to social well-being based on theoretical and empirical background. We made a questionnaire research in 2013 among civil organizations at the regional level in Hungary; we would like to show the main results of it. This paper presents a review of the main participatory forms of the organizations through which they can contribute to the improvement of the services and to the expanding of the supply. An important message of the paper is that civil organizations cannot operate without active citizens, our study will also show the methods how civil organizations can contribute to the active citizenship and what kind of elements and barriers have this process. This paper can add to the literature of the civil organizations and can be useful both for policy makers, researchers and citizens.

Keywords Civil sector · Organizations · Society · Participation · Active citizens

8.1 Introduction

The current social, economic changes and processes have unfavourable consequences; social problems—both at global and local levels—become more conspicuous, and it is vital to handle and solve them for the acceptable operation of the society.

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Public and private actors may also take part in the accomplishment, however, we, as self-conscious and liable civilians cannot leave these actors alone to manage social problems, to represent individual and community interests, as well as to shape and influence public affairs. The actors of civil society have also become determining players by now. Civil organizations have become important actors in creating and ensuring social welfare and well-being by producing public goods, providing services, creating jobs, influencing developments and participating in their realization. However, besides their role in these fields, their role in community development, social organization, value preservation, etc., are also not negligible, since community experience, togetherness, trust, solidarity are as determining factors of well-being as financial security or public order.

In our study, we present the social engagement of civil organizations based on theory and a territorial questionnaire survey conducted in Hungary. We introduce the engagement's most important forms with which civil organizations can contribute to social well-being. Civil organizations cannot operate without active citizens, thus we also discuss how organizations can contribute to active citizenship.

8.2 The Concept of Civil and Non-profit Organizations in Hungary

It is not easy to define civil and non-profit organizations exactly, because there are several approaches of these organizations, and there are several different names for them like the third sector, voluntary sector; depending on the attributes of the sector. Mária Anna Bartal (1999:14) defined the definition of civil organizations as follows: civil society includes those citizens' initiatives which are voluntary for the citizens, and are free from state interventions.

Nowadays this definition is often confused with the definition of the non-profit organizations, which can be an incorrect approach in Hungary. Non-profit organizations are only those ones, which have legal status in the civil society. It means that non-profit sector is a narrower category, but it is also a wider one in Hungary, because non-profit sector also includes organizations, which are established partly or completely by state actors (Kuti 1998: 15). These organizations are out of civil sector because of their establishment. In our study, we write about those non-profit organizations which are also civil as a whole (for example foundations and associations), and we call them civil organizations.

During the period spent since the transition of the regime, a diverse civil/non-profit sector with an extremely heterogeneous composition has emerged in Hungary as well; the number of the organizations exceeds 62 thousand (KSH 2016), and most of the organizations mean determinant social actors in view of their engagement and field of activity. Nevertheless, recent years have seen an unfavourable process; the 'deprivatisation' of civil society has begun. A greater acceptance and support of civil organizations close to the power can be observed as well as the attack and the hampering of those ones that are either far from power or real ones, furthermore,

the emergence of so-called pseudo-civil organizations can be experienced, which adumbrates the evolution of the institution of state corporatism organized from the top (Ágh 2016).

8.3 The Role of Civil Sector in Shaping Active Citizens

Civil sector cannot exist without active citizens who not only care about their own life, but also about social issues. These active citizens can support the civil sector in many ways, by being members or leaders, donating, volunteering, etc. ‘Citizenship defines rights and responsibilities, in turn creating a dynamic debate about the duties of citizens as members of the community. Traditionally, active citizenship has included participating in elections or referendums, standing for a political office, and actively or passively engaging as member of a political party or politically affiliated organization. However, this strict definition has expanded. A core element of active citizenship is now seen as engagement in civil society through membership in or support of organizations, involvement in political debates and public consultation processes, participation in demonstrations or protests, volunteering, and awareness of topical issues.’ (Policy Paper on... 2013: 3). ‘Active citizenship means primarily active involvement of citizens in the life of their communities and thus in democracy, in terms of activity and decision-making.’ (Policy Paper on... 2013: 4).

The question arises who teach the citizens how to be active in these areas. The question is important because nobody was born with those skills, which make them active. People can learn the skills from the followings (e.g. Breen and Rees 2009; Delatny 2007; Gáti 2010):

- family
- formal learning (in school system)
- non-formal learning (organized learning but not in the formal system)
- informal learning (during everyday life and in the communities where people live)

We think the first two types do not need any explanations, the other two will be shown very briefly. ‘Non-formal education involves learners voluntarily opting to engage in self—directed learning from an organized body of knowledge, directed by a designated teacher.

‘Informal education or training is more incidental and spontaneous.’ (Breen and Rees 2009: 16–17) It means that people can learn in such a way that they are not aware of being thought actually. In the literature, there are no exact viewpoints about which form of learning is the best; we think that all of them can have an important role in a certain situation. The most important thing is that learning these skills can be a lifelong learning process and the emphasis is on the activity. Formal education can contribute to the learning of active citizenship but such activities which are not formal can be also effective.

There are many platforms for learning the skills of active citizenship in practice, and one of them is civil organizations. This means that these organizations can help

people to be more active, and if people are more active, they can contribute to the social goals of the organizations at a higher level. ‘One of the most important roles of civil organizations [...] lies in their ability that they can activate people, strengthen their community bonding, and have them connected to the circulation of the society thought informal networks between them and within the organizations.’ (Nárai 2004: 627). The more active the citizens are, the better the society where they live will be, or in other words ‘active citizenship is the glue that keeps society together...’ (Active Citizenship For..., 2012: 6).

Civil organization can take part in the informal education of active citizenship with the following types of activities¹:

- They make people have their voice heard.
- They can ensure opportunities to learn how to act with other people, how to behave in community.
- They can help in assertive communication.
- They can ensure opportunities for self-organization.
- They can ensure public relations—social integration.
- They can ensure an opinion-influencing and—shaping, value—and behaviour-forming socializing medium.
- They can help building social capital and trust.
- They can contribute to understanding democracy.
- They can provide such courses, which can be useful for people who would like to learn more about themselves, about effective communication, etc.
- Working for organizations can help people learn how to manage everyday life issues in an organization and how to manage formal issues (e.g. go to the post office, go to offices, etc.)
- They can help learn how to enforce public interests.
- They can help learn how to make decisions in everyday and professional life.

It is important to emphasize that civil organizations can be the teacher in the learning process but they are also the platforms where people can practice what they have learnt in the organization. That is to say, people can immediately try out in practice what they have learnt in the organizations.

As we can see, civil organizations can teach people lots of kind of skills of active citizenship, now we would like to show in detail the following ones: ensuring the opportunity of self-organization, ensuring socializing medium and practicing social participation as a learning scene of democracy.

An important social relevance of establishing civil organizations is that they ensure an appropriate frame and opportunity for *self-organization*. By establishing associations, clubs, coalitions, foundations, etc. people can express their demands and enforce their interests. They intensify the diversity of individual interests into group interests and are also adapted to link the formed and pronounced group interests to the greater community or public interests (Jenkins 1997; Lévai 1998; Putnam 1993; 1995). Public and private actors are not always able to find those problems with

¹The list is based on the following literature: (Jochum 2005; Nárai and Reisinger 2016).

which people face day by day, and are not always able to meet the more and more special demands. By founding civil organizations and volunteering in these types of organizations people also have the opportunity for solving the occurred problems according to their own ideas, as active actors of the society, and for meeting the occurred demands.

By membership in civil organizations as well as activities carried out in such organizations people have the opportunity for expanding their personal relationships. These organizations strengthen individuals' community bonding and *integrate them into the society* through informal networks, public relations and social activities. Without the rich network of civil initiations society becomes atomized, however, we can infer diverse social relations from their huge number (Kuti 1998), by which relations the emotional and informational networks between people strengthen and trust and solidarity will have a greater degree (Putnam 2000).

Civil organizations also mean important *opinion-influencing and—shaping, value—and behaviour-forming socializing medium*, 'they inculcate receptivity for cooperation and participation in social life in their members' (Putnam 1993: 89–90). They provide opportunity, for e.g. participation in decision-making, the deployment of the initiative, or even the development of the ability to compromise. Participation in civil organizations is also the perfect field for practicing tolerance, empathy, solidarity and the 'evolution' of this kind of willingness (namely e.g. to be solid with others), or increasing sensitivity to social problems.

These abilities, skills, knowledge and activities are essential for democracy, thus if we talk about the role of civil organizations, the fact has to be emphasized that these organizations can be interpreted as the basic elements of civil society, an *essential keystone of democracies* (Jenkins 1997). Back in the 19th century Tocqueville (1835, 1993) saw voluntary, autodynamic organizations as the bailees of democracy. According to this role, besides interest representation, the linking of individual and community interests and aims, the establishment of horizontal networks and political socialization, they promote the participation of individuals in the operation of community level, and enable the involvement of individuals in community activity and democratic processes. For many people activity in associations, clubs and foundations is the only opportunity for *active social participation*. Thus, these organizations visualize the right of autonomous, free activity, so they are essential for the emergence of participatory democracy (Brachinger 2005).

8.4 The Engagement Forms of Civil Organizations Responsible for Society

Civil organizations are not only able to promote citizens' social activity, but they can also be active social players, which may have the following forms according to us (Nárai and Reisinger 2016):

- (1) fundraising,
- (2) support to private persons,
- (3) support to institutions, organizations,
- (4) providing special services,
- (5) performing community/public tasks,
- (6) maintaining the institutions,
- (7) acting as employers—job creation,
- (8) publishing publications,
- (9) organizing and conducting events,
- (10) participation in the decision-preparing work of the local government,
- (11) active participation in the elaboration of development documents,
- (12) participation in the implementation of investments, developments affecting the settlement,
- (13) the implementation of social control, the ‘monitoring’ of the actors of power sphere, a so-called watchdog (Szabó 2004) or voice role (Ferge 1997, 1998), social organization, providing social integration,
- (14) community-building and—shaping, community organization.

These diverse engagement forms suggest and show that civil organizations have several and often closely linked psychological, socio-psychological, socio-political, social and economic functions for individuals and smaller and larger communities and also for the society as a whole. Thus, civil organizations mean such organizational resources the social value of which highly exceeds their financial basics and economic performance, and this diverse social role confirms that they are the embodiments of social responsibility only with their bare existence.

Hereinafter a review of the most common forms of engagement takes place.

8.4.1 Fundraising and Largition, Support, Assistance

An important engagement form of civil organizations, mostly foundations² is the support of different institutions, organizations and private persons. Fundraising is not only important to have something to give from, but these organizations take charge of coordinating activity, e.g. by collecting different donations-in-kind and passing them to individuals and organizations in need of support. This is a significant thing because the majority of people are helpless to whom and how to pass, e.g. the assets redundant for them; and civil organizations undertaking these help them and thus activate the inhabitants to donate.

Besides foundations that are specifically organized to collect donations, numerous autodynamic organizations contribute to the operation of an institution (mainly nursery school, school, common lodging house, healthcare institution) or to the support

²In her previous pieces of research, Nárai (2008) found that private foundations are more open to individual needs and problems than the other elements of non-profit sector.

of private persons by their financial support or donation-in-kind. These organizations play an important redistributive role in society.

According to the data of Hungarian Central Statistical Office, one-fifth of civil organizations give donations, and in 2014 the amount of support distributed by them reached 140 billion HUF from which 125 billion HUF were financial donation (89%). On a national scale, most of the donations addressed to private persons derive from self-organizations that are active in the field of social care, while in case of donations addressed to organizations, institutions the redistributive role of foundations and associations operating in the fields of culture and education is prominent. Spatial concentration is very significant in the redistribution of supports, as the majority of financial supports given to both the inhabitants and the institutions (overall, nearly three quarters of the donations) get to Budapest, the capital.

8.4.2 Providing Services, the Production of Public Goods

There are some civil organizations which are involved in performing community/public tasks and population's needs by providing a kind of service, and they usually perform additional services and special activities (Horváth 2002). Several organizations provide *special services* for their members and most commonly for others (population, institutions and organizations) in their settlement, region. These organizations extend and improve the existing service supply as in most cases they gratify alternative demands which are different from the average, or they often perform activities which are required by the majority but not provided by other organizations (e.g., fire protection, damage control, safeguarding, elderly care, home care and legal protection).

One part of the organizations is involved in *performing public tasks and providing public services* correcting and balancing this way the negativities and lacks of the public welfare service system as well as offering alternatives and implementing the practice of a more flexible, a more direct and a more anthropocentric performance. In many cases they 'just' help in providing services, but there are also several examples when they completely take over the performing of tasks from the local government, or perhaps they maintain a self-dependent institution (e.g. temporary home for children and families, school, library, community house). It happens that by reacting to the occurring social demands, needs they introduce new services, perform tasks or try to reach the state or local governmental support of these tasks which were not present earlier in public services or still do not have a place in the current networks usually because these could be provided with higher costs within state, institutional frames (e.g. the care for and rehabilitation of addicts). A good example of the involvement in performing public tasks is the activity of Hungarian Maltese Charity Service who involve in, for e.g. the care for disabled people or homeless ones in numerous settlements.

Today it is typical that several local governments entrust performing one or more (public) tasks to civil organizations. More and more local governments realize that

they can ensure their obligations of performing public tasks as well as their advantages, positivities not only by maintaining own institutions, but also by involving other social actors like civil/non-profit organizations in performing public services. In the middle of the 1990s, only one-tenth of local governments involved civil partners, while in the middle of the 2000s this rate increased to 22%, and nowadays it is 21%. However, due to the centralization, re-deprivatisation of public services the number of involved organizations has significantly decreased (to one-fourth) (Sebestyén 2015). Currently, in Hungary, the actors of civil society can be involved in the following public tasks:

- performing public educational tasks;
- performing public cultural tasks;
- maintaining and operating social institutions providing personal care;
- providing child protection services ensuring personal care;
- ensuring health care;
- performing communal tasks.

Local governments usually involve civilians in performing such tasks that significantly contribute to the wealth and the well-being of the settlement's inhabitants as well as the improvement of their way they feel. In Budapest and in the bigger cities, local governments count on civil actors in performing tasks in the fields of education, culture, social care and health care, while in villages rather in the establishment of development aims (Sebestyén 2015). Obviously, the delegation and the outsourcing of tasks can take place within appropriately controlled frames which provide guarantees for both parties as well as their accountability, thus usually in the form of contract (of public utility) or cooperation agreement, in order to supply the inhabitants continuously and appropriately. Civil organizations need suitable human and material background to be able to continuously ensure the performing of undertaken tasks at an appropriate level; thus this type of engagement presumes a more balanced and more professional operation from civil/non-profit organizations.

8.4.3 Employment, Job Creation

A part of civil organizations also *apply paid workforce* besides or in some cases instead of volunteers to continuously and reliably perform the undertaken tasks. Operation mainly or exclusively with volunteers does not necessarily mean amateurism since the work provided for free of charge by suitable professionals enables the organization to perform the undertaken tasks at an appropriate level and reach its aims. However, in most cases, especially in case of organizations involved in performing public services and tasks, the continuous provision of the service or the activity as well as the reliability of the organization's operation and task-performing activity require continuously employed and paid workforce. They usually apply professionals in accordance with the organization's field of activity, in addition, accountants,

financial and accounting staff, and/or the administrative workforce. Several organizations apply paid professionals in the fields of leadership, management and legal consultation, representation to operate more professionally.

Civil organizations often transform such works and activities into services and ‘occupation’, which works were previously done by potential consumers or were performed with the help of relatives, friends and acquaintances (mainly different time-consuming and work-intensive activities, personal, social or communal services), or were used within the frames of informal economy. However, sometimes civil sphere creates jobs due to social sensitivity as a part of the organizations enables individuals who have unfavorable chances in labour market (e.g. people with changed working ability, disabled people) to get jobs by creating jobs outside the mainstream of labour market and implementing employment projects. In their case, it is an important aim to impede to get to the absolute periphery, to exclude from society and to help them got (re)integrated to the society (Frey 2001).

However, it is also important to emphasize that civil/non-profit sphere cannot provide a mass solution to the handling of employment problems. And although a more dynamic development can be seen in the employment by civil/non-profit organizations, nationally only 3% of all employees work for these organizations.

8.4.4 The Gratification of Cultural and Leisure Time Demands

By organizing different events, civil organizations significantly contribute to the gratification of cultural demands, the substantial spending of leisure time, the ensuring of recreational opportunities as well as to the extension of people’s knowledge. From this viewpoint, civil/non-profit organizations have important roles especially in villages and smaller towns, where there are only a few organized or institutionalized opportunities for doing leisure time cultural activities and gratifying such demands. It is common that civil organizations take part in the organization and the provision of the programs of village days which are more widespread nowadays, but they also organize various competitions, cultural and other festivals, summer camps, different conferences, training, informative presentations and study trips.

8.4.5 Community-Building, Community-Shaping—Development

The bases of local societies are local communities in the organization, shaping of which and in their functioning as real communities, civil organizations are important. By joining people together and activating them they *create communities* and encourage them to do community activities. They enable them to bond, provide

them the feeling of belonging to somewhere, and ensure them *communal and social embeddedness*. From this viewpoint, mainly the engagement of associations can be highlighted, as smaller-greater organized communities are formed with the establishment of associations. Of course, it is not necessary to be a member of a civil organization so that we could talk about communities (e.g. neighbourhood relations, different informal groups).

The engagement of civil organizations in community organization and community—building prevails broadly as well, not only with the organization of membership, since through their activity or different actions, appeals they contribute to the forming, catalyzation and the development of the broadly defined community life. It also includes that they try to involve people in social activities and they encourage them to participate in common activities by which individuals are not only passive viewers, the endurers of things surrounding them, but can become active players, generators of changes. From this viewpoint, the role of civil organizations is important from more aspects as on the one hand they convey the importance of the how, the when and the wherefore and the validation of public civil and civil roles, while on the other hand, a certain level of organization is necessary by all means to determine common aims, to recognize common interests, to effectively enforce interests, to influence power players. ‘... during communal activity civilians recognize their own opportunities, [...] A civil community becoming an organization [...] as a result of its activities, realizes its own power as well, which enhances its consciousness and makes it motivated to act further.’ (Nagy et al. 2014: 51).

There are organizations which during their community organizing and community developing activity pronouncedly undertake the development of the ability of inhabitants who are unable to represent their own interests, do not have means and are on the periphery of the society to fight back disadvantages.

8.4.6 Active Engagement in Settlement—and Regional Development

We can interpret the contribution of civil/non-profit organizations in development tasks as the complexity of development functions, roles and activities.

There are civil organizations which help the good meeting and the edification of a given village, city or region by their activities affecting the built and natural environment, e.g. by making the environment more beautiful, arranged or planting flowers to the streets. In several cases, it was the result of the appearance of social self-organizations that buildings were renovated, monuments and statues were set up, but we can also find examples for participation in the followings: the road-reconstruction of the given settlement, the development of public lightning, the establishment of memorial park, the renovation of sport clubhouse, the establishment of playground or even building a gym (Nárai 2008). A part of civil initiations also try to get involved in planning and shaping development policy.

The planning of a settlement, region is basically a top-down process (in relation to local governments and settlements activities initiated by local governmental actors are seen as top-down ones), which becomes effective and meets the criteria of active democracy, according to us, if top-down initiations couple with bottom-up ones which are initiated by the society and the economic actors. Although the conception of community planning is now a part of the EU development policy too, it is not so common in Hungary. The community model of development builds upon local resources, local values, human capital and local initiatives. In this model, both the citizens and the civil/non-profit organizations are active participants. The implementation of plans ensures effective development in the long run as well, because development is not only directed from the top, but also reflects the ideas and interests of local actors. As a consequence of this, such developments take place which better meet the needs, and it increases cost-effectiveness (Erdősi and Knyihár 2015). During community planning, a major emphasis is put on the planning itself as well as on coordination; gathering information is based on primary data collection, the basics of future plans are mainly provided by the opinion and the ideas of those affected, therefore such plans can be created which are well founded and accepted by the majority, which is also the basis of sustainability.

8.4.7 Involvement in the Decision Preparation Work of the Local Government, Civil Control

Efforts to influence the decisions of power and public affairs are also decisive forms of participation for the enforcement of the voice role of civil organizations and the implementation of civil control; and these efforts are mainly fulfilled by involvement in the decision-making process of local governments, and especially in its preparatory phase.

Organizations participating in decision-making process usually try to help the work of local governments and implement civil control by estimating proposals of local governments (documents, plans and ideas) as well as by permanent committee membership, making different statements, and consultancy. The opportunities of civil society for managing and influencing public affairs highly depend on local governments' initiative and receptivity as determining the frames of cooperation mainly depends on them. According to Sebestyén (2015), it does not only depend on the commitment of local governments towards democratic operation, but financial interests may influence it too.

8.4.8 *Own Research*

We conducted a questionnaire research among civil organizations in 2013 (Nárai and Reisinger 2016). The goal of the organization survey was to get information from civil/non-profit organizations about their opinion and actions regarding social participation and the forms of their activity. The research area was the North-Transdanubian Region (5 counties), we sent the questionnaire to 3 800 organizations by e-mail, about 7.7% of them answered. Our sample does not represent the organizations in the region (but the ratio of the organizations by activity and form is quite the same as in the region), so we draw up the results only about those who participated.

During our research, it was proved that the establishment of civil organizations takes place along diverse dimensions; a part of the organizations focus on more aims and concentrate on more fields. Our results show that their activity is organized averagely around two aims and three fields. Based on previous research findings (Nárai 2008), it can be stated that multipurposeness is present at the moment of foundation in case of a significant part of the organizations, which also adumbrates their *multifunctionality* regarding their activities. Only one-fourth of the respondent organizations operate in only one area, while half of them operate in three or more fields. They mainly perform cultural (49.6% of them) and leisure time, hobby activities (43.1%), but education and training (37.7%), environmental protection (28.6%), sport (27.2%), social care (18.3%), settlement development (15.3%) and international relations (15.3%) are also decisive. Like national characteristics, in our sample, the lowest rate (under 6%) belong to those who undertake tasks related to policy, economy development and legal protection, from which the former two should not primarily belong to the tasks of civil actors.

Their activities, engagement are driven and motivated by diverse aims; a significant part of them (52%) are multilateral in this respect too, so they mentioned more aims when we wanted to know why they had been established. It seems that the organizational form has a significant effect on the diversity of objectives. Typically public foundations and foundations mentioned more than one objective; however, the majority of non-profit business organizations operate with only one objective. Our findings also show that among organizations operating in chief towns of a county, the rate of those mentioning one or two objectives was slightly higher (with 4–5%) than in smaller towns and in villages, and there were not any organizations operating along more than three objectives.

Figure 8.1 illustrates the objectives mentioned by the organizations.³ Their establishment was mainly motivated by the cultivation of diverse traditions, preserving traditions, the achievement of a specific aim, the performing of specific tasks and assistance, but the collaboration of people, the promotion of the development of the settlement, information-giving, knowledge development and interest representation were also mentioned. The diversity and ambiguousness of objectives adumbrate the heterogeneity of the undertaken and performed tasks. However, it can also be stated

³The question related to objectives was an open one and we executed the categorization of the answers afterwards.

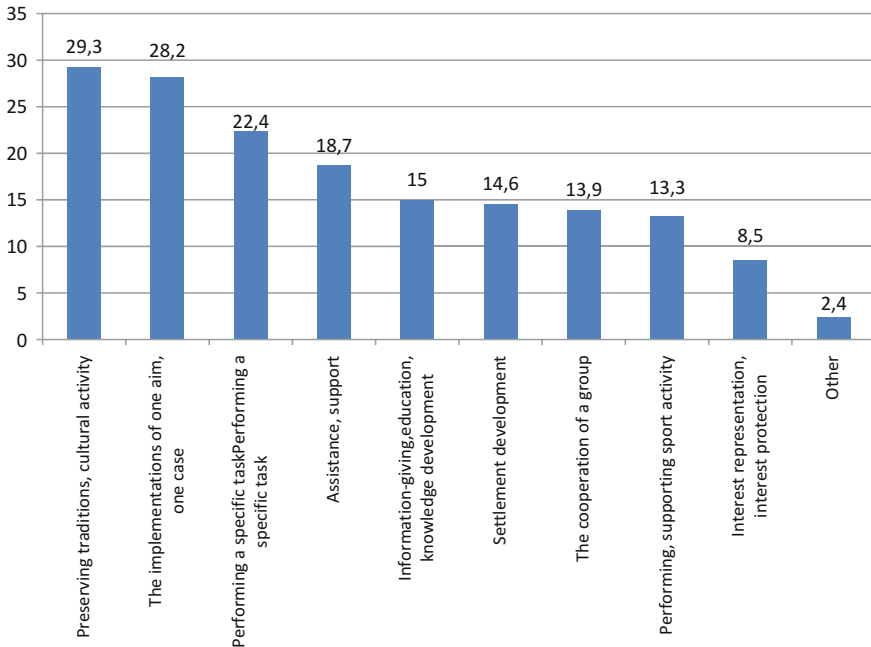


Fig. 8.1 The objectives of the respondent organizations, %, n=294 *Source* (Own questionnaire research among civil organizations 2013)

that although the majority of civil organizations (90.8%) concentrate on population, diversity characterizes target groups as there are other civil/non-profit organizations, local governments, but also state institutions and even the actors of market sector among the target groups of tasks undertaken by our respondents. However, the latter ones were mentioned at a lower rate (8.5 and 7.8%).

In order to reach their aims, a significant part of analyzed foundations, associations and other social organizations involve in and participate in more ways in the life of their home settlement. Organizations mentioned averagely three specific forms of engagement. Only less than one-fourth of them indicated only one form, almost a half of them mentioned 2–3, while one-fifth of them mentioned 5–6 or more forms with which they try to contribute to making the life of the population and the local community/society better, to handling social problems, and to achieving common good. Among communal organizations the rate of those who indicated only one form of engagement was significantly lower than among those operating in chief towns of a county and in other cities (10% versus 1% and 23.3%). On the other hand, it can be said that the rate of those who are engaged in only one form (25%) is typically higher among foundations compared to actors operating in other organizational forms; however, it can also be observed that public foundations and foundations are over-represented among those engaging in diverse activities (who mentioned at least

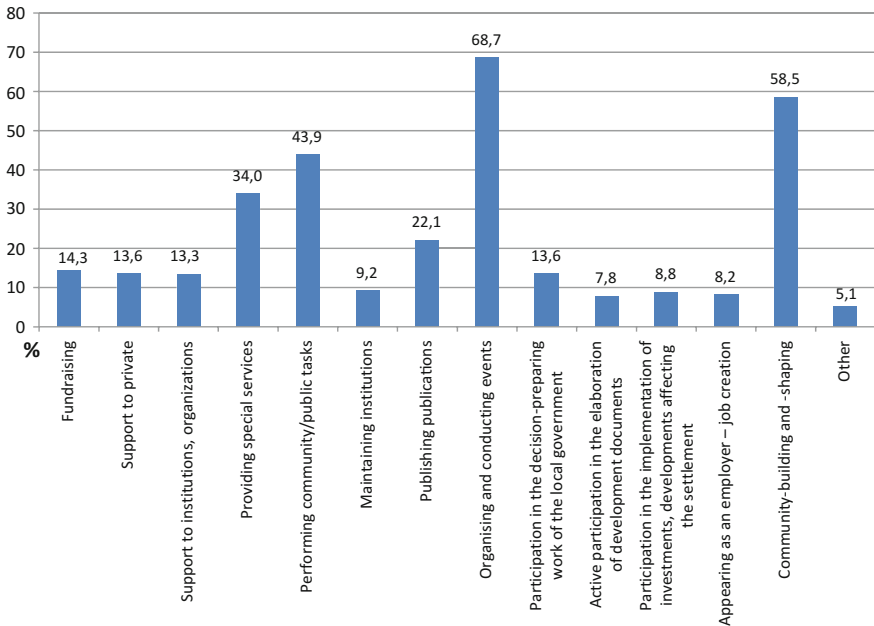


Fig. 8.2 The frequency of different forms of engagement among the respondent organizations, %, n=294 Source (Own questionnaire research among civil/non-profit organizations 2013)

five forms of engagement). However, in this respect, a significant relationship was only found in organizational form.

Most civil organizations mentioned the organizations of diverse events, thus this form of engagement characterizes two-thirds of them (see Fig. 8.2). They organize sports events, cultural and environmental protection events, actions, but also professional training and conferences. These events contribute to the formation of local communities if the events are open to the inhabitants of the settlement. The second most commonly mentioned form of engagement was community-building—organization as more than half of the respondents appear in this role (see Fig. 8.2) and try to catalyze community processes.

Besides these two dominant engagement forms, the role of civil actors in providing services is also stressed as more than two-fifth of them mentioned that they are engaged in performing different community/public tasks, while one-third of them provide a kind of special service, which shows that their role in gratifying community needs is significant. Of course, there are overlaps between these two fields. The performed community tasks are diverse, as they mentioned the provision of health care and social services, crime prevention, patrol service for enhancing the inhabitants' sense of security (e.g. militiamen), drug prevention at school or even activities regarding the protection of animals (e.g. teaming and caring for stray dogs).

A lower rate of the organizations (approximately one-tenth of them) performs the provided services within institutional frames. We can find civil organizations as employers mainly among those providing diverse services, and it is especially true for those ones that function as institutions, which does not require further explanation. Performing professional service-provider role cannot take place only based only on volunteers, as steadily ensuring services with appropriate standards requires the employment of paid workforce.

All in all, the rate of those organizations that work with employees as well (18%) is higher than that of those ones which (also) determine themselves as employers and job creators (8.2%). This latter rather characterizes those one which have more employees. Employing paid workforce has a significant relationship with the organization forms, and it mainly characterizes non-profit business organizations and public bodies, almost all of these organizations as well as almost one-fifth of foundations and public foundations have employees, while one-tenth of associations appear as employers.

Almost one-third of our respondents (28.5%) perform redistribution activity, and by raising and/or distributing donations they try to contribute to the improvement of the position of those in need and who need support. Of course, there are overlaps, but not necessarily the same actors appear as supporters as who indicated fundraising. Practically, the rate of those who provide support to private persons and those who provide support to organizations, institutions is the same, but only 5% is the rate of those organizations which support both the private persons and the institutions.

One of the most effective ways of shaping processes and public tasks of the given settlement is if civil/non-profit organizations try to influence the decisions regarding the fate of the settlement, region and to shape local public opinion. A form of this can be, for e.g. the participation in the decision-preparing work of the local government as well as striving for doing so, participation in the settlement development processes like in the form of the elaboration of planning documents or engagement in the implementation of investments, developments. According to our results, appearance in these forms of engagement is not general; what's more (!), only less than one-tenth of organizations play an active role in settlement development, and influencing the work of the local government characterizes only one-seventh of them (see Fig. 8.2). From this viewpoint, these results prove a significantly lower level of engagement than that we found as a result of our research in the middle of the 1990s, when two-fifth of the respondent organizations participated in the decision-preparatory work of local governments or at least tried to do so, and one-fifth of them (also) had an active role in settlement development (Nárai 2008). Maybe the reason for this decline is that the civils' strive for engaging in public tasks as well as their efforts to influence power decisions did not meet with a warm response or did not have big results, and in some cases these were not so effective, thus nowadays a part of civil/non-profit organizations does not even try to act in this field and they rather undertake the task of community-shaping, service-providing and responding to cultural–leisure time needs.

8.5 Conclusions

Although the majority of civil organizations do not serve directly the whole society, just only some narrower groups of it, and the value and effectiveness of their activity is hard to measure and estimate, we think that the importance and the social value of organizational net that organizes individuals into communities, provides opportunity for civil participation and control and helps the everyday life of people is indisputable. The forms of engagement introduced in our study illustrate well that the contribution of civil organizations to the life and the development of a settlement (region), the provision of social well-being, and the implementation of active citizenship is more complex than it is shown by statistical data and numbers. Several examples prove that these organizations more and more find those fields where they can successfully engage in the life of the local society, and they can show what they can do and who they are. There are some fields where they do this more spectacularly and louder, as it is visible, sensible for almost everybody or at least for the majority of the inhabitants, however, there are some fields where their activity and their results are only sensible for a narrower group. The results of a part of the undertaken roles are well-quantifiable (e.g. the amount of distributed supports, the number of employees, the event organized), however, the other part cannot be measured in an exact way, but these are the proofs of the work and activity of civilians and their contribution to the life of their narrower–broader environment. Without them, democracy is in danger as well as the opportunity for autonomous, free activity.

The future of the sector is the responsibility of the following: the whole society, the decision-makers, the supporters (state, companies, private persons, and non-profit organizations), those who are supported, and the organization providing support and services. Every member of the society is a part of one if not more groups. Therefore it is our joint responsibility that the organizations, which work to make our life and environment better, could achieve their aims, and the existence of their majority should be governed by the joy of assistance and not by uncertainty.



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