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**MINORITY ELITES AND POLITICAL
REPRESENTATION IN ROMANIA AFTER
1989. THE SELF-ORGANIZATION OF THE
HUNGARIANS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. A
CASE STUDY***

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on self-organization of the Hungarian minority in Romania and elite recruitment of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania after the 1989 revolution in Timisoara, a city in the Banat region of Romania. By analyzing events in a single town, it explores how the Hungarian elite was recruited and under which circumstances the self-organization of the community developed. Additionally, the paper compares its findings to the existing literature on elite-transformation and post-communist discourses in order to understand both the generalities and specificities of the analyzed case. I will argue that the self-organization of the Hungarian community was orchestrated primarily by the pre-1989 cultural elite and Hungarian members of the nomenklatura, as a result to their pre-revolution social networks and cultural capital. Moreover, I will claim that this kind of capital had become more relevant than the symbolic capital gathered by other actors from the revolution itself. Furthermore, I will present that as this elite recognized the newly formed organization's legitimacy deficit, they tried to integrate people with revolutionary capital and sought the support of the local Hungarian community as well.

KEYWORDS

- post-communist elites
- minorities
- ethnic parties
- Hungarians
- Romania
- 1989 Romanian revolution
- regime change

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The references are the following:

Toró Tibor – Toró Tamás-Zoltán (2014): A temesvári magyar közösség politikai önszerveződése az 1989-es temesvári események után. In Bárdi Nándor – Gidó Attila – Novák Csaba Zoltán (eds.) Együtt és külön: az erdélyi magyarok önszerveződése (1989–1990), 15-51. Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, Cluj-Napoca.

Tibor Toró – Tamás-Zoltán Toró (în pregătire): Autoorganizarea politică a comunității maghiare din Timișoara în urma evenimentelor din 1989. In: Nándor Bárdi – Attila Gidó – Csaba Novák Zoltán (editori): Primele forme de autoorganizare a maghiarilor din România: 1989–1990. Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, Cluj-Napoca.

The events of the 1989 Revolution are one of the main topics of research related to the regime change in Romania. This can be explained not only by their importance in the course of the Romanian transformations, but also by the vast amount of available data – chronologies (Dutu: 2006), oral-history interviews^[1], memoirs^[2], even documentary novels^[3] – and secondary sources written by both Romanian and foreign scholars on the revolution itself and its consequences^[4].

These works analyze the events from a general perspective, however the local post-revolution events – the restoration of order, the consolidation of administration, the appearance of political and social actors – are understudied. There is also a dearth of studies focusing on the events centered on the Hungarian community, the numerically most significant ethnic minority in Romania. Neither historians, nor political scientists focused on the role and self-organization of Hungarians after the revolution at the local level apart from a few pieces of research on the events leading to the revolution, the role of László Tőkés, an ethnic Hungarian reformed pastor, or the ethnic clashes from Târgu Mures in March 1990 (László, Novák: 2012; Stroschein: 2012, chap. 4). Likewise, the literature on the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (hereinafter: DAHR) is mostly focused on more general and ideological processes, such as its institutionalization and integration into the Romanian political sphere (Bakk: 1999; Bakk: 2000; Gallagher: 1999, 193–214; Pavel: 2003; Pasti: 1995, 188–197; Crăiutu: 1995; Shafir: 2000).

Consequently, this paper focuses on the elite recruitment of DAHR in Timisoara, the most significant city in the Banat region of Romania. By analyzing the events in a single town, I try to explore how the Hungarian elite was recruited and under which circumstances the self-organization of the community developed. Additionally, the findings of the paper will be assessed in light of the existing literature on elite-transformation and post-communist discourses in order to understand both the generalities and specificities of the analyzed case. I will argue that the self-organization of the Hungarian community was orchestrated primarily by the pre-1989 cultural elite and Hungarian members of the nomenklatura, as a result of their pre-revolution social networks and cultural capital. Moreover, I will claim that this kind of capital had become more relevant than the symbolic revolutionary capital gathered by other actors, the newcomers managing only partially to get involved in the actions. Furthermore, I will show that, as the elite recognized the newly formed organization's legitimacy deficit, they tried to integrate people with revolutionary capital and sought the support of the local Hungarian community as well.

I have selected Timisoara as my place of inquiry for several reasons. First, it is one of the most important cities in Romania, where a considerable number of ethnic Hungarians live^[5]. Also, it is the city where the 1989 revolution started and the local Hungarian community played an important role in the turn of the events. Second, in the 1990s the political and civil actors from Timisoara were overrepresented in DAHR compared to the weight of the Hungarian population of the city within the Hungarian community in Romania as a whole. There were several prominent figures in the history of DAHR who originated from Timisoara. Third, compared to the Hungarian communities

¹ See, among others: Suci: 2008; Mici: 1997

² e.g. Tőkés: 1990; Tőkés, Porter: 1991

³ e.g. Mandics: 1991

⁴ e.g. Cesereanu: 2004; Ratesh: 1991; Antohi, Tismăneanu: 2000; Light, Phinnemore: 2001

⁵ According to the 1992 census 9.51% of the city's population was Hungarian (see Table 1 of this paper).

of other cities, the inhabitants of Timisoara actively took part in the events of the 1989 revolution. Moreover, it was in Timisoara that the first Hungarian local political and civil organizations began to take shape, days before the ones in Cluj, Oradea, Bucharest or the Szeklerland organized themselves. Taking this characteristics into account the case-study presented by this paper can be considered a *disconfirmatory (most-likely) crucial case* in the sense used by Gerring and Seawright (Gerring, Seawright: 2007): in the aftermath of the revolution one would expect that as a result of their participation in the frontline of the events, the people most active in the construction of the Hungarian self-organization process would be those who also participated most actively in the events leading to the fall of the communist system. Therefore, one would expect that the revolutionary capital would reset or downgrade the influence of the pre-existent social networks and cultural capital. However, as I argue in this paper, that is hardly the case, since possessors of pre-revolutionary social and cultural capital seized the initiative, thus laying the basic objectives and rules of the organization.

Regarding the sources of my inquiry, two observations need to be made. First, given that the 1989 revolution is a relatively well-researched topic, a vast number of secondary sources were accessible. Second, in order to understand the events from the perspective of the Hungarian community, I have analyzed the local Hungarian media and have conducted semi-structured interviews with the local elite. The Hungarian community had its own newspaper entitled *Szabad Szó*⁶ during the communist regime, which changed its name to *Temesvári Új Szó* on the 23rd of December 1989 as the old regime collapsed. This newly established daily documented thoroughly the events from the Hungarian perspective. Beside these, I have consulted the Romanian language papers (*Luptătorul Bănăţean, Timisoara*) from December 1, 1989 – May 31, 1990 as well.

As for the interviews⁷, my goal was to talk to the most important local Hungarian actors. The persons I have succeeded to interview can be classified into several types. Some persons had a past with the Romanian Communist Party, while others rejected party membership. Some of them were members of the cultural or political elite before 1989, while others became key figures only during the revolution. According to their social embeddedness, some of the selected interviewees were newcomers in Timisoara, while others had a long family line in the city. Finally, I aimed to cover persons belonging to all generations. Despite these differences, there is one feature that all interviewees have in common: they all have higher education degrees acquired before 1989.

The structure of the paper is as follows: a brief presentation of the political situation of the Hungarian community during state socialism is provided; the participation of the Hungarians in the revolution is discussed and, in the end, the main aspects of the self-organization of the Hungarian community at the local level are detailed. The last two parts of the paper analyze the most important characteristics of the organization founded by the Hungarians and its consolidation and its relationship with the national organization (DAHR)

⁶ The paper has a list of abbreviations and translations at the end, that the meaning of the Hungarian and Romanian institution names is explained in this listing.

⁷ All the interviews are available in the archives of the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities in Cluj. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian, all the quoted parts in the paper are my own translations.

The Hungarians of Timisoara under state socialism

Timisoara has traditionally been considered a multicultural and intercultural city (Neumann: 1997; Poledna, Ruegg, Rus: 2002), as none of the ethnic groups – Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Jews and others – secured a stable majority throughout most of modern history. However, as a result of the forced industrialization and urbanization processes of the communist period this changed radically, as a massive population of ethnic Romanians arrived to the city from other regions of the country.

Table 1. – Demographical changes in Timisoara between 1880-2011

	1880	1910	1930	1956	1977	1992	2011
Romanians	5 188 13.40%	7 593 10.26%	25 207 24.62%	75 855 53.32%	191 742 71.19%	274 511 82.16%	259 754 81.36%
Hungarians	7 745 20.01%	28 645 38.71%	36 818 35.96%	29 968 21.07%	36 724 13.63%	31 785 9.51%	15 564 4.87%
Germans	21 121 54.57%	32 963 44.54%	33 162 32.39%	24 326 17.10%	28 429 10.55%	13 206 3.95%	4 193 1.31%
Serbs	2 487 6.43%	3 490 4.72%	2 237 2.18%	3 065 2.15%	6 776 2.52%	7 748 2.32%	4 843 1.52%
Jews*			7 264 7.09%	6 700 4.71%	1 629 0.60%	549 0.16%	176 0.06%
Others	2 161 5.58%	1 312 1.77%	2 747 2.68%	2 343 1.65%	4 053 1.50%	6 316 1.89%	34 749 10.88%
Total	38 702	74 003	102 390	142 257	269 353	334 115	319 279

For the figures between 1880-2002 see: Varga: 2007, the 2011 census data were downloaded from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics webpage.

* In 1880 and 1910 there was no census category for Jews. The main ethnic groups were counted by mother tongue. As most Jews were speaking German or Hungarian, they were included in those categories.

Despite the continuously shrinking proportion of the Hungarian community, Timisoara and its universities remained one of the most important destinations for Hungarian youth all around Transylvania, many of them settling permanently in the city and providing a significant portion of the Hungarian cultural and political elite during communism.

From a political perspective, the Hungarians were underrepresented at all levels of the party apparatus during the 1980s. At county level there was no ethnic Hungarian among the permanent members of the party committee^[8] and only few Hungarians achieved positions in the party committees of factories, cooperatives and other institutions. As the table below shows, both the Hungarian members and leaders of party committees were underrepresented, as only 4.8% of the party committee secretaries were Hungarians, compared to the percentage of the ethnic Hungarian population in Timis county (around

⁸ Source: Fond CC al PCR / Sectia Organizatorică, dosar nr. 18/1989

10%)^[9].

Table 2. – Ethnic distribution of party committee members in Timis county

		Appointed in 1984		Proposed for appointment in 1989	
		Hungarian	Total	Hungarian	Total
Factory, institutional and cooperative level party committees	Secretary	11 (4.80%)	229	12 (4.88%)	246
	Member	384 (7.51%)	5 116	391 (7.30%)	5 354
Party committees of local party organizations	Secretary	137 (5.57%)	2 460	140 (5.62%)	2 492
	Member	1 062 (8.57%)	12 392	1 072 (8.57%)	12 506

Source: Archival Fund of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party / Organization Section, file no. 18/1989

The situation of the Hungarian community in Timisoara fitted the national trends in the domains of culture and education: the educational system was gradually cut back, the Hungarian media, theater and cultural organizations were under heavy party control^[10]. Despite this tight control, several formal and informal cultural groups were formed, providing opportunities for Hungarians to meet and network. The most important ones were founded in the 1970s: the *Látóhatár Circle*, the *Thália Theatrical Circle*, the *M-Studio student radio* and the *Zoltán Franyó Literature Circle* for intellectuals^[11]. The importance of these groups is given by the fact that later, after the revolution, many of the individuals involved in their sustainment became actively involved in the self-organization of the Hungarians^[12].

One can conclude, on the one hand, that these formal and informal cultural groups were places of gathering and sources of cultural and social capital: involvement in one of them provided the opportunity for intellectuals and the future elite to socialize, which contributed to the development of the mutual trust that became indispensable after the regime change. On the other hand though, this was the sphere where the Hungarian elite could function. As political careers were practically closed for most Hungarians and the Hungarian community perceived that their cultural reproduction was threatened by the state, most of the Hungarian elite focused on occupying cultural positions and on organizing events relevant from a cultural and identity-building perspective^[13]. Furthermore, there was no clear line between the cultural elite and the group of ethnic Hungarian second- and third-liner nomenklatura, as many of the people active in the cultural domain also held

⁹ As there is no census data for the 1980s, one can only approximate by comparing the 1977 and 1992 figures (for the exact figures see Table 3 of this paper).

¹⁰ For detailed information on this see: Schöpflin and Poulton 1990; Salat et al. 2008; Tismăneanu 2006, 523–577; Gilberg 1990; Shafir 1985.

¹¹ More on these groups see: Balogh, Benkő, and Dávid 1981.

¹² Some of the most prominent figures were the following: László Borbély (vice president of DAHR, MP in the Romanian Parliament (1990-1996, 2000-present) and Ministry of Environment (2009-2012)) and Tibor T. Toró (founding president of UHYO, leader of the internal opposition of DAHR until 2013, DAHR MP (2000-2008) and president of the Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania (2010-2015)), were both members of Thália; Ferenc Bárányi (DAHR MP (1990-2000) and Minister of Health in 1998) used to attend the meetings of the Zoltán Franyó Literary Circle.

¹³ Due to these processes even a physics teacher or an engineer interested in the fate of the Hungarian community came to be regarded as a member of the cultural elite as a result of his actions within this informal sphere.

party functions as a result of their formal positions. Also, in many cases they used their party position to take care of matters important from the Hungarian perspective^[14].

The 1989 revolution and the Hungarians

From a Hungarian perspective the most important events of the revolution were the ones related to the Calvinist pastor László Tőkés, a prominent figure of the community, persecuted by the regime^[15]. On December 15, 1989, hundreds of people gathered in front of the church where Tőkés served in order to protest against the eviction of the pastor. These events not only marked the beginning of the revolution in Timișoara (Duțu: 2006, 96–103) but were presented as an important turning point by many of the prominent participants of the revolution^[16]. In order to understand how the Hungarian community perceived the revolution and how this later influenced the elite selection, a brief presentation of the case of László Tőkés is needed.

László Tőkés was appointed to Timișoara by the Calvinist church in 1986, becoming one of the protagonists of the Hungarian community shortly after. The attendance of his sermons grew day by day and many members of the local Hungarian elite tried to get in touch with him and become members of his group^[17]. As a result of the growing political tensions around him the group had become very compact, as many succumbing to the threats by the authorities and the Securitate departed, while others who were not trusted were not allowed to get close^[18].

As a result of his activities the political persecution of Tőkés started to intensify in 1988. First, he organized a festive evening on Reformation Day (celebrated on October 31 each year) where poems about the fate of the Hungarian minority were recited by four members of the *Thália Theatrical Circle* and second he publicly criticized the “systematization” (village destruction) program of the Romanian Communist Party leadership^[19]. As a result Tőkés received not only an ecclesiastic disciplinary admonition, but also attracted the attention of the Romanian secret police^[20], the Securitate. Consequently, the Reformed

¹⁴ For example, many university teachers or leading engineers received higher level positions in the party as a result of their position held at their workplace, in spite of the fact that they did not pursue party careers, even if in some cases the leading professional positions were achieved as a result of the party position and not the other way round

¹⁵ After the revolution Tőkés László became the bishop of the Királyhágómellék District of the Calvinist Church in Romania (1990-2009) and held the position of honorary president of DAHR (1990-2003). In 2003 he founded the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania, a civic-political organization of Transylvanian Hungarians. Since 2007 he is a member of the European Parliament.

¹⁶ See: the memoirs of Marius Mioc and Adrian Kali (Mioc: 1999), the interview with Ion Monoran (Lănă: 2006), or the interviews made with some of the main protagonists of the revolution (Suci: 2008).

¹⁷ This was reinforced by many of my interviewees, for instance Ferenc Bárányi and Imre Borbély.

¹⁸ One of the interviewees recalled these times the following way: “Living in the same city with Tőkés changed everybody’s life. Parker Leó (*the former pastor – author’s observation*) was not the kind of man to build a community. We met [with Tőkés] several times, we knew each other, but the circle that helped him was a closed one. Only those people got in, who were... if I say 100% trustworthy, it can be interpreted... so who knew each other very well and everybody knew everything about the other. In this group there was no journalist, because at that time journalists were in their own way blackmailable.” (Interview with Barna Bodó).

¹⁹ Although the program was not directly targeting ethnic Hungarians, the latter perceived it as a threat, as it would have affected around 2 000 Hungarian settlements in Alba, Bihor, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita and Satu Mare counties (Révész: 2008, 23–24).

²⁰ Both the letter of protest and the disciplinary admonition can be found online: http://www.temesvar1989.ro/hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4 (accessed on January 9, 2015)

church decided to relocate Tőkés to Mineu, a village in Sălaj county, while many of the people around him were also affected: they were constantly harassed, some even died under unclear circumstances^[21].

The date of the eviction was set for December 15, 1989, attracting many members of the Calvinist community to protest in front of the church against the decision. Parallel to this, some of the most trusted friends of the pastor guarded him inside the church. The interviewees remember unanimously that it started as a spontaneous gathering of around one hundred people, not as an organized protest. On December 15, only the members of the protestant community were present, while on December 16 members of the Romanian neo-protestant community led by Petre Dugulescu joined too. As the crowd grew in numbers the gathering gradually transformed into an anti-regime protest. In the afternoon of December 16, Ion Monoran, a Romanian poet who joined the gathering, stopped a tram and the first anti-Ceaușescu slogans were chanted (Duțu: 2006, 99).

As the events escalated ethnic Hungarians came little to the fore. Although there were Hungarians who spoke to the crowd from the balcony of the National Opera between December 20 and 22^[22], the newly formed National Salvation Front only had one Hungarian member, Barna Bodó, a journalist, who actually did not even participate at the founding meeting^[23].

From the perspective of the Hungarians, the importance of the revolution and the events preceding it is twofold. First, most of the revolutionary capital of the Hungarian elite was related to their actions on December 15-th and 16-th. Participation at the gathering or being a member of the trusted group of László Tőkés would influence decisively their future career opportunities. However, it is important to note that most interviewed persons admitted this only with regard to the career of others, but not of their own: most of the interviewees identified this as an important turning point for their colleagues. This differs from the revolutionary capital of Romanians, as members of the Hungarian community were only sporadically in the forefront of the later events. Also when the interviewees make reference to the revolution most of them think about these events in the first place.

Second, in these recollections the “real” revolutionaries are separated from the “self-proclaimed” revolutionaries, who in their opinion not only used the revolution to get ahead unfairly, but contributed to the “theft of the revolution”^[24]. Although not a

²¹ See the statements of Gazda Árpád, Sepsi Béla or Gazda Árpád (Mici: 2002) and the diary of Tőkés László (http://www.temesvar1989.ro/hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15 – accessed on January 9, 2015).

²² On those days the balcony was the symbol of free speech, as everybody who was brave enough and managed to get out there had the chance to speak to the crowd. Among my interviewees Ferenc Bárányi and Zoltán Balaton managed to reach the balcony. The latter was also part of László Tőkés’ group.

²³ Mr. Bodó recalled that he learned from the radio that he became founding member of the Front, but he never participated actively at the meetings. (see the interview with Barna Bodó).

²⁴ “There were some very-very strange figures, for example one of the persons, a Becali-style figure. What was his name?... Marcu, if you know him. He became a senator later. I think he had no more than three or four classes. On the 20th he walked his dog drunk in the Dózsa park. After they called him, he ran [to the balcony] and said that Iliescu is the new chief.” (see the interview with Zoltán Balaton). A similar story is told by László Oberst, one of the few Hungarian active revolutionaries, when talking of the “participation” of a particular revolutionary leader: “he came home from Oradea on the 17th. He didn’t know anything. Because there were no buses he started walking home. They collected him off the streets and let him out when everything finished. After the revolution he founded one of the organizations that fought for the rights of the revolutionaries. He was the loudest of all” (discussions with László Oberst).

Hungarian specificity, this is one of the major myths that appeared in order to explain its perceived failure. According to this idea the real Romanian revolution was hijacked by the second-tier nomenklatura, who managed to remain in power (Siani-Davis: 2001, 20–21). Also, as Vladimir Tismăneanu points out, these discursive narratives served not only to explain the events to come, but in the 1990s they had demobilizing effects too: people felt that their actions were in vain, transferring the guilt of the failed revolution onto others (Tismăneanu: 2000).

The foundation and institutionalization of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in the Banat

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in the Banat (hereinafter: DAHB) was founded on the afternoon of December 22, 1989 at the personal flat of a well-known and respected Hungarian physician, Ferenc Bárányi. Those present at the meeting drafted a statement, which was published the next day in the local Hungarian newspaper. The statement was signed by a provisional executive committee, whose members, however, were not all present at the meeting. As some key figures recalled, it was clear that most of the people present were part of Bárányi's circle of friends, others were contacted by phone, while some were not even asked if they would or would not agree to be on the list. Provisional president became Barna Bodó, a journalist, who was proposed by some older participants at the meeting^[25]. As Bodó later pointed out in an interview in a magazine, when selecting the members of the provisional executive committee, the participants tried to “replicate the social structure as much as possible. We were looking for reliable workers, women. In other words, we tried to follow the valid patterns of that time^[26].” Similar processes took place at the constituent assembly of the National Salvation Front. Barna Bodó, although not present and not asked by anyone about his intentions, became a member of the local governing body, apparently for similar reasons as the ones we could witness in the case of the formation of DAHB: the organizers were looking for a “reliable Hungarian” for their committee and Bodó was the only one they knew, as he approached them as the president of the newly founded Hungarian organization^[27].

With regard to the meeting at Bárányi's place, several important aspects stand out. First, those present capitalized on Bárányi's network, becoming the leading group in the self-organization of the Hungarians. Bárányi was one of the leading figures of the social life of the Hungarian minority starting from the 1970s, gathering around himself not only most of the Hungarian intellectuals from the city, but the Hungarian members of the nomenklatura as well^[28]. Recollections about the period underline the importance of the

²⁵ The composition of the provisional executive committee of DAHB was the following: honorary president: László Tókécs, president: Barna Bodó, members: Ferenc Albert, Miklós Bakk, Ottó Bálintfi, Ferenc Bárányi, Imre Borbély, Gyula Delesega, Mária Forrai, János Graur, Attila Lukinich, György Mandics, György Matekovics, István Sándor, László Tamás, László Tácsi, Tibor Toró, Lajos Varga, Csaba Ungor.

As some of my interviewees pointed out, only Ferenc Albert, Ferenc Bárányi, Ottó Bálintfi, Barna Bodó, György Mandics, István Sándor, László Tamás, Tibor T. Toró and Csaba Ungor were present at the meeting (source: interviews with Ferenc Bárányi, Barna Bodó and Ferenc Albert).

²⁶ Barna Bodó, „Meg kellett tanulnunk, hogy mi a szabad világ”, interview by Mészáros Ildikó, Régi(j)óvilág, 2010.

²⁷ Interview with Barna Bodó.

²⁸ For instance, university professor Ferenc Albert was a member of the party committee of the university, Károly Sinka was the director of the Hungarian theater, Barna Bodó was the editor of two important national level newspapers, Ifjú Munkás and later Előre, while Ottó Bálintfi was teaching Marxism at the university and was leading

annual name day celebrations organized at Bárányi's residence, where in many cases more than 70 people, mostly members of the cultural elite, got together. As many of these held important or quasi-important positions in the communist party too, one can conclude that the first steps of the Hungarian self-organization were taken by the cultural intellectuals and the Hungarian nomenklatura together. These events fit the patterns described in the general transitology literature, as many of the authors speak about the seizure of power by the nomenklatura (Kristóf: 2011), the technocrats (Zámfir: 2003), or the two groups together (Culic: 2002). The role of the nomenklatura is highlighted even more by the turn of the events on December 22. Most of the interviewees present agree that the statement was drafted by Ferenc Albert, a Hungarian sociologist, professor at the university and member of the university party committee. This shaped decisively the objectives of the newly formed association.

Second, the goals formulated at the founding meeting anticipated the actions taken in the following period. The statement clearly set it out that the newly formed organization was not a political party, but a political and civic organization responsible for the mobilization of the Hungarians in the Banat and aimed to achieve equal rights for Hungarians and to cooperate with the other nationalities and the National Salvation Front. From an institutional perspective, the initiators targeted the foundation of local organizations. On the one hand they intended to help set-up organizations in each and every settlement inhabited by Hungarians in Timiș and Caraș-Severin counties^[29] and on the other hand in bigger cities they experimented with Hungarian „cells” in factories and public institutions. Although without long-term results, these actions, along with the membership-recruitment strategy were crucial from the perspective of legitimacy. As the creation of the organization was incidental, its representatives were not elected, so there was a need to prove the support of large numbers of the Hungarian population in order to mitigate the legitimacy deficit and to integrate the local Hungarian elites into the broad structure created.

Third, the sequence of events highlighted the lack of premeditation in the actors' decisions. The individuals present at Bárányi's place did not meet in order to create an organization; it was a spontaneous decision as a result of the revolutionary atmosphere^[30]. However, the fact that this specific group was the one to become dominant within the Hungarian community was not accidental, as only the people present at this meeting possessed the necessary resources and social networks to reach out to the masses^[31].

several ideological circles within the institution. It is important to mention that these people did not belong to the core of the communist party elite, yet from a sociological perspective they were members of the nomenklatura.

²⁹ After a few attempts to integrate the Hungarians from Caraș-Severin county the leaders of DAHB gave up on this idea. For example in March, although the Hungarian organizations from the neighboring county were invited to the general assembly of the organization, they did not respond to the invitation and did not accept the offered positions in the leadership, creating in the end their own institution. After this DAHB was limited strictly to Timis county.

³⁰ For example Barna Bodó recollects that he visited Ferenc Bárányi every day as a friend, but as a journalist as well, asking him about what happened each day at the hospital. Bárányi was an anesthesiologist and worked at one of the local hospitals, where between 17-22 December many of the wounded were taken.

On the afternoon of December 22, some of their friends were already there, and Ferenc Albert was working on the text of the statement (interview with Barna Bodó). Bárányi thinks that the idea came after his speech from the balcony of the National Opera delivered earlier that day, and recollects that after returning home he started to call his friends that they should do something (interview with Ferenc Bárányi).

³¹ Among the signatories of the statements we can find several journalists, who would guarantee its appearance in the morning newspaper.

The fourth important aspect of the meeting concerns its relationship to the relevant events of the Hungarians' self-organization at the national level. After the foundation of DAHB, the initiators called Géza Domokos^[32], one of the leading Hungarian intellectuals and public figures of the time, who was soon to become the president of DAHR and reported the events to him. The importance of this act is twofold. On the one hand, it clearly demonstrates the symbolic capital and legitimacy of Domokos, as many other similar initiative groups would report to him throughout the country, although no hierarchical organizational structure was in place yet. On the other hand, it underscores even more the role of the Hungarian cultural elite and nomenklatura in the process of political self-organization.

A fifth interesting aspect in this early period is related to the organizational structure and everyday functioning of DAHB. Most of the interviewees agreed that in the first few months there was no hierarchical structure, the organization mostly functioned in an ad-hoc way, holding meetings every day, where they tried to figure out what to do. These meetings were open so that everyone could participate^[33]. In other words DAHB functioned as a public forum where ethnic Hungarians could meet and discuss the problems and objectives of their community. Therefore, it functioned as a "public sphere" in the sense of the term used by Habermas^[34], where those interested could meet to create the boundaries of their own community and to formulate its public interest. This openness also influenced the organization's problem solving abilities. In many cases, people acting in the name of the organization worked in parallel, each of them using their own informal networks and social capital, being unaware of the others' activities. As a result, often more than one person took the credit for some of the outcomes^[35].

The formalization of the organization started on March 22, 1990, when the first general assembly took place^[36] and the new leadership was elected. The assembly confirmed Barna Bodó as president and elected a new presidential committee. As to its composition,

³² Géza Domokos was the founder of DAHR and the first president of the organization. At that time, he was the director of the only minority language publishing house functioning in Romania in the 1980s (Kriterion). In addition to his publishing activities he was a substitute member of the Central Party Committee.

³³ This was confirmed both by the interviews and the written press.

"The next step was to figure out what to do. This did not mean that we were looking for people who wanted to help, because they came without calling them. It was astonishing how many people wanted to do something for their own [the Hungarian] community" (interview with Barna Bodó).

"Yes, it was like a discussion-table, a discussion group, where all those present could speak their mind. Everybody was talking about what should be done." (interview with László Oberst, a local engineer, one of the few Hungarians who continued to participate in the events of the revolution also after December 16).

„When I asked them if they would like to help, they answered yes without thinking! Some even told us what they knew the best. Among our members we have journalists, farmers, doctors, electricians, grocers, purveyors, typographers, lawyers and many others." (Vidor: 1990).

³⁴ A place where private people can meet in order to discuss about public interest in a rational way (Habermas: 1989).

³⁵ One of the most eloquent examples is the creation of the Hungarian-language high school. Many of the interviewed persons emphasized their own key role in its foundation, arguing that had they not talked to one or another important Romanian political leader, nothing would have happened. In the context of the discussions it was clear that in most of the cases the interviewees did not try to present themselves in a positive light, but they honestly believed in their important contribution to the achieved result, and did not know about the others' similar attempts. Although it is impossible to establish who is right, it is reasonable to believe that it was the cumulative impact of these individual acts of lobbying that made the outcomes possible.

³⁶ See Temesvári Új Szó, March 29, 1990.

nine of the members were from the pre-1989^[37] and two of them had revolutionary background^[38].

To conclude, DAHB was created on the basis of the local Hungarian informal networks, consisting mostly of the Hungarian cultural elite and nomenklatura. After its formation on December 22nd, 1989 the leaders tried to legitimize the organization by creating local assemblies and by opening up its ranks to the masses, in order to increase the number of members. Ironically, some of these activities – finding supporting members from every social category and creating local organizations and organizational „cells” within the factories and various institutions – were similar to the organization of the communist party which, as one of the interviewees had put it, was the only available, though widely rejected model that they knew^[39]. In this consolidation period the organization functioned as a veritable public sphere, where many members of the Hungarian community participated. This period ended at the time of the general assembly on March 17, 1990 which established a stable leadership, a hierarchical organizational form and reinforced the legitimacy of the founding members.

The characteristics of the early post-1989 Hungarian self-organization in Timisoara

Analyzing in detail the events of the first few months after the revolution and the actions and decision of the people involved, several conclusions can be drawn about the structure of the new elite, as well as about the process of formation of the organization.

First, similarly to decisions of the national leadership of DAHR in Bucharest^[40], it was clear that the founders of DAHB did not intend to create a party, but a civic organization. On the one hand, they tried to avoid using the term which had been discredited during the previous political system, on the other hand they thought that their organization would obtain legitimacy only if they could draw in significant masses.

Legitimacy was one of the central issues in the life of the organization until the general assembly in March 1990. Beyond membership recruitment the provisional leaders of the organization welcomed those who actively participated in the revolution and tried to create organizations in factories and various other institutions too^[41]. As most of the founding members were part of the same group, they needed to select very carefully whom they would let in. For example, some of the people present were not allowed to sign the founding statement as their role in the communist system was equivocal^[42].

³⁷ From the the signatories of the founding statement: Barna Bodó (journalist), Ferenc and Ildikó Bárányi (both physicians), István Sándor (university professor), and in addition to them László Egeressy (former prosecutor), Lajos Makra (actor), László Tácsi (teacher and superintendent), György Matekovits (physician) and János Graur (journalist).

³⁸ Imre Borbély and László Oberst (both engineers).

³⁹ Interview with Barna Bodó.

⁴⁰ On this see: Bakk Miklós 1999.

⁴¹ For example, in January 1990 a DAHB organization is created in a theater and the provisory leadership is expanded with the representatives of this institution (see: “Közlemény a BMDSZ (1990. január 24-i bővített vezetőségi üléséről,” Temesvári Új Szó. 1990. January 26.).

⁴² For example, Ferenc Albert, despite his role in the party committee was accepted, while others, László Egeressy, a prosecutor and Károly Sinka, the director of the Hungarian theater were rejected. This is remembered by Barna Bodó in the following way: “Two persons are missing with whom we had serious debates. I have a letter from László Egeressy ... whose presence on the list we strongly opposed, because everybody knew that as a prosecutor he had some part in the arrest of the youth. [...] Also, the situation of the theater was critical and we didn’t know what the

Second, as mentioned earlier, the revolution played a crucial role in the formation of the Hungarian elite. Participation at gatherings of December 15–16 became a primary condition for being accepted as a member of the new elite, most of the people emphasizing their presence in the crowd in front of the Reformed church. The interviewees felt compelled not only to underline their presence but to justify their absence as well. Moreover, the myth of the “theft of the revolution” appears in this context as well, as someone’s presence can only be established based on self-reporting, as there were no records or objectively accepted “attendance lists”^[43].

Furthermore, “revolutionarian” became symbolic capital^[44], entitling its holder to participate successfully in the organization of the new system. Participation in the revolution, work in the hospital between December 15–22 a speech from the balcony of the National Opera or taking part in the organization of a factory strike, although not always conscious actions became important self-legitimizing elements in the later development of the game^[45].

Although the early stages of self-organization were orchestrated by the members of the Hungarian cultural elite and second- and third-tier ethnic Hungarian nomenklatura, the revolution also played a crucial role in the formation of the new elite. These two processes are not in contradiction, but reinforce each other. Many members of the cultural elite already possessed the symbolic capital that others obtained only through their participation in the revolution and it was the former group who accepted the latter, many of whom were members of the new, younger generation^[46]. The activation of the latter was facilitated by the open structure of the organization previously shown. An important question that arises from this is related to the role of the new revolutionary elite. More exactly, how and why did they accept the dominance of the pre-revolutionary cultural elite? How come they did not manage to use their own capital to seize power in the organization? There are several reasons for this.

First of all, as mentioned earlier, the members of the Hungarian pre-revolutionary cultural elite and nomenklatura were the ones that had the crucial capital (e.g.: well developed social connections, connections in the media) and time to organize themselves,

role Sinka had in this, so we left him out as well.” (interview with Barna Bodó)

⁴³ For example one of the interviewees underlines this fact, making allusions that without tangible evidence many people would have made up their role in the revolution: “I am not protestant, I did not go to church before the revolution, but I was there with my wife on the 16th. When I saw the crowd I thought that this is it for me... they were filming and everything. The archives would show who was there, if someone would have really wanted to know.” (interview with Ottó Bálintfi)

⁴⁴ I am using the term symbolic capital in the sense used by Bourdieu, meaning the result of such legit action, that works as a result of a relationship based on trust, which is not carried on for pursuing profit. Such capital is generated by prestige, gratitude, appreciation or respect. This capital, in the conception of Bourdieu, can be converted to other kinds of capitals: social, economic, cultural, etc. (Bourdieu: 1992, 116–119).

⁴⁵ Most of the people involved underline the contingent nature of their role in the revolution. However, there is a clear correlation between this and the later happenings. One of the most eloquent examples is the story of Zoltán Balaton. His daughter was one of the few people protecting László Tókécs on the night of December 16 and was taken by the Securitate when the pastor was evicted. As he was waiting for information in front of the church he was approached by some leaders of the revolution, who were looking for Tókécs. The crowd sent him to the balcony, as “his daughter is in prison, for him it is all the same”. Later he became a member of the Timisoara Society and one of the leading Hungarian promoters of the Timisoara Proclamation. It seems reasonable to claim that without his accidental role in the revolution he could not have obtained the necessary symbolic capital for his future actions (based on the interview with Zoltán Balaton).

⁴⁶ In March 1990 some of them were even elected to the presidency of the organization.

as many individuals possessing revolutionary capital were not part of any influential social network within the community.

Secondly, as DAHB was already founded and many of these people connected to its work, they lacked the needed influence to seize power. Also seemingly they did not even question the legitimacy of the pre-revolutionary cultural elite, as the interviewees could not remember any debate or fracture on this issue of some individuals' involvement with the former regime. This does not mean that those debates did not exist, rather that they lacked the intensity needed for elite-circulation. An eloquent example for this is a reader's letter appearing in the local newspaper^[47] which brought up precisely the problem of the communist past, asking whether those who graduated the party academy^[48] could or could not be members of the Alliance. The question was very relevant, as several members of the founding elite were in this situation. The letter was answered by the president of DAHB himself, who underlined the openness and democratic commitment of the organization.

A question may arise: how come a communist-post communist cleavage was not created, as the topic was one of major importance within the Romanian political sphere as a whole^[49]. There are several, mutually reinforcing explanations for this issue. First, generally in the case of Hungarians the creation of this type of cleavage was problematic, as only a few Hungarians reached top notch positions in the communist power structure, and some of these had become dissidents when they objected Ceaușescu's chauvinistic policy in the 1980s^[50]. This was not the case in Timisoara, as none of the persons involved had any dissident past, however neither of them collaborated with the system either.

Second, many of the old cultural elite and nomenklatura tried to build up significant symbolic, revolutionary capital. As shown a few pages earlier, many of them underlined their role in some events of the revolution, implicitly blurring the line between them and those who were marginalized by the communist regime.

Third, many of the members of the old cultural elite and nomenklatura in their narratives tried to acquit themselves, by evoking the context of his or her acceptance or rejection of party membership, or elements of their restrictive conditions or resistance. Some stress the triviality of party membership as compared to the actions taken in the interest of the – national or scientific – community. It is important to mention that this is not a local specificity either. As József D. Lőrincz points out, members of the party, nomenklatura or the old cultural elite could keep their legitimacy nationwide by using an ambivalent discourse in the communist period, which combined the official Marxist-Leninist rhetoric with an underground nationalist one: it kept the frame and form of the former, while filling it with system-critical messages from the latter. While in the 1980s this strategy guaranteed that they could keep their self-esteem in a world where sincerity and outspokenness was impossible, after the revolution, as Zoltán A. Biró argues, they only replaced the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric with a new, nationalist one (Biró: 1998, 49–94). Based on this change, after the revolution no self-reflection was needed as regards the communist past, since their basic activity and engagement did not change, but only

⁴⁷ See: *Temesvári Új Szó*, January 13, 1990.

⁴⁸ Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy in Bucharest.

⁴⁹ On this issue see Tibil 1995; Mungiu 1995. In her book for example, Alina Mungiu argues, among other things, that the democratic opposition's only strategy in the first few years of the 1990s was the production of a morality based anti-communist discourse against Iliescu and the National Salvation Front.

⁵⁰ Most eloquent example is the cases of András Sütő or Károly Király, the latter protested against the atrocities committed against Hungarians in an official letter written in 1978. On Király's role see his memoirs: (Király: 1995.)

the language they used (Lőrincz: 2004). Also, as a few of them were regarded having been “servants” of the system, on discursive level a sharp separation is created between those members of the old elite, who were considered collaborators of the Romanian secret service, traitors, who for their own personal well-being presumably committed other atrocities against Hungarians as well and those, who although filled elite positions in the communist period, were “good members of the community^[51].” This marginalization of some individuals had several consequences. For one, people singled out were symbolically excluded from the community, most of them even retiring from the public sphere. Secondly, for the others it meant that they were implicitly acquitted from the need to reflect on their own communist past.

A fourth reason that prevented the formation of a sharp communist-anti-communist cleavage is related to the salience of ethnic boundaries. As a result of the ethnic clashes from Târgu Mureş in March 1990 and the changing nationalistic politics of the Iliescu regime, many of the members of the Hungarian elite – both on local and national level – ranked internal debates as less important than the need of unified ethnic representation^[52].

Consequently, those members of the newly forming elite, who gathered their political capital by transforming their revolutionary one lacked the necessary tools and will to crowd out those who used their pre-revolutionary cultural and social capital to found the organization. Moreover, as shown above they were not interested in creating a cleavage within the elite, as these differences in many cases were not clear cut, but rather fuzzy.

The consolidation of DAHB and the parliamentary elections

On the local level DAHB built up close relationships with the local Hungarian newspaper and the Hungarian Youth Organization from Timisoara. This was also facilitated by the fact that all three organizations functioned in the same building, in the offices of the old newspaper, *Szabad Szó*. Such partnerships were not a specificity in Timisoara, as all local and national organizations of DAHR followed the same strategy: first, they accepted the newspapers and the youth organizations as partners and afterwards they granted reserved positions for them in the leadership^[53]. Although both the youth organization and the newspaper kept their independence and their own agendas, they worked together in problems of Hungarian interest^[54].

An interesting event in the evolution of the relationship between the newspaper and DAHB happened on December 23, 1989 when the president of the newly formed organization, Barna Bodó and one of the most prominent founding members, Ferenc

⁵¹ This kind separation was a general strategy within the Hungarian community as it was present both at the local and national level. For example in Timisoara, most of the interviewees singled out as the only person collaborating with the communist regime an editor of the local newspaper, Sándor Vajda. Except for him, not only that nobody else from the Hungarian community was mentioned as a committed collaborator of the communist system, but everybody else filling important party-positions was acquitted, as a result to his/her perceived actions.

⁵² This kind of interpretation of the events can be read out from several speeches, it appeared from example in those from the first congress of DAHR (Varga: 1990).

⁵³ In Timisoara both the editor in chief of *Temesvári Új Szó*, János Graur, and the president of the youth organization, Tibor T. Toró became members of the presidency without election.

⁵⁴ One of the most eloquent examples of this collaboration was during the electoral campaign, when the paper published most of the news sent by DAHR and followed the Hungarian candidates' activity closely. The member of the youth organization conducted the grassroots campaign in Timisoara, such as the door-to-door campaign and putting out posters.

Bárányi visited the editorial office to deliver the founding statement for publishing. After this event, Bárányi “appointed” Bodó as editor-in-chief. The editors did not accept and elected their editor democratically. This event provides several insights into the emerging social relations. First, it is clear that the founders of DAHB imagined that their organization should control all social relations and – as the emerging leadership of Hungarians – should have decisional rights in every domain of social life. Second, Bárányi, a member of the provisional executive committee, appointed the president of the organization as editor-in-chief. Under normal circumstances this could not have happened as it contradicted all hierarchical and organizational logic. Therefore, a reasonable explanation is that Bárányi possessed a strong legitimating capital in the community. Although the relationship between the paper and the Alliance soon normalized, the case highlights how the newly formed elite perceived and defined democracy at that time and what key roles prominent personalities could play in the first months. In our specific case, despite the fact that Bárányi did not become the leader of the organization, his pre-1989 social capital, his revolutionary capital and his habitus apparently authorized him to take decisions such as the one presented above^[55]. Furthermore, this concentration of capital probably helped him become the leading candidate in the first parliamentary elections. Although the ways of his nomination remain unclear^[56], one thing is for sure: neither the candidacy of Bárányi for the Chamber of Deputies, either that of László Tőkés for the Senate were contested, both of them being appointed by consensus. Besides the concentration of capital, another factor was crucial in this sense: the high uncertainty discouraged people from wanting to go to Bucharest. As Tibor T. Toró, the president of the youth organization by that time pointed out, it was very hard to find people who were willing to give their name for the candidate lists, let alone to assume roles in Bucharest^[57]. Naturally, for 1992 the situation had changed, as it became clear what membership in parliament meant. Despite the uncontested acceptance of the leading Hungarian candidates, the results of DAHR in Timiș county at the parliamentary elections of 1990 fell short of expectations.

Table 3. – The results of DAHR at the 1990 elections in Timiș county

	<i>Number of votes</i> *	<i>Percentage of votes</i>	<i>Percentage of Hungarians in the county (Vargá: 2007)</i>	
			1977	1992
Chamber of deputies	30 471	7.61%	11.12%	8.98%
Senate	44 174	10.45%		

* „Alegerile generale din România (1990-2004)” 2015

All the actors involved expected the success of both candidates and secretly they were hoping for a second seat in the Chamber of Deputies as well. This can be explained by the fact that nobody knew exactly how many Hungarians live in the county and they

⁵⁵ This is strengthened by the interviews as well. Many remember Bárányi as a person who took spontaneous and authoritarian decisions. When they debated the separation of schools on ethnic terms many opposed that it should be done in the mid-semester. “But Bárányi slapped the table, »No, brother, we are going in!« And he was right, we went in [to discuss the issue with the mayor]” (interview with Zoltán Balaton).

⁵⁶ Neither the media from that time, nor the interviewees provided details on this. Probably Bárányi’s candidacy was announced by Ferenc Albert in a radio interview.

⁵⁷ Personal discussion with Tibor T. Toró.

were expecting “sympathy votes” for László Tőkés from ethnic Romanians as well^[58]. However, the results show that even if a significant number of ethnic Romanians (and persons belonging to other minorities) voted for Tőkés^[59], as Hungarian mobilization was probably lower than that of the Romanians (since the results of DAHR fell behind the ethnic percentage of the Hungarians), the results were not enough for getting into parliament.

Table 4. – Electoral results of DAHR in the 1990-1996 period

	1990	1992	1996
Chamber of deputies	30 471 (7.61%)	19 674 (5.79%)	20320 (5.12%)
Senate	44 174 (10.45%)	16 937 (4.96%)	19 769 (4.99%)

Source: for the 1990 figures: (“Alegerile generale din România (1990-2004)” 2015), for the 1992 and 1996 figures: the webpage of the Permanent Electoral Authority (<http://alegeri.roaep.ro/>)

The relationship between DAHB and the central organization of DAHR

The relationship with the central organization of DAHR is an important pillar in the consolidation of DAHB, as the rupture between those who wanted to activate on the local level and those who aspired for national roles emerged at a very early stage. Those who became integrated into the national structure did not compete for local positions (local and county councils, etc.), although they needed the legitimization of the local organizations. They competed for those few positions – the single obtainable seat in the Chamber of Deputies, presidency of the local organization – which would have provided them avenues into the national bodies of DAHR. These few available positions were occupied by interested actors at a very early stage, freezing and expropriating them.

When analyzing the national engagement of the local actors, three questions need to be answered. First, what was the role of the delegates from Timisoara at the first congress of DAHR, second, how can it be explained that they ended up overrepresented in the national bodies, compared to the percentage of Hungarians living in Banat and third, when and how was it decided that DAHB would become a member of DAHR, and when did they cease to use the name DAHB and switched to DAHR

The delegates of DAHB participated at every provisory meeting of DAHR^[60], some of them becoming members of the leading bodies of the organization^[61]. This engagement has several possible explanations. First, some of the DAHB prominent figures became active at the national level as representatives of the youth organization. This was also

⁵⁸ See the interviews with Zoltán Balaton and Ferenc Bárányi. Bárányi thinks until this day that László Tőkés as the candidate for the Senate was very close, although he was short with around 11 thousand votes.

⁵⁹ Compared to the 1992 and 1996 result, DAHR performed much better on the Senatorial list in 1990, as both in 1992 and 1996 the number of votes is actually lower for the Senate. In other words, in 1990 Tőkés obtained a very significant number of sympathy votes from Romanians and other minorities, which was lost in the upcoming elections.

⁶⁰ These were the following: preliminary meeting organized in Cluj on January 7, preliminary meeting organized in Târgu Mures on January 13, preliminary meeting of the National Interim Committee organized in Sfântu Gheorghe on February 24-25, and the first congress of DAHR organized on April 21-22, in Oradea.

⁶¹ Attila Zsolt Borbély, a university student became member of the National Interim Committee of DAHR, while Barna Bodó and Tibor T. Toró became members of the national presidential body of the Alliance.

catalyzed by the fact that at the local level the organization was controlled mostly by the old cultural elite, while at the national level the youth organization, as a partner of DAHR, received a quota at the Congress and other national bodies of the Alliance. Moreover, acting as the internal opposition and having a more radical voice than the mainstream of DAHR, the youth organization could readily maintain itself in the focus of attention from the early stages^[62].

Second, as László Tőkés became the honorary president of DAHR, members of the group supporting him before 1989 could use his symbolic capital to position themselves within DAHR at the national level. The most eloquent example in this sense is Imre Borbély, who as a trusted companion of Tőkés became one of the leading DAHR politicians in the early 1990s, and received several foreign scholarships in the 1990s which were directly linked to his role in the revolution^[63]. In 1991 he published an important programmatic paper entitled *Where to take our destiny, or the co-national status and its opportunities* (Borbély: 1991), which propelled him into the DAHR presidency.

As for the last question there is no exact data on how and when it was decided that DAHB would become a member of DAHR, and when they switched to DAHR, as neither the newspapers, nor the interviewees would give details on this. Also, there is no evidence on the fact that the founding members of DAHB would have thought otherwise, they were not planning to create a new party (they were participating regularly at national meetings). There are two plausible explanations on this issue. On the one hand, apparently they did not give any importance to it (e.g. in 1991, when the name of organization was already DAHR, they still used the official stamp of the old organization, many documents being issued by DAHB^[64]) and, on the other hand, the decision seems to be related to the upcoming parliamentary elections. In order to participate at the parliamentary elections DAHB needed to merge within DAHR, becoming the Timiș county level organization of the Alliance.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to present the most important events of the self-organization of the Hungarian community in Timisoara after December 1989 and to analyze the characteristics of the newly formed Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in the Banat. As argued in the paper the first few months of the organization underline the fact that the foundation of DAHB was a spontaneous act, the result of the meeting of an informal group, whose members were part of the local Hungarian cultural elite and of the second and third lines of the nomenklatura. In other words, the foundation of DAHB was not premeditated, it happened more as a result of the sudden idea of the actors. The key actor in this process, a well-known Hungarian physician Ferenc Bárányi gathered the members of his social network, the representatives of the Hungarian cultural elite and the nomenklatura to his house where they decided about the future and characteristics of the organization. Although it is possible that there were other similar attempts only this group

⁶² See the speeches of UHYO-delegates Zsolt Szilágyi and István Csutak and the response of György Gálfalvi (delegate from Târgu Mures) at the First Congress (Varga: 1990).

⁶³ Interview with Imre Borbély.

⁶⁴ This was explained to me by Dukász Péter one of the upcoming president of the local DAHR in a personal discussion.

possessed the proper social and cultural resources to accomplish its plans successfully.

Therefore, the findings of the paper bring in depth evidence from a rather specific case to the theories that explain the regime-change through elite-reproduction^[65], as contrary to the expectations. Even in a city with strong revolutionary movements, in the case of the Hungarian community, individuals whose symbolic capital was mainly of the revolutionary kind got into leadership positions only sporadically. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the symbolic capital derived from participation in the revolution was not important, but it implied that it was not sufficient to take power. On one hand, compared to the pre-revolutionary cultural elite and nomenklatura, these actors lacked the crucial social network and connections to orchestrate the formation of the organization, and on the other hand, they could not differentiate themselves from the members of the old elite, as in many cases the line between the two was fuzzy, as a result to the latter's perceived role in the community. Also, as in the Hungarian elite's perception, the revolution ended in a way with the December 15-16 events, most of the interviewed people reflected on these events, and it is reasonable to conclude that those present derived their revolutionary capital from their relationship to Tőkés and the events surrounding him. Later, many of the members of the old cultural elite considered this symbolic capital of participation essential in order to legitimate one's presence in the public sphere. In addition to this, the cultural elite tried from a very early stage to integrate the youth organizations, in order to defuse a possible generational opposition.

Another important aspect of the consolidation of DAHB is that its leaders understood and recognized their legitimacy deficit, so they deployed several strategies—replicating social structure in their group, membership recruitment, and founding local organizations as well as branches in factories and various other institutions, looking for partners – to overcome it. These processes were strikingly similar to the formation and consolidation of the Romanian Communist Party, the only known organizational model for the actors at that time.

DAHB did not function as an organization in the classical sense until the internal elections organized in March 1990. It rather worked as the public sphere of Hungarians, an open forum where everybody could say his or her opinion and work together for the best formulation of the Hungarian public interest. Moreover, as there was no hierarchical structure, everybody was working on issues individually, using their own networks and social capital, without being aware of what the others were doing. Already in these early stages its founding members imagined DAHB as a total organization which should integrate all the social structures and civic organizations of the Hungarians.

As the “old” cultural elite dominated the new structures too, reflections on the communist past remained sporadic. An essential aspect of the attitude towards the past is the phenomenon of scapegoating, that is the process of singling out certain people for taking the blame for the collaboration with the communist system. As a result of this some of the actors designated as scapegoats left on their own, while others were excluded from the Hungarian community, disappearing from public life after the revolution. In addition to this, the rest of the elite, whose relationship with the communist regime was unclear, were absolved. Moreover, the public accepted their innocence as a result of the ambivalent

⁶⁵ For example: Pasti 1995; Zamfir 2003 or Szelényi and Szelényi 1995, This latter article however did not reject completely elite circulation, arguing that in the case Hungary and Poland the political elite was partly reproduced and partly circulated.

discourse they used: in other words they managed to reallocate their cultural and social capital gathered in the previous system.

Abbreviations and translations of names:

DAHB – Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in the Banat
 DAHR – Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania
 UHYO – Union of Hungarian Youth Organizations from Romania
 Temesvári Új Szó – New Word of Timisoara
 Szabad Szó – Free Word
 Luptătorul Bănăţean – Fighter from Banat
 Securitate – the Romanian secret service before 1989
 Ifjú Munkás – Young Worker
 Előre – Forward, Ahead
 Látóhatár Kör – Horizon Circle

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