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Summary: Ways of Interpretation of Hungarian-American Ethnic-based Public Life and Identity

In the course of our research, we tried to use a variety of methodologies to best capture the main characteristics of the Hungarian-American institutions, civic activities, and social life, and to identify the worldview of the participants and leaders of Hungarian-American public life.

Below, we define the methods used to classify the functions and characteristics of Hungarian-American institutions, in order to arrive at an institutional typology. We also examine and try to identify the ethnic identity profiles that emerge from participants in Hungarian-American institutional life, since participation in public life is a constituent factor in the dynamics of Hungarian ethnic institutions. Finally, we try to determine fundamental diaspora community relationships, employing our research-based institutional and identity profiles, and to explore connections between community life in the diaspora and the ancestral homeland (or the perception of the homeland). Further, we attempt to determine whether such relationships create an autochthonous ethnic culture or, instead, represent an adaptation of the old cultural heritage to a new environment.

1.1. Types of Institutions

There are a number of ways we can classify Hungarian-American institutions. One of the handiest and frequently used is to classify them by the date of the creation of the institution and its goals. This, mostly historical approach is linked to the various waves of migration and results in the following groups:
  – Traditional ("old") Hungarians' institutions, such as: fraternal associations, Catholic parishes and Protestant congregations;

- DP (Displaced Persons, that is, refugees from World War II) organizations, such as: MHBK (*Fraternal Association of Hungarian Veterans*), *Hungarian Scout Federation in Exile*, *Hungarian National Committee*;
- Organizations of 1956 refugees, such as: *Hungarian Freedom Fighters' Associations*;
- Organizations partly maintained and created by economic refugees and newly arrived immigrants, such as: *HungarianAmerica Foundation* (Washington DC), some Hungarian Sunday schools and Magyar/ Hungarian Houses in various cities (i.e. Los Angeles).

This classification, although it takes into account fundamental factors, is of limited use because in today's Hungarian-American community, the traditional group definitions that characterized migrating patterns have either disappeared or have evolved. Currently, we have simultaneously first, second and third generation DP immigrants, first and second generations of refugees of 1956, the wave of migration of the 1960's to the 1980's (the so-called Kadar's orphans[1]), and the skilled immigrants of the 1990's seeking to make a better living. The immigrant institutions were also affected by the fact that the end of the Cold War and the attendant emergence of newly democratic states in Europe also meant the disappearance of the "enemy image" that was part and parcel of the legitimacy, and indeed, the identity of the institutions. A third factor affecting the institutional crisis, besides the end of the underlying context of the ideological divide, was the advanced age of institutional leaders and the dying out of their generation, which brought new challenges for those institutions striving to endure.

The institutions may also be categorized by areas of activity. In this respect, the most important are those that have an orientation toward a particular set of activities, such as politics, culture, worship, scouting, or professional affiliation. Our discussion of the institutional database reflects this classification method.[2]

In its 2006 report, the since-abolished Office of Hungarians Abroad (HTMH) uses yet another set of categories[3] to classify Hungarian organizations in the United States:

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[1]   The term is used by Huseby-Darvas, Éva V.: *Hungarians in Michigan*. Michigan State University Press, 2003. p. 27.

[2]   See János Márton's analysis in this book.

[3]   Office of Hungarians Abroad (HTMH): *Jelentés a Kárpát-medencén kívül élő magyarság helyzetéről.* [Report on Hungarian communities outside the Carpathian Basin 2006.]

- Organizations which focus on Hungarian-American relations and represent Hungarian interests, and which no longer fit the mold of the traditional civic institutions (e.g. *Hungarian American Coalition, Center for Hungarian-American Congressional Relations*)
- Organizations that are "transitional" in the sense that they seek both to represent Hungarian interests and to protect the Hungarian heritage (e.g. *Manhattan Hungarian Network*)
- Organizations that function in the framework of traditional immigrant institutions.

Based on our research, and particularly on an analysis of the interviews undertaken, we propose to categorize the organizations in terms of spheres of influence, separating the local organizations from the national ones. From this vantage point, we have three types of organizations: local, buffer and national organizations.

In this classification, "buffer" means organizations which are essentially both local and national in scope: their sphere of activities goes beyond local boundaries. Such is the case for the church-based organizations, the scouts (the *Hungarian Scout Association Abroad*), and to some extent the Hungarian schools. For the church-based organizations, the organizational structure is a given (i.e. diocesan framework); the scouts have their own strong linkage between the local troops and the Scout Association which oversees them. In case of the schools, however, national integration is, for the most part, a desirable but unfulfilled goal. The operation of Hungarian schools has not been standardized despite the creation of *American Hungarian Educator's Association* (AHEA, MITE) and *Hungarian Language Conference* (Anyanyelvi Konferencia). As for the national organizations, our analysis shows that they are primarily lobby, trade or professional affiliations, while the local organizations concentrate on local Hungarian cultural and social activities, and have very little involvement in the political sphere. Both the local and national organizations suffer from internal and external conflicts; these might be overcome with the influx of younger generations.

Another way to classify the organizations is to examine how a given organization formulates its goals and how it carries them out: according to this logic, organizations may be divided into two large categories:
- Closed ethnic organizations
- Open ethnic organizations

The working language of *closed ethnic organizations* is primarily Hungarian; their perception of the Hungarian-American community is static, and

echoes their self-perception. This type of organization entails a folk-populist culture with the traditional ethnic overtones (e.g. traditional Hungarian food).

In the *open ethnic organizations*, English-language communications are also acceptable and the perception of the Hungarian community is dynamic, in the sense that the organization's activities involve interacting with local and national American groups. From the perspective of representatives of this type of organization, Hungarian-ness is not just for preservation, but should be showcased before the wider society.

The organizing principle of open vs. closed ethnic organizations is relevant at both the local and national levels. We could say that while ethnic openness is a precondition for organizations representing Hungarian interests at the national level, in other types of organizations the opposite is true: their closed ethnic organizational mode allows them to transcend local boundaries and function successfully at the national level as well (e.g. scout troops). An nalysis of the historical narrative of Hungarian organizations indicates that these organizations were primarily closed ethnic organizations, since they were largely created to preserve an ethnic culture. However, because of integration into American society, the feeling of being immigrants has receded, and with increasing frequency we find ethnically open organizations at the local level, where Hungarian identity is more relational with the wider community. It should be noted that this type of organizational vantage point is, perhaps paradoxically, more typical in communities where larger numbers of citizens of Hungarian ancestry live. It is reasonable to assume that in these geographic enclaves (Cleveland, Florida, New Jersey) there is a greater pool of second and third generation Hungarians and of economic immigrants, partly due to mixed marriages, and this favors the ascendance of open ethnic organizations.

If we combine the organizing principles described above (local vs. national, and open vs. closed) we can create a matrix that encompasses four major types of organizations *(See figure 6.1.)*: *lobbying organizations, heritage organizations, community preservation organizations* and *community showcase organizations*. These types of organizations, even though we included some actual organizations in the illustration, are really sociological ideal types,[4] that is, theoretical structures designed to accurately reflect operational aspects or the most salient characteristics of organizations. We should note that these ideal types seldom if ever exist in their pure form in

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[4]   The term is used in a weberian sense. See Weber, Max: *Gazdaság és társadalom. A megértő szociológia alapvonalai 1. Szociológiai kategóriatan.* Közgadasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1987. (mainly on pages 49–51.)

everyday life. In reality, actual organizations share characteristics of different types, although usually its most salient characteristic allows us to characterize it as a single type.

Figure 6.1. Operational Typology of Hungarian-American Organizations
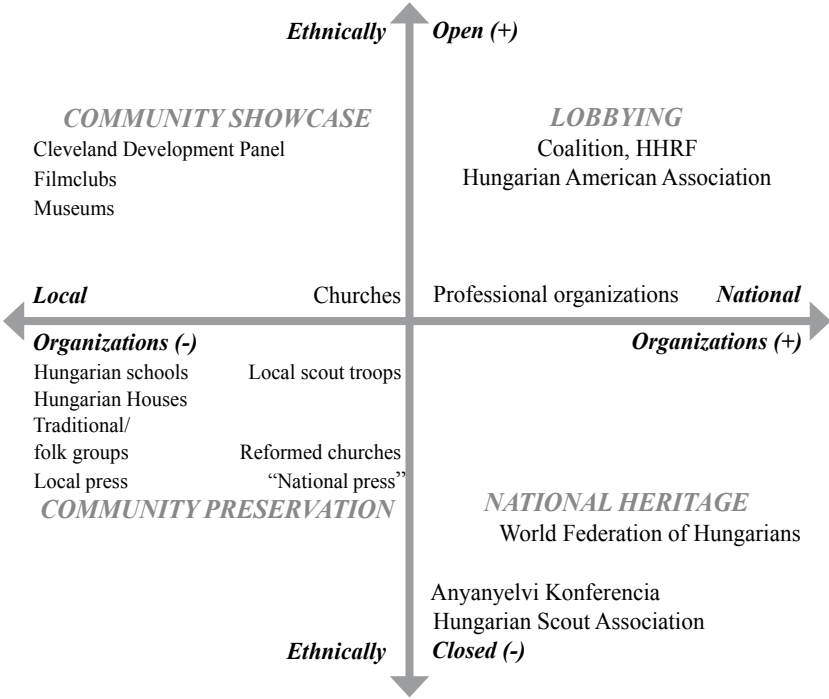
Lobbying organizations aim to achieve a national profile, which is reflected in their rhetoric, and their very existence is predicated upon ethnic openness. These organizations seek to represent Hungarian interests by building relationships with American and Hungarian political entities. These institutions seek to look "greater" than they actually are. We can get a sense of an organization's size by membership figures, or –a better indicator – the number of its constituent member organizations, although it is often difficult to settle on a specific number. In reality, membership figures are not fundamental; instead, the number of member organizations empowers representing organizations to act or communicate on behalf of 1.5 million Hungarian-Americans. We should note that there are organizations that, although by

charter without any organizational membership, may still claim to represent Hungarian-Americans in general.

A particular subset of lobbying organizations is the *professional interest group*. These interest groups, although they transcend locality, still cannot be regarded as national in the full sense of the term. Their activity centers on cooperation among professionals of various professions or trades, and though they achieve a measure of success, they cannot achieve a complete professional integration. These professional organizations work on behalf of Hungarian interests but their very professional orientation requires a working relationship with American counterpart organizations, which precludes the use of Hungarian as the exclusive language of communication.

The National *Heritage organizations* are also national institutions (or even transnational) and their activities focus on protecting the heritage of the Hungarian nation. These organizations are ethnically closed, as indicated by their working language (Hungarian) and their presence in Hungary and the Carpathian basin. We may include in this group cultural institutions which may not be fully national in terms of sphere of activity, but which transcend locality and operate in a wide area including Hungary and other parts of Central Europe (i.e. Anyanyelvi Konferencia).

The *Community Preservation organizations* function primarily as local entities; their emphasis on "preservation" means ensuring the continuity of their own communities. These organizations are active locally and they interact with other local organizations intensively, but know little of similar organizations in other locations, and do not really maintain relationships with them. Of course, there are exceptions to this "insularity", but this generally takes the form of a loose network of relationships among Hungarian-American intellectuals, which however does not reach the level of formal connectedness among the local communities. The Hungarian identity of Community Preservation organizations is not merely a sense of national kinship, but also rests upon specific local community activities. For example, the local scout troops, schools and Hungarian Reformed churches largely focus on daily tasks that serve the community; they do not necessarily wish to set goals of national policy. This does not mean that individuals active in these organizations do not have an ethno-social or national consciousness, rather that they are active in community roles instead of serving the nation in the more abstract sense.

In our illustration *(Figure 6.1.)*, we placed the press in the category of Community Preservation organizations. In the case of the local electronic media or publications of local organizations, this categorization is understandable,

but the inclusion of the "national-level press" in this community category requires elaboration. This seeming paradox is explained by the fact that the so-called "national" press actually functions within a local framework. Whether considering the Hungarian papers in California, or the newspaper that reports from Chicago but is published in Canada, we see strong affiliations with local interests. The *Amerikai Magyar Népszava Szabadság*, currently published in New Jersey, includes topics of interest nationally and news from Hungary, yet still it is inward-looking and plagued by internal conflicts, and so retains the characteristics of a local institution.

The function of *Community Showcase Organizations* is to present Hungarian ethnicity to the American public. The need to be "visible" becomes an organizing force; Hungarian-ness becomes something to be introduced to the local non-Hungarian-speaking public. Museums are the most obvious example of such an organization (one which involves both being Hungarian and also showing our heritage to others), since museums are places that show and preserve. In addition, the churches, as buffer organizations, also belong to this category to some extent, because the growing trend toward bilingual services assumes ethnic openness. However, a sizable proportion of the Reformed congregations nevertheless more properly belong to the *Community Preservation* category described above, since these churches, besides nurturing the faith, act locally to preserve Hungarian culture.[5]

In *Figure 6.1.* we placed a few organizations in the diagram in an attempt to suggest the operational logic of the diverse organizational functions.[6] Two things should be noted here. First: organizations placed in the various coordinates of the diagram most likely have characteristics that might make them equally suited for another category. The Hungarian schools, for example, are interested in the preservation of the Hungarian heritage and nationality, but their functions are carried out locally. Similarly, the *Community Showcase Organizations* also have community preservation functions, although their defining function is to present the national heritage to the American public. In short, the classification gives greater emphasis to the organization's opera-

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[5]   And this twin function may be a source of repeated conflicts, see subheading 3.4.5. in Papp's analysis. (The dilemma of religious faith vs. ethnic preservation.)

[6]   Note on the chart that an organization's position relative to the axes is also significant: the regions of the chart indicating "ethnic openness" and "function" should be interpreted like a coordinate system, with positive and negative extremes. An organization that is shown near the intersection of these two coordinates indicates that it tends toward being neutral in terms of ethnic openness and is "transitional" (buffer) in terms of function.

tional method over its heritage-preserving aspects, which is, in some measure, common to all of the organizations.

Our second observation is regarding the nature of our analysis. We do not intend to apply a value judgment to the organizations and their operations. For us, these modes of functioning are value-neutral, since the purpose of the analysis and research is not to evaluate the organizations according to their relative importance, but to shed light on this small universe of Hungarian-American organizations and thereby to reach an understanding of the character of (a segment of) the Hungarian-American present.

1.2. Hungarian-American Identity Structures

Although the primary aim of the qualitative research was to enter the inner world of Hungarian-American organizations, our interviews gave us an opportunity to learn about the identity awareness of a significant group of Hungarian-Americans.

In our analysis, we came up with three levels of identity in the Hungarian-American community. We defined an *ethno-personal identity* level, where the relationship is between the individual and the host country. We defined an *ethno-social identity* level, characterized by a well-defined relationship with the American way of life within the context of belonging to a Hungarian community. And third, we defined an identity level which assumes a more encompassing sense of *national consciousness*, strongly influenced by returns to the ancestral homeland and by the individual's view of the Hungarian nation.[7] Naturally, these identity levels and their characteristics occur to

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[7] It should be noted that although from a different perspective and with a different terminology, Miklós Szántó arrived at a similar descriptive identity structure. (Szántó Miklós: *Magyarok Amerikában*. Gondolat, Budapest, 1984. 36–40.) According to him, the strength of the levels of Hungarian identity depends on contacts with the ancestral homeland, integration in the adopted country, and degree of participation in the life of the ethnic community. These determinants may be further examined according to their respective sociological, cultural and political dimensions. Based on these criteria, there are 8 types, ranging from those who have a harmonious dual relationship with both the ancestral homeland and the host country, to those who are more prone to reject the new country and remain at the periphery of its society. This model is largely consonant with research on nationalism and minorities pursued by Rogers Brubaker, though in 1984 Szanto could not possibly have known the work of Brubaker, which was published in 1996. Brubaker also says that the situation of the minorities is defined by relationships with the ancestral country, the minority community and the host country. (Brubaker, Rogers: *Nationalism*

varying extents among different individuals: this became evident through our own direct interaction with the interview subjects, but also indirectly, from what the interviewees had to say about their fellow Hungarian-Americans. A number of interview subjects stated that those individuals who regularly participate in Hungarian-American community life are a small proportion of the entire Hungarian community, estimated at most at 5 to 10 percent of the total. As we have detailed in our demographic analysis U.S. census data estimating the number of persons of Hungarian ancestry include an element of uncertainty, but it is generally accepted that 10 percent of Hungarian-Americans regularly speak Hungarian at home. But who are the Hungarian-Americans who do not participate in Hungarian community life and who do not speak Hungarian?

The above-described levels of identity, which emerged from our series of interviews, are helpful in identifying – at least in theory – the identity consciousness of these "other" Hungarian-Americans. If our point of departure is that the three-level framework is observable to varying degrees for each person (that is, each of the three identity levels either applies to an individual or not), then we can define a range of identity-consciousness. At one pole, we find those who actively participate in the organizational life of the community; his/her Hungarian identity is important at the individual level (for instance, he/she uses the Hungarian language); he/she feels, in some fashion, part of the Hungarian nation and regards himself or herself as a member of the Hungarian community. At the other pole, we find those who are completely assimilated (third, fourth or nth generation) Americans of Hungarian ancestry for whom Hungarian identity is unimportant both at the individual and community levels, who do not speak Hungarian, and who have no sense of belonging to the Hungarian nation either symbolically or more substantially.

Within these extremes we can find several transitional stages, each of which can be defined as an identity profile. We have identified a total of eight such profiles, as shown in *Table 6.1*.[8]

Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe. Cambridge University Press, 1996.)

[8]   Sign (+) indicates existence of an identity level, sign (–) indicates lack of it. In fact, it is possible to further refine the identity types by indicating the relative presence or absence of each identity level's typical characteristics, ranging from "very much present" (+++) to "entirely absent" (– – –).

Table 6.1. Hungarian-American Identity Profiles

	Ethno-personal identity exists	*Ethno-social identity exists*	*National identity exists*
Sample Questions	*Is being Hungarian important at a personal level? (for example: does the person speak Hungarian?)*	*Is being Hungarian important at the local community level? (e.g. does he/ she participate in Hungarian events?)*	*Does he/she self-identify as part of the Hungarian nation? (e.g. is he/she aware of his/her Hungarian ancestry?)*
Identity Profile			
1. Active Hungarian	+	+	+
2. Local Hungarian	+	+	–
3. Cautious Hungarian	+	–	+
4. Private Hungarian	+	–	–
5. Hungarian in heart	–	+	+
6. Festive, occasional Hungarians	–	+	–
7. Census-Hungarians	–	–	+
8. Assimilated Hungarians	–	–	–

Let us examine what these identity types may entail:

1. *Active Hungarian Identity*: A sense of Hungarian identity exists at both the individual and communal levels, and the question of national identity is also very much present. Such an individual speaks Hungarian, participates in Hungarian events and public life and has opinions about his/her own Hungarian identity, about Hungary and about the Hungarians who live as minorities in Central Europe.

2. *Local Hungarian Identity*: for this individual, the country of ancestry and the fate of the Hungarian nation have become less relevant. This individual still speaks Hungarian and attends Hungarian events from time to time, but it is unlikely that he or she travels to Hungary, or does so infrequently.

3. *Cautious Hungarian Identity*: this individual speaks Hungarian, and Hungary and a sense of belonging to a larger Hungarian community are still important, but he/she does not attend explicitly Hungarian events. Based on our interviews, the oft-mentioned "illegal Hungarians", "new Hungarians", and "fresh-off-the-boat" Hungarians might be classified in this group. Other members of this group include those immigrants who came earlier, and whose Hungarian identity is still important, but who for some reason do not wish to participate in the activities of the Hungarian-American organizations.

4. *Private Hungarian Identity*: these individuals have lost their relationship with the Hungarian community, whether in a close-knit family sense or in the wider sense. He/she still speaks some Hungarian, if only the colloquial language. For these individuals, Hungarian identity is a private matter which is rarely expressed to others.

5. *Hungarian in heart*: we could define this identity type by the saying "the nation lives not only through its language but in the heart as well". These individuals, as a rule, barely speak Hungarian or do not speak it at all, but they have a sense of respect and responsibility toward the country of ancestry, and as a result they participate in Hungarian-American community events, still visit Hungary, and concern themselves (whatever that concern may be) with Hungarian issues.

6. *Festive or Occasional Hungarians*: this is where the individual's ancestry is foggy or unsettled, although he/she participates from time to time in Hungarian events (perhaps events where Hungarian dishes are served, for example). Individuals in this category may not indicate their Hungarian ancestry in the census questionnaire and they do not speak Hungarian at all.

7. *Census-Hungarians*: these individuals have some notion of Hungarian ancestry, which they indicate in the census questionnaire. Otherwise, they do not consider Hungarian identity important, nor do they attend Hungarian events.[9]

8. *Assimilated Hungarians*: these are individuals for whom their Hungarian roots are completely irrelevant and any consciousness of Hungarian origin is absent.

The eight ethnic identity types cover all variations of Hungarian-American identity consciousness. It should be noted that only seven of these are reflected in the census, since those who have been assimilated completely probably do not even know whether their ancestors were Hungarian. In the course of our analysis, our interviews were mostly with members of the first group, that is, the Active Hungarian Identity, plus a few persons who do not speak Hungarian, but nonetheless are active in Hungarian-American organizations and may be classified by Identity type number 5 or perhaps number 6. Our theoretical identity types do not cover dual-identity or dual allegiance issues, although such issues likely occur in all of first seven identity categories. (In the last

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[9]   A returning theme for census professionals is how to measure and statistically differentiate those respondents having a significant ethnic consciousness from those individuals for whom ethnic identity is merely occasional, such as when responding to a census questionnaire. (See Levente Pakot's study in this book.)

identity type, dual identity issues do not arise.) If we were to undertake a more detailed analysis, we could examine to what extent these eight identity types are present in the various migration groups and their descendants.

Using these identity types, we can extrapolate theoretical processes of (ethnic) identity loss. This process of loosening ethnic affiliation may begin at any level of identity, that is, either at the individual, social or national level.

A. If an individual no longer speaks Hungarian, theoretically he (and his descendants) could take the path of becoming a Hungarian in heart, then a "festive" Hungarian, then a census Hungarian, and finally reach the stage of full assimilation. In other words, after losing the language, ethnic or national identity may still remain, but after two or three generations even this level of identity is easily lost. *(Figure 6.2.)*

B. If we find that the significance of national identity deteriorates, then the individual may still participate in community events. But if this level of participation does not remain steady, then there are two possible outcomes: participation becomes haphazard as a result of loss of language skills, leading down the path to total assimilation, or else attendance at Hungarian events ceases altogether, with the result that Hungarian language use is restricted to the home. Here, the next stage might well entail the total loss of language skills, which again leads to assimilation. *(Figure 6.3.)*

C. If an individual does not participate in Hungarian institutional activities, he or she may still preserve his or her Hungarian identity privately, but either because the use of the Hungarian language recedes or because of a diminishing sense of national identity we again arrive at full assimilation. *(Figure 6.4.)*

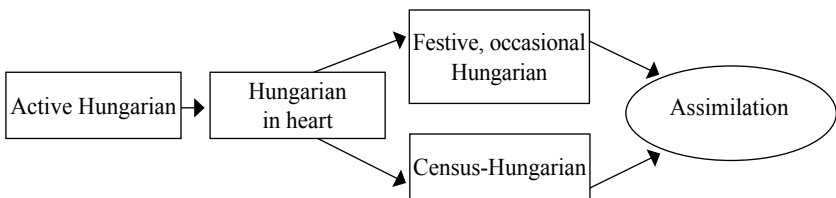*Figure 6.2.* Assimilation paths beginning by loss of ethnic language.

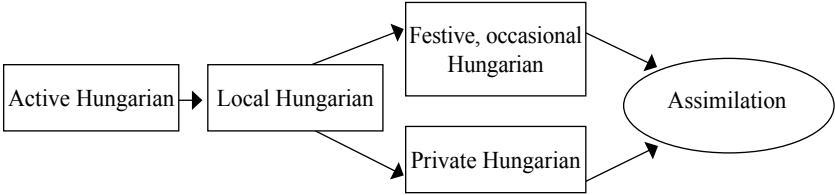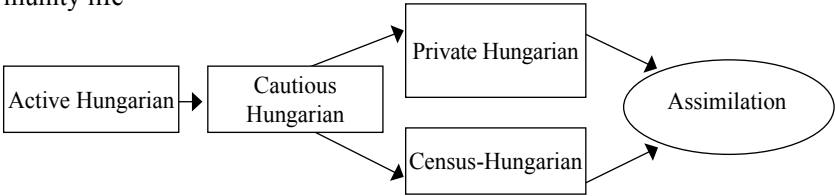*Figure 6.3.* Assimilation paths beginning by weaking of national identity

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┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐        ┌────────────────────┐
│ Active Hungarian │──▶│ Local Hungarian │        │ Festive, occasional │
└─────────────────┘   └─────────────────┘    ──▶ │     Hungarian       │─┐        ╭──────────────╮
                                                   └────────────────────┘  └──────▶│              │
                                                   ┌────────────────────┐          │ Assimilation │
                                                   │  Private Hungarian  │────────▶│              │
                                                   └────────────────────┘          ╰──────────────╯
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Figure 6.4. Assimilation paths beginning by non-participation in ethnic community life

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┌─────────────────┐   ┌──────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
│ Active Hungarian │──▶│ Cautious │        │ Private Hungarian │─┐        ╭──────────────╮
└─────────────────┘   │ Hungarian│    ──▶ └──────────────────┘  └──────▶│              │
                      └──────────┘        ┌──────────────────┐          │ Assimilation │
                                          │ Census-Hungarian  │────────▶│              │
                                          └──────────────────┘          ╰──────────────╯
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Given these defined paths to assimilation, and given our hypothetical assumptions about the behavior of the different generations, we can also determine the time horizon of the phenomenon of assimilation. If our point of departure is that with each new generation, a given level of identity is damaged or diminished – that is, the children will not consider their Hungarian identity (either at individual, social or national level) as important as their parents do, then we may easily conclude that full assimilation will come about within four generations, regardless of the path followed. But if, for instance, the parents are not particularly active as individuals, or as members of an organization, or, for example, the parents do not consider their national identity relevant for whatever reason, then the path to assimilation becomes shorter: the assimilation trajectory speeds up to three or even two generations. Similarly, the path to assimilation becomes shorter inasmuch as the younger generation's identity levels are diminished simultaneously. An example of this, which often happens in reality, is that the younger generation simultaneously loses both its language capabilities and does not participate in Hungarian-American organizations.

In these theoretical pathways, a reverse process is also possible – that of an ethno-cultural revitalization. In this case, it is possible that a completely assimilated individual may be induced to attend Hungarian events, and if he/she learns Hungarian and the ancestral national ties become important, then in two or three generations the descendants may even become Active Hungarians in terms of identity level. Although it is possible to find instances of

this, the usual reality and our interviews indicate that the younger generations are increasingly unlikely to speak the language of their parents and their links to Hungarian institutions are also decreasing.

This assimilation pathway is described by Julianna Puskás as the process by which group identity is gradually replaced by the development of individual identity.[10] In the course of her micro-historical research, Puskás describes the main stages of this identity modification. Initially, the Hungarian sections of town begin to lose their ethnic quality. Daily commuting distance replaces the earlier physical proximity and neighborliness of daily interactions. However, ethnic institutions do support the community's sense of togetherness despite its physical dispersal. But with time, these institutions also start to become bilingual, and in addition, their names often shed their distinctive Hungarian designation. For example, the former *Verhovay Fraternal Association* (*Verhovay Testvérsegitő Egyesület*) merged with the *Rákóczi Association (Rakóczi Egyesület)* and became *The William Penn Fraternal Association* – which sells better in the American marketplace. This institutional evolution placed the older generation, who favored keeping the Hungarian designation, at odds with the younger members, who favored Americanization (and who prevailed). Later on, even the reference to the communal character of the institution was dropped, so that it sounded even better in English: *William Penn Association*.[11] In a parallel development, the originally Hungarian-language publication of the Association becomes bilingual and later on an English-only publication. A similar process can be observed in the Hungarian churches, where the formerly all-Hungarian congregation becomes a bilingual one, then an English-speaking one. (This is more frequent in the Hungarian Catholic congregations, whose parishioners have no say in choosing the pastor.)

Besides the institutional evolution towards bilingualism, the identity individualization process is reinforced by developments in the marriage market: on the one hand manifested by the desire to overcome the intra-ethnic conflicts generated by marriages of diverse backgrounds and, on the other hand, the increase in mixed marriages.

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[10]   Puskás Julianna: *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide. 100 years of Hungarian Experience in the United States.* Holms Meier, New York / London 2000. 290–303.

[11]   Underscoring the "Hungarian in heart" categorization we created, this organization up until recently described itself: "American in Name..… American in Spirit ….. But Hungarian in Heart. Serving Hungarians and their Families since 1886" (See the publication A Nyugat Oldali Magyar Református Egyház 1906-2006. Celebrating on 100th Anniversary, Cleveland, p. 20)

The second element supporting the move toward individualization is related to the educational opportunities of the descendants of Hungarian immigrants, many of whom surpassed their parents' working-class, blue collar status. Thus, social mobility and career considerations contribute to creative impulses and willingness to take initiatives – both hallmarks of individualism, which, in turn, strengthens the assimilation process.

Based on our model, we can also state that the assimilation process may be delayed if at least one of the identity levels is shared by both the children and the parents. For instance, if the child speaks Hungarian and is active in community life, the assimilation process takes longer, but assimilation still occurs. We experienced this in a number of interviews: our subject belongs to the younger generation; he has an active Hungarian identity, speaks Hungarian and participates in Hungarian organizations. Yet in our conversation, he concedes that for him the Hungarian language is a second language, and that he is more at home in English. He also may reveal that his Hungarian national identity lacks a cognitive component and is largely built on emotional kinship or perhaps on elements which were natural for his parents but which, for him, are relevant only as "a parental legacy". The assimilation process slows, but we can nevertheless see the "end of the ethnic tunnel".

Identity, and national identity, are situational. A socio-psychological survey taken in Hungary indicated that Hungarian identity is important for 37% of respondents, but only in the context of a "foreign situation", while under "domestic" normal circumstances the importance of national identity falls to only 3%.[12] The immigrant and above all the refugee is permanently in "a foreign situation," so in the socio-psychological sense their greater degree of commitment is completely understandable. It is also true that if this commitment borne of the "foreign situation" comes into contact with the realities of the homeland – that is, if these two worlds, the imagined Hungarian identity in a foreign setting, and the experience of the identity levels of citizens in present-day Hungary meet, then these varying levels of Hungarian identity may either reinforce or cancel each other out. Those individuals who return to Hungary, and those whose thoughts are occupied by the situation in the homeland, resist this cognitive dissonance by seeking out kindred spirits in the homeland, or those thought to be kindred spirits. Quite naturally, they are more likely to maintain relations with groups in Hungary that stress their

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[12]   György Csepeli: *Szociálpszichológia.* Osiris, Budapest, 1997. 526.

commitment to the Hungarian nation.[13] Whether we are looking at immigrant parents or their descendants, a measure of alienation will always be present and passed on to the next generation. The refugee, the immigrant, will develop and change in his new setting, and the environment left behind will continue to develop as well, and will not remain the same as when the refugee left. For the individual who stays abroad, the myth of returning may be tantalizing, but his own transformation, combined with unseen changes in the old setting, may result in illusory perceptions.[14] The individual (whether a refugee, second or third generation immigrant) senses this disconnect, perhaps subconsciously, and thus his relationship with his ethnic group, his country of ancestry and birth, and with his nationality involves the search for some validation of authenticity. Thus, there is a constant struggle to maintain an "authentic" national identity, and to prefer and display the "pure" forms of Hungarian worldview, style, music (e.g. an insistence on teaching only authentic folk songs), values and cognition, and history (in which the emphasis is on the "pure," ancient myths regarding the origins of the Hungarian people). In the course of our interviews and analysis, we saw all of these effects and their repercussions on the ethnic institutions.

Becoming aware of the assimilation process, as well as its opposite (ethnic and cultural revitalization), is relevant because these processes deepen our understanding of the organizational universe we are trying to describe and understand. Today, it is the assimilation process that provides the larger framework of the world of Hungarian organizations.

This was not always so, since the organizations, which were created in parallel with the arrival of sequential waves of refugees, were often motivated by political issues and by the exigencies of immigrant life. But with the change of regime in Hungary in 1990, these immigrant-centered underpinnings have crumbled. The organizations have consequently undergone a distinct ethno-cultural transformation, whose rhetoric centers on strategies for survival (strategies which, incidentally, never took any comprehensively

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13   One of our survey respondents elaborated on this; he found it hard to believe that [Hungarians] could espouse views other than those of the right: "*Even today, when I hear pronouncements that are at variance with my national sentiment, I am taken aback that there are such things. This is because I hear very little of that.*" (38)

14   Lewin, Kurt: The psycho-sociological problems of minorities. In: Lengyel, Zsuzsanna (ed.): *Szociálpszichológa. Szöveggyűjtemény.* [Socio-psychology. Text compilation.] Osiris, Budapest, 2002. 491–449.

expressed form).[15] The Western diaspora of the early nineties sensed this fundamental change, and in addition to pondering the new ramifications of identity issues, began to interpret their minority status not in terms of immigrant destiny, but as a challenge and a duty.[16] In the United States, this ethno-cultural change began to emerge even before the change of regimes in Central Europe, as the melting pot ideology in the U.S. was discarded in favor of a vaunted ideology of ethnic and cultural pluralism, accompanied by a greater measure of ideological and legal frameworks for preserving communal cultural heritage.[17] Although this wider legal framework[18] varied by state, and its popularity faded in the 1980s, it did nonetheless contribute, if selectively, to the strengthening of Hungarian communities within the paradigm of ethnic revival.[19] Multiculturalism and the end of the sense of immigrant destiny both contributed to the strengthening of the so-called Community Showcase organizations: preserving Hungarian communities and presenting their heritage to the wider public satisfied both the duty to preserve Hungarian identity and the expectations of American society.

Today, most organizational functions are really geared to responding to the challenge of assimilation. The controversial term "*magyarkodás*" (a negative term particularly in the current political context of Hungary, loosely translatable as "doing the Hungarian thing") is, when uttered by

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15   One of the most obvious signs of this cultural change, evident in our interviews, is that Hungarian-Americans' assessments and expectations toward the Hungarian government are cultural: that is, their image of Hungarian-ness is related to cultural preferences (and is not political in nature).

16   Borbándi, Gyula: A nyugati magyar szórványok identitáskérdései. [Identity questions among the Hungarian Diaspora of the West.] In: *Kisebbségnek lenni nem sors, hanem feladat.* Tanácskozás Kismartonban 1992. szeptember 19 – 20 [To be a Minority is a Duty, not Destiny. Meeting in Kismarton, Austria, September 19–20, 1992.],. Published by Ausztriai Magyar Egyesületek és Szervezetek Központi Szövetsége, 1992. 43–47.

17   Borbándi also determined in his 1985 book, that with diminished political activity there is a widening of efforts to preserve the national patrimony, identity consciousness, and intellectual achievement. (Borbándi, Gyula: *Emigráció és Magyarország. Nyugati Magyarok a változások éveiben 1945–1985.* [Political Emigration and Hungary. Western Hungarians in Changing Years 1945–1985.] Európai Magyar Protestáns Szabadegyetem 1985. 447.)

18   For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Bilingual Education Act of 1968.

19   See Fejős, Zoltán: Magyar szórványok mulietnikus környezetben és az etnikus politika. [The Hungarian Diaspora in a Multiethnic Environment and Ethnic Politics.] In: *Magyarságkutatás. Magyarságkutató Intézet Évkönyve.* Budapest, 1989. 23–35.

Hungarian-Americans, considered a useful form of activism without which organizations cannot exist. Since the process of assimilation is most effective when an individual lives his private and social life free of ethnic and national ideologies, the process may be slowed and delayed by committed intervention in the community setting. If the organizations are to survive, logically they require an unusually intensive degree of activity, which entails considerable commitment in terms of time, energy and often finances from the active individuals. The intensity of commitment is particularly noticeable if we consider that the individual has to respond to not only to assimilation challenges but also fulfill ordinary private duties involving career and family. Upholding and preserving ethnic identity therefore cannot be separated from other segments of social identity. Three routes are possible: 1. Career takes priority, which implies a less intensive process of revitalizing ethnic identity. 2. Maintaining ethnic identity at all cost, with sometimes negative consequences for the career. 3. Finding a balance between the competing goals. In our interviews we found instances of all three cases, though we heard most often that involvement in organizational life implies career failure in some way, or else a tendency toward "counter-selection" of the individuals who become activists and leaders of the community. This does not necessarily mean that those active in organizational life did not build successful careers, rather it means that these individuals get their community experiences and find satisfaction in shared activities not at their jobs, but in the framework of the organization they helped to create.

The relationship between participating in organizational life and maintaining ethnic identity brings the unavoidable question of how to ensure organizational continuity from one generation to the next. By now, it is a widely accepted view that the future leaders for Hungarians in the West are likely to come from among the scouts. The scouts and the schools they support provide the formative framework to produce the future organizational leaders, that is, the elite of the Hungarian Western diaspora. All identity formation, including the scouts' program, can be successful if it transmits the type of knowledge that the individual can use at various stages and fields of interest of his or her daily life. Just as technical or professional knowledge is built up at various levels of education and satisfy the evolving requirements of the workplace, so Hungarian-related studies can also represent high value if they can be used both in narrower and wider environments. For today's Hungarian-American youth, the practical application of their formative experiences is given a clear boost by the possibility to travel and study in the ancestral homeland. However, a curriculum built on essentially static and

rigid concepts of Hungarian nationhood, sometimes even with an ideologically exclusionist outlook, could be outright counterproductive in terms of heritage protection. A good example, and also a warning sign, is the case of Burg Kastl, a Hungarian high school established in 1957 in Bavaria. The goal of the institution was to educate future leaders for the Hungarians of Hungary and of the West. Although the school produced excellent physicians, engineers, lawyers and economists, the participation of Burg Kastl graduates in Hungarian community organizations was disproportionately low. Already in the mid-eighties, Gyula Borbándi observed: „It is as if the education they received at a Hungarian school alienated them from Hungarian concerns and from activities of Hungarian organizations, instead of strengthening bonds or increasing their sense of solidarity.[20] And to make the point more fully – about the pitfalls of a totally self-contained method of ethnic identity formation that lacks nearly any reference to interrelationships with the everyday environment – we must note that this church-supported institution closed its doors for good in 2006.

The question therefore emerges: is it possible to preserve ethnic identity and activity in the absence of some kind of ethno-political paradigm? Shoring up ethnic revitalization or fighting assimilation can only be successful if these efforts are linked to a more general and explicitly stated ethno-political conceptual framework and policy of ethnic recognition-building.[21] If there is no internal and external assistance for these, then attempts to build and showcase ethnic identity may run into serious hurdles. In the Hungarian-American context, this process of identity revitalization is a difficult undertaking because there is no apparent consensus on a policy of Hungarian ethnic identity-building. We have seen that Hungarian-American institutions and communities are characterized by fragmentation and, in many cases, an ad-hoc nature. The challenges of assimilation crop up in varying and unequal measure; they take on innumerable local particularities. The national organizations are not able to act as overall coordinators, and, in general, the relationship between local communities is so weak that we may even question the very notion of „Hungarian-Americans", at least in the sense of a social subset.

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[20] Borbándi (1985): 338.

[21] There are those who go further: „There is no self-knowledge without recognition, self-identity without function. There is no ethnicity without ethnopolitics, no identity without the politics of identity" Kovács Éva: Etnicitás vagy etnopolitika? Bizonytalanságok az etnikai identitás értelmezése körül. In: Bárdi Nándor – Fedinec Csilla (szerk.): *A közösségi, magán- és nemzetközi érdekek viszonyrendszere Közép-Európában.* Teleki László Alapítvány, Budapest, 2003. 43–56. .

The most startling observation about these organizations is the absence of initiatives that attempt to perform a coordinating function. Although there are umbrella organizations, or organizations that coordinate professional or technical activities, these are, as we have seen, interest groups with limited or incidental reach. The teachers association (AHEA), for instance, does not coordinate the teaching activities of the schools, and the rest of the professional organizations, except for that of the medical doctors, are all but invisible. The Hungarian-language press is fundamentally local, so there is no unified public media. Most organizations focus on local issues; their inception is rooted in the interests of certain individuals rather than as a response to local or general social needs (apart from recognizing the process of assimilation). The organizations, then, do not serve as unifiers of the Hungarian-American community (or the Hungarian minority); their achievements are often tied to the organizational abilities and interests of particular individuals. This is true for national organizations, schools, university-level Hungarian programs, and scout troops alike.

The historian Julianna Puskás reached a similar conclusion from a different research perspective. According to her there are serious challenges to the preservation of Hungarian ethnic identity, and these are not only the result of the small number of communities but also of conflicts among them. According to Puskás, the Hungarian-American community as such exists only as a subject of theoretical research; in reality, they are disparate groups that compete, or are adversarial or indifferent toward each other[22].

1.3. Is 'American Hungarian Diaspora' a True Diaspora?

As we have seen there is no such thing as a Hungarian-American community that is organized around a system of common principles. Instead, we have local communities which are able to revitalize ethnic identity with varying degrees of intensity. With the exception of the churches and the scout movement, there is no solidarity or cooperation between the organizations. The Hungarian-American community, then, is not a unified community, but rather a set of „islands" or scattered groups, which are connected to each other psychologically. This connectedness stems in part from its members harboring

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[22] „Only in theory we can speak of American Hungarianhood, of an American ethnic community – this notion can be used as an instrument of research. In reality one can only find a great number of competitive groups, who feel aversion or at least indifference to each other. Uprooted or transplanted, both adjectives are valid for great numbers among them." (Puskás *op.cit*. 318.)

an ethno-social or diaspora consciousness, and in part by informal networks among the locally based elites.[23] For these elites, a sort of mental map exists of Hungarian-American communities that are spread (albeit in varying concentrations) throughout the country. This network among local elites crosses the whole continent, joining the Hungarian communities that are located at great distances from each other. These networks of individuals regularly organize nationwide speaking tours to a series of Hungarian-American local communities for illustrious figures (political or cultural leaders) visiting from Hungary or the surrounding countries. These speaking tours, or more poetically the "peregrination among like-minded souls," strengthens or potentially strengthens the notion of a unified Hungarian-American community.

According to Károly Nagy, the organization of these speaking tours and the resulting exchanges are one of the most important activities of the Western Hungarian "islands", in addition to identity preservation, interest-representation and serving as liaisons between their adopted and their ancestral homelands.[24] These functions undoubtedly exist, but we should add that they affect only a certain segment of the elite. In our research we tried to bring in other perspectives, through intensive interviews. Through our conversations, there emerged not only those topics that the activist elite deem important, but also the ethnic and non-ethnic identity issues that stem from the everyday activities of social groups and individuals. True, some of these issues became evident without the conscious intent of the interview subject, or were merely alluded to, but including these points of view in the structure of our documentation may have helped us to present a more complete picture of Hungarian-American organizational life. Through these discourses, we attempted to discover perspectives on the inner life of the communities and their system of relationships, as well as to analyze the abovementioned activities.

The initiatives for preserving ethnic identity continue to this day through the activities of the schools, the scouts, the press and the churches, although the challenge for our research is not just to document these laudable activities, but also to determine, for example, how these schools function (individually and together), what role the scouting association plays in addition to performing their declared and explicit functions, and how the church or the media adjusts to local conditions. In addition, we must give at least a brief answer to the question of whether this organizational universe can be described using

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23   These relationships may also be family-based.
24   Nagy, Károly: *Szigetmagyarság és szolidaritás*. [Scattered Hungarians and Solidarity]. Corvin Kiadó, Montreal, 1988.

the concepts particular to a diaspora, and to the question of whether it can be characterized as operating under its own particular operational logic (known in the sociological literature as "uprooted"), or whether it is just an extension and adaptation – "transplantation" – of experiences brought over from Central Europe.

In our analysis, we consider "diaspora logic" to be the organizational *modus operandi* that developed within the ethnic community, as described by active members of these Hungarian-American organizations. In order to determine whether the various local communities constitute a diaspora, we must first define the diaspora concept. Among the many interpretations of diaspora, one of the most comprehensive is that of Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau.[25] These researchers defined a diaspora as a community that results from a communal dispersal (usually with political origins), whose members are driven by a collective memory and the desire to preserve their identity. It is also important, however, to consider the historical context of an ethnic or religious community's functioning, since the term "diaspora" only applies to communities which survive over a period of time. In considering how these communities operate, important factors include their relationship with the ancestral homeland and the relationships among the communities that constitute the diaspora.

Our analysis considers all of these factors in addressing the diaspora nature of the Hungarian-American community. The collective dispersal originating in political events is a given, since the current presence of Hungarians in the United States is due, among other things, to immigration, though this immigration includes economic refugees from the 1960's and 1970's, and others who emigrated for economic reasons in the 1990's. This circumstance indicates that the condition of a universal dispersal does not quite apply, since the Hungarian-American communities were replenished over time by ever newer waves of immigrants, whose reasons for immigrating varied. Despite this, the collective memory of these communities did evolve, and continues to be passed on. In our discussion of Hungarian-Americans' impressions of the Hungarian nation, we have seen that this process of passing on collective memory is not universal, yet

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[25]   See Fejős, Zoltán: Diaszpóra és az „amerikai magyarok" – háttér egy fogalom alkalmazhatóságához. [Diaspora and the „Hungarian Americans:" Background to the Use of a Teminology.]. In: Kovács, Nóra (ed.): *Tanulmányok a diaszpóráról* [Studies on Diaspora.] Gondolat, MTA Ethnic and National Minority Research Institute, Budapest, 2004. 9–24. Biczó Gábor: A szórványkérdés transznacionális dimenziói és a magyar szórványkutatás. In: Ilyés Zoltán – Papp Richárd (ed.): *Tanulmányok a szórványról*. Gondolat, MTA ENKI, Budapest 2005. 21–42.

the varying and competing ideological or cultural conceptions of Hungarian-ness do survive, and in some cases serve to create the institutions (scouting, the churches, schools) which strive to pass on these views and to preserve Hungarian identity. All of these factors tend to support the existence of a Hungarian-American diaspora, though it would be a too-optimistic simplification to simply declare that such a diaspora exists. Indeed, there are important factors which work against the existence of a comprehensive diaspora.

First, it is questionable whether the Hungarian diaspora will pass the test of time. Up till now, the continuity of Hungarian American communities has depended on great political cataclysms. In the absence of such cataclysms, the survival of Hungarian America will depend solely on the economic immigrants whose Hungarian identity is of varying intensity and, more importantly, whose motivations in immigrating vary widely. Yet these groups alone cannot ensure the continuity of Hungarian-American communities, since the economic immigrants usually arrive to the United States as individuals, to this country in which individualism is so highly prized. Also, the organizational life of these new immigrants is hampered not only by their own motivations, but also by the resistance of the existing communities and the existing organizational framework. The psychological distance between these groups threatens the communities' future, for whom ensuring continuity is a constant problem – one for which no strategy exists, and indeed no strategy is possible.

Second, we must recognize that only a small proportion of Hungarian-Americans participate in the current diaspora communities that are supported by the organizations. If we confine ourselves to the estimates given by our interview subjects, we can say that at most 10 percent of Hungarian-Americans participate in such organizations. Not all of them speak Hungarian, but their connection to a Hungarian community survives. But as we have seen in our discussion of the process of ethnic identity loss, even these groups are fighting a difficult battle against assimilation, and the number of active members of these organizations continues to decline.

Third, as we concluded earlier, we cannot really speak of a unified Hungarian-American community, only of multiple local communities. This "structure" might even be appropriate for sustaining a state of diaspora, but the communities' internal conflicts and the physical and mental divides between sub-groups of these communities do not support the survival and continuity of a state of diaspora. Moreover, while the spread of new communications technologies has, in a few instances, created and maintained new types of communities, generally speaking the internet's capacity for community-building (or diaspora-building) is not being used to its full potential.

Putting all these considerations together, we may conclude that only a certain segment of the Hungarian-American communities can be considered diaspora communities. Diaspora functioning takes place primarily in cases where the communities, centered on organizational life, are self-sustaining and contribute to the preservation of some folk-based or cultural form of Hungarian-ness. In other words, a particular segment within the larger set of Americans of Hungarian origin constitutes a diaspora community, but we cannot speak of a Hungarian-American diaspora in general, for if there is no organizational participation, or if links to these organizations is not accompanied by a certain level of commitment, then we can only speak of a "sleeping" diaspora, one that will perhaps never be awakened, and which cannot be mobilized. But that segment which does behave like a genuine diaspora is quite vital, despite the pressures toward assimilation. The ethnic identity of those belonging to these communities is nurtured by the active, local, and festive Hungarians and "Hungarians of the heart," to use the categories described earlier – it is these types of individuals who display the particular emotional and cognitive conditions that generally characterize a diaspora. These diaspora-type communities have developed very specialized modes of functioning – and here we come to the crucial dilemma posed by rootlessness versus transplantation.

1.4. Beyond the Uprooted versus Transplanted Dilemma

In analyzing the character of American ethnic communities, a frequently recurring question is whether these communities are truly independent, both culturally and operationally. There are two general answers to this question. One of them, which favors the interpretation of the communities' uprootedness,[26] posits that the ethnic immigrants to America found themselves in an entirely new environment,[27] in which the values they brought from their homelands seemed irrelevant, producing a feeling of great loneliness despite the new emphasis on individualism in the U.S. The immigrants found they could rely only upon themselves. The other interpretation[28] contends that the

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[26]   Handlin, Oscar: *The Uprooted*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1953.
[27]   The Hungarian expression „idegenbe szakadt", „wrenched into a foreign environment," accurately conveys this sense of uprootedness, loneliness, and the rift between the old and new environments.
[28]   Veccoli, Rudolph: The Contadini in Chicago: A Critic of the Uprooted. The Journal of American History. 1964. Vol. 51. 404–417. John Bodnar *The Transplanted*: A History of Immigrants in Urban America. Bloomington, Indiana University Press,

immigrants to the U.S. never really cut their ties to their homelands, and their activities in the New World can be considered a continuation of their old way of life. Julianna Puskás (cited earlier) and Zoltán Fejős both generally support this second "transplantation" interpretation, though not completely, and both recognize the erosion of ethnic culture. However, our own interviews have initially led us to conclude that the "uprootedness" thesis is the more accurate analysis.

Upon consideration, however, we believe that these two approaches – "uprooted" vs. "transplanted" – cannot really be applied to Hungarian-Americans in a mutually exclusive sense: our analysis of community life, of the small micro-universes which display certain characteristics of a diaspora, are more accurately hybrids: they are unique community cultures which, however, are built upon inherited values.

Undoubtedly, Hungarian American community life is rooted to some extent in experiences from the old homeland. This applies to the churches and to the scouts, but many other organizations – particularly the lobbying groups, the "showcase" and national heritage groups – are less dependent on any such roots in the homeland. These organizations, as we have shown, operate just like American civic groups: they are self-sustaining, and they are based on mutual cooperation and solidarity. The active members of local Hungarian communities fulfill their needs for civic and social life through these organizations. This is partly sustained by these groups' middle-class and ethnic foundations – as seen, for example, in the widespread custom of balls and dances. These factors differ markedly from recent social customs in East Central Europe, even though the post-Communist societies experienced an upswing in civic activity.

Leaving aside the organizational framework, it is important to consider the Hungarian worldview and attitudes of these activist Hungarian-Americans. With respect to their Hungarian worldview (i.e. their conception of "Hungarian-ness"), we have seen that the Hungarian American mentality of these leaders does not include (for ideological and cultural reasons) the multi-faceted cultural life of present-day Hungary – it only includes those cultural elements that correspond to their concept of higher culture or "pure"

1985. On the specifically Hungarian American experience, see also Fejős, Zoltán: *A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke 1890–1940.* [Two Generations of Hungarians in Chicago 1890–1940.]. Central European Institute, Budapest, 1993., Gyáni, Gábor: Könyvszemle. Puskás Julianna: Kivándorlás és az amerikai magyarság sorsa. [Book Review. Julianna Puskás: Emigration and the Fate of Hungarian Americans.] MAGYAR TUDOMÁNY 2001/4.

folk/popular culture. With respect to attitudes, as we have seen, interviews with Hungarian-American leaders in many cases have created a social divide between themselves and the Hungarians from Hungary as well as the new immigrants from Hungary (who have come for economic reasons). This divide between Hungarians who were born in the United States and those who have newly immigrated is ever-growing.

Putting together the particularities of the organizations and the attitudes of the active individuals, we see that the result is a community that points to a sort of American-style, ethnic-based independence – in short, the American spirit prevails. It is into this context that Hungarian symbols and Hungarian values are placed. One might say they have been "transplanted," but in fact these symbols and values continue to evolve in their new context. A map of greater Hungary, a folk song or even an expression (like the differing interpretations of the phrase "magyarkodás") means different things in a Hungarian-American context than they do in Hungary. True, the internet promotes the impression of transplanting, for the symbols of modern-day Hungary become easily and instantly available half a world away, yet these symbols are used selectively by Hungarian-Americans, and adapted into the local institutional framework that has evolved in an essentially rootless context.

The argument in favor of the "uprooted" nature of Hungarian-American organizations is further supported by their diaspora nature. If we contend that a diaspora can be identified with reference to its organizational life, then we must be able to identify a *modus operandi* that is peculiar to those organizations – because "diaspora" implies, to a certain extent, a rootless nature; it is this rootlessness that defines or legitimizes a community's characterization as a diaspora. Just as a community must pass the test of time to be considered a diaspora, so does its rootless nature require the passage of time before it evolves or becomes apparent. Over the past century, ever-newer waves of Hungarian immigrants have arrived, who did not let the existing organizations to become entirely rootless. But it is likely that in the future, the organizations that are maintained by Hungarians born in the United States will more clearly display their rootless characteristic – that is, a truly specialized modus operandi. There are, even now, signs of this particularity.

For example, the organizations created to maintain ethnic identity – as described earlier – actually function as cultural, static institutions that aim to preserve and pass on unchanging values: they serve to maintain the community. Scouting explicitly strives to maintain traditional values; the schools strive to preserve the Hungarian language; the media tries to maintain the community; and other local organizations support these efforts and similarly

aim to preserve the ethnic communities. And they do this in a constantly changing, fast-paced nation that is at the forefront of globalization. In this context, we see the Hungarian American organizations as a kind of "pressure valve", a response to the psychological pressures of voluntary or forced emigration. Although most of these activities occur in the Hungarian language, these volunteer-based free-time activities, which have adapted the ethos of American-style community groups, have the effect on the whole of integrating Hungarian-Americans into the wider society. In other words, Hungarian activities actually strengthen the active individuals' integration into American life, and the Hungarian-American communities are just one more part of the United States' pluralistic culture. Today, Hungarian-American organizations have developed their own operational logic which differs from the institutional life of the ancestral homeland, although this development varied over time, and was affected by political and administrative factors. For example, the way the Hungarian-American churches operate is similar to that of the American churches; the scouts are sometimes confounded by their counterparts in Hungary, who are "not Hungarian enough"; the press is isolated from the internet-fueled growth of the world of Hungarian media; Hungarian-American schools make little use of professional experience from Hungary; and the values held by the organizations are in many respects much narrower than the values of today's Hungary (Hungarian-Americans' music is dominated by folk music and operettas; the values of scouting are antithetical to modern youth culture, etc.).

Based on all these considerations, it is safe to say that after a period of uprootedness, Hungarian-American ethnic culture as generated by its organizations has by now become largely rootless. Although the symbolism used by this culture also exists in Hungary, Hungarian-American culture is unique, and its institutions do not resemble the workings of similar institutions in Hungary. The adopted symbols used by Hungarian-Americans acquire a different meaning in their new context: what in the U.S. is Hungarian, or appears to be Hungarian (churches, organizations, festivals) are in fact very American.

The organizations' response to the pressures of assimilation relies on a particularly American mixture of self-reliance, rootlessness, and preservation of existing cultural patterns. Self-reliance means that individuals recognize their own problems and those of their community; they act to manage these problems; and in all this the American example of volunteer community cooperation is of great assistance. The community creates its own self-sustaining organizations, based on volunteerism, mutual trust, and solidarity. But in the absence of direct experience, the new organizational structure is characterized

by a kind of "permanent ad-hoc" nature. The ability of such organizations to gain strength over time is hampered by the fact that the various groups of immigrants, who all bring their different backgrounds and varying immigrant experiences, create their own organizations. As a result, the continuity of the organizations is brought into question and their internal structures easily falls apart. Exceptions to this tendency are the highly structured organizations with explicit rules – those "built on the ten commandments" (e.g. churches, scouts). But overall, most organizations are personality-based – that is, they hinge on the selfless efforts of one or two dedicated individuals. This factor, as other researchers have noted, does not at all detract from these organizations' worth, but it is certainly a particularity of their modus operandi that deserves notice.[29]

1.5. American Hungarian Public Life as Provincialism and Locality

In the absence of firm foundations and professional management, and due to the constant conflicts arising among them, these organizations cannot work effectively enough; often they are characterized by a kind of provincialism. The oft-mentioned conflicts are most often due to denigration of another person's background, an overemphasis on personalities, the inability to communicate dispassionately, and a kind of permanent oversensitivity. In such situations, an individual's identity becomes a hypersensitive issue, leading the individual to seek out situations in which he can validate his identity.[30] The term "provincialism" is also not used here as a value judgment, but rather as a particular characteristic that is best described by the scenario of "agonizing tribes" whose situation is neither urbanized nor rural.[31] The "neither city nor village" scenario is a good metaphor for the particular contradiction that characterizes Hungarian-American communities: while they are located in a

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[29] This is also noted by Gyula Borbándi, a scholar of Western Hungarians, including the Hungarian-American organizations: „Most studies on the activities and achievements of the ethnic communities in the West give little mention to the individual and communal achievements of the „one-man show" institutions, but this author would like to call attention to the value and importance of the contributions of these unnamed Hungarians." (Borbándi Gyula: *Emigráció és Magyarország. Nyugati Magyarok a változások éveiben 1985–1995*. [Political Emigration and Hungary. Western Hungarians in Changing Years 1985–1995.]. Európai Magyar Protestáns Szabadegyetem 1996. 54.)

[30] On the negative strategy of assimilation, see Csepeli *op. cit.* 523.

[31] See Konstantinovic, Radomir: *A vidék filozófiája.* [The Philosophy of the Province.] Forum (Novi Sad), Kijárat (Budapest).

country that is at the forefront of globalization, often in or near metropolises and urban centers, or else physically at great distances from each other, their behavior and face-to-face style of communication suggests a close proximity characteristic of village interactions. The conflict between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Toennies) – that is, community and society – is resolved by a provincialness that we also noted during our interviews: our interview subjects, even when literally surrounded by skyscrapers, often spoke as if they were chatting about the everyday activities in a village. It is as if the huge geographical distances do not exist in their minds. Thus, the narratives about the Hungarian-American organizations remained at a localized level. The interviewees speaking on behalf of their communities seemed to be seeking the security of the long-lost village amid the alienation of the concrete jungle. Put another way: they seem to be seeking a people-friendly little green oasis in the vast alienating desert of American life.[32] This is the imagined location, the province, in which most Hungarian-American communities still exist. But the perception of stability underlying these communities is continually threatened by the ever-returning thought: we are diminishing, and will become extinct. The agonizing caused by the oft-cited demographic crisis is becoming more prevalent, and this worry is not only on behalf of Hungary and the Hungarians of Central Europe, but also their own Hungarian-American communities. This threatened feeling affects the internal life of the organizations, but in an apparent contradiction, does not result in an atmosphere of panic – at most, it is a source of disagreements; it does not, however, spur – in each cases – the organizations to any initiatives to shore up their institutions. Instead, the agonizing spirit characteristic of a provincial community just sweeps the feeling of threat under the rug and calmly sits on it. And the very fact that there are a few individuals who raise their voices against this situation demonstrates that these organizations are not undertaking an honest self-assessment; there are no generally accepted strategies for how the time frame of the inevitable process of assimilation might be lengthened.

We have often used the term "local" to describe the Hungarian-American communities and the manner in which their organizations operate. For the most part, we use the word "local" in the sense defined by Appadurai, who states that locality is a phenomenological characteristic which is expressed through the ability to take action, the impulse to join forces, and the ability

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[32] For the use and explanation of the metaphor of America as a desert, see Baudrillard, Jean: *Amerika*. Magvető, Budapest, 1996.

to reproduce itself as a community, and which provides a structure for an individual's emotional makeup. In today's globalizing world, with migration on a global scale, it is important to understand locality as not strictly or exclusively tied to geographical location. This implies the deterritorialization of localities, and also emphasizes the existence of translocal communities: these communities extend beyond the bounds of physical proximity, yet still embody the type of locality expressed in "the spirit of a place." At the same time, it is important to distinguish between locality and proximity: while the former is based upon a kind of local knowledge, the latter means physical closeness and actually existing social forms (through which locality might be expressed, though not necessarily). According to Appadurai, the key question is how to create the locally based knowledge that is capable of recreating locality even amid anxiety and entropy, the erosion of social structures and constant change.[33]

Using Appadurai's terms, we may easily conclude that the deterritorialization of localities – i.e., the existence of communities that are not limited by geographical place – applies to the great majority of Hungarian-Americans, as a result of the changes in the ethnic geography of American cities. The Hungarian-American organizations may be considered, in this construct, to be proximities that embody a locality that provides (a segment of) Hungarian-Americans with an identity and a structure for emotional ties. As with every other locality, this one faces the challenges posed by a globalized media and the internet, which in our case means – among other things – that new communications technologies can theoretically bring immigrant Hungarians and their descendents closer to the ancestral homeland – with all the positive and negative effects of this proximity. Such communications can expand the locality concept to include a global-national dimension, but this dimension can also erode the neighborhoods and exacerbate local conflicts.[34] With respect to textual media, as mentioned earlier, new communications technologies make it easier to produce these texts, but the extent to which they are read, and by whom, becomes more uncertain: today, it is all too easy to publish information that is useless in the creation of local knowledge. But the locality remains, and the "spirit of the place" continues to rule the media and its assessment.

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[33]   See Appadurai, Arjun: *A lokalitás teremtése*. [Creating Locality.] REGIO 2001/3.
[34]   For example, if the local participants have differing interpretations of a current political event in Hungary.

Similarly, we can place the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad into this framework. The scouts embody the ethos of "glocalization" two times over. First, on an ideological level: scouting is a global movement, but within this framework, the Hungarian scouts have pledged to preserve national goals in keeping with diaspora logic. Second, on an organizational level: while the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad is a global organization, its functioning is based on localities: the scout localities create the geographically determined neighborhoods, so that its local troops are active participants in the local Hungarian communities. And again, we can use this framework in considering the formerly "buffer" or transitional Hungarian-American organizations, such as the churches. But the big issue facing the lobbying and professional organizations is this: are they capable of creating localities? Our interviews indicate that they are not. And for this reason, it seems that these organizations may be struggling with a crisis of legitimacy from the point of view of the Hungarian American communities, since the organizations are neither able to act as integrators nor to participate in creating local knowledge.

The great challenge facing Hungarian-American organizations in general is whether, following the above-described cultural transition, they are able to create or recreate local (Hungarian) knowledge. For the most part, the answers to this seemingly rhetorical question cited the demographic decline among the local elites, assimilation, the lack of new members, the destructive internal conflicts, and fears that the organizations purporting to unify the Hungarian-American communities lack the necessary strength. Perhaps the data and results of our current research, and the descriptions in the report, written by dispassionate "outsiders" in a scholarly and non-emotional style, may help Hungarian-American communities and decision-makers in Hungary, respectively, to face up to their challenges, chart their possible strategies, and make the necessary decisions in the interest of ensuring a longer time-frame for the survival of these communities.