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YOUTH IN ACTION: AN ATTEMPT
TO CHRONOLOGICALLY STRUCTURE
THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF HUNGARIAN
YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN ROMANIA

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to attempt to chronologically outline the institutionalization of Hungarian youth organizations in Romania following the Romanian revolution of 1989 and divide them into discrete segments.¹ This study examines the phenomenon of potential fault lines within the political and youth elite. While examining these fault lines it is crucial to note that political differences of opinion within Hungarian youth organizations do not reflect divisions within the entire Hungarian youth community; these conflicts primarily concern the inner circles of youth elites.

The theoretical basis for this paper is based on four fundamental pillars. Firstly, an ethnic minority – and thus its integral part, the youth – cannot be interpreted as an internally homogenous, static group with external delimitations. Secondly, after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime, the Hungarian youth in Romania – just like the Hungarian minority in Romania, of which it is an integral part – started organizing themselves on the principle of nationality. This process can be analyzed through the theoretical lens of a nation-building minority. Thirdly, institutionalization can be viewed as a process. Fourthly, it shall be taken into account that the institutionalization of the Hungarian minority in Romania cannot be understood in isolation. I am convinced that it would be practical from a methodological point of view to treat youth organizations' institutionalization on a national principle as a continuously variable, dynamic process that is affected by the historical context.

1 It is important to note that in the present study I will not address several important features of the Hungarian youth organizational sphere in Romania, which would be essential aspects for the interpretation of the institutionalization of Hungarian youth organizations in Romania. On the other hand, it is important to point out that Hungarian youth organizations in Romania can be examined from a different approach, and I believe that doing so would be worthwhile.

1989/90: turnaround in Romania. New self-organization opportunities for the Hungarian minority

The most crucial political changes in the history of the Hungarian minority of Romania happened during the 1918 regime change, which resulted in tectonic movements. The following two regime changes in 1944 and 1989 did not impose a paradigm change either, but at the same time they significantly affected the frameworks and opportunities for self-organization and self-expression. The key issues of all three periods were self-determination and self-organization.² The regime change created a wholly new situation. Thus, the events of 1989/90 serve as a natural starting point for the reinvigoration of the Hungarian public life in Transylvania. In the new social, economic, and political system, the elite had to discover the organizational principle of nationality and had to redefine the nationality issue. In a broader context, it can be established that the elite played a significant part in organizing the community on the principles of nationality after the fall of the communist regime. At the same time, Hungarian minority elite groups had to prove their legitimacy to both the minority and the majority community. In order to prove legitimacy and be able to assert political interests, the construct of national “unity” had to be created, which served the elite’s purpose to establish the image of a homogenous and socially coherent community.³

Foundation period: Regime change. First steps in the self-organization of the Hungarian youth in Romania in 1989/1990

In the eyes of the Hungarian minority, the promises of democracy were of great importance, as after a very long time, the community was given the opportunity to organize itself and set the agenda of minority rights. Hungarian cultural and community life, previously repressed by the dictatorial regime, started to prosper. In 1989/90, in the euphoric atmosphere brought about by the revolution, different organizations started springing up with the aim of representing the interests of the Hungarian minority. These organizations united relatively quickly under the political umbrella of RMDSZ (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania), which was formed in 1989 in a historical context that still plays a decisive role in contemporary events. RMDSZ was founded as an advocacy group,

2 Kántor, Zoltán, “Kisebbségi nemzetépítés – a romániai magyarság mint nemzetépítő kisebbség”. *Regio*, 11, 3 (2000): 219–241.

3 Bárdi, Nándor, *Otthon és haza. Tanulmányok a romániai magyar kisebbség történetéről*. (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, Magyar Kisebbség Könyvtára, 2013)

a minority policy alternative, and an alliance with the ability of covering a wide spectrum of political ideologies. Along the way, it became an important political factor. By founding advocacy groups and the local and county-level organizations of RMDSZ, as well as by their acknowledgement by society as a whole, the political legitimacy of the Hungarian community was ensured. Youth representatives – and all other ideological and political groups that eventually led to platformization – would have been welcome in their ranks, but the youth decided to organize themselves and thus define themselves as an independent force. Their impetus, ambition, and activity led to an organizational dynamism that, in many cases, could outperform that of the older generations.⁴

During the reinvigoration of civil society following the fall of the Ceaușescu regime, the youth were the most dynamic factor in the democratization process.⁵ In the year 1989, in the context of the post-revolutionary atmosphere, local RMDSZ bodies and youth organizations were founded in Transylvanian settlements simultaneously and in parallel. The latter mostly bore the name MADISZ (Hungarian Democratic Youth Union). The youth organizations that were founded in parallel contacted each other and organized meetings that eventually led to the establishment of national organizations. Many important meetings took place in this period in Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc), Nagyvárad (Oradea), Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș) and Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc). Youth organizational structure took shape. The first youth leaders emerged in Hungarian public life.

The grassroots youth organizations that mostly bore the name MADISZ organized their first meeting on 5-7 January 1990 in Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc). Mostly organizational issues were discussed. The importance of developing a national organizational network was also declared. The organization in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) was given a central coordinating role. At the same time, emphasis was laid upon preserving the autonomy of local organizations. It was also a key issue to define MADISZ-RMDSZ relations. The youth strived to develop relations based on equality and partnership.⁶

The next “summit” or national meeting took place in Nagyvárad (Oradea) on 20-21 January 1990. During this meeting, the main focus was to elaborate a single, uniform programme, to operate publications linked to the organizations, and to define their connections

4 An excellent example of this is that the first congress of the MISZSZ was held as early as 17-18 March 1990, while the first congress of the RMDSZ took place on 21-22 April 1990, in Nagyvárad.

5 Kósa, András László, *Timurok és Pál utcai fiúk – A romániai magyar ifjúsági elit természetrajza*, ed. Imre Zilahi *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*, (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005), 207–227.

6 Tóth-Bartos, András, *Rendszerváltás és önszerveződés Kézdivásárhelyen, 1989. december – 1990. május*, ed. Bárdi, Gidó, Attila, and Novák, Csaba Zoltán, *Együtt és külön. Az erdélyi magyarok önszerveződése, 1989-1990*, (Kolozsvár: Nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2014), 355–376.

with RMDSZ. A joint declaration established the national organizational structure. The organizations approved the name MISZSZ (Union of Hungarian Youth Organizations). MISZSZ sought to be the umbrella body of all Hungarian youth organizations that had been founded throughout the country.⁷

It was decided that a preparatory meeting shall take place on 17-18 February 1990 to prepare a national congress. 21 organizations attended the inaugural meeting and determined that MISZSZ shall be the national network of youth organizations. Founding MISZSZ was also necessary in order to address the needs formulated by the Hungarian youth in Transylvania at a national level.⁸

The initial momentum was broken by the 1990 ethnic clashes in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș), known as Black March. In most cities, the two nationalities initially rejoiced at the transition period together. Liberation from the discriminative policies that became common during the years of dictatorship was a particularly cathartic experience. However, ethnic issues resurfaced relatively quickly and became a sensitive issue in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș) and the surrounding Maros (Mureș) county as well. Many factors contributed to the ethnic clashes in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș). Ethnicization became more and more prevalent due to several factors. For example, due to organizational activism, efforts to replace Ceaușescu regime old guard, for example economic leaders, and demanding ethnic rights in the field of education: mother-tongue education; autonomy of educational and cultural institutions. The decisive factors in the issue of majority-minority relations were mother-tongue education and the establishment of autonomous educational institutions, with education in the Hungarian language. An ethnic conflict emerged around the issue of ethnic-based schools. The conflict became a subject for public discourse, which in turn polarised relatively quickly. In Hargita (Harghita) and Kovászna (Covasna) counties, in which Hungarians form the majority of the population, most Hungarian-language schools were restored. In regions with mixed populations, however, the issue of separating Hungarian and Romanian schools was not yet solved due to resistance from the Romanian public opinion. The issue of the Bolyai University in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) was also not solved yet.⁹ The most controversial and sensitive issues in the field of education were that of the Bolyai Farkas High School and that of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute (OGYI), both in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș). The debate around the Medical

7 Borbély, Zsolt Attila, *Az erdélyi magyar politikai érdekképviselőket negyed évszázada*. (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács, 2015)

8 Interview with Jenő Mátis: *Difficult choice: civil sphere or pure politics?* ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*, (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005), 9–16.

9 Forró, Albert, *Az 1989-es rendszerváltás csíkszeredai eseményei*, ed. Bárdi, Nándor, Gidó, Attila, and Novák, Csaba Zoltán, *Együtt és külön. Az erdélyi magyarok önszerveződése, 1989-1990* (Kolozsvár: Nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2014), 237–282.

and Pharmaceutical Institute and the issue of separating the two high schools on an ethnic basis quickly became central issues of Hungarian public life and symbols of settling majority-minority relations. While the Romanian public saw the separation of the high schools as the first step towards ethnic separatism, the Hungarian community saw in it a guarantee of protecting ethnic rights. Symbolism was quickly replaced by steps taken to protect interests. Parents and students were eventually involved on both sides. Bolyai Farkas High School pupils organized a sit-in at the end of January. This was followed by a Romanian protest on 7 February. After this, thousands of ethnic Hungarians attended a protest with candles and books. In the eyes of the Hungarian community, they managed to show in a calm, quiet, and European way that their community is powerful, and managed to demonstrate that they are not willing to give up on the rights that they were demanding. However, the Romanian community had an opposite impression of the protest. By March, the situation in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) became increasingly tense. The ethnic rights reforms demanded by the Hungarian community were running late. In parallel, Romanian groups formed around the Romanian Hearth Union (Uniunea Vatra Românească) strived to impede Hungarian ambitions. The ever-growing disputes caused a chain of events that eventually led to the bloody conflicts of 19-20 March 1990.¹⁰

The events that took place in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) can be regarded as an important milestone both in post-regime-change Hungarian minority life and in the development of majority-minority relations. The public euphoria that followed the fall of the communist regime and the revolution faded away. The feeling that minorities broke free from the negative ethnic discrimination that became ordinary during the Ceauşescu regime vanished as well. Ethnic disputes were resurfacing. The whole Hungarian community in Romania, including the youth, was moved by their fight for ethnic rights and the ethnic clashes in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş).

The ethnic clashes, referred to as “Black March”, were an essential factor in the self-organizing process of the ethnic Hungarian youth in Romania. MISZSZ leaders organised their first congress in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) on 17-18 March 1990, which was attended by close to four hundred young people. According to some recollections, *“the tense atmosphere in the city did not promote progress during the first MISZSZ congress. Premonitions of the tragedy that was to come negatively affected attendee mood. The delegates were nervous and they constantly found themselves in long, unproductive debates.”*¹¹ On 18 March, MISZSZ adopted a declaration expressing their solidarity with the Hungarian

10 Novák, Csaba Zoltán, Forradalom és rendszerváltás Marosvásárhelyen, Bárdi, Nándor, Gidó, Attila, and Novák, Csaba Zoltán, Együtt és külön. Az erdélyi magyarok önszerveződése, 1989-1990. (Kolozsvár: Nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2014), 191–236.

11 MISZSZ booklet. Tusnádfürdő, 17 July 2017.

students of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute (OGYI). The declaration also stated that MISZSZ supports their demands to set up an autonomous Hungarian school system, restore the Bolyai University, set up the Ministry of Nationalities, adopt the law on nationalities, and ensure free usage of the Hungarian language.¹² Moreover, MISZSZ took a position regarding the Romanian Hearth Union. They explained that the protest on 10 February 1990 organized by the Hungarian minority had been peaceful in nature and had the aim of asserting their collective rights, and that the Romanian Hearth Union in turn had answered with a chauvinistic and violent counter-protest.¹³ During the congress, MISZSZ appointed a 15-member delegation to the RMDSZ congress in Nagyvárad (Oradea). Parliamentary candidates were also delegated, who were to run on the RMDSZ electoral list. Consequently, although the youth strived to maintain their autonomy, they had demonstrated political realism before the elections by moving towards RMDSZ. The congress had to be interrupted because of the ethnic clashes. It was reorganized two weeks later in Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc).¹⁴

Shortly thereafter, the Hungarian University Students' Union (OMDSZ) was founded as an umbrella organization representing university student federations. OMDSZ initially included high school student organizations as well. However, in autumn 1990, the Union of Hungarian High-School Students in Romania (MAKOSZ) was founded in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe).¹⁵ Historically active youth organizations were also re-established, for example, the Scout Association of Hungarians in Romania (1990), the National "Dávid Ferenc" Youth Association (1991), and the Christian Youth Association (1994).¹⁶

12 The Declaration was published in *Szabadság* (Kolozsvár) on 28 March, 1990. Udvardy, Frigyes: Historical chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania 1990-2006. <https://udvardy.adatbank.transindex.ro> (Last accessed: 1 September 2020)

13 The Commitment was published in *Háromszék* (Sepsiszentgyörgy), on 20 March 1990. Udvardy, Frigyes: Historical chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania 1990-2006. <https://udvardy.adatbank.transindex.ro> (Last accessed: 1 September 2020)

14 Youth movement 1990 – about the beginnings. Interview with Zsolt Szilágyi, President of EMNP, former youth leader, ed. Bodó, Barna, *Erdélyi Magyar Civil Évkönyv 2016–2017 – A mi fiataljaink*, (Kolozsvár: Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017) 20–28.

15 Kósa, András László, "Timurok és Pál utcai fiúk", 207–227.

16 Bodó, Barna, ed. *Erdélyi Magyar Civil Évkönyv 2016–2017 – A mi fiataljaink*, (Kolozsvár: Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017) 89–114.

Pioneering period: 1990-1995

After the disintegration of the bipolar world order, minorities started organizing themselves in Romania. During this process, local organizations of RMDSZ and youth organizations were emerging in parallel. The need to establish cooperation with the local youth appeared in the very beginning. In 1990, RMDSZ adopted a declaration of intent, which contained a separate chapter on youth policies. With the aim of defining their relations with local youth, RMDSZ declared that instead of seeking to govern them, they strived to cooperate with them on a partnership basis. It was also deemed necessary that their management bodies should include youth representatives on all levels.¹⁷

At the first RMDSZ congress on 21-22 April 1990 in Nagyvárad (Oradea), youth policy programmes were discussed. Youth was to be treated as an autonomous social group, whose role in the revolution was also acknowledged. MISZSZ was recognized as a legitimate youth representative organization, whose independence was to be respected, and which was to be treated as an equal partner in both the activities and decisions of RMDSZ. In practice, this meant that youth organization members were provided the opportunity of involvement in RMDSZ management bodies.¹⁸ RMDSZ leadership was elected at the congress. MISZSZ appointed twenty delegates to the RMDSZ National Committee.

In the public consciousness, this is regarded as a pioneering period because the initial momentum of self-organization brought about thousands of members for these new organizations, who could thus organize events that drew large crowds. Moreover, almost all organizations had local publications at their disposal. It was also a period of mass movements. The local youth elite exploited this historical turning point to consolidate their positions.¹⁹ Thus, MISZSZ potential to protect interests also grew. This materialized among others in the fact that MISZSZ leaders were quickly given the opportunity to engage in politics, as during the first democratic elections in May 1990, youth candidates were included in the RMDSZ electoral list. By obtaining political positions, MISZSZ could become active in the field of politics, which stood for a much wider area than youth organization activities. The organization strived to establish itself within a clearly

17 Declaration of intent of interim administrative committee of the RMDSZ. Marosvásárhely, 13 January 1990. See: *Húszéves az RMDSZ 1989-2009: Eseménynaptár, dokumentumok*. RMDSZ Elnöki Hivatal–Ügyvezető Elnökség: Kolozsvár, https://regioldal.rmdsz.ro/uploads/kiadvanyok/files/Huszeves_RMDSZ_CD.pdf (Last accessed: 3 October 2020)

18 Varga, Gábor, ed., *A Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség I. Kongresszusa – beszédek és határozatok*. (Nagyvárad: Bihar megyei RMDSZ, 1990) 202–203.

19 Kósa, András László, “Timurok és Pál utcai fiúk”, 207–227.

defined political framework. MISZSZ started playing the role of a critical opposition and endeavoured to compel RMDSZ to include relevant issues in its agenda.²⁰

Among the most important political objectives of the youth, who were often called “radicals”, were the achieving of autonomy, the restitution of confiscated church property, and the establishment of RMDSZ internal structure.²¹ However, MISZSZ was not a completely unanimous and homogeneous organization, as its leaders and members had a wide variety of different political ideologies.²² Initially, neither MISZSZ nor RMDSZ had a uniform and clear political profile.²³ In the records about the second MISZSZ congress on 9-11 November 1990. in Temesvár (Timișoara), it was stated that “*the president’s retrospective review of the congress gave no reason for joy: ‘MISZSZ activities have no general conception. Orders of the day are haphazard.’*”²⁴

Schism in MISZSZ. Separation of a political wing

A main tendency of youth organizations is constant change and quick fluctuation unlike the organizations of older generations. Many examples show that the fluctuating performance that can be found in the history of youth organizations is closely linked to the qualities, ambitions and goals of those managing and operating the organization. Besides, because of the knowledge capital deficit that stems from the age of the members, the unstable sources of income and the restricted amount of time and effort that can be allocated to running the organization, members and volunteers have to decide which activities to pursue with their relatively scarce resources. This dilemma also emerged in MISZSZ and eventually led to the separation of a political wing.

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- 20 Youth organizations – launched in 1990. Interview with Tibor T. Toró, former president of MISZSZ, executive chairman of EMNP, ed. Barna Bodó, Erdélyi Magyar Civil Évkönyv 2016–2017 – A mi fiataljaink, (Kolozsvár: Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017) 11–19., Youth movement 1990 – about the beginnings. Interview with Zsolt Szilágyi, president of the EMNP, former youth leader, ed. Bodó, Barna, Erdélyi Magyar Civil Évkönyv 2016–2017 – A mi fiataljaink, (Kolozsvár: Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017) 20–28.
- 21 According to young people, the structure of RMDSZ should be formed as a model of state. It should function as a self-government of the Hungarians in Transylvania, with internal structures appropriate to the branches of power, i.e. the development of the “state in the state” model. Later, one of the most frequently expressed criticisms of RMDSZ was that it began to function as a party and moved away from this initial concept.
- 22 Youth organizations – launched in 1990. Interview with Tibor T. Toró, former president of MISZSZ, executive chairman of EMNP, ed. Bodó, Barna, Erdélyi Magyar Civil Évkönyv 2016–2017 – A mi fiataljaink, (Kolozsvár: Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017) 11–19.
- 23 Youth movement 1990 – about the beginnings. Interview with Zsolt Szilágyi, President of EMNP, former youth leader, ed. Bodó, Barna, Erdélyi Magyar Civil Évkönyv 2016–2017 – A mi fiataljaink, (Kolozsvár: Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017) 20–28.
- 24 MISZSZ booklet. Tuszánfürdő, 17 July 2017.

MISZSZ emerged as a national network of local organizations called MADISZ. Because of its many member organizations that usually differed from settlement to settlement, MISZSZ was a heterogeneous umbrella organization from the very beginning.²⁵ A dividing line appeared relatively quickly within the organization around the issue of involvement in politics. Some youth leaders became more and more active in politics and came to be members of the newly emerging political elite. Others argued in favour of an apolitical approach and saw civil society as the natural medium of youth organizations. Although this gap formed early, carrying out both functions (civil society and politics) within MISZSZ at the same time was considered possible until 1993. At the fourth MISZSZ congress that took place on 10 December 1993 in Félixfürdő (Băile Felix), however, it was decided that the members aspiring for a political role would establish the Reform Bloc (RT) to operate as a platform of RMDSZ that is organized based on ideologies, values, and policies. The apolitical wing of MISZSZ would then focus on youth movements, society, and community building.²⁶ Thus, the first-generation youth elite of MISZSZ outgrew youth organizations. This meant that they were to be admitted to politics. Differentiation and professionalization of civil society and politics started within youth organizations.²⁷ The organizational split of MISZSZ civil and political wings was not interpreted as a schism, but rather as a necessary step towards professionalisation. The congress made a decision on the issue, declaring that civil society and politics had both already been part of MISZSZ activities. It was stated that political presence and social programming were still necessary for the organization, and that splitting various types of activities on an organizational level is a vital step in ensuring efficiency and flexibility.²⁸ Efforts were made to figuratively demonstrate the unity of the two wings. For example, the separated political wing continued its activities as MISZSZ-RT (Reform Bloc). Both wings elected Géza Szőcs as their honorary president.²⁹ The Reform Bloc aimed to focus on youth issues, but this was not achieved in the long term.³⁰ Sometime later, they withdrew from youth issues and formed an autonomous platform within RMDSZ. Eventually, generation-based discourse was abandoned. The political activities of the Reform Bloc were consciously aimed

25 Kósa, András László, "Timurok és Pál utcai fiúk", 207–227.

26 Udvardy, Frigyes: Historical chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania 1990-2006. <https://udvardy.adatbank.transindex.ro> (Last accessed: 1 September 2020)

27 Interview with László Tamás: I am a civilian, I do not have much to do with politics, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 17–23.

28 The IV. congress of the MISZSZ, 12 December 1993. See: MISZSZ booklet. Tusnádfürdő, 17 July 2017.

29 Bakk, Miklós, "Az RMDSZ mint a romániai magyarság politikai önmeghatározási kísérlete 1989 után". *Regio*, 2. (1999): 81–116.

30 Youth organizations – launched in 1990. Interview with Tibor T. Toró, former president of MISZSZ, executive chairman of EMNP, ed. Bodó, Barna, *Erdélyi Magyar Civil Évkönyv 2016–2017 – A mi fiataljaink*, (Kolozsvár: Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017) 11–19.

toward forming an opposition within RMDSZ.³¹ First-generation MISZSZ leaders left the organization. Their roles were then taken over by members of the civil wing. MISZSZ infrastructure (possessions, offices, assets), social capital and positions within RMDSZ (a proportion of 15%)³² was also inherited by the civil wing. A new youth elite emerged soon thereafter, who pursued their activities with a less pronounced public image, but achieved notable successes nonetheless. Thanks to them, the Youth Department was formed within the Executive Bureau of RMDSZ. With this step, youth policies became high-priority policies. Moreover, the Romanian Board of Trustees of the Illyés Public Foundation decided in favour of setting up a Youth Specialized Panel, thus giving youth organizations their say in the distribution of subsidies, as the members of the specialized panel were delegated by youth organizations.³³

The period of pact-based politics: strength in unity; establishment of MIT: 1995-2001

During the pioneering period, MISZSZ can be considered the dominant umbrella organization. However, youth organizations existed beyond MISZSZ as well. Umbrella organizations were founded for university student organizations (OMDSZ – Hungarian University Students’ Union) and high school student organizations (MAKOSZ – Union of Hungarian High-School Students in Romania). Religious organizations were re-established as well (ODFIE – National “Dávid Ferenc” Youth Association, IKE – Christian Youth Association). Some professional youth organizations were also founded, for example the Citizen Manager Society (ÁME) and the Union of Hungarian Journalism Students in Romania (DUMA).³⁴ The needs of the youth organizations that were not part of MISZSZ

31 Interview with Zsolt Szilágyi: From suspicion to the federal, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 30–34.

32 At the I. congress of the RMDSZ (Nagyvárad, 21-22 April 1990), the participation of youth in the leadership of the RMDSZ was proposed at the level of the programme. However, at the II Congress (Marosvásárhely, 24-26 May 1991), it was already declared in statutes that the MISZSZ has 15 percent of the seats in the National Council of Delegates. It was a sign of the strengthening of youth organizations, that the youth umbrella organizations – MISZSZ and OMDSZ – managed to achieve that 15 percent of the seats in the Council of Federal Representatives (SZKT), and at the III Congress of the RMDSZ (Brassó, 15-17 January 1993) it was reserved for youth organizations. Herewith, the RMDSZ provided an opportunity for a civil sphere organized on a generational basis to participate in decision-making structures. The IV Congress (Cluj-Napoca, 26-28 May 1995) also confirmed the participation of young people in decision-making forums. Bakk, Miklós, “Az RMDSZ mint a romániai magyarság politikai önmeghatározási kísérlete 1989 után” 81–116.

33 Kósa, András László, “Timurok és Pál utcai fiúk”, 207–227.

34 The ÁME was founded by former MAKOSZ leaders who had already finished high school and wanted to continue to participate in public life.

were more and more prevalent. It was argued that it was necessary to create a platform through which different organizations can reach joint positions in youth policy issues. Joint action was in the interest of the different youth organizations and their national unions. This was made difficult by the divided structure of youth public life and by the fact that MISZSZ lost its former dominance because other university and high school students', religious and professional organizations formed and gained strength.³⁵ MIT was not a youth movement organization. It was established by national umbrella organizations with the aim to create a common means of communicating their needs towards the political sphere. It was also meant to provide a platform for youth organizations to align their interests. For this, an institutionalized forum was required. There were other, more concrete interests at play too. For example, an organization was needed that could delegate members to the Youth Specialized Panel that was founded by the Romanian Board of Trustees of the Illyés Public Foundation, because this specialized panel decided on the subsidies to be given to youth organizations. MIT operated as a round table that unified its member organizations. For this reason, applications with greater resource estimates were able to be submitted.³⁶

More than 50 member organizations, youth foundations, and high school organizations attended the MIT national committee meeting organised on 13-15 January 1995. The need of a self-governing Hungarian youth organization in Romania was expressed. The declared first step towards a common forum was the establishment of the Hungarian Youth Council (MIT). A declaration of intent was adopted which expressed the main goals of MIT: *“to develop a uniform youth policy strategic concept for the whole Hungarian youth in Romania and to build a democratic institutional system in the spirit of autonomy for our minority and based on international human rights principles.”*³⁷ Their main activities were defined to be constant interest alignment, providing unified representation, and functioning in an institutionalized manner. Their system of relations was based on four key areas: institutions of the Hungarian minority in Romania, youth organizations in Romania, public bodies and institutions of the Romanian state, and international youth policy organizations. The declaration of intent was initiated by OMDSZ, MAKOSZ, and MISZSZ.

Thus, youth organization leaders came up with the idea of establishing and operating a legitimate and representative forum for the whole Hungarian youth in Romania, and

35 Interview with Zsolt Nagy: As if the tool sometimes became a goal, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 35–36.

36 Interview with Kálmán Róbert Ráduly: Personal disputes marked the beginning of the end, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 24–29.

37 Declaration of intent initiated by MISZSZ, OMDSZ and MAKOSZ. Sepsiszentgyörgy, 15 January 1995. Zilahi, Imre, ed., *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 245.

that of establishing a legal personality for the Hungarian youth. In order to help establish MIT as this forum, the organizations turned to RMDSZ, which already had significant knowledge and financial capital. It was also in the interests of RMDSZ that the diversified Transylvanian youth sphere should have a common platform, so that they would not have to negotiate with each and every organization separately.³⁸ On 17 March 1995, RMDSZ organised an Advisory Council meeting, at which the youth organizations called upon the Youth Department of the RMDSZ Executive Bureau to provide technical assistance in establishing MIT. In response to the request, the Youth Department took on the preparatory work in the founding of MIT and the technical management of establishing the organization.³⁹ The inaugural session took place on 22 April 1995 in the Apáczai Csere János school in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca). The session was attended by the founding member organizations (MISZSZ, OMDSZ, IKE, MAKOSZ, ÁME) and by Csaba Takács and Béla Markó representing RMDSZ. MIT organizational structure had five pillars representing the founding organizations. These were as follows: umbrella organizations (MISZSZ), university students (OMDSZ), high school students (MAKOSZ), religious organizations (IKE and ODFIE), and professional organizations (DUMA and ÁME). Róbert Kálmán Ráduly was elected as its first president. Decisions were to be taken by the elected representatives of the five pillars, by consensus.⁴⁰ The consensus-based decision-making mechanism resulted in a higher degree of legitimacy, but at the same time decision-making became inflexible and sluggish.

MIT started out as a partner organization of RMDSZ. Their relations quickly institutionalized. The first MIT delegates' meeting that appointed representatives in the RMDSZ Council of Representatives took place on 24–25 June 1995. MIT representatives were elected to join the Council of Representatives.⁴¹

The years 1989/90 were an important milestone in the self-organization process of the whole Hungarian community in Transylvania. The youth was able to gain from this historical turning point. As a result of this, local youth organizations started springing up. Within a relatively short period of time, they started interacting with each other and established their first umbrella organizations. During the initial momentum and the public euphoria, the youth started to establish organizations to protect their interests in an almost instinctive way, in many cases outperforming the dynamism of the older generations. This

38 Interview with Zoltán Kali: Bloody internal debates and consensual mediation, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 37–43.

39 Letter of invitation. Zilahi, Imre, ed., *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 246.

40 Kósa, András László, "Timurok és Pál utcai fiúk", 207–227.

41 Extract from the Minutes of MIT. Székelyudvarhely, 25 June 1995. Zilahi, Imre, ed., *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 247.

process reached its peak in 1995. The youth organization field professionalized in the name of unity. The establishment of MIT meant a higher level of integration in the process of institutionalization. The network of youth organizations was never this unified, neither before nor afterwards.

The polarization of the youth organization network

This idyllic situation of a unified youth organization network and a harmonic MIT-RMDSZ relationship did not last long. Latent conflicts started breaking out between MIT and its member organizations, and regarding their relations with RMDSZ. This eventually led to a rupture. Internal disputes were exacerbated by the scarcity of funding and the focus on using politics to obtain benefits. However, ideological and moral factors also contributed to the escalation of the already tense situation. The most serious dispute that led to the split inside MIT erupted between Csaba Borboly⁴² (leader of MAKOSZ and ÁME) and MISZSZ (especially Pál Nagy).

The conflict between the member organizations led to MIT suspending the membership of two member organizations and declaring that it will not accept some of the organizations' leaders as negotiating partners. This happened during the MIT delegates' meeting on 27-28 June 1998. The most important agenda item during the meeting was managing the crisis that broke out in the Hungarian youth organization network. In the communiqué issued on the decision, it was stated that the majority of MIT member organizations "*deem unacceptable the methods that some 'high school student' leaders use to pursue their own ambitions, [...] compromising the whole youth organization network.*" It was emphasized that the organization leaders in question "*work based on a different set of values and principles. As a consequence, [...] there is no hope for further collaboration.*"⁴³ The delegates of the organizations in question (MAKOSZ and ÁME) walked out of the session. After this, MIT members (ODFIE abstained) voted in favour of suspending the MIT membership of MAKOSZ and ÁME. MAKOSZ and ÁME delegates were also recalled from the RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT), the RMDSZ Interest Alignment Council (SZET), and the Youth Specialized Panel of the Illyés Public Foundation's Romanian Board of Trustees.

42 Between 1993 and 1995 he was president of the Citizen Manager Society (ÁME), between 1994 and 1997 he was a member of the board of MAKOSZ, between 1999 and 2004 he was president of the Youth Council of Csík Territory (CSTIT), between 2001 and 2003 he was vice-president of the Youth in Their Own Homeland Movement (IFM), between 2003 and 2008 he was president of MIÉRT, and from 2011 he was a member of the presidium of the RMDSZ Federal Bureau.

43 Communiqué of MIT delegates' meeting. Kolozsvár, 28. June 1998. Zilahi, Imre, ed., *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 252–253.

With MAKOSZ and ÁME membership suspended, it became increasingly difficult for MIT to be regarded by RMDSZ as a legitimate representative of the Hungarian youth in Transylvania. As a consequence, MIT relations worsened with RMDSZ central management. In practice, this led to a split between MIT and RMDSZ. Later, during the RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT) issue, RMDSZ central management made a reference to the suspension of MAKOSZ and ÁME membership to argue that MIT did not pursue its activities in a proper way. For this reason, the MIT delegates' list was not accepted into the RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT). After the split, Csaba Borboly and his associates first founded the Youth in Their Own Homeland Movement (IFM) in 1999. They also contributed to the establishment of the Hungarian Youth Council (MIÉRT).⁴⁴ One of the main factors that contributed to the founding of IFM was the fact that those suspended from MIT could not continue their activities in the same manner as before due to the changes in their organizational background. MIÉRT was founded as a counterbalance to MIT member organizations.⁴⁵

The conflict between MIT and RMDSZ escalates: the SZKT-conflict

The relations between MIT and RMDSZ did not worsen out of the blue. After it was founded, MIT took over the task from MISZSZ to partake in RMDSZ decision-making structure. Initially, the two organizations were able to cooperate in a flawless manner. However, the MIT caucus did not refrain from expressing their opinion on RMDSZ activities, even when this opinion was critical. From time to time, reports were published in the media covering the tensions between MIT and RMDSZ. The young delegates criticized RMDSZ for not involving them in the decisions concerning youth issues. RMDSZ on the other hand claimed that youth organizations were not active enough.

The opinions polarised further. By the year 2000, relations between RMDSZ national leadership and MIT worsened to a point where the last conflict led to a split between the two. The conflict arose over attempts to reform the MIT caucus within the RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT).

At the MIT delegates' meeting that took place in Budapest on 23-24 October 2000, MIT recalled its representatives from the SZKT. The year 2001 was to be a year of renewal

44 Interview with Csaba Borboly: The issue of generational advocacy has become a victim of short-term political interests, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 83–89.

45 Interview with László Szabó: Public participation without political competition: transylvanian youth can handle two umbrella organizations, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 182–196.

and moral harmonisation. At the delegates' meeting organized in Hétfalu (Șapte Sate) on 6 January 2001, it was stated that *“the representation issue of the Hungarian community in Transylvania is of the utmost importance.”*⁴⁶ The MIT caucus within the RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT) was reformed. MIT recalled its delegates from the RMDSZ Interest Alignment Council (SZET) and distanced itself from all MAKOSZ activities. At the same time, the Union of Hungarian High School Students in Romania (RMKSZ) was included as a MIT member with consultative status. With the inclusion of RMKSZ, MIT tried to replace MAKOSZ with another organization to represent high school students' interests to be able to act as a union that represents the whole Hungarian youth in Transylvania. The strain on relations between MIT and RMDSZ reached its peak when RMDSZ did not approve of the new Council of Representatives (SZKT) caucus elected by MIT. According to RMDSZ criticism, the MIT delegates' meeting and the re-election of the caucus was not legitimate. MIT argued however that they are competent to decide on their representatives independently, according to their own statute and rules of operation, and RMDSZ should have no say in the process. On 31 January 2001, in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), the MIT caucus within RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT) was suspended. The MIT Delegates' Committee took note of this and started a negotiation process with RMDSZ.

On 31 March 2001, the MIT Delegates' Committee addressed an open letter to RMDSZ's national leadership explaining that relations between MIT and RMDSZ had become strained beyond a critical point. This was ascribed to changes in RMDSZ policies.⁴⁷ In the meantime, the Council of Representatives (SZKT) seats left empty by the suspended MIT representatives were taken by the organizations from which MIT previously distanced itself, as these organizations were willing to cooperate with RMDSZ. As a consequence, MIT decided on 4 July 2001 that it would break ties with the RMDSZ national leadership. They decided that they shall pursue their activities in the civil sphere and outside RMDSZ and emphasized that they will continue to support local cooperation between their member organizations and local RMDSZ bodies.⁴⁸ The split was regarded by MIT and its member organizations as a step towards preserving their independence and autonomy.⁴⁹

46 Declaration of MIT delegates' meeting. Hétfalu, 6 January 2001. Zilahi, Imre, ed., *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 254.

47 Open letter from the Assembly of Delegates of MIT to the national leaders of RMDSZ. Zilahi, Imre, ed., *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 256–258.

48 Declaration of the Assembly of Delegates of MIT. Zilahi, Imre, ed., *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 260.

49 Final declaration of the VIII Congress of the MISZSZ was published in *Népújóság* (Marosvásárhely) on December 5, 2001. Udvardy, Frigyes: *Historical chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania 1990–2006*. <https://udvardy.adatbank.transindex.ro> (Last accessed: 1 September 2020)

The development of MIT-RMDSZ relations

There were varying views on the development of MIT-RMDSZ relations even within MIT. Those who supported the split argued that their goal was not to leave the RMDSZ structure. On the contrary, they tried to strengthen their position as a civil representative within RMDSZ. Others believed that RMDSZ had a legitimate cause not to adopt the list of MIT representatives, as the list did not include representatives of an organization that constantly requested inclusion into MIT and seats on the list. By rejecting the Youth in Their Own Homeland Movement (IFM)⁵⁰ because their point of view was different, MIT had done the same thing for which they had criticized RMDSZ.⁵¹ The suspension of MIT from the RMDSZ Council of Representatives created a divide not only within MIT – even though the decision appeared to be unanimous. Different arguments for and against the decision emerged also in the Romanian Union of Hungarian Doctoral Students and Young Researchers (RODOSZ). RODOSZ subsequently decided against the withdrawal. Consequently, Lehel Kovács, their delegate who took part in the initial decision, had to resign as RODOSZ vice president. During the period when MIT was part of the RMDSZ Council of Representatives, their activities were mainly directed by their relations with RMDSZ. The MIT caucus discussed the topics before the Council meetings and tried to reach a common position. The majority of the issues were based on civic or political matters, and the most time was spent on elaborating an opinion on RMDSZ decisions. Youth policy was less of a key issue in the activities of the MIT caucus.⁵² Indeed, according to Pál Nagy⁵³, “*the first ten years of MIT were mostly about RMDSZ, and this was not a natural thing.*”⁵⁴

50 Youth In Their Own Homeland Movement is closely related to the formation of MIÉRT, and Csaba Borboly also participated in its foundation.

51 Interview with Levente Vass: The world would turn on its head if young people sat back in armchairs, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 98–105.

52 Interview with István Jakab: The alternative should have a voice, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 68–82.

53 Founding member of the Hungarian Students' Union of Brassó, vice-president between 1992 and 1993, president of UFF between 1993 and 2003, vice-president of MISZSZ between 1993 and 1997, then president until 2003, representative of the Székelyudvarhely City Council between 1997 and 2000, acting president of MIT between 2000 and 2001, executive chairman of the Hungarian Civic Association of Udvarhelyszék from 2004 to 2005, then member of the Board of Directors of MCSZESZ.

54 Interview with Pál Nagy: Today's youth is becoming softer, they do not dare to resort to drastic methods, ed. Imre Zilahi, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok.* (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 129–146.

Fragmentation of the Hungarian youth organization network in Transylvania. The establishment of MIÉRT

Instead of a reconciliation with MIT, RMDSZ established its own organization to represent youth interests to fill the gap left by the MIT representatives. This organization was often regarded as “*the youth organization that cooperated with RMDSZ*”. On 7-9 December 2001, at the Teleki Education Centre in Szováta (Sovata), RMDSZ organized a conference with the title *RMDSZ and Youth 2002*. At the conference, a decision was made to establish the Hungarian Youth Council (MIÉRT). The attending youth organizations discussed the Youth Framework Programme developed by Bálint Porcsalmi, a youth member of the RMDSZ Executive Bureau. The main task of the Framework was to institutionalize relations between Hungarian youth organizations in Romania and RMDSZ.

MIÉRT has been an RMDSZ partner organization since its establishment. This was stated in the 2002 Szováta (Sovata) Recommendation as well. The recommendation indicates that representing the interests of the Hungarian youth is a common goal that can only be achieved with cooperation. The basis of this cooperation shall be the establishment of relations that are both permanent and institutionalized. The recommendation includes organizational principles, functions, membership, structure, the establishment of territorial youth councils, the opportunities provided by RMDSZ, and RMDSZ expectations.⁵⁵ Basically all organizational and ideological issues of the new youth umbrella organization were included in the recommendation. On the one hand, the establishment of MISZSZ was initiated and completed by youth organizations themselves. On the other hand, founding MIT was initiated by youth organizations, while RMDSZ provided technical assistance. Nevertheless, MIT organizational principles and structure, goals, and tasks were outlined by the youth. The goal that led to the establishment of MIT, however, was obviously to create a new dimension in youth organizations that corresponded to RMDSZ policies.

Soon thereafter, the MIT Delegates’ Committee published a declaration confirming that while they had taken note of the fact that RMDSZ was working on establishing their own youth organizational network, they firmly believed that MIÉRT had been established in order to guarantee new generations joining RMDSZ ranks. With this step, not only did RMDSZ question the legitimacy of MIT, which is not organized on a political basis, they also created a dividing line between Hungarian youth organizations in Transylvania.⁵⁶

55 Szováta (Sovata) Recommendation. <http://miert.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/szovatai-ajanlas.pdf> (Last accessed: 13 January 2020)

56 The declaration of MIT was published in Erdélyi Napló (Nagyvárad) on December 18, 2001. Udvardy, Frigyes: Historical chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania 1990-2017. <https://udvardy.adatbank.transindex.ro> (Last accessed: 1 September 2020)

MIÉRT was finally founded in March 2002 as an autonomous and independent union of Hungarian youth organizations in Romania and their local representative bodies. Its main goal was to protect the interests of the youth, represent them, and help align interests. In the same year, MIÉRT concluded a cooperation agreement with RMDSZ, committing to be their associated member organization on a national and local scale, and to respect the RMDSZ Policy Programme, cooperating with RMDSZ in order to achieve the goals set by the programme. Because of this, MIÉRT obtained rights to make up 15% of RMDSZ local and national decision-making forums. A condition thereof, however, was that the RMDSZ Statute and Policy Programme had to be respected. It was also concluded that RMDSZ would provide professional and political assistance to the MIÉRT Representative Body and to MIÉRT members in the RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT) in order to represent the youth on a political level.⁵⁷ A number of factors influenced relations between MIT and MIÉRT, for example their relationship with RMDSZ, the struggle for political positions, and the competition for subsidies.

Conclusion

Examining the events that mark the beginning or end of various periods is an integral part in defining the different institutionalization periods of the Hungarian youth in Romania. The quintessence of these events is often a conflict that arises within a certain elite group, leading to the appearance of different points of view. In order to define the institutionalization periods of the Hungarian youth organizations in Romania, it is essential to analyze these points of view and, more importantly, analyze the actors' strategies and positions along the dividing lines. It is also important to underline that the institutionalization periods defined by this study are only indicative, and the process was analyzed only from the point of view of the youth elite. The issue was thus approached on a macro level, not based on events in everyday life. An exhaustive analysis should also address the nation-building activities of the Romanian and Hungarian governments and the changes in international relations.

During the foundation period (1989–1990), a number of mass movements formed. This initial momentum led to the establishment of many organizations with thousands of members. Mass events were held. The youth organization network was comprised of grassroots organizations that started springing up simultaneously with the older generations'

57 Cooperation agreement between RMDSZ and MIÉRT, 2002. https://miert.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/egyuttmukodes_MIERT_RMDSZ-2002.pdf (Last accessed: 13 January 2020)

organizations. Within a relatively short period of time, youth organizations started interacting with each other and, after a number of national-level meetings, established their first umbrella organizations. They cooperated closely with the older generations, but at the same time they preserved their independence. The youth organized itself on a national principle and addressed not only generational issues, but were actively involved from the very beginning in solving issues concerning the entire Hungarian community in Transylvania, for example the fight for ethnic rights.

The pioneering period (1990–1995) could be best described with a general perception of “everything is possible”.⁵⁸ The decisive moment of this period was the integration of MISZSZ into the RMDSZ structure, which was practically the integration of the Hungarian youth elite into the political life of the community. The main dividing line appeared between two youth elite groups: those who engaged in politics and those who engaged in civil activities and distanced themselves from politics.

During the period of pact-based politics (1995–2001), the organizational network was based on agreements between the pillars that represented youth organizations (organizations representing university students, high school students, religious youth etc.). The most important aspect of these agreements was to establish common representation. Another important agreement in this period was the cooperation of RMDSZ and MIT, the youth umbrella organization that strived to represent the whole Hungarian youth in Romania. The most important conflicts of this period are also tied to RMDSZ.

The main conflict that defined the fragmentation period of the Hungarian youth organizations in Transylvania (after 2001) was their attitude towards RMDSZ. The Hungarian subculture in Romania formed along an ethnic dividing line. However, another dividing line emerged in the subculture as well, and it institutionalized by the end of the 2000s. It was created by the conflict between central RMDSZ leadership and its internal opposition. The regional opposition between Catholics and Protestants was much less significant. Conflicts generated by the generation gap had also weakened. The “radical-moderate” conflict, however, had a strong structuring force. On one hand, the central RMDSZ leadership (the “moderates”) focused mainly on the integration of the Hungarians living in Transylvania into Romanian society. On the other hand, RMDSZ opposition (the “radicals”) called for the integration of the Hungarians living in Transylvania as an autonomous society.⁵⁹ This opposition was reproduced in the Hungarian youth organization network of Romania, creating a political culture of fragmentation, characterized by conflicts, and

58 Interview with Zsolt Szilágyi: *From suspicion to the Alliance*, ed. Zilahi, Imre, *Másfél évtized az erdélyi ifjúsági életben: interjúk és dokumentumok*. (Kolozsvár: MIT, 2005) 30–34.

59 Kántor, Zoltán and Bárdi, Nándor, “Az RMDSZ a romániai kormányban, 1996-2000”. *Regio*, 4. (2000): 150–186.

goals that are often mutually exclusive. The internal opposition and the MIT member organizations, that took the “radical” side distanced themselves from RMDSZ leadership.⁶⁰ This conflict led to MIT voluntarily leaving the RMDSZ Council of Representatives (SZKT). They thought that leaving the Council would weaken RMDSZ’s legitimacy, as without the youth, RMDSZ would no longer represent the whole Hungarian community in Transylvania.

RMDSZ initially handed over youth policy competences to the self-organizing youth. Their key youth partners were first MISZSZ and OMDSZ, then MIT. The most important RMDSZ decision regarding youth policies was to institutionalize their relationship with youth umbrella organizations that incorporated quasi-independently organised and functioning youth organizations.⁶¹ By this, youth organizations became involved in the decision-making structure of RMDSZ. By the 2000s, tensions were rising between MIT and RMDSZ. The situation had become untenable not only for the youth, but also for RMDSZ. This is when RMDSZ started to address youth policy issues. The first and most important step was to support the establishment of a youth umbrella organization (MIÉRT) that incorporates the youth organizations that are willing to cooperate with RMDSZ. Thus, MIÉRT filled up the vacuum in RMDSZ legitimacy that arose after MIT left.

After the pioneering era, the Hungarian youth organization network pluralized. In parallel with RMDSZ becoming a political party⁶², the attitude towards RMDSZ became the main dividing line between youth organizations. This became a structural factor that led to a political and, later, organizational fragmentation. In parallel with the escalation of the conflict between MIT and RMDSZ, a new youth structure arose. This ended a period of institutionalization in the youth organization network. The period between 1995 and 2001 was defined by a push for a common representation. After the fragmentation of the youth organization network, however, the youth organizations that shared ideologies and cooperated with RMDSZ separated from those who distanced themselves from RMDSZ and played the role of the opposition.

60 MIT was not united on the issue of attitudes toward the RMDSZ either, and the most important fault line was between member organizations approaching the RMDSZ and moving away from the RMDSZ.

61 The independent adjective is correct from the point of view that the RMDSZ had less influence on the independent opinion-forming of both the MISZSZ and the MIT (they often took the opposite position to the central leaders of the RMDSZ), but at the same time it played a key role in supporting the establishment of youth organizations, such as technical management for the founding of MIT and in the preparation of the establishment of MIT, as well as in providing resources that are essential for their operation.

62 With the participation of the ruling coalition, the RMDSZ began to function as a political party more and more focused on elections. See: Kántor, Zoltán and Bárdi, Nándor, “Az RMDSZ a romániai kormányban, 1996-2000”. 150–186.