Study halls (tanoda) for Roma and vulnerable children in Hungary

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Table of contents

1   The initiative and its organizers

The Hungarian term tanoda refers to a package of afternoon school activities. The term is hard to translate into English, but 'study hall' or 'community-based extracurricular group' captures the meaning of the term best (albeit only partially). Since their inception, 'study halls' (as we will henceforth call tanodas) have been mainly organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or in some cases by Roma organizations, in order to facilitate the educational success of children whose needs are not adequately met in the public educational system. The initiative targets mainly (but not exclusively) disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged pupils, including children of Roma origin[1].

A comprehensive definition comes from Tanoda platform, an informal umbrella organization of study halls organized by educational experts and civil actors who all actively work in study halls and have several years of pedagogical and project-management experience. According to Tanoda platform:

> *A study hall is a community space with independent infrastructure operated by a non-governmental organization that relies on local knowledge as well as the voluntary participation of children taking into account their unique needs. Study halls offer complex services keeping in mind personality development holistically.* (Norbert Szűcs, 12.12.2014)

These services include the use of innovative pedagogical methods in teaching, along with useful pastime activities for the children and their families. According to Norbert Szűcs:

> *In the public educational system these services cannot be reached by socially marginalized children whose needs are inadequately met in the public education system.*

This definition suggests that study halls are regarded as innovative and autonomous professional workshops, independent of the public educational system. Tanoda platform thus provides a definition that envisages study halls operating in the most optimal way and that keeps the complex nature of these institutions in focus. The complexity of study halls stems from the fact that these institutions work on the periphery of the public school system, though their aims differ from those of that system. Furthermore, the pedagogical methods used in study halls differ from the traditional frontal, lecture-style educational methods applied in most schools. Moreover, study halls provide extracurricular activities for children and their families, making the study hall a multipurpose centre for social life.

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[1] According to the Higher Education Act, a disadvantaged student/applicant is a student/applicant younger than 25 years at the time of registration, in respect of whom a notary arranged for child protection care during secondary education due to family or social back-ground, or for whom regular child welfare benefit has been disbursed, or who has been eligible for regular child protection benefit, or has been a ward of the state. A multiply disadvantaged student (applicant) is a disadvantaged student/applicant whose parents exercising parental control at the time the student reached compulsory school age had only completed primary education (as stated in a voluntary parental declaration under the procedure regulated in the Act on the Protection of Children and on Child Welfare Administration); or for whom long-term guardianship has been arranged. Half of the multiply disadvantaged children are of Roma background. Apart from this official definition of disadvantaged children, study halls also host vulnerable children whose social and family circumstances require them to do so.

Another important document in terms of defining study halls, is the Study Hall Standard which was devised in 2008 within the framework of a Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP), funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) project. This Standard defines study halls as follows:

Study halls primarily provide academic, social, cultural and spiritual help for children in order to help disadvantaged and multiple disadvantaged – among them Roma – and refugee children achieve success in primary and secondary schools. Ideally, the work is envisaged in a so-called "self-help" local peer group that is supported by teachers, social workers, the parents and the local school working in a democratic union – though in practice, this ideal is altered in different proportions[2].

From an educational point of view, it is ultimately important that it is not the children who are supposed to conform to the school subjects and the teachers, but rather the other way round: it is the individual needs and skills of the pupils that determine the areas to be worked on and improved. The pedagogical work of study halls is characterized by critical reflection on individual differences in the cognitive development of children, personalized tutoring and mentoring in a child-centred approach, as well as by tracking of the progress of pupils using objective evaluative tools.

At the moment, in 2015, there are 189 study halls involving around 5,000 children. The majority of study halls are still to be found in the major cities, where innovative investment is more easily mobilized, though there have been deliberate efforts to open study halls in the most disadvantaged and less urbanized sub-regions of the country. The study halls under analysis here are diverse in their aims and current situations (see Table 1). The study hall leaders interviewed include Anna Csongor, member of the board of trustees of the Study hall of Józsefváros (Budapest), the first study hall in Hungary, which started in the early 1990s with the financial support of the Dutch Foundation and the Soros Foundation. Later it received financial   support from SROP programmes (see below); but financial hardship meant that the study hall had to scale down and then cease its work, eventually closing in 2012.

The second study hall that we analyse here is the Study hall of Ferencváros (Budapest). It is organized by Közért Egyesület (For the Public Association), which operates two other study halls – in the small town of Piliscsaba, near Budapest, and in the north-eastern village of Tiszabura. The study hall was established in 2001 in the poorest region of the Ferencváros district, under the name Dzsumbuj Egyesület (Slum Association); this refers to the popular name for the district (dzsumbuj means 'slum'). Since 2004, the main activity of the organization has been to provide educational, psychological and recreational activities for children. In 2005, it received EU funding (HUF 19 million, or around EUR 62,500) from the Human Resources Operational Programme (HEFOP-2.1.4 and HEFOP 2.1.4/B projects), enabling it to embark on complex social-pedagogical work, laying the foundations for two more study halls in the countryside in 2012.

The third study hall that will be analysed here is the Study hall of Csobánka. It is situated in a small village near Budapest and represents a different type of operation, as it is solely financed by the non-profit organization CSEPP Esélyegyenlőségi Alapítvány (CSEPP Equal Opportunities Organization). As a consequence, it is not dependent on SROP funds, and so non-continuous financial support does not

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[2] TÁMOP-3.3.5/A/08/1 - Tanoda programok támogatása (Supporting Study hall programmes)

pose a problem for this study hall. It was established in September 2012, initiated by a local kindergarten teacher, Eszter Lovász, and an anthropologist, Boglárka Bakó, who was doing field research in the village. The study hall works with volunteers and currently hosts 27 children, with 10 more on the waiting list. It is organized by three volunteers who place an emphasis on democratic management and on an innovative pedagogical approach that takes into account the individual cognitive improvement of children. Through individual tutoring and competence development, these volunteers support children who, for one reason or another, are lagging behind at school; they also organize study groups and recreational activities for the children, such as a board game club.

The fourth study hall under investigation is the Study hall of Bátonyterenye. It was established in a small city in the north-eastern convergence region in 2000 by an equal opportunities expert, Judit Berki. At first, it received no financial support from the government, but instead operated on a voluntary basis on Saturdays. At that time, it functioned as an open house for everyone, and great emphasis was placed on the involvement of the children's families. The primary aim was to provide help for children with learning difficulties. Later, in 2004 and 2005, it won support from the Human Resources Operation-al Programme (HEFOP), and then from the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP) in 2008, 2009 and 2012. The original HEFOP grants enabled the study hall to develop exemplary social work practices and to move towards networking in the sub-region and a professional working scheme. By 2008, it had already achieved a systematized and coherent working scheme, with a total of four study halls: in Mátraverebély and Lucfalva (small villages near Bátonyterenye), where it hosted 60 and 40 children, respectively; in Kisterenye (part of Bátonyterenye, but a separate study hall), where it hosted 40; and in Bátonyterenye, where it involved 60 children. Also, it trained a group of young experts (some of whom had previously attended the study hall) who were able to continue the work, as the management of 200 children required a professional team. Every study hall had mentors and a number of teachers who were able to see to improving the children's pedagogical and social skills. This situation continued for three years, until 2012, when it failed to win a SROP grant and lost its financial support. Since then, it has been working with volunteers and has only been able to carry on a different kind of pedagogical work, with one mentor in each study hall and a few volunteer teachers, while the study hall in Lucfalva eventually had to close.

Table 1: The characteristics of the study halls examined

Name	Organization	Establishment year	Number of children in 2014–15
Study hall of Józsefváros, Budapest (1 study hall)	Józsefvárosi Tanoda Alapítvány (Study hall of Józsefváros Foundation)	1995	none (closed down in 2012)
Study hall of Ferencváros, Budapest, Piliscsaba, Tiszabura (3 study halls)	Közért Egyesület (For the Public Association)	2004	50–55
Study hall of Csobánka (CSODA) (1 study hall)	CSEPP Esélyegyenlőségi Alapítvány (CSEPP Equal Opportunities Organization)	2012	27 (10 on waiting list)
Study hall of Bátonyterenye, Kisterenye, Mátraverebély (3 study halls)	Nógrád Megyei Cigány Kisebbségi Képviselők és Szószólók Szövetsége (Association of Nógrád County Roma Minority Representatives and Spokespersons)	2000	45–50 (200 at its peak in the middle of the 2000s)

2 Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems

Most studies of the Hungarian educational system highlight a tendency for children from less educated and poor families to be marginalized. Table 2 below is from the situation analysis, part of the National Social Inclusion Strategy published by the State Secretariat for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice. It shows the ratio and distribution of disadvantaged children in Hungarian schools (National Social Integration Strategy, 2011, p 31).

The statistics show the extreme difference between the indicators of the most disadvantaged regions and the other micro-regions. In the territory of the 47 most disadvantaged micro-regions with multiple disadvantages (MD47), 27.9 per cent of pupils/students have multiple disadvantages, while the figure is only 6.5 per cent in the other parts of the country on average. According to the study:

> *it is a regrettable characteristic of the educational system that it is unable to reduce the disadvantages existing on account of family circumstances; in other words, according to the definition of the PISA survey, the system is not equitable. The background analyses of surveys show that the Hungarian educational system is one of the systems amongst the OECD countries least providing equal opportunities and the educational success of children largely depends on the education and occupation of their parents.* (National Social Integration Strategy, 2011: 31).

The educational system is unable to provide disadvantaged children with equal chances of accessing quality education. Moreover, the scope of complementary support services is not sufficiently extensive, so that the disadvantages facing these children are not systematically tackled by the welfare system. Apart from study halls, there are no support services that directly address this problem.

Table 2: Number and ratio of children with multiple disadvantages in school year 2009/2010*

Territorial unit	Type of institution						
	Kindergarten	Elementary school	Vocational school	Special vocational school	Vocational secondary school	Grammar school	Total
Number of pupils and students							
MD47 micro-regions	50923	136569	16211	912	17678	26397	**248690**
Other 127 micro-regions	277622	639172	119057	9105	255666	213595	**154217**
Total	**328545**	**775741**	**135268**	**10017**	**273344**	**239992**	**1762907**
Of which pupils/students with multiple disadvantages							
MD47 micro-regions	16990	45264	4137	243	1837	1026	**69497**
Other 127 micro-regions	20091	61271	9333	1141	4852	1611	**98299**
Total	**37081**	**106535**	**13470**	**1384**	**6689**	**2637**	**167796**
Ratio of children with multiple disadvantages							
MD47 micro-regions	33.4%	33.1%	25.5%	26.6%	10.4%	3.9%	**27.9%**

Other 127 micro-regions	7.2%	9.6%	7.8%	12.5%	1.9%	0.8%	**6.5%**
Total	**11.3%**	**13.7%**	**10.0%**	**13.8%**	**2.4%**	**1.1%**	**9.5%**

Source: Public education – statistical data base, 2009/2010, cited by National Social Integration Strategy, 2011
*MD47 refers to the 47 most disadvantaged micro-regions with multiple disadvantages.

One of the main reasons for the lack of equal opportunities is school segregation. In order to understand the roots of segregation in public schools, it is essential to introduce briefly the Hungarian style of enrolment in the public educational system. Importantly (and similarly to other countries in the region), Hungary is characterized by a dominance of state-run schools and parents are free to choose a school for their children. As well as enrolling children from within their own catchment area, as determined by the municipality, schools can admit children from outside the area. Total enrolment in schools is determined by capacity, the level of demand from within and outside the area district and the allocation rules set by the municipality (including the number of children allocated). The main reason for school segregation is the fact that:

> *students' free school choice and [low commuting costs] diminish the role of residential distribution because many students commute to schools of their choice* (ibid.: 40).

However, families do not primarily select a school on the basis of the Roma and non-Roma proportion in a particular school, but rather by evaluating the quality of the school.

According to a 2014 survey by Corvinus University and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on school segregation:

> *the distribution of Roma and non-Roma students across schools has become considerably more unequal in Hungary since the 1980s.* (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2013: 5)

The study differentiates between two main types of segregation: inter- and intra-school segregation, both of which derive from the policy measures of municipalities and the practices of enrolment in the Hungarian public school system. The majority of municipalities implement educational policies that have an impact on the ethnic composition of schools in town and moderately increase inter-school segregation. The strongest factor increasing inequality is that most municipalities fail to maintain the representation of Roma students in mostly non-Roma schools (whether municipal or non-municipal schools). Thus they do not use positive measures to combat inter-school segregation. Also, quite a few municipalities allow their higher-status ('elite') schools to pursue admission policies towards the Roma that tend to lead to segregation of Ro-ma pupils from other pupils and many allow segregated Roma schools to exist. Some (but not many) municipalities use school mergers and modify school district boundaries in such a way that leads to a slight increase in inequality between schools. Intra-school segregation is characterized by the maintenance of separate Roma classes and segregated buildings and/or school facilities (e.g. cafeterias).

Children in segregated schools do not have the opportunity to access quality education in the same way as their peers do. This deprives disadvantaged and Roma children especially of equal opportunities in public education and there are other factors that lead to poorer educational performance among these children. One of the main reasons behind poor school results is the lack of stimuli at home (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2014: 3). Ethnicity as such is almost totally insignificant in children's performance:

it is the home environment and financial status that makes the real difference. Overall, the unequal opportunities among Roma and/or poor children derive from the inaccessibility of quality education through segregation and a poorer social environment, which affect their cognitive skills. Both of these phenomena are targeted by the extracurricular pedagogical services of study halls.

Apart from disadvantaged children, study halls have another important target group: the migrant community. Statistics and information on migrant education are found in the third volume of the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX III). According to the measures the index uses, in the field of education Hungary performs poorly:

> *Hungary's limited strategies and budgets for intercultural education are of little use for newcomer children. Hungary denies undocumented migrants access to not only the full education system (as in half MIPEX countries), but also explicitly compulsory education (only BG, RO, SK do so). It also does so for children of some legal migrants. Intercultural education scores critically unfavourable, close to zero. To get into the right school, authorities provide limited and out-dated information. Schools are not required to address newcomers' specific needs and opportunities, or to teach all pupils about living in a diverse society[3].*

Another comprehensive analysis in the field is the 2014 study by the Central European University on the monitoring mechanisms for the integration of migrants in the context of the Assessing Integration Measures for Vulnerable Migrant Groups (AS-SESS) project. With respect to the Hungarian public educational system, the ASSESS study claims that:

> *the education system is generally not prepared to integrate migrant children from non-Hungarian backgrounds* (Messing and Árendás, 2014: 8).

A 2014 study by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet – OFI) provides a comprehensive list of deficiencies that the public school system sustains. The study indicates that there are no special measures, legal provisions or common methods for assessing the aptitude of children and placing them in the appropriate classes. There are only local initiatives and EU-funded pro-jects that do not usually provide long-term assistance due to their cyclical nature and the strict expectations of proposals. Also, there is no comprehensive official data on the number of migrant students in national authorities; school data is incompatible, faulty and incomplete (Kállai and Vadász, 2014).

3   Genesis of the initiative

 The study hall initiative has its roots in the early 1990s, when the local council of the poorest district of Budapest (Józsefváros) implemented a threefold package: it appointed a local commissioner of minority rights; established a support group for the Roma minority; and took conscious steps to acknowledge the Roma as an independent minority group. Also in the early 1990s, a support system to facilitate the education of Roma children took a fresh look at the effectiveness of concentrating on poverty or ethnicity in the regulatory schemes. From the 1970s onwards, there had been Roma clubs and community schools working and in the 1980s special services and thematic summer camps were organized for Ro-ma children, which led to an awareness both of the need for special initiatives for drop-out children and of the rising interest in alternative pedagogical models. Also, more and more

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[3] The paper on Hungary can be downloaded from MIPEX website at: http://www.mipex.eu/hungary

government and civil emphasis was placed on the participation of the emerging Roma intelligentsia in public life. All this made the district receptive to new social innovations in the field of educational programmes for Roma children.

The idea behind the study hall revolved around providing tuition in a local and integrated environment, where Roma and non-Roma children were involved together in the activities. Also, study halls aimed to deliver extracurricular programmes and catch-up opportunities for Roma pupils in the afternoons and weekends by using alternative learning methods and inviting excellent and motivated teachers from high-quality schools. Parallel to these endeavours, the organizers wished to highlight the importance of strengthening the Roma identity by providing stimulating, intellectual and cultural experiences that sought to increase identity capital (a positive connection to one's ethnic identity). Along with these, there were language and art classes that stimulated Roma identity in the programme structure of these institutions.

The first study hall (Study hall of Józsefváros) was established by a non-profit organization supported by the Dutch Foundation and the Soros Foundation. The organization realized the need for educative afternoon activities for primary and secondary schoolchildren of Roma origin; it therefore established a multifunctional community space, where individual tutoring, arts and crafts activities and community events were organized, along with outdoor events and occasional home tutoring. This particular study hall had to close down eventually in 2012, despite all its efforts. In the 1990s, individual civil society organizations started to operate study hall-like programmes inspired by the *Study hall of Józsefváros*, but every study hall had to evolve its own organizational structure and activities, keeping in mind the local needs of children. The institutionalization of the movement started in 2004, at the time of the first HEFOP tender.

The current situation and working conditions of the network of study halls can best be understood in the context of its institutionalization. While the first study hall was established in the early 1990s, the implementation of the study hall concept in the welfare system started in 2004, when the initiative was included in the Human Resources Development Operational Programme funded by ESF. The main objectives of the programme structure of the 2004 tender were to support study halls in creating a stimulating learning environment for those who might not get it at home. Other objectives included the arrangement of individual tutoring to provide background knowledge and skills for curricular education and to compensate for those dysfunctions that the school cannot resolve. Thus the tender had a threefold objective: to enhance school success; to compensate for disadvantages due to low social status; and to support minority culture. The target group of this tender was made up of pupils from the poorest families. In 2004, the call for proposals aimed at creating more study hall programmes, primarily in the disadvantaged regions and at developing the existing programmes.

The overview of the 2005–2008 rounds of proposals largely relies on a research paper produced by TÁRKI-TUDOK (2009) and the guide for calls for tenders. The second round of calls in 2005 already addressed multiply disadvantaged children directly. Furthermore, the tender sought to increase the number of study halls. According to the TÁRKI-TUDOK research paper, a new element of the tender was a move to include the direct involvement of Roma pupils in the study halls' programmes so that:

> *more and more Roma pupils shall graduate from primary schools and shall continue their studies in secondary schools giving access to higher education*

and

> *shall have educational success in an integrated public educational background* (Guide for Applicants, 2005, quoted in TARKI-TUDOK, 2009: 7).

It can be seen from the guidelines, as well as the research paper, that the 2005 call for tenders narrowed the scope for eligibility to children in grades 5–8 of primary school and secondary school pupils (where-as the call the previous year had not set any specific criteria concerning the age group). The specification of the age group caused study halls to reconsider their previous pedagogical work and find alternative ways to help children who fall outside the scope of eligible pupils. The tender envisaged a mini-mum of 25 to 60 pupils in each study hall and again that was hard to meet in smaller municipalities. With respect to the daily activities of study halls, the new call included more specific proposals, including specifications for the contracts and the personal development plan. Moreover, the list of compulsory activities emphasized that the study groups

> *shall not focus solely on the daily preparation of home-work for the next school day … no programme can be supported that merely intends to promote lei-sure activities or support cultural identity* (Call for proposals, 2005).

The research paper also underlines the fact that compulsory partnerships were required from the initiatives in order to build a prosperous relationship with the public school system. This requirement was also hard to meet, since the attitude of the school was not always supportive. That said, there are numerous examples where the school did become an active partner of the study hall.

The third round of calls in 2008 went further in the standardization process while trying to create a professionally unified set of study halls. Thus it presented more standardization documents, such as the 'Quality Assurance Tools for Study Halls' and the 'Study Hall Standard', also attached to the call. There had been a debate preceding publication of the documents among representatives of civil society and the government, though many study hall leaders claimed to have been left out of the professional discussion. Concerning the target group of the study halls, there were further measures implemented in the specification: the call proposed that 75 per cent of the total number of participating children must be multiply disadvantaged or under child protection (Guide for Applicants, 2008). The 2008 tender encouraged the establishment of study halls that focused on the 33 most disadvantaged sub-regions under the 'Nobody is Left Behind' flagship programme of the government. At that time, most study halls had started to perceive that their operation was becoming intensively formalized, as Judit Berki (Study hall of Bátonyterenye) emphasized:

> *The initial work felt freer but it was necessary to create a good basis for the professionalization of the work of study halls.*

Considering the target group, there were considerable changes: first, migrant students could be involved in the supported programmes, as could children in state care. Attached to the guidance documentation of the 2008 call for proposals, the Study Hall Standard summarized the target group of study halls and the scope of tasks. These institutionalized changes narrowed the circle of eligible children, compared to the initial operation (i.e. preceding the tenders). Initially, study halls could involve anyone who needed help, but the tenders would only support children with a specific status (disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children) and of a specific age (primary and secondary schoolchildren).

In 2012, at the time of the last SROP tender, many of the same elements were in evidence. According to the 'Guide for Applicants', the study hall programmes had to include 20–60 children at the same

time and had to develop personal development plans for them (this latter feature had been a requirement since 2005). Also, it was a minimal requirement for those with a personal development plan to demonstrate noticeable improvement in the following fields of study: mathematics-logic, reading comprehension, foreign language, info-communication technologies and social skills. In the tender, special emphasis was placed on the most disadvantaged regions, where civil organizations could apply for half of the allocation. Nevertheless, there were significant changes in the concept as well: the tar-get group again allowed the inclusion of children in the lower grades of primary school. However, it again exposed the professional work that had started with the standardization process: all the while, it established a wider concept of the age group supported. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils was to be at least 70 per cent of participating children, and of those 70 per cent should be multiply disadvantaged (i.e. at least 49 per cent of the total number of children). Also, the new tender increased financial support for individual study halls. As a result, around 150 study halls started to operate, rather than the existing 65, which raised the question of continuous professional work.

4   The activities and organization

All study halls are separated from the public school system physically, as well as in terms of their ideology and approach (although their work might show overlapping activities). The activities of study halls diverge from one local context to another and are very responsive to the local context and dependent on the vision of the actors taking the initiative. Study halls thus fulfil different functions according to their main goal of operation. Three objectives are most prevalent. First, there is the goal of providing catch-up activities and preparation for the secondary school graduation exam. This operational goal includes a wide range of activities and pedagogical initiatives that conform to the needs of the broad target group. A second goal is to support the most disadvantaged students and pupils with the worst school results. And the third focus is to develop the talents of disadvantaged pupils in order to support their further training.

According to study hall leaders, the institutionalization of study halls under the HEFOP and the SROP tenders led to a range of formal requirements that fundamentally defined their day-to-day operation. First, the minimally required documentation was hard to arrange for many study halls, as it was virtually identical to the essential operational list of required documentation for public schools according to the Educational Act of the time. Furthermore, for study halls that operated in small, disadvantaged settlements, the required infrastructural, material and personal conditions often posed real problems. The proposals required a minimum set of rooms, as well as equipment, supplies and tools (e.g. moveable, multifunctional furniture, refrigerator, dishwasher, washing machine, electronic devices, selective garbage, compost bin, a library of related vocational subjects, atlas and globe), a highly qualified executive manager and the responsible subject coordinators to hold the mandatory qualifications. This was hard to meet and, from an administrative perspective, presented almost as many difficulties as opening a new school in the sub-region.

Furthermore, funding discontinuity forced study halls to reduce their services and programme structure, to look for voluntary teachers (which undermined continuous, high-standard work), to sacrifice complementary activities, and to focus solely on 'remedial' teaching, leaving aside talent promotion and cognitive skills development. In some cases, study halls even had to close down between tenders, because of financial difficulties. Table 3 below shows a remarkable upscaling

tendency of financial allocations offered by the HEFOP and SROP tenders for study halls from 2004 to 2012.

Table 3: The characteristics of HEFOP and SROP tenders, 2004–2012

Year	Allocation in HUF	Max. amount per study hall (million HUF)	Number of winners	Implementation period (month)
2004	300 million	12–15 million	23	10–24
2005	515 million	15–19 million	27	20–24
2008	1.3 billion	14–22 million	55	20–24
2012	4 billion	10–30 million	125	20–28

Source: Fejes (2014: 33).

The majority of the study halls in our scope do not work with full-time employees. In most cases, employees are on temporary agency contracts or work on a voluntary basis. If there is a full-time employee, it is most probably the executive assistant. The most pressing problem in this field is the lack of professional teachers due to funding deficiencies. Therefore, certain subjects are taught by non-specialist teachers, which jeopardizes continuous high-level professional work. The timetable of most study halls is drawn up in September, aligning the school year and the children's schedule. In most of the study halls, children spend 2–3 hours at a time in the building, once or twice a week. The participation of the children is based on a schedule in most of the institutions, but a smaller number of the study halls are entirely open – children are not assigned to 'classes', but choose whichever programme seems best for them. The vast majority of the programmes focus on tutoring or revising the school material, in the hope that the children might understand and record the main points more easily.

In terms of the organization of learning, pupils typically work in small groups. This makes it possible for them to get actively involved in the work. There still are some tutors who teach ex cathedra in the study hall as well. This is because the traditional teaching methods of Hungarian schools are still prevalent in many study halls, though there is a conscious and systematic effort to use innovative pedagogical methods. There is individual tuition as well, and in some places this method is the most important teaching tool.

However, there is a strong feeling in many study halls against the traditional pedagogical practice. A group of study hall leaders have recognized that the poor school results of children often derive from the incomplete acquisition of basic competences and so they strive to offer services that complement school education. Thus, in these study halls an improvement in basic skills has become the most important pedagogical target – to provide long-lasting results and promote social cohesion. But they are operating in an environment where they are forced onto the periphery of the public education system. As a consequence, this goal is often neglected in the more traditional study halls and is replaced with direct tutoring in order to keep children's results high enough to pass their grades.

Furthermore, the study halls are usually inadequately recognized and intermittently financed by the welfare system. Those study halls that represent the more innovative views have formed an informal association, called Tanoda platform. This has become an important advocate in favour of the importance of basic competences that can ground the successful self-realization of children. Currently, Tanoda platform involves 72 participant study halls (out of the 189). However, at the moment the sustainability of Tanoda platform's aims is questionable because of the constant financial troubles facing the study halls, though the basic goal of study halls remains: to develop basic competences (reading, numeric skills, learning practices) involving innovative pedagogical methods, in order to support better performance at school. Furthermore, a main priority for these extracurricular learning groups is to realize integrated programmes for Roma children and improve local communities.

5 The innovative dimension of the initiative

5.1 Which social needs are addressed by study halls in Hungary?

A key aim of study halls is to contribute to the prevention of social exclusion through a pedagogical approach and thus promote social cohesion. Study halls create a vehicle where values of solidarity can thrive, along with a focus on the principles of equality and impartiality. In this respect, each initiative operates as a self-governing, informal institution serving social purposes: above all, they strive to ease educational disparities and the inadequacy of schools, in order to meet the needs of poor and disadvantaged children. Besides, study halls reduce the social cost to the government, offer a model of solidarity for the rest of society, operate in a democratic way and provide social mobility opportunities for those living in poverty.

5.2 How do study halls transform social relations?

In line with ImPRovE's criterion of social innovation, the study hall movement in Hungary is composed of bottom-up initiatives that involve a wide range of civil society actors and also Roma-led organizations (though less sizeably in number), in order to satisfy the basic needs of socially excluded children. By providing complementary educational services to children, study halls respond to social needs, challenge the commodification of life chances and provide a complementary service to the structure of social institutions. Also, by enabling children to access quality educational services, study halls contribute to the empowerment and socio-political mobilization of socially excluded groups. Furthermore, they have established links with certain educational institutions and have featured in the Social Renewal Operational Programmes since 2004.

5.3 What kind of empowerment is realized by study halls?

As has been mentioned, the pedagogical aim of study halls generally is to develop the basic competences of children, since experts believe that poor school results are primarily due to the lack of numeric, reading and cognitive skills. Accordingly, innovative pedagogical tools have been developed, such as non-formal teaching methods, alternative evaluation techniques, the rewarding of pedagogical endeavour, and the provision of greater autonomy for children in how they want to learn. Apart from

an emphasis on individual development, study halls aim to improve communities and strive to establish more and more heterogeneous spaces, so that study hall life can step out of its locality and its social bonds. Also, study halls contribute to the empowerment and socio-political mobilization of impoverished families by providing children with quality tuition and extracurricular educative programmes.

6 Institutional mapping and governance relations

The institutionalization and expansion of study halls required the establishment of an umbrella organization in order to promote networking opportunities and establish a common platform of experience exchange and professional work. The previously mentioned Tanoda platform was formed in 2012 by a group of educational experts who work on promoting the networking of study halls, providing professional support and carrying out advocacy activities. Tanoda platform is also an informal network of study halls, in the sense that it was a bottom-up initiative and is not administered by the government. At the moment there are 72 study halls that participate in its professional work and advocacy activities. The organization initially conducted a methodical analysis in order to provide situation reports and studies to chart the history and identify the relevant literature on study halls. Tanoda platform holds a considerable quantity of statistics. In order to promote professional consultation, it carried out six policy reviews, 26 case studies, made seven documentary films, and organized four professional workshops and one conference in December 2014. As for advocacy, Tanoda platform carries out policy-making monitoring, writes lobby papers and aims to provide consultancy for tenders. In future, it hopes to expand its network and disseminate professional innovation by organizing workshops, directing films and distributing working material.

Government participation first came about in the tender call of 2004, and has been repeated since then. Before 2004, the government was not systematically involved in the work of study halls, though individual municipalities did help the study halls by providing a place for them. This was especially significant in the case of Józsefváros, where the local government supported the establishment of the study hall by finding accommodation. Since 2003, different government institutions have been responsible for supporting and mainstreaming study halls. That was the time when the Public Education Act was modified and the governmental support of Tanoda-like institutions was subsequently implemented. This task was attributed to the Ministry of Education (Oktatási Hivatal, OH) in 2003 and was transferred to the Human Resources Development Operational Programme Managing Authority (HEFOP IH) in February 2004. The 2004 and 2005 calls were managed by the Authority. The 2008 and 2012 study hall proposals were issued and managed by the National Development Agency (Nemzeti Fejlesztési Ügynökség, NFÜ). Since 2014, the Türr István Training and Research Institute manages the proposals.

Study hall leaders claim that the active participation of them in the planning of the proposals was some-times neglected: in other words, there was insufficient professional discourse about the future of study halls involving both civil society actors and government levels. Some study hall managers who started their projects in the early 1990s claim that the Study Hall Standard was not drawn up by joint agreement between the civil actors and government concerns. A representative from the Ministry of Human Capacities has said that a study hall working group was recently established within the Türr István Training and Research Institute, a ministry body which, among other things, is in charge of sup-porting study halls. This working group aims to encourage active and fruitful professional discourse on

the future of the initiative. Apart from this, the ministry plans to publish a new call for proposals for study halls in the next round of tenders in 2015, when the extension of the study halls' services will be a key topic, alongside responsible growth in the number of study halls.

Until now, the expansion of study halls has shown a tendency towards upscaling, as the appearance of a new study hall has been mainly influenced by the determination of local actors, combined with good relations with the local community. Municipalities take part in supporting the study halls, but in different ways and degrees. In some cases, the municipality provides space for the activities as in the case of Bátonyterenye and Csobánka where the study hall is in immediate neighbourhood of the town hall. In other cases, the municipality helps to find a suitable case for the hall, as in the case of Ferencváros (the 9th district of Budapest) and Piliscsaba; we also know examples where the study hall operates in the school building (also in Ferencváros).

Most study halls work with volunteers, mostly because of the funding discontinuity that they experience between tender calls. As mentioned before, those study halls that rely on tender support have to reduce their services and programme structure from time to time and look for voluntary teachers when they do not have the funds to remunerate them. In some cases, study halls even had to close down between tenders, because of financial difficulties. This creates a disparity between the activities and services of the study halls in the implementation time and after that and enhances the risk of dis-continuous pedagogical work.

However, the participation of Roma associations is different in each case, the majority of study halls were established by civil organisations or local associations, a smaller part of them by Roma-led associations such as Napkerék Association (Napkerék Egyesület) in Kaposvár, Khetapine Association for Roma Unity (Khetanipe a Romák Összefogásáért Egyesület) in Pécs, Aparthani Independent Roma Association (Aparhanti Független Roma Egyesület) in the village of Kisvejke, Alliance of Gypsy Minority Representatives and Spokespeople of Nógrád County (Nógrád Megyei Cigány Kisebbségi Képviselők és Szószólók Szövetsége, NMCKKSZSZ) in Bátonyterenye.

7 Governance challenges

The most important challenges that most study halls have faced since their establishment are growing demand, the diversity of needs, the proliferation of ideas and activities, ownership issues and the question of sustainability and financing. This paper discusses some of these in detail below.

7.1 Mainstreaming social innovation

Concerning the mainstreaming of the social innovation of study halls, in the last 20 years study halls have popped up quite spontaneously wherever social demand and the innovative capital of NGOs have met under the right circumstances. On the other hand, there have been conscious moves to bring these informal institutions under one roof, but without taking away their contextual uniqueness. To this end, study hall organizers have established an umbrella organization that works as an advocacy organization for the networks, and as a kind of authorization and supervising committee for bottom-up quality assurance. This networking process also contributes to the equal access of children to the services of study halls, as the spontaneous emergence of study halls cannot ensure the right circumstances for equal access.

Currently, in early 2015, the preparatory work is in its final phase, though the final date of the call is not yet public. Study hall leaders have expressed their doubts about the timing of the call, as there is a chance that the new call will not coincide with the end of implementation of the previous tender and thus there may be a considerable time gap in the financing. In consequence, some study hall leaders are thinking of alternative ways of funding, through additional services that might make it financially feasible to promote the diverse services of study halls. A spokesman for the István Türr Training and Research Institute also outlined a plan to create a National Study Hall Network – a formally acknowledged institution with the involvement of the participants of *Tanoda platform* and study hall leaders. Moreover, the institute has stated that in early summer HUF 500,000 to 600,000 (approximately EUR 1,600–2,000) may be available to support study halls; however, the conditions of this funding are uncertain. Study hall leaders expressed a desire to gain more freedom to use the funding, since the heterogeneity of their work means that everyone needs the funding for different purposes (equipment, building human capital, administrative costs, and camps). Furthermore, since the outcome and timing of this provisional aid is uncertain, it may be that the money becomes available during the summer, when the work of the study halls differs from the mid-year and when it concentrates more on providing meaningful pastime opportunities for children.

There are other sensitive issues from the point of view of the tenders. One of these certainly is the lack of stability in the funding process, which causes financial difficulties for the majority of these institutions. The lack of continuous funding means that either teachers are paid from private resources that are later reimbursed or else they look for another source of employment and continue their work in the study hall only partially or not at all. In some cases a lack of project management competencies (professional and financial) can also be identified – both on the part of the grant winners and on the part of the administrative agency; in the case of the latter, the representative was often hard to find due to frequent changes in the agency. On the other hand, the administrative duties of grant winners are almost equal to the administrative burdens of public schools and usually the types of supporting documents required do not correlate with real-life practice.

7.2 Governing welfare mix: avoiding fragmentation

It has already been mentioned that the core aims of study halls do not completely correlate with the aims of the public school system (though some of their activities do), since it is not their purpose to heal the inadequacies of schools, but rather to improve the basic competences of children, in order to make them able to cope as adults. The main issue is the relationship between study halls and the public school system, especially their respective roles and responsibilities and their involvement in one another's activities. Local public schools sometimes believe that study halls pose a challenge to their work and contrast with the activities of the public school. According to study hall leaders, there have been cases where teachers are hostile towards students who attend the study hall. In one of the cases we have studied – Csobánka, a small village near Budapest – there is one public school, whose pupils are mostly of Roma origin (around 80 per cent). Those parents who can afford to send their children to a bigger town or to the capital do so and therefore the Csobánka school is becoming more and more segregated. Teachers usually regard study halls as after-school day-care centres, where the so-called 'poorly performing' students can be tutored, as the public school simply does not have enough time to provide additional support for these children. Nevertheless, the teachers are sometimes harsher towards those children who attend the study hall, as they feel their work is being challenged.

However, there are numerous counter-examples as well, where there is good cooperation between the study hall and the school. The cooperation between schools and study halls varies from place to place: in some cases, the study hall operates in the school building; on the other hand, there are places where cooperation is scarcely possible due to the entrenched social paradigms of local society. Thus parents are sometimes reluctant to send their children to the study hall, as it is labelled 'the school of bad and Roma children' (Boglárka Bakó, anthropologist, study hall leader of Csobánka), even if it would benefit the child to attend. As far as schools are concerned, they sometimes have no interest in getting involved in study hall life or mutual work, as these after-school institutions are seen as challenges to the public school system. Also a factor that complicates the involvement of children in study hall life is that since 2013, after-class daycare has been compulsory, and so students have to spend their afternoons in school. Consequently, it is hard to secure the afternoon and weekend participation of children in the study halls when they already spend eight hours a day at school during the week.

The individual relationship between study halls and schools is also a sensitive topic that shows no systematic pattern. Study halls aim to become institutions that complement the public school system by providing complex pedagogical services. In the current circumstances, without the active contribution of the school, most study halls are only able to handle urgent needs and provide direct tutoring to low-performing children from the material that they learn at school, sometimes through formal dictation. Schools need to become more interested in collaborating with study halls. Also, there is a need to synchronize the study hall with the system of full day education and the chance to use the school community services.

7.3 Governing welfare mix – developing a participatory governance style

Participatory governance style is important for study hall leaders. Most of them emphasize that their organizations aim to operate on a democratic model, so that decisions are made involving the different actors in the institution (mentors, teachers, teaching assistants) and the organizers take an active part in the everyday life of the study halls. In most cases, the organizers are mentors or teachers as well. This model implies that the study hall is open to everyone, even if financial support is not provided to cover them.

7.4 Equality and diversity

It is part of the mission of study halls to tackle the tensions of equality and diversity. There is a deliberate effort to achieve positive discrimination in order to empower marginalized groups. But this is undertaken in a context-sensitive way, respecting local specificities and the divergent needs of different age groups, migratory background and socio-economic deprivation. Further diversity issues have emerged, as several study hall leaders suggest that there might be a need to rethink the concept of study halls holistically, in order to address the criticism that they are a segregated space for low-performing and Roma students, excluding children with higher social status who might be equally in need of the study hall services. The criticism is that in this segregated environment poor children do not meet either Roma or non-Roma children of another, higher social status. These mechanics then exclude children who might need support as well, but are not allowed to attend the study hall because of its stereotyped position within the community. Study halls are sometimes seen by the public as 'a place where the bad Roma children go so they are not on the street' – a place that even higher social status Roma children cannot attend because of its low social status. This problem raises a question: if study halls are thus segregated through social dynamics, what steps can be taken to make them more like spaces of integration? This is a question that is addressed by study hall leaders, but the answers are just being formulated at the moment (information provided by the experts of Tanoda platform). In this sense, the study hall programme overall faces challenges in building social cohesion.

7.5 Uneven access

With respect to uneven access, the tenders that provide financial support limit the diversity of services provided by study halls, as they work with a one-dimensional system of conditions that cannot be adapted to localized environments and needs. This means that the same measures are determined for study halls in the capital and in the countryside; for example, tenders require the same number of students to be involved in every study hall. Moreover, the same indicators have to be met in the ratio of disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children. The existing diversity of actors and institutions, developed to satisfy a diversity of local needs, does not fit into this categorization. The suggestion of study hall leaders interviewed is to develop tenders calls that are differentiated according to the multiple functions of the different study halls, or that take account of the socio-demographic peculiarities of different regions, in order to better serve the diverse needs of children. There is also unequal access for children, because at the moment one of the study halls' target groups is not present in the tender guidelines: children with special educational needs (there is no available financial support

for their tuition). Also, study hall leaders suggest that there is a need to recalibrate the ratios of disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children in the calls, as social status is not the only indicator of a child's need for the study hall services. Also, in smaller municipalities, the indicator numbers in the calls for tender are hard to meet simply because of the limited number of children living in these places. Some study hall leaders pointed out that the ratio of disadvantaged children required in the calls is too high, and "indicators should present the emotionally neglected as well". Also, indicators should take account of the size of the migrant group, as the regulations on the migrant group do not always correlate with the group interests. Contributing to this, it is important to point out that study halls tend to emerge in larger cities, where innovative social capital (the will to make something new that is socially beneficial) is more prevalent; they are still lacking in convergence regions.

The study hall leaders have multiple recommendations from the point of view of the tenders being the most important source of financial support for them. Most of these correlate directly with the governance challenges. First of all, again from the perspective of uneven access, a widening of the age group in the guidelines seems necessary: apart from helping students to pass their school leaving exam, there is the need to prevent the drop-out of vocational school students. According to the study hall leaders, there is a need to refine the transition between lower- and upper-grade students at school: at the moment, when a child enters a higher grade at primary school, he/she experiences a radical shift from competence development to the direct acquisition of lexical knowledge. Also, still concerning age group expansion, there are plans for pilot programmes to involve children at pre-school age, in order to facilitate their improvement through early intervention. Although in the last call there was a wider tar-get group than in previous tenders, study hall leaders expressed the need to further differentiate the calls to bring them into line with the diverse needs of study halls.

7.6   Avoiding responsibility

The recommendations of Tanoda platform (in agreement with the 72 study halls affiliated) are that continual financial support is highly desirable (though of course, if the public school system met the needs of the children, there would be no need for study halls in their current form). A continuous financial model for the study halls would only maintain the status quo and not relieve the original problem. Nevertheless, until that problem is resolved, it is necessary to have a long-term (48–60 months) financial model, in order to achieve long-lasting results and maintain the high-quality professional work. There might be a chance to examine the possibility of normative financial support, so that study halls are continuously supported by the national government. In line with this, the recalibration of the Study Halls Standard is highly recommended, so that the study halls can work as independent, professional workshops that can complement the work of the public school system and not merely alleviate its flaws. Study hall leaders imagine that study halls could work as 'reading comprehension workshops' where there could be a focus on developing basic competences and on achieving long-lasting improvement, instead of on the current 'firefighting' efforts of the tutoring system.

Most study halls face severe liquidity problems after the two-year implementation period is over, since the tenders do not dovetail neatly and there is hence no permanent funding. Additionally, and in connection with this, few organizations have proved successful in these tenders two or three times in a row, which has caused further problems with discontinuous funding. Of the 239 study halls that have made applications, 172 (i.e. most of them) won funding at least once; but only 32 have won twice –

and only four have secured funding on three occasions. The problems of funding and the short implementation period erect serious barriers in the way of professional and pedagogical work. To mention one example, it becomes much harder to arrange complementary initiatives that would make the work of the study hall more effective, e.g. the involvement of parents. On the other hand, since the tenders are not continuous or consecutive in time, they are not economically coherent: they all envisage the acquisition of assets, but in some cases the necessary assets have already been purchased.

7.7 Enabling legal framework

From the perspective of compliance of the tenders with the tanodas there are disparities in the expectations to measure efficiency. The tender guidelines generally prescribe the planned achievements of study halls in quantitative terms:

> *The effectiveness of the study hall from the point of view of drop-out prevention is good if the ratio of drop-out students does not exceed 10 per cent of the total number of children involved.*

The Study Hall Standard also defines another indicator of efficiency: the number of pupils with worse grades cannot go above 10 per cent, and children's results have to show considerable improvement either in primary or secondary school. The documentation also prescribes one qualitative principle: there should be demonstrable involvement of the students in community life. Study halls have expressed concern with all this, as they claim that in the Standard efficiency is measured in terms of school results, and thus the cognitive development of children, the innovative pedagogical capital and the integrative social influence of study halls are neglected. The basic concept of Tanoda platform and the 72 study halls involved is that, apart from the above criteria, long-term educational results should be more important in any assessment. They claim that one reason for the poor school results of children is the lack of one or more basic competences; therefore mere tutoring is not enough to achieve long-lasting positive effects. From this point of view, tutoring in itself concentrates on short-term educational targets and is therefore not effective – only if it is balanced with complex pedagogical methods aiming at competence improvement.

In order to make the work of study halls more effective holistically, different measurements should be established after eliminating the data gaps. Thus a better monitoring system should be created. This need is also recognized by study hall leaders and work on this is under way at the moment in Tanoda platform. Study hall leaders recommend that these measurements should be unified and gathered over a long-term period and should use control groups, as well as take into consideration the social and affective factors of a child's development. All these suggestions are familiar to study hall leaders, and their informal umbrella organization is working on them; on the other hand, it is clear that the study hall programme has not been able to find synergies with the welfare system. There are still profound arguments around standards versus flexibility, the lack of socio-demographic diversity and the contribution the study halls could make to the public school system.

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- Judit Berki, Study hall of Bátonyterenye, Mátraverebély
- Anna Csongor, former Study hall of Józsefváros Budapest, member of the board of trustees
- Gábor Kovács, István Türr Training and Research Institute (state body)
- Orsolya Kozma, Study hall of Ferencváros, Budapest, Piliscsaba, Tiszabura
- Norbert Szűcs, Valéria Kelemen, Máté Lencse, Erika Csovcsics, József Balázs Fejes – Tanoda platform

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ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe. Social Policy and Innovation

Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE) is an international research project that brings together ten outstanding research institutes and a broad network of researchers in a concerted effort to study poverty, social policy and social innovation in Europe. The ImPRovE project aims to improve the basis for evidence-based policy making in Europe, both in the short and in the long term. In the short term, this is done by carrying out research that is directly relevant for policymakers. At the same time however, ImPRovE invests in improving the long-term capacity for evidence-based policy making by upgrading the available research infrastructure, by combining both applied and fundamental research, and by optimising the information flow of research results to relevant policy makers and the civil society at large.

The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?

How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?

The project runs from March 2012 till February 2016 and receives EU research support to the amount of Euro 2.7 million under the 7th Framework Programme. The output of ImPRovE will include over 55 research papers, about 16 policy briefs and at least 3 scientific books. The ImPRovE Consortium will organise two international conferences (Spring 2014 and Winter 2015). In addition, ImPRovE will develop a new database of local projects of social innovation in Europe, cross-national comparable reference budgets for 6 countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain) and will strongly expand the available policy scenarios in the European microsimulation model EUROMOD.

More detailed information is available on the website http://improve-research.eu.

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