

Disgruntled Elites and Imperial States: The Making of Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Civil Society in Congress Poland and Western Galicia.

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INTRODUCTION

The end of the eighteenth century brought the partitioning of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its eastern lands came under Russian rule and its southern regions fell into Austrian hands. Despite their similar beginnings, by the early twentieth century the public spheres in Russian-ruled Congress Poland and Austrian-ruled western Galicia had significantly diverged in character.¹ Congress Poland developed a civil society largely dominated by the interests and leadership of Polish landed and cultural elites. By contrast, western Galicia's associational life was more autonomous, and its public sphere was characterized by the leadership and interests of both upper and lower classes, including peasants. This article explores why this divergence occurred.

The literature on civil society offers few convincing explanations of variations in the character of associational life. Some scholars have proposed that

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¹ Western Galicia, like Congress Poland, had a Polish ethnic majority.

civil societies that emerge from dissimilar conditions are qualitatively different² and thus have distinct political implications. With rare exceptions,³ though, little has been written about the determinants of civil society's characteristics that promote inclusionary (democratic) or exclusionary (authoritarian) political outcomes, including its level of autonomy from or domination by elites. To address this, I draw on diverse literatures that directly or indirectly discuss the determinants of the public sphere, for instance how states and markets shape modern social organization. In some agreement with existing scholarship, I argue that state policies, such as imperial policies of regional integration, as well as socioeconomic changes, like those spurred by capitalist growth, did shape the potential *paths* of civil society's development in Congress Poland and western Galicia. However, through a narrative analysis of the emergence of associational life, I show that elites' interests and conflicts⁴ mediated the impacts of each region's political and economic transformations. They thereby determined the specific trajectory that each civil society followed. I claim that when it comes to understanding civil society development, states and markets do matter, yet the political inclusion, or exclusion, of local elites and their economic prospects plays a more fundamental role in shaping associational life.

Though my main objective is to expand sociological understandings of civil society development, I also contribute to historical debates by expanding our knowledge of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century civil societies in the Warsaw Governorate⁵ (in Congress Poland) and the Grand Duchy of Kraków⁶ (in western Galicia). I do so by synthesizing archival data on associations in the two regions with existing historiographies and published primary sources such as diaries. Drawing on these disparate sources, I elucidate how specific associations and sectors of associational life fit into the broader public spheres of the former Poland-Lithuania. Lastly, I leverage a comparative analysis of the two regions to question existing assumptions about the importance of historical events, such as peasant emancipation, in shaping the character of associational life there.

² Ekiert and Kubik 2014; Howard 2002.

³ See, for example, Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2008; Bernhard and Karakoç 2007; Riley and Fernández 2014.

⁴ While elite conflict approaches have been largely absent from civil society debates, there is a sizeable literature on how elite conflicts shape political institutions. For example: Adams 1994; Lachmann 1990; McLean 2005; and Singh 2016.

⁵ The Warsaw Governorate (Gubernia Warszawska) was an administrative division established in Congress Poland in 1844. Its borders were altered in 1867 and 1893.

⁶ The Grand Duchy of Kraków (Wielkie Księstwo Krakowskie) was established by the Hapsburg Empire's 1846 annexation of the Free City of Kraków (the Republic of Kraków). The Grand Duchy, whose borders aligned with those of the former Republic of Kraków, was divided into the Provinces of Kraków, Chrzanów, and Jaworzno in 1853. In 1860, the Province of Jaworzno was incorporated into Chrzanów.

I begin by defining key concepts and briefly discussing my methodology and data. I then present divergent civil society outcomes in Congress Poland and western Galicia and explore the ability of diverse historical and sociological propositions to explain their distinct public sphere developments. I show that, despite considerable industrial development, political and economic marginalization of local Polish elites in Russian-ruled Congress Poland promoted the development of a heteronomous civil society that Polish elites forged, dominated, and sought to wield in their political and economic struggles. Conversely, the political inclusion of traditional, Polish elites in western Galicia allowed civil society to flourish there with relative autonomy from elite domination because elites focused on securing their interests by negotiating in formal political institutions rather than by organizing civil society against the Austrian state. I conclude with a discussion of potential applications and limitations of my study and suggest directions for future research on the determinants of civil society.

CIVIL SOCIETY, AUTONOMY, AND ELITES

In its ideal form, an autonomous civil society is characterized by the self-organization of groups. In addition to embodying the notion of self-determination, it represents the self-organization of a society's disparate social groups, whether demarcated by class, ethnicity, gender, or religion. Its converse, the ideal type of a heteronomous, or "elite-dominated" civil society, is composed of associations that elites utilize to lead non-elites in pursuit of elite interests, and in its extreme form it serves the interests of a single elite.

I define elites as individuals or groups with a substantial hold over a relevant form of capital,⁷ be it economic, cultural, social, or political. Elites can also be conceptualized as a minority that stands in opposition to and has power over a non-elite majority. Elites, as individuals or groups, can preserve or increase their power by improving their position vis-à-vis other elites and their control over apparatuses of resource extraction.⁸ While the concept of elites can be conceived in ahistorical terms, which specific groups or individuals are elites is historically rooted. Who, then, were the elites of pre-World War I western Galicia and Congress Poland?

Among these Polish elites there were considerable differences in wealth and its sources, social position, and interests. Nonetheless, Polish Christian elites in both regions fell into two main categories: economic elites and cultural elites. The former included industrialists, wealthy merchants, and members of the landed Polish nobility who retained their estates in the face of economic

⁷ Capital is a symbol of power, which, though specific to a field, can be translated into capital within other fields according to historically-specific sociopolitical relations.

⁸ Lachmann 1990.

transformations. While some economic elites, particularly the landed nobility, also possessed significant amounts of Polish cultural capital, a subset of Polish cultural elites, mainly the clergy and the intelligentsia, had little economic wealth. The intelligentsia was composed largely of lower, petty, and impoverished gentry who found employment in the “free professions,” administration, and state institutions. Despite their differences across regions, wealth, and professions, Polish elites shared a common status bestowed on them through not only birth but also their refined education and “proper behavior” (“*dobre wychowanie*”), mannerisms, and dress.⁹ These commonalities made the aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia more alike, and distinguished them from non-elites such as small and landless farmers, industrial workers, craftsmen, petty traders, and small business owners.

ON CASES AND METHODS

While the concept of an autonomous civil society has been part of political and sociological debates, deeming a public sphere autonomous or heteronomous is fraught with difficulties. After all, public spheres in even the most totalitarian states have pockets of autonomy. The chief benefit of examining multiple public spheres together is that doing so lets us eschew absolute categories in favor of comparative ones. For this reason, while I use “autonomous” or “elite-dominated” civil societies as ideal types, I categorize civil societies of western Galicia and Congress Poland as more or less autonomous in relation to each other.

A comparison of civil society autonomy across these areas must contend with variation in the collection and survival of data in different associations and regions. To analyze and compare the autonomy of associational life in the face of significant unevenness of materials I employ a multifaceted approach, merging qualitative accounts of specific associations with regional data on the sphere of public association as a whole.

First, I draw upon existing historiographies alongside disparate primary sources—including diaries of associations’ members, their organizational bylaws, and their meeting notes—to reveal what variation in elite domination of organizational networks and association types looked like. I then draw on this knowledge about specific associations and sectors of civil societies to construct a collage of each region’s broader associational landscape. I employ here descriptive statistics (see [Table 1](#)) created by coding by types of associations, of state registries of early twentieth-century associations in the Warsaw Governorate and in the Grand Duchy of Kraków. Combining descriptive statistics with qualitative evidence lets me compare the extent to which civil societies in these two regions were autonomous from elite domination. Early twentieth-

⁹ Jezierski and Leszczyńska 1999, 160; Kaczyńska 1976, 112.

TABLE 1:

Associations registered in the Grand Duchy of Krakow and the Warsaw Governorate, by organization type. Association types generally acknowledged to be elite-dominated are italicized. Sources: AP Warsaw, C. 1155: Syg. 1212; TsDIAL of Ukraine in Lviv: nr. 25: collection 146: Syg. 18258, 18259.

Organization Type	Grand Duchy of Kraków, registered after 1906		Warsaw Governorate, registered after 1906	
	Total	Rural ^a	Total	Rural ^b
<i>Agricultural</i>	31	25	53 (43) ^c	37 (29) ^d
Bureaucratic	—	—	11	5
<i>Cultural</i>	22	10	63	26
Economic ^e	26	3	8	—
Interest	30	2	95	10
-community ^f	(2)	—	(11)	(8)
-education ^g	(9)	—	(69)	(2)
-women	(8)	—	(6)	—
Mutual Aid	20	—	40	4
<i>Nationalist</i>	10	1	—	—
Philanthropic	45	1	103	16
Political	14	1	11	—
Professional	159	16	37	1
Recreational	63	5	83	9
Religious	30	4	1	—
<i>Schools</i>	12	3	100ⁱ (98)	79
Service ^h	10	6	—	—
<i>Sport-Nationalist</i>	49	39	1^j	—
University Student	44	—	—	—
<i>Workers-Political or Religious</i>	14	2	—	—
<i>Youth</i>	10	3	1	—
Total	589	121	606	187
<i>Elite-dominated and politicized</i>	117	58	206	134

Notes:

^aRegistered associations located outside of the five cities in the Grand Duchy of Kraków: Chrzanów, Jaworzno (declared a city in 1901), Kraków, Nowa Góra, and Trzebina.

^bRegistered associations in Warsaw Governorate villages and towns. Of 616 organizations listed, 611 could be classified by organizational type, of which 423 listed a location, and of those, 408 were successfully matched with a municipality type using Zinberg (1877) and Bobiński (1901).

^cTen TKRS circles are excluded from the count of elite-dominated associations.

^dEight TKRS circles are excluded from the count of elite-dominated associations.

^eCredit and savings loans associations, and organizations dedicated to economic development.

^fCommunity gardens and organizations dedicated to the beautification of municipalities.

^gParents' associations and financial aid organizations tied to specific schools that helped underprivileged students pursue an education. Education-oriented associations with cultural-nationalistic aims, such as reading rooms, are categorized as cultural organizations.

^hAimed at providing public goods, such as sanitation-improving organizations and fire brigades.

ⁱAll but one of the ninety-nine listed community belonged to the TON-established Polish Educational Society.

^jA Russian "Falcon" association.

century associational registries, particularly those from Congress Poland, have their limitations, which I will discuss in the next section. That said, when used alongside an in-depth analysis of individual associations, they contribute to a better understanding of the broader associational landscapes.

In the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Congress Poland and western Galicia were under Russian and Austrian rule, respectively. I concentrate on Congress Poland, itself only part of the Commonwealth's lands under Russian rule, due to the distinct approaches adopted by the Russian state in the eastern (Borderlands) and central (Congress Poland) lands. My comparative analysis of the broader associational landscape, however, switches to a narrower geographic focus. In the case of Congress Poland, this is motivated by significant data-limitations. That is, I focus on the Warsaw Governorate because, unlike other governorates in Congress Poland, an associational registry for this administrative division has survived.

In the case of Austrian-ruled Galicia, I highlight the administrative jurisdiction known as the Grand Duchy of Kraków, for two reasons. First, it is an appropriate case to compare with the Warsaw Governorate because of its relatively lower degree of economic development and higher degree of associational autonomy. Though Kraków Province was one of the most developed regions of Austrian-ruled Galicia, second only to Lviv Province, it nonetheless lagged behind the Warsaw Governorate. The Grand Duchy's relatively higher associational autonomy therefore challenges approaches that see economic growth as driving the emergence of autonomous civil societies. The other reason is that, because of the region's nearly continuous history of autonomous Polish rule, the Grand Duchy is a good case for analyzing how political institutions impact civil societies. Prior to its incorporation into the Austrian Empire, its lands constituted the autonomous Republic of Kraków (1815–1846). Before that they were part of the Duchy of Warsaw (1809–1815). Thus, the region was the only part of Poland-Lithuania in which Polish elites retained significant political power throughout most of the nineteenth century. This peculiarity makes the Grand Duchy a fruitful case for analyzing the effects of the political incorporation of local elites on the development of civil society, especially when it is examined alongside regions where Polish elites lost their political power, as in Congress Poland.

CIVIL SOCIETIES IN CONGRESS POLAND AND WESTERN GALICIA

Civil societies in these two regions had similar beginnings. Each sphere of public discourse can be traced back to at least the eighteenth century in Poland-Lithuania, and to the production of political discourse in the form of letters and pamphlets written by the Commonwealth's elites.¹⁰ Though associational life

¹⁰ Woliński and Rostworowski 1955.

did not emerge until a few decades later, it was similarly centered on the interests of new and old elites: landed nobles, the growing bourgeoisie, the clergy, and the intelligentsia. Nonetheless, despite their similar origins, the development and characteristics of civil societies in lands of the former Poland-Lithuania diverged in the nineteenth century.

Associational life in Congress Poland was devoted to the political interests of elites from the start. One of its earliest associations, the Freemasons (ca. 1815), was composed mainly of members of the gentry employed in the upper ranks of the military. The Freemasons, along with other clandestine associations such as students' educational circles, drew members from the region's intelligentsia and aspired to bring about the return of a Polish state.¹¹ Other, legal associations, such as the Agricultural Society (1858) or Warsaw's City Delegation (1861), presented themselves as apolitical, yet they, too, served the political interests of Polish elites: the Agricultural Society and the City Delegation allowed Polish elites, mainly the landed and the gentry, to engage in political functions denied them in the formal political sphere.¹²

By the 1860s, some clandestine associations in Congress Poland widened their membership base, but not their aims. The approximately twenty thousand members of the "Reds"—a wide-spread network directed by the Central National Committee (KCN, Komitet Centralny Narodowy) that spurred the 1863 uprising—spanned "all" social classes.¹³ Still, though "skilled workers" were found at all levels of the organization, cultural and traditional elites dominated its upper echelons.¹⁴ In the end, the KCN, like other associations in Congress Poland, served the political goal of national independence that was championed by the region's elites rather than its mainly agrarian masses.¹⁵

In contrast to the public sphere in Congress Poland, civil society in the Republic of Kraków was neither politicized nor clandestine. Associations that arose in the early and mid-nineteenth century were mostly social rather than political. They included philanthropic, professional, and recreational associations¹⁶ created by and for Kraków's aristocrats, bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia.¹⁷ These associations met the recreational, social, religious, or economic rather than political needs of local elites.¹⁸ The exclusive atmosphere and non-political aims, which were characteristic of much of Kraków's early nineteenth-century public sphere, are captured in the diaries of one of the city's upwardly

¹¹ Davies 1981, 312; Lukowski and Zawadzki 2001, 126; Wandycz 1974, 85–86, 89.

¹² Davies 1981, 348–49.

¹³ Janowski 1923, 11.

¹⁴ Janowski 1925, 64–65.

¹⁵ Janowski 1923.

¹⁶ Zathay 1962, 47–49.

¹⁷ See Homola 1984; Wood 2010.

¹⁸ TsDIAL of Ukraine in L'viv, Ukraine. Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Львів, nr. 25: collection 146: syg. 18258, 18259: *Associational Registry of Galicia*.

mobile, “new bourgeois” families. Józef Louise, the son of a French-Polish bureaucrat, was born in 1803. Support from his father, his wife’s small fortune, and the backing of a wealthy patron enabled Józef to rise in Kraków’s bourgeoisie merchant ranks and join the city’s gentry society.¹⁹ In his diary, he paints the latter as the playground of the Republic’s new and old elites, where the new aspired to mimic the old in search of an elevated social status.²⁰

During the nineteenth century, civil societies in Congress Poland and western Galicia further diverged in character. Socioeconomic diversity grew in both of their associational landscapes, but while civil society in Congress Poland continued to be dominated largely by elites (landed, intelligentsia) and their political interests, the western Galicia’s associational landscape was marked by a higher development of autonomous organizations.

I will examine these distinct civil society outcomes in two steps. First, I will discuss the types of associations that appeared in Congress Poland and Western Galicia, including who organized them, who joined them, and why they did so. I will highlight differences and similarities in organizational types that arose in these two regions. Second, I will compare the extent to which the broader associational landscapes in the sub-regions of the Grand Duchy of Kraków and the Warsaw Governorate were composed of associations dominated by, or autonomous from, elites and their interests.

Associational Heteronomy in Congress Poland and Western Galicia

Cultural-Educational Associations. Cultural associations in both regions were organized by traditional and cultural elites to serve their own political interests.²¹ They championed the notion of a Polish nation and, in some cases, mobilized workers and farmers into political movements.²² Despite these significant cross-regional similarities, cultural and cultural-educational associations in the two regions differed in the degree to which elites dominated them. Most cultural-associational networks in Congress Poland were controlled by a single, unified elite that permeated associations on both the regional and local levels. In western Galicia, local cultural organizations had more autonomy from their elite-dominated regional headquarters and the aims of the elites who dominated their leadership positions were more diverse.

The largest cultural-associational network in Congress Poland, the National Education Association (Towarzystwo Oświaty Narodowej, TON), exemplified the politicization of culture and the domination of cultural-educational associations by Polish elites. Founded in 1899 by the Polish

¹⁹ Zathey 1962, 11–16.

²⁰ Ibid., 47–49, 55.

²¹ Homola 1984; Wood 2010.

²² Davies 1981, 231; Miąso 1990, 52, 60; Wasilewski 2005, 108–16, 121, 194–98, 475–76.

League (after 1893, the National League), TON actively sought to recruit non-elites, mainly peasants and workers, into its network and the pursuit of its political aims. TON organized educational circles, reading rooms, and secret schools that promised to provide the masses with practical knowledge, for example by teaching farmers how to manage rural economies. Its overriding goal was to create a Polish cultural community. Moreover, its leaders and their aims represented a single ethno-religious (Polish Catholic) and political (nationalist) identity, centered on a belief “in God” and a “love of Poland.”²³

To further their goals, TON’s leaders used their network to forge a Polish, Catholic, and nationalistic community by propagating cultural symbols, stories, and national myths. For instance, its cultural circles and libraries provided members with patriotic novels and periodicals such as the National League’s (later National Democrat’s) nationalistic publication *Polak* [Pole]. The latter frequently highlighted the cornerstones of Polish national mythology such as the 1831 and 1863 uprisings in Congress Poland, the May 3rd Constitution (1791), and the Polish cavalry’s defeat of the Ottoman army near Vienna in 1683.²⁴ To ensure its agenda, TON stipulated that its members only read pre-approved literatures like *Polak*, and swear to reject books written or provided by “the enemies of their faith and fatherland.”²⁵

Despite these efforts to incorporate rural and urban non-elites as members and local activists, TON’s leaders were all nationalistic Polish landlords and intellectuals such as doctors, teachers, and bureaucrats. Elites’ control was so pervasive that a threat to TON’s leadership led to its dissolution in 1905. When confronted with growing peasant and worker involvement, demands, and agitation, the National League replaced TON with the “National Organization” (Organizacja Narodowa), which was planned to be developed in a more centralized manner so as to ensure that local organizations were dependent on regional leaders and the National League.²⁶

Cultural associations in Congress Poland were closely tied to community schools that were independent from the state. The russification of Congress Poland’s public education in the late nineteenth century contributed to a rise of clandestine community schools that promoted the spread of Polish culture and literacy among the masses. TON established the region’s largest association of community schools, known as the Polish Educational Society (Polska Macierz Szkolna, PMS).²⁷ Nationalistic Polish intelligentsia in Congress Poland were central to organizing the PMS and carrying out schools’ didactic functions.

²³ Miąso 1990, 61.

²⁴ For more on the literature TON disseminated and the organization’s recruiting tactics and organizational structure, see Wolsza 1987; and Miąso 1990.

²⁵ Miąso 1990, 62.

²⁶ Wolsza 1987, 90.

²⁷ Miąso 1990, 52–53, 61; Davies 1981, 231–36.

Although TON was Congress Poland's largest cultural-educational organization, there were other cultural networks in the region. Like TON, the Polish Culture Association (Towarzystwo Kultury Polskiej, TKP) sought to educate and "polonize" the Polish masses in preparation for the reemergence of a Polish state. However, it did so under the guise of a less exclusionary understanding of Polish nationalism, a distinction that began to erode in the early twentieth century.²⁸ In addition to the TKP, the Circle of Popular Education (Kóło Oświaty Ludowej, KOL) provided a more significant variation on cultural-educational associations. Like TON and TKP, KOL sought to increase literacy rates and patriotic sentiment. However, its leadership did not represent the interests of just one elite; in addition to crossing ethnic and religious lines, KOL crossed ideological divides by grouping nationalists and socialists in its leading ranks.²⁹

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 rendered secret schooling unnecessary in Galicia. By late in the century, public education in western Galicia was already conducted in Polish, the mother tongue of the local ethnic majority. Still, prior years of cultural repression under Austrian rule, as well as a desire to promote local education and foster a national spirit among the masses, led Galicia's cultural elites to develop cultural-educational associations similar to those operating in Polish lands under more repressive imperial states.

Similarities between cultural-educational associations in Congress Poland and Galicia extended further into their leadership. The Folk School Association (Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej, TSL) was TON's counterpart in size and influence. Though its memberships were comparatively more ethnically and religiously diverse, its leadership was firmly rooted in Galicia's cultural elite—the intelligentsia. The absence of workers and peasants in the organization's leadership was noticed by the populations it aimed to serve, something one TSL member underscored at a general meeting in September 1913: "Among the people there is a great mistrust towards the work of the TSL, because it lacks peasant and worker members, those on whom it works, and who could say something about the method of that work."³⁰

Despite strong similarities in the extent to which local cultural elites dominated both TSL and TON, the two differed in the degree to which their elite-domination meant domination by a *single* elite. TON's leadership represented one political elite with a shared interest and project, while TSL's more resembled the smaller and more politically diverse KOL in Congress Poland. Further,

²⁸ For more on the convergence of nationalism and positivism in early twentieth-century Congress Poland, see Stegner 1985.

²⁹ Miąso 1990.

³⁰ Archiwum Narodowe, Kraków, Oddział III, ul. Sienna: Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej, 42: "Protokół z przebiegu obrad walnego spotkania Zjazdu Delegatów Towarzystwa Szkoły Ludowej, odbytego w Tamowie dnia 28 i 29 września 1913," 36.

TSL had a less centralized organizational structure and an elite leadership that was more willing to entertain greater independence of local associations. When TON's leadership perceived a threat of increasing autonomy of local circles it dissolved the network and started anew, but when Galicia's TSL experienced a homogenization and centralization of power its local circles simply became more independent. During TSL's general meeting in September of 1906, one member spoke up against the efforts by the National Democrats (ND) to dominate its regional leadership. Another speaker proclaimed that he would not leave the organization despite its undesirable "politicization" since TSL's decentralized nature allowed its local branches substantial autonomy from the increasingly homogenous, regional leadership.³¹

Youth Clubs. In addition to cultural associations, Polish elites in Congress Poland and Galicia utilized youth sports associations to forge ties with non-elites and further their nationalist aspirations. Prior to World War I, Falcon (Sokół) and the Rifelman's Association (Strzelec) were the two most popular youth sports associations that Polish elites used to indoctrinate youth into their political ideologies.³² In addition to fostering nationalist sentiment, associations like Falcon also had militaristic objectives, namely training Polish youth to take part in potential armed struggles, under Polish leadership.³³ In preparation for this, Falcon's training instilled in its members order and respect for the association's authorities. It even furnished them with outfits that resembled army uniforms: a beret adorned with a feather, a military jacket, a cape hung from the left shoulder, pants tapered at the legs, and boots.³⁴

As with youth-oriented sports associations, charities and social organizations were employed by Polish Catholic clergy, landed aristocrats, and the land-displaced gentry to incorporate working and rural youths into political movements and networks. Youths often joined charities and social clubs to gain access to recreational or material benefits such as financial and housing aid. Yet, providing needed material aid was a secondary, instrumental function of such organizations, whose main goal was to grow their membership. Their key objective was ideological indoctrination, both religious and national. This was to be achieved, as outlined in organizations' bylaws, through religious and moral guidance, lectures, and social events, and by generally encouraging young people to practice religious rituals such as daily prayer.³⁵

³¹ Archiwum Narodowe, Kraków, Oddział III, ul. Sienna: Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej 44: "Protokół z przebiegu obrad walnego spotkania Zjazdu Delegatów Towarzystwa Szkoły Ludowej, odbytego w Przemyślu dnia 8 i 9 września 1906," 31–33.

³² Małolepszy and Pawluczuk 2001, 43.

³³ This came to pass when members of prewar paramilitary associations like Falcon, Riflemen, and Bartosz Teams filled the ranks of Piłsudski's Polish Legions during World War I.

³⁴ *Statut Towarzystwa Ginnastycznego "Sokół" w Rzeszowie 1887.*

³⁵ Grzebień 2016.

Associational Autonomy in Congress Poland and Western Galicia

Civil society organizations, which Polish elites created to establish networks with non-elites, were common in both Congress Poland and Galicia, yet they did not encompass the entire public sphere in either region. In addition to elite-centered associations created by and for elites, civil societies in both regions included associations in which non-elites served as leaders alongside landowners, the bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia. For instance, while women's associations tended to be autonomous by virtue of being elite-centered (elites were their leaders and members), many recreational clubs and professional organizations were autonomous because their aims and leaders were more representative of their socioeconomically diverse memberships.

Women's Associations. Regardless of whether they targeted women as members or beneficiaries, women's associations in Galicia and Congress Poland were run by women of gentry and bourgeois backgrounds.³⁶ Despite the diversity in the aims of these associations, non-elite women rarely joined their ranks, and so most women's associations were elite-centered. There were of course exceptions. For instance, the Circles of Women Farmers in Congress Poland sought to mobilize rural women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition to allowing all women to be members, this group encouraged non-elite members to take an active part in local organizations. However, such actions were instrumental, aimed at solidifying the association's rural reach. When it came to regional supervision and setting the association's direction and agenda, women from the landed aristocracy took the reins.³⁷ Thus, even "exceptions" to elite-centered women's organizations were elite-dominated rather than autonomous civic associations.

Recreational Clubs. With the exception of youth sport clubs and some social clubs, most recreational associations, such as community theaters, gambling clubs, and singing circles, were apolitical and autonomous. Whether they grouped members of urban middle classes or rural peasants, they aimed to entertain rather than indoctrinate their members. There were exceptions, such as recreational clubs created by religious groups that pegged their social activities to religious themes; those can be interpreted as working to buttress the social power of religious institutions. That said, most recreational organizations catered to their founders' and members' recreational rather than political or economic interests.³⁸

Professional Organizations and Labor Unions. For the most part, professional and economic associations were autonomous. Most of them grouped

³⁶ Kostrzewska 2015; Siemieńska 1986; Urbaniak 1981.

³⁷ Siemieńska 1986.

³⁸ For more on recreational associations in Congress Poland before World War I, see Jaworski 2016.

members of the same profession, the leadership at least partially reflected the membership, and the associations and their aims represented their members' shared, mainly economic interests. Bylaws and meeting notes of economic organizations such as the Savings and Loans Cooperatives (*Spółki oszczędnościowe i pożyczki*), or professional ones such as the Guild of Chimney Sweeps in Kraków (*Cech Kominarzy w Krakowie*), demonstrate this preoccupation with economic matters and dedication to the professional and "material well-being of their members."³⁹

Similarly, general labor unions' leadership reflected the membership, at least partially. This was especially true for unions that recruited members from specific industrial branches or individual factories, but it was not always the case. In particular, unions that marketed themselves first and foremost in terms of social identities, such as religious (e.g., Christian, Catholic) or ethnic (e.g., Polish) ones, exhibited the characteristics of elite-dominated associations that sought to fulfill the needs of the organizers rather than those of the members.⁴⁰ Catholic unions, for instance, united workers "strictly under Christian and nationalist spirit/ideology," and the core aim of such organizations was to develop workers' religious-spiritual lives and strengthen church loyalties rather than improve their material well-being.⁴¹ Like religious youth associations, religious unions did provide their members with economic benefits such as loans, yet they did so primarily to grow their memberships. The purpose of enlarging the membership, in turn, was to strengthen workers' dedication to the Catholic Church by promoting the practice of religious rituals such as daily prayer and mass attendance.⁴²

Agricultural Circles. Local agricultural circles display one of the most significant differences in the civil societies of Congress Poland and western Galicia. Many types of organizations, such as professional or cultural associations, leaned towards autonomy or heteronomy irrespective of the region in which they were located. Such cross-regional similarities did not apply to agricultural circles: though agricultural cooperatives were numerous and important in both regions,⁴³ they were much more elite-dominated in Congress Poland.⁴⁴

³⁹ Archiwum Narodowe, Kraków, ul. Grodzka St.Ż.I 24; and Oddział III, ul. Sienna: Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej AD1227: "Księga protokołów z walnych zgromadzeń i posiedzeń 1911–1933."

⁴⁰ See Daszyńska-Golińska 1920, 35.

⁴¹ Archiwum Narodowe, Kraków, ul. Grodzka, St.Ż.I 25: *Polski Zw. Katolickich Uczniów Rękodzielniczych*, 1914.

⁴² For more on Catholic unions in Galicia, see Grzebień 2016. For those in Congress Poland, see Jaworski 2016.

⁴³ Błobaum 2000, 416; Rutowski and Pilar 1887, 135.

⁴⁴ Dzieciolowski 1981; Feldman 1907, 237; Stauter-Halsted 2001, 115, 117.

In both regions, landed aristocrats and clergy created and sought to dominate cooperatives in order to foster close ties to peasants and gain their political support so as to prevent the rise of autonomous peasant organizations.⁴⁵ These efforts, however, were much more successful in Congress Poland. A comparison of the status of presidents of local circles of the Central Agricultural Society (Centralne Towarzystwo Rolnicze, CTR) and the Agricultural Circles Society (Towarzystwo Kółek Rolniczych, TKR), which were the largest agricultural associations in Congress Poland and Galicia, respectively, testifies to a stark disparity in elite influence over rural associations. In 1911, peasants were the presidents of only 18.2 percent of local circles of the CTR in Congress Poland, while landed elites and manor administrator were the presidents of 51.2 percent. In Galicia that same year, by contrast, 56.1 percent of local TKR circles had peasant presidents. While landed elites and manor administrators presided over half of the local circles of CTR in Congress Poland, they held similar positions in only 4.7 percent of TKR circles in Galicia.⁴⁶

Once more, it is important to note that not all agricultural cooperative networks followed these trends. In Congress Poland, the CTR's elite-dominated network was countered by Staszic's Association of Agricultural Coops (Towarzystwo Kółek Rolniczych im. Staszica, TKRS). Unlike the CTR, the TKRS was a rural movement that pursued peasants' interests and included peasants in leadership roles.⁴⁷ Yet it had a limited impact on civil society due to its very small associational network. Whereas the TKRS had only about 140 agricultural circles in Congress Poland in 1914,⁴⁸ the CTR already had 1,052 circles a year earlier.⁴⁹

Comparing Associational Life in the Warsaw Governorate and the Grand Duchy of Kraków

Detailed historical accounts grounded in existing studies and primary documents help us to understand the functioning of civil society associations. They are also crucial for assessing similarities and differences between certain types of organizations across Congress Poland and western Galicia. However, a broader survey of the associational landscape is necessary to grasp the extent of specific organizations and types of associations and the broad influence they had in shaping each public sphere.

To elucidate the breadth and scope of different types of associations in these two public spheres, in this section I analyze two registries of civic organizations: the Associational Registry of the Warsaw Governorate

⁴⁵ Bartyś 1974, 60–61; Blobaum 2000, 415; Dzieciotowski 1981, 47–48, 67–68, 201–7.

⁴⁶ Bartyś 1974, 62, 66; Gurnicz 1967, 78–80.

⁴⁷ Bartyś 1974, 61, 111, 128–29, 136.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 62, 66.

⁴⁹ Blobaum 2000, 416.

(1907–1915)⁵⁰ and the Galician Associational Registry (1867–1914).⁵¹ These documents enable a more systematic, cross-regional comparison of the extent to which the associational landscapes were dominated by local elites and devoted to their political agendas. They allow us to compare the proportions of the associational landscapes that belonged to elite-dominated organizational networks described in the previous section, which were registered in the more circumscribed administrative areas of the Warsaw Governorate and the Grand Duchy of Kraków between 1907 and 1915.⁵² Table 1 compares associations that were registered, coded by type.

The use of historical documents requires reflection on their potential biases and limitations. In addition to human error, limits on the legalization of different types of associations in Congress Poland and the late loosening of associational laws (1906) mean the Warsaw Governorate's registry does not accurately reflect the entirety of the region's associational landscape. For this reason, when assessing the Governorate's sphere of public organization, I note associations that the registry omits and what such omissions mean for utilizing it to depict the local public sphere.

Civil Society in the Warsaw Governorate. Over a third of the legal, registered, associational landscape in the Warsaw Governorate was dominated by local elites and their interests. Out of the 606 associations registered between 1907 and 1915, 205 (33.8 percent) fall into categories of associations, which, as discussed earlier, were created to organize and mobilize non-elites to pursue the social and political interests of the region's elites, mainly the landed Polish elites and the intelligentsia (see Table 1). The intelligentsia, particularly in Congress Poland, was overwhelmingly composed of the land-displaced and *déclassé* gentry.⁵³ These elite-dominated associations include ninety-eight community schools organized by the Polish Educational Society (PMS), one nationalist sport youth association (a *Russian* Falcon club, since *Polish* Falcon clubs were illegal), forty-three CTR agricultural circles, and sixty-three "cultural" associations.⁵⁴ The majority of registered cultural organizations (forty-eight) belonged to the Polish Culture Association. The remaining

⁵⁰ Archiwum Państwowe, Warsaw, Warszawski Gubernialny Urząd do Spraw Stowarzyszeń], collection 1155: syg. 1212.

⁵¹ TsDIAL of Ukraine in L'viv, Ukraine. Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Львів, nr. 25: collection 146: syg. 18258, 18259.

⁵² The logic behind this case selection is detailed in my discussion of methodology.

⁵³ Micińska, Janowski, and Jedlicki 2008.

⁵⁴ Organizations that I categorize as "interest-educational" had more circumscribed goals than did cultural associations. The majority of these educational associations (forty-nine out of sixty-nine) resembled philanthropic organizations, since their main aim was to provide financial aid to specific schools and students in the region. Other educational associations include those created to improve specific aspects of education and training in Congress Poland, ranging from preschool to higher education (e.g., technical, commerce). Lastly, I include in "interest-educational" associations those working to alleviate adult illiteracy, and educational funds, which lacked precise details about their functioning and membership.

cultural associations were local reading and book clubs—including the Warsaw Russian Society of Art and Literature, the Slavic Artistic Association of Literature, and the Jewish Literature Association—that promoted the spread of Russian, Slavic, and Jewish culture and literature in the region.

Even higher is the heteronomous proportion of the Warsaw Governorate's registered *rural* associations, which made up 71.7 percent of associations there. This very large proportion of “elite-dominated” rural associations stems from the ubiquity of CTR agricultural circles and Polish Educational Society community schools in the countryside. By showcasing the high proportion of rural associational life that belonged to these two organizations, the registry buttresses two significant claims. First, it poignantly demonstrates the lack of a diverse, autonomous rural civil society in the Warsaw Governorate. Second, it supports historical claims that cultural-educational associations were largely responsible for the National Democrats' wide reach and significant rural electoral support in Congress Poland's 1906, 1907, and 1912 Duma elections.⁵⁵

Once more, an analysis of associations recorded in Warsaw's registry suggests that much of the region's developing civil society—a third of the whole region and over two-thirds of its rural areas—was dominated by elites, mainly landed elites and the intelligentsia. An assessment of organizations absent from this registry suggests that these estimates understate the proportion of the region's associational landscape that was heteronomous. Though associational laws were relaxed in 1906, thereby precipitating the appearance, and in many cases the registration of pre-existing associations across Congress Poland, associational laws were re-tightened the next year. Restrictions placed on legal associations and the outlawing of associations deemed political led many organizations, especially nationalistically-oriented ones, to retain or reclaim their clandestine status. For instance, many labor unions chose to never seek legalization because gaining it would have limited their political activities.⁵⁶ Other associations were quickly outlawed, such as the Polish Falcon (Sokół), PMS community schools, and some parents' associations (e.g., Mothers' Circles) that belonged to the PMS network and openly proclaimed nationalistic and Christian ideologies. The impact these legal restrictions and changes had on the Warsaw Governorate's associational registry is clear: the Polish Falcon and nationalist and socialist labor unions are completely absent, while PMS schools and parents' associations are underrepresented.⁵⁷ These omissions suggest that the associational landscape in the Warsaw province

⁵⁵ Kaczyńska 1976, 132.

⁵⁶ Orzechowski and Kochański 1964, 107–9.

⁵⁷ For more on Polish Falcon clubs in Congress Poland, see Pawluczuk 2005, 21, 26. For more on TON's parent associations, see Jakubiak 1992. All Polish Education Society community schools present in the registry were recorded in 1907, before the state rescinded their legal status.

was even more dominated by Polish elites, particularly the nationalistic intelligentsia, than the registry suggests.

Associational Life in the Grand Duchy of Kraków. The Galician Associational Registry, which includes associations registered in the Grand Duchy of Kraków, was created following the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise. Thus, it embodies a longer as well as fuller record of associational life than does the Warsaw Governorate's registry. Though the 1867 law of associations allowed the Austrian state to dismantle groups it saw as subversive, this prohibition was relaxed over time,⁵⁸ and by the 1880s Galicia's registry listed political organizations and parties. Galicia's registry no doubt misrepresents the actual Galician associational landscape, for instance by listing some inactive associations. Nevertheless, it is more accurate than the Warsaw Governorate's registry.

In comparison to the Warsaw Governorate's civil society, the associational landscape in the provinces of Kraków and Chrzanów, which constituted the Duchy of Kraków, was more autonomous from local landed and cultural elites. Despite the ability of politicized, political, and nationalist associations to legally register in Galicia, only about one-fifth (117 out of 589) of the organizations registered in the Duchy of Kraków after 1906 were associations created and utilized by local elites to pursue their own interests rather than those of their non-elite members. In comparison, a third of the organizations registered in the Warsaw Governorate fell into this category. Furthermore, whereas almost three-quarters (71.7 percent) of Warsaw's rural registered associations were likely dominated by elites, the same can be said of only about half (47.9 percent) of the associations registered in Kraków's countryside.

The comparatively low proportion of heteronomous associations in the Duchy of Kraków resulted from the relative absence of cultural associations (twenty-two, or 3.7 percent) and community schools (twelve, 2 percent), as well as from the autonomy of local agricultural circles. Cultural associations located in the Duchy included organizations such as "Workers' reading clubs," branches of the Ukrainian-nationalist "Enlightenment" (Просвіта), and Czech and Jewish reading clubs. Local community schools belonged to two main networks: The Association of Folk Schools (Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej, TSL) and The Association of Folk Universities (Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych).

Elite-dominated associations that had a significant presence in the Duchy's civil society were youth (ten, 1.7 percent), nationalist (ten, 1.7 percent), and sport-nationalist organizations (forty-nine, 8.3 percent). The latter category includes paramilitary sports clubs such as the Polish Falcon (Sokół), the Rifleman's Association (Strzelec), Ukrainian paramilitary

⁵⁸ Hoffmann 2006, 50.

associations (Cіч), and Bartosz Teams (Drużyny Bartoszowe). Associations classified as nationalist included organizations that did not fall into other categories, such as sport-nationalist, yet whose members eagerly sought the polonization of Polish lands; the most common associations that fell into this category belonged to the Polish Guard (Straż Polska). Elite-dominated youth associations included those that, as previously noted, provided desirable material benefits to youth as a means of growing their membership. Their true aims, however, were to indoctrinate youth into specific ideologies, mainly Christian or nationalist ones. These include the Polish Union of Catholic Artisan Apprentices (Polski Związek Katolickich Uczniów Rękodzielniczych) and the Union of Young Catholic Workers (Związek Katolickiej Młodzieży Robotniczej). The same strategy was employed to mobilize workers into Polish, Christian, or Catholic labor unions such as the Polish Labor Union of Christian Workers (Polski Związek Zawodowy Chrześcijańskich Robotników). Once more, similar nationalist, sports-youth, youth, and worker organizations existed in Congress Poland, but these operated outside the law and so are absent from Warsaw's associational registry.

ELITE CONFLICT AND THE AUTONOMY OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE

With a few notable exceptions, there has been little research on the determinants of civil society characteristics, including why public spheres are to different degrees autonomous from state and non-state elites. To the extent that scholars have addressed this question, they have stressed one of two key variables: levels of economic development, and the presence or absence of liberal political institutions. This section briefly assesses the ability of these analytic frameworks and other historical explanations, to account for the emergence at the turn of the twentieth century of a more autonomous civil society in western Galicia, particularly in the Duchy of Kraków, than in Congress Poland, particularly in the Warsaw Governorate. I agree that political and economic relations play a role in shaping civil society, but I argue that to understand why and when civil society is dominated by elites, or instead represents the self-organizations of broader sectors of society, requires a mid-level analysis of how socioeconomic and political structures are mediated by particular social groups. As I will show, a focus on how elite conflicts mediate political and economic institutions and their transformations better explains divergences in civil society autonomy.

Economic Development: Peasant Emancipation, Land, and Industry

Economic explanations of the character of associational life assert that higher levels of economic growth generate more autonomous civil societies. Whether such economic development explanations center on the emergence of an active society or the development of classes and class conflict, they see capitalist, and particularly industrial development, as driving not just the

organization of social groups, but also their *self*-organization. While there are various types of self-organization, economic development-oriented explanations consider economic interests or identities to be “decisive” in shaping the character of whatever associational sphere emerges.⁵⁹

One way to explain why a more autonomous civil society emerged in western Galicia than in Congress Poland would be to deem the former more economically developed by the late nineteenth century. Such a claim, however, would grossly misrepresent capitalist development in the two regions. Congress Poland underwent an industrial revolution in the nineteenth century (1850s–1900), while Galicia remained relatively underdeveloped. These stark differences did not exist between Congress Poland, particularly the Warsaw Governorate, and the Duchy of Kraków. Even though the western half of Galicia was less developed than the eastern half, and though Krakow was one of the most developed cities and provinces there, it was still comparatively less developed than either Congress Poland or the smaller sub-region of the Warsaw Governorate.⁶⁰ Despite that, basic indicators of economic development show that, even compared with the Duchy of Kraków, the Warsaw Governorate was more economically, and certainly industrially advanced. By 1897, 36 percent of the Warszawa Governorate’s population was employed in agriculture, 21 percent in industry, 13 percent in trade, and 30 percent in other endeavors, mainly craftsmanship and the free professions.⁶¹ In comparison, over a decade later in the Duchy of Kraków, in 1910, 44 percent of the workforce remained in agriculture, 13 percent in bureaucracy and the free professions, 22 percent in industry, and 15 percent in trade.⁶²

Ardent proponents of an economic development approach could argue that, despite higher levels of economic and industrial development in the Warsaw Governorate, the self-organization of classes, and thus a more autonomous civil society, were thwarted by aberrations in economic development there. For instance, one might assert that the presence of ethno-cultural divisions of labor hindered the emergence of class-based organizations in the Warsaw Governorate⁶³, while their absence in the Duchy of Kraków allowed

⁵⁹ For more on the emergence of an active society, see Polanyi 2001, 161–62. Other key proponents of a class-based approach include Lipset 1981, and Rueschemeyer, Stevens, and Stevens 1992. For historical applications of economic approaches that argue that civil society replaces older communal institutions by merging the impetus of economic development with the transformative power of cultural norms, see Gamm and Putnam 1999, and Hall 1999, 435–39.

⁶⁰ Jeziński and Leszczyńska 1999, 173; Łukasiewicz 1963, 6–8, 13, 307; Wandycz 1974, 201–6.

⁶¹ Jeziński and Wyczański 2003, 196.

⁶² Bureau der K. K. Statistischen Zentralkommission 1916, 99–100.

⁶³ An ethnic division of labor can be conceived of in a strict sense, when (1) class divisions overlap with ethnic divisions, or in a broader sense when (2) an ethnic group is concentrated in one profession. Either of these divisions of labor can lead to ethnic, often violent conflict (Mann 2005). For more on ethnic divisions of labor, see Gellner 1983; Hechter 1995; and Mann 2005, 5–6, 31.

non-elites to self-organize along class-lines. To the extent that Polish elites exploited ethnic conflict to find common cause with non-elites in Congress Poland, they frequently, though not exclusively, employed anti-Semitic slogans.

Arguments that tie the use of these anti-Semitic slogans in Congress Poland to actual economic conditions there overlook three facts. First, the main economic discrimination Poles faced came from the state and was apparent in their decreasing presence across all levels of state administration over the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Polish elites, however, mainly highlighted anti-Semitic slogans in their attempts to find common ethno-cultural ground with the Polish (Christian) masses. Second, the most pronounced ethnic-economic disparity between Christians and Jews in Congress Poland, which was in trade,⁶⁵ was decreasing in the late nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Third, the economic differences that existed between Polish Christians and Jews in Congress Poland were just as if not more pronounced in the Duchy of Kraków. For instance, not only was the Jewish minority relatively overrepresented in Kraków's trade, but Polish Jews came to occupy an increasing number of intelligentsia positions from 1880 to 1910.⁶⁷ Despite this, Warsaw was characterized by a comparatively higher rise in anti-Semitic rhetoric and the use of such slogans to foster elite domination of associational life.

A second possible explanation of why Congress Poland developed a more heteronomous civil society, particularly in rural areas, is that this stemmed from the smaller proportion of peasant landownership and larger proportion of elite—large and medium—landownership there. Still, although a much higher proportion of agricultural cooperatives in Congress Poland (51.2 percent) were led by landed elites and manor administrators than in Galicia (4.7 percent), it is difficult to attribute this simply to the higher proportion of large and medium landowners. In 1902–1905, there was little variation in the proportion of very large landownership (over 20 hectares) in Congress Poland (2 percent) and Galicia (1 percent). With respect to medium-sized landownership, 33 percent of all farms in Congress Poland were between 5 and 20 hectares in size (with an average of 9.8 hectares) while in Galicia 18 percent of all farms fell into that size category (with an average of 9.4 hectares). It is difficult to attribute even this larger, 15 percent difference in medium-size ownership to the 46.5 percent difference in the proportion of agricultural circles led

⁶⁴ Chwalba 1999.

⁶⁵ *Первая Всеобщая Перепись Населения Российской Империи 1897* [The first comprehensive Imperial Russian Census], vol. 51 (St.-Petersburg: N. A. Troĩnitskĩi, 1899–1904), 192–95, 206–7.

⁶⁶ The percentage of Jews employed in trade in Warsaw decreased from 79.3 percent in 1882 to 62.2 percent in 1897; during the same period that of Catholics increased from 17.3 to 33.5 percent. These changes were not a mere reflection of demographic trends; the Jewish population remained constant (33.4 percent in 1882 and 33.7 percent in 1897); that of Catholics slightly decreased (58.1 percent to 55.7 percent). See Corrin 1989, 145, 153–57.

⁶⁷ Homola 1984, 380.

by landed elites and their administrative representatives. Lastly, there was a similarly significant difference of 16 percent in the proportion of small landholdings (under 5 hectares) in Galicia (81 percent) and Congress Poland (65 percent). Yet, once more, this 16 percent disparity in peasant petty landownership cannot, by itself, explain the larger, 37.9 percent disparity in the proportion of CTR (18.2 percent) and TKR (56.1 percent) peasant-run local circles in Congress Poland and Galicia, respectively.⁶⁸

A third line of defense for an economic development approach is that a relatively late dissolution of feudal labor duties (1864) obstructed the emergence of an autonomous rural civil society in Congress Poland. Proponents could argue that late emancipation deprived peasants of opportunities to foster skills necessary for self-organization; that is, with few leaders of their own, peasants allowed themselves to be organized by Polish elites due to custom and a lack of alternatives. The problem with this explanation is that despite the relative late abolition of serfdom, Congress Poland in fact had its fair share of peasant-born leaders who strove to organize peasants around their economic and political interests.

In western Galicia, the presence of peasant leaders was visible in the development of both a robust rural associational life and the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, 1895).⁶⁹ In Congress Poland, such leaders were active in the sphere of association and public discourse. Despite its relatively small size, the network of Staszica cooperatives was organized by and for peasants. The success of these cooperatives—the symbol of peasants' ability and willingness to organize under their own leadership—prompted elite CTR leaders to foster the spread of local CTR circles to prevent the growth of peasant-led organizations.⁷⁰ In addition to autonomous associations like Staszica's cooperatives, Congress Poland's peasant leaders made themselves visible through articles and letters published in clandestine newspapers and pamphlets. Among the many peasant voices that called for peasant unity were those of Teofil Kurczak and Daniel Szabaciuk. Teofil urged peasants to self-organize and said that landlords and clergy were fundamentally different and thus could never represent them. Daniel made a similar appeal, underscoring the historical differences and enmity between peasants and lords by referring to the latter as “great lords” (*wielkich panów*). He reminded peasants that they could “neither depend on lords, nor on the clergy,” but “only on [themselves].”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Landownership data is from Jezierski and Leszczyńska 1999, 167–68; cooperative leadership data from Bartyś 1974, 62–66; and Gurnicz 1967, 78–80.

⁶⁹ Stauter-Halsted 2001.

⁷⁰ Dzieciolowski 1981, 47–48, 67–68, 201–7.

⁷¹ Teofil Kurczak, “Kochani Bracia,” in *Życie Gromadzkie* 1 (1906): 1–2; and Daniel Szabaciuk, *Zagon* 4 (1907), cited in Brodowska-Kubicz 1986, 84–85. The latter further analyzes peasant correspondence.

One might argue that later emancipation in Congress Poland rendered Polish peasants *less*, not more willing to join elite-created and elite-led associations, since they more vividly recalled the brutalities of *corvée* labor, and evidence supports this view. At first, peasants accepted rural associations at face value as organizations that provided needed educational and agricultural services, but once they equated such associations with Polish landed elites peasants grew skeptical. One wrote in the secret press: “We don’t want to belong to *Macierz*, because it is ruled by the lords/masters (*panowie*), who lead the clergy by their noses, for which the latter bring them simple peasants by their noses ... but we are no longer so stupid not to know who really works for us and who uses us for their own benefit.”⁷² Further echoing the mistrust between Polish peasants and elites, which persevered into the interwar period,⁷³ another peasant wrote: “Calls to [national unity and solidarity] mostly come from wealthy or privileged individuals who want to keep their privileges as long as possible, without concern as to whether such a unity is possible or would be detrimental to the poor.”⁷⁴

States, Elites, and Civil Society Development

The idea that economic development drives the character of civil society fails to explain the divergence in the characters of the public spheres in Congress Poland and western Galicia. More persuasive are models that trace this divergence to state policies targeted at the public sphere, such as the legalization of associations, and at non-elites, such as granting them the ability to hold positions in state administration.⁷⁵ Yet upon closer inspection such state-centered approaches, too, struggle to explain the divergent historical developments of civil society. For instance, at first glance, claims that the legalization of associations fosters organizational growth by reducing the burden and danger associated with establishing new organizations appear true when we compare the lengths of the Warsaw Governorate’s and Duchy of Kraków’s associational registries. But Congress Poland’s vast networks of secret schools, cultural-educational associations, sports clubs, and political organizations developed in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, which shows that associational landscapes can grow despite or even because of state prohibition.

Other state-centered approaches point to abstract notions of state-responsiveness,⁷⁶ particularly the state’s treatment of minorities, to explain the

⁷² Brodowska-Kubicz 1986, 89.

⁷³ Przeniosło 2001.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Stauter-Halsted 2001.

⁷⁶ Berman 1997; Bunce 2000; Ertman 1998.

developmental trajectory of civil society. Yet these, too, cannot account for the peculiarities of civil society development in western Galicia and Congress Poland. For instance, Congress Poland was ruled by a state that throughout the nineteenth century grew increasingly unresponsive to its inhabitants, save for Russian dignitaries. State responsiveness approaches would predict that a united, cross-class, and cross-group civil society targeted at the Russian state would arise. Yet neither the beginning, middle, nor end of the nineteenth century played out according to such predictions. Despite repressive policies, early nineteenth-century civil society remained limited almost exclusively to traditional and cultural elites. Polish leaders tried but failed to organize broader sectors of society during the region's mid-century uprisings; even the radical "red" faction of the 1863 uprisings failed to mobilize the rural masses.

Still more telling here is the failure of ethnic groups and ethno-class communities (e.g., Polish-Christian peasants) to react as expected to shifting policies of increasing or decreasing "responsiveness" to the demands of each group. For example, groups whose rights not only failed to expand but contracted under Russian state rule should have joined Polish elites' revolutionary efforts when they were targeted by state repression. Likewise, they should have shunned those efforts when they were granted increased privileges or rights, but this proved not to be the case. In response to the uprising, the Russian state granted Jewish emancipation in 1862 and peasant emancipation in 1864, but whereas some Jews actively participated in the rebellion even after this proclamation,⁷⁷ peasants generally took no part in revolutionary actions *even before* their emancipation.⁷⁸ Not until the century's end were Polish elites able to politicize and mobilize Polish-Christian peasants. Yet that occurred after the Russian state had become more "responsive" to peasants with respect to their demands for political emancipation and land reform, granting them ownership of lands on which they lived and worked.⁷⁹

To understand how the Austrian and Russian states influenced the autonomy of their public spheres it is insufficient to consider only state policies directed at either the public sphere or non-elites. A narrative analysis of the emergence of agricultural cooperatives clearly demonstrates that the development of a civil society characterized by either self-organization of non-elites or elite-domination of public life is always mediated, and thus must always be examined with respect to elites and their interests and conflicts. Such an analysis further shows that, despite the presence of peasant leaders in

⁷⁷ The Russian state revoked the terms of Jewish emancipation after the end of the 1863 uprising, but Polish Jews who supported the uprising did so unaware that they would be stripped of their newly gained rights.

⁷⁸ Janowski 1923, 85–88, 133, 185–88, 317; Jeziński and Leszczyńska 1999, 117; Rudnicki 2008, 22.

⁷⁹ Blobaum 2000, 423–24; Wereszycki 1979, 58.

western Galicia and Congress Poland, elites, particularly landed and cultural elites, played central roles in developing rural associational spheres in both regions.

After the 1863 uprising, the Russian state stripped away from Congress Poland all remaining traces of regional autonomy, including by removing Poles from high and mid-range bureaucratic posts. Though the enactment of these policies proceeded slowly, by the twentieth century their effects were clearly visible. In 1869, the percentage of Russian state functionaries in Congress Poland—administrators, teachers, and policemen—remained at a mere 12 percent. By 1906, however, Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians accounted for 36.9 percent of employees in the state administration, courts, and the police. At the same time, even though Poles had historically dominated these institutions, and though they made up three-quarters of the population, they filled only 57.1 percent of these posts.⁸⁰

With their political and economic prospects dwindling, Polish landed and cultural elites, particularly the intelligentsia,⁸¹ saw the organization of “Polish” masses and the cultivation of a Polish “nation” through civil society as their best means of retaining some social power. Through reading rooms, libraries, educational circles, and organizations like the Union of Polish Youth (ZET, 1887), the National League, the National Education Association (TON), and the Polish Educational Society (PMS), they promoted Polish linguistic skills, communal symbols, and myths (through stories, poems, and songs).⁸² In his memoirs, Stanisław Kozicki, a member of the Polish gentry and of TON, describes the elites’ use of educational-cultural associations: “In the first place, [TON] used its local circles to organize the masses for its national work/project. In these circles people spoke about the past of Poland [creating the Polish “national” myth], [and] about how education and political efforts could be improved and initiatives to start such efforts were supported.”⁸³ Stanisław recounted how, to spread its reach, TON took on social and philanthropic functions, organizing associations such as volunteer firefighters and credit unions that provided needed goods and services.

As much as the Polish intelligentsia was responsible for creating cultural associations in Congress Poland, so too, landed elites were central to the emergence and functioning of most agricultural circles, especially those belonging to the largest association of cooperatives, the CTR. Agricultural cooperatives began to appear in 1899 after the state legalized them. Initially, they aimed to meet the needs of local landlords, but with the growing mobilization of peasants in the Russian Empire cooperatives were tailored to also meet the needs of

⁸⁰ Chwalba 1999, 33–37, 40, 236.

⁸¹ Weeks 2006, 57.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 32–34, 135; Miąso 1990.

⁸³ Kozicki 2009, 138–45.

the peasantry. The intent of this reorientation was to incentivize peasants to join organizations led by landlords, their administrators, and local clergy instead of forming their own, peasant-led organizations such as Staszica's agricultural circles. The landowning elite feared that if peasants self-organized that would erode their own influence in the countryside and empower peasants to mobilize for land redistribution.⁸⁴ The Polish elites' anxiety over peasant self-organization and what it would mean for them in Congress Poland was heightened by their declining economic and political standing in the second half of the nineteenth century. These worries motivated their significant and multi-leveled involvement in the region's civil society, particularly in the countryside, from the start.

In contrast to their counterparts in Congress Poland, Polish elites in Galicia saw their political power and standing increase following the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise. The significantly more secure position of Polish landed elites in western Galicia meant that, unlike elites in Congress Poland, they were neither worried about peasants organizing nor proactive in trying to prevent peasant-run circles from developing. Rather than focusing on civil society, Galicia's Polish elites concentrated on furthering their interests through state institutions. In this they were very successful. For instance, after Galicia received regional autonomy, its highest ranking official—the Namiestnik Galicyjski (viceroy of Galicia)—was always a Pole, and all but one, the Kraków conservative and historian Michał Bobrzyński, were either members of the aristocracy or wealthy landowners. Other top provincial, county, and municipal administrative positions (e.g., Starosta) were similarly held by landowners or individuals with ideological or ancestral ties to the landowning classes.⁸⁵ Moreover, the electoral system for the Galician Sejm was biased not only toward Poles, but toward wealthy, landed Poles.⁸⁶

When Polish elites, particularly landed elites, concentrated on state institutions—a strategy that had served them well through most of the second half of the century⁸⁷—this created more possibilities for the emergence of peasant-led organizations. This does not mean that elites took no part in creating the public sphere, but rather that they were less active in preventing non-elites from gaining significant leadership roles once civil society started to develop. This dynamic is captured in the developmental narrative of Galicia's agricultural cooperatives that arose in the late 1870s.

The main developer of Galicia's rural cooperative movement was Father Stojałowski, a Catholic priest born to a tenant farmer from a mid-level-gentry background. Stojałowski was not a radical who sought to change the social

⁸⁴ Dzięciółowski 1981, 51; Przeniosło 2001.

⁸⁵ Grzybowski 1959, 75.

⁸⁶ Rudnytsky 1967, 404; Wandycz 1974, 279.

⁸⁷ Pajakowski 1989, 9–42.

order; he simply championed the development and spread of the Agricultural Circle Society in Galicia (Towarzystwo Kółek Rolniczych, TKR) as a means of encouraging peasant self-help. The Polish landed elite took notice of his efforts, but despite their trepidation regarding “any peasant organization,” they condoned Stojalowski’s organization of the peasantry since he assured them, at first, that they would have a definitive say in directing organizations that were formed.⁸⁸ The elites were initially complacent due to their strong standing in regional and national political institutions and their belief that he would keep his promise, if for no other reason than to protect his own political and economic interests.⁸⁹

With relatively little interference from landed Polish elites, then, the TKR agricultural association grew rapidly, from thirty-six circles and 1,034 members in 1882, to 607 circles and 23,203 members in 1890, and 1,536 circles and 65,815 members in 1910.⁹⁰ Once the elites were confronted with the reality of growing peasant self-organization, they tried to rectify their mistake and take a direct role in organizing peasants. Toward this end they sent police to harass peasant meetings and launched a “slander campaign” against Stojalowski.⁹¹ Furthermore, they tried to dominate the leadership of the TKR’s regional institutions, believing that by doing so they could gain control over local agricultural circles. To achieve this goal they merged the TKR with the elite-controlled Galician Farmers’ Society (1882) and phased out the ability of all local circles to send one elected delegate with voting rights to the organization’s annual general assembly (1885).⁹² They also tried to increase their ties with local circles and their power over them by offering to help them procure state approval and funding.⁹³

In the end, these measures proved too little, too late. Faced with their removal from regional positions and unwilling to increase their dependence on regional organizations, local TKR circles grew increasingly independent.⁹⁴ Once more, the ability of Polish elites to secure their interests by focusing on political institutions provided non-elites with the space to develop resilient networks and organizations with little elite support. By the turn of the twentieth century, autonomous associational life had developed to such a degree that associations and networks could thrive even in the face of growing elite resistance.

⁸⁸ Pajakowski 1995, 24.

⁸⁹ Stojalowski went through a period of radicalization during which he promoted peasant self-organization as a means of asserting peasants’ economic interests. He later abandoned his radicalism to preserve his social position and specifically to avoid excommunication. Gurnicz 1967, 102.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 78–80.

⁹¹ Kieniewicz 1969, 208–9.

⁹² Stauter-Halsted 2001, 132.

⁹³ Struve 2006, 237.

⁹⁴ Stauter-Halsted 2001.

CONCLUSION

This article has brought elites into the center of civil society debates. By leveraging a comparative, narrative-historical analysis of the development of civil societies in Congress Poland and western Galicia, I have shown that while states and economic transformations were important in shaping each region's civil societies their impacts were mediated by the interests, position, and conflicts of their elites. Elites, in both their involvement and their absence, were central to how the respective associational landscapes emerged and shaped their degrees of autonomy. In both regions, Polish elites feared urban and rural masses would organize, but the intensity of both their anxieties and their responses differed markedly. Whereas Polish elites in Congress Poland found themselves competing with the Russian state, removed from political power, and with dwindling economic resources, the political and economic standings of their western Galicia counterparts were more secure. This difference affected the intensity with which Polish elites became involved in guiding the development of the associational landscapes in each region.

The exclusion of Polish landed and cultural elites from state power in Congress Poland promoted their entrenchment in the leadership of civic organizations. For instance, to stymie the self-organization of peasants, they became active in creating and running rural associations. To secure non-elite members they founded organizations that, at least in theory and in fact in part, addressed some of peasants' immediate needs such as technical education. Polish elites in western Galicia adopted a more reactionary and limited approach. The political inclusion of Polish elites in western Galicia directed their attentions away from the public sphere and toward retaining their favorable position in regional and national state institutions. This led western Galicia's elites to seek control of agricultural circles only on the regional level, and only after cooperatives' networks had already greatly expanded. Thus, whereas Polish elites in Congress Poland actively worked to organize the masses as a means of increasing their own political power, the comparative disinterest among elites in western Galicia allowed non-elites there to organize themselves under their own leaders.

In theoretical terms, I have analyzed the determinants of one variable characteristic of both liberal and illiberal civil societies: their relative domination by, or autonomy from a single or a few elites. I propose three trajectories for future research. First, my findings underscore the importance of considering a civil society's relative autonomy from local elites when examining the roots of liberal and illiberal public spheres. Second, by highlighting the importance of associational autonomy and heteronomy for a civil society's character, I underscore the need for future studies to identify and assess the determinants of other aspects of associational life that can be systematically linked to liberal or illiberal political outcomes. One particularly important characteristic of civil

society that merits further investigation is the degree to which it cuts across or reinforces significant social cleavages. Third, I have analyzed civil society outcomes in two regions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the elite conflicts that shaped variations between them. This lays the groundwork for future research into the political and developmental impacts of variations in associational character, and the distinct imperial policies and elite conflicts that generated such variations.

The end of the First World War saw the re-emergence of a Polish state and the consequent reunion of the lands once known as Congress Poland and western Galicia. Scholars have long argued that some imperial legacies, such as incompatible railway systems, hindered the developmental prospects of the unified interwar Polish state. Yet regional variation in local elite conflicts, and the distinctions in associational autonomy that they bore, have received little attention. Future analyses should explore the character of civil society across the regions and decades of interwar Poland to assess how the civil legacies of imperial policies and elite conflicts before World War I shaped the political and social prospects of interwar Poland, and the mechanisms through which they did so. This article provides the groundwork and impetus for such work.

Lastly, a comment on the implications of deriving theoretical claims about civil society development from atypical cases. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were a unique period of economic, social, and political transformations marked by the end of feudalism, by war, and by frequent regime change. These transformations and their variation across the region enable a fruitful comparative analysis of how elite conflicts can shape civil society. The period's historical peculiarities, however, can problematize the broader applicability of this article's theoretical claims. Some might argue that claims derived from an examination of the exclusion of local elites during the pre-World War I era have limited relevancy today given the undisputed hegemony of democratic institutions and ideals in modern states. Such critiques misunderstand both the claims made here and contemporary political realities. The political exclusion of certain elites, particularly cultural, ethnic, or religious elites, may be more likely to occur in autocratic regimes, but it is not limited to them. As Tocqueville warned in his assessment of American democracy, and as contemporary scholars have also observed,⁹⁵ such political exclusions can all too readily occur in modern, democratic states.

⁹⁵ Mann 2005.

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Abstract: Why does civil society in some cases become a tool of elite organization and domination of non-elites, and in others a sphere for non-elite self-organization and self-determination? To answer this question, this article compares the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century divergent developments of civil society in two regions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Russian-ruled Congress Poland, with a focus on the Warsaw Governorate (1815–1915), and Austrian-ruled western-Galicia, concentrating on the Grand Duchy of Krakow (1846–1914). This analysis of variation in elite domination of civil society shifts the focus of civil society debates away from the market and the state and toward elites. It argues that while imperial policies of regional integration and socioeconomic changes spurred by the transition from feudalism shaped the potential paths of civil society's development in both regions, their effects on civil society's relative autonomy in each were mediated, and thus steered, by the interests and conflicts of local elites.

Key words: civil society, imperial legacies, elite conflicts, autonomous public sphere, associations, Warsaw Governorate, Grand Duchy of Krakow, Congress Poland, western Galicia