

Thesis

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**Hungarian diaspora policy since 1990
from the perspective of the state and the diaspora**

PhD dissertation

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2018

1. Antecedents of the research and main questions

During the time in which I was considering the topic of my dissertation (2013/2014), the Hungarian government in its kin-state politics was using the category “diaspora” more and more explicitly to distinguish Hungarian emigrant communities abroad from traditional Hungarian minority communities abroad (the latter communities live in the neighboring countries of Hungary). In 2011, the Hungarian government established the Hungarian Diaspora Council to provide a forum of dialogue for representatives of the diaspora and representatives of the Hungarian government. The Hungarian Diaspora Council was set up based on the example of the Hungarian Standing Conference, which has been serving as a consultative forum between representatives of Hungarian communities abroad and representatives of the Hungarian Parliament since 2000, and where the diaspora has been underrepresented due to the extensive presence of representatives of Hungarian minority communities. The creation of the Diaspora Council was soon followed by the initiation of different programs tailored to engage Hungarian diaspora communities worldwide. Hungary’s new attention towards the diaspora raised my curiosity to research, first, what the historical antecedents have been to present day Hungarian diaspora policy, and second, how this newly initiated policy can be analyzed from a social scientific point of view. The research questions are interesting not only because of the topicality of the issue, but also because the relationship between

Hungary and Hungarian diaspora communities has not enjoyed strong academic interest in the past decades.

The dissertation aims to answer the following questions: (1) What kind of policies have Hungarian governments pursued towards Hungarian diaspora communities? (2) What have been the attitude of Hungarian governments towards Hungarian emigrants settling down in foreign countries? (3) Does the Hungarian government 'assign' a role to the diaspora in the Hungarian nation building agenda, and if it does, what does that role consist of? (4) What can Hungary give to the diaspora, and what can the diaspora give to Hungary? I try to answer these question from two perspectives: from the perspective of Hungary, and from the perspective of the "receiving end" of diaspora policy, the diaspora itself. In addition, I try to interpret Hungarian diaspora policy in the context of the international diaspora policy literature and theoretical frameworks.

In the theoretical part of the dissertation, I give an overview of the literature on the definition of diaspora, as well as the theories that explain why and how states try to address, engage, or support their diasporas. In the same chapter I also briefly overview the history of the evolution of Hungarian diaspora communities.

The theoretical chapter is followed by an introduction to the diaspora policy models that are widely discussed in the literature. Israel, Ireland and Armenia are being examined, as they have an extensive diaspora population and they pursue highly active diaspora policies. In addition to these "classic" cases, I dedicate a subchapter to Central European

diaspora policies so that the Hungarian case study can be interpreted in the regional context as well.

The next chapter is dedicated to the historical overview of Hungarian diaspora policy. I discuss in detail how Hungary has reacted to Hungarian emigration waves, what the relationship between the homeland and the diaspora communities have developed, and what kind of support Hungary has provided to these communities.

The Hungary-based approach is balanced by the last chapter that focuses entirely on how the representatives of the diaspora interpret Hungarian diaspora policy. I conducted interviews with organizational leaders of the diaspora that are in direct contact with the institutions of Hungarian diaspora policy, and are participating in the diaspora initiatives of Hungary. These semi-structured interviews reveal what the representatives of the diaspora think about the relationship between Hungary and the diaspora and about Hungary's diaspora policy, and how they interpret the newly emerged interest of the homeland in the diaspora.

The empirical research of the dissertation provides a new approach in diaspora policy, and not only in the Hungarian context, but in the international diaspora policy literature as well. Diaspora policy researches generally focus on the sending states' diaspora policy goals, tools and results. That is, mainstream diaspora policy researches are usually macro-level researches. My approach in the dissertation brings a new level and a new direction into the research, as it compliments the macro-level research with a mezzo-level analysis about the diaspora's own interpretation of the diaspora policy. The

diaspora here is the receiver of the policy, and the respondents in the research represent diaspora organizations, institutions, and communities that participate in Hungary's diaspora policy projects. Therefore, the interpretation of the respondents can be understood as the opinion of the broader community that they represent. Thus, the research enables a mezzo-level analysis of Hungarian diaspora policy. As a result, the dissertation combines the mainstream macro-level approach with a new, mezzo-level perspective on diaspora policy.

2. Methodology

The research was carried out in three major methodological frameworks: 1) I used the theoretical approaches that provide explanations and typologies on diaspora policies; (2) I examined the relationship between Hungary and Hungarian emigrant communities in a historical perspective; and (3) I conducted interviews with organizational leaders of the Hungarian diaspora about their perceptions of Hungary's diaspora policy.

In the second chapter I overviewed the theoretical frameworks and definitions based on the Hungarian and international literature. Here I also discussed the historical development of Hungarian diaspora communities. The literature review highlighted that diaspora policy studies emerged in the '90s as a result of the intensified (labor) migration and the more and more apparent transnationalism.

Academic interests in diaspora policies thus was a reaction to the new, global-scale mobility and the challenges it posed.

I found Alan Gamlen's typology on diaspora policies the most useful theoretical framework for my own research. Gamlen set up three main categories for diaspora policy models: capacity building, extending rights, and extending obligations. I used his typology to analyze the diaspora policy models discussed in the third chapter: Israel, Ireland, and Armenia, and, for the sake of regional comparison, I also reviewed the diaspora policies of Central European countries.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the history of relationship between Hungary and Hungarian emigrant communities. I used mainly secondary sources (monographs and papers), but in certain cases I also consulted primary sources (newspaper articles). I reviewed the history of this relationship since the first major emigration wave until the first two decades of the democratic transition. This historical overview was important because it enables us to see the foundations and antecedents of the post-2010 intense diaspora policy, as well as the main milestones of the relationship between Hungary and Hungarian diaspora communities. Based in the findings I decided to mark 2010 as the most important milestone in the history of the relationship between Hungary and the diaspora, and this impression of mine was clearly reinforced by the respondents of the empirical research. The majority of the interviewees explicitly stated that in their relationship with Hungary, 2010 was a more important milestone than 1990.

Unfortunately, due to the closing of the Hungarian National Archives I could not consult an important source, the archives of the Office of

Hungarian Communities Abroad. This material probably would have given important insights to the developments of Hungarian diaspora policy in the 1990s. I substituted this source with oral history, and conducted interviews with Géza Jeszenszky, minister of foreign affairs between 1990 and 1994, and with Géza Entz, who was the director of the Office of Hungarian Communities Abroad in the first years after the Office's establishment.

The next chapter is dedicated to the discussion and analysis of the diaspora policy projects launched after 2010. I analyzed the diaspora policy within the larger context of Hungarian kin-state politics, as well as in the intensified nationalistic discourse after 2010. I discussed the legal (dual citizenship, Basic Law, law on national cohesion), institutional (Hungarian Diaspora Council, different forms of support), discursive, and program-based (grants, scholarships, etc.) elements of Hungarian diaspora policy.

The methodological framework of chapter 6 is based on the 23 semi-structured interviews I conducted with organizational leaders of the diaspora. The selection criteria for the respondents were twofold. First, the organization represented by the interviewee needs to be in direct contact with the Hungarian authorities in charge of diaspora projects. The indicator of this direct relationship can be the diaspora organization's participation in the Hungarian Diaspora Council's meetings, or their participation in one of the diaspora policy programs (Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program, Mikes Kelemen Program, etc.). The other criterion was the fair geographic representation of Hungarian diaspora communities. In compliance with that, I interviewed 13

respondents from the US, 2 from Latin America, 2 from Canada, 2 from Australia, and 4 from Western Europe. My interviewees were partly high-end leaders, partly mid-level leaders of large diaspora organizations, and partly represented smaller organizations.

The interviews were conducted during 2015, 2016, and 2017, partly in the US and partly in Hungary. 16 of the interviews was conducted personally, the rest was conducted via Skype. The average length of the interviews was 60 minutes. The language of the interviews was Hungarian, except for one English-language interview. They were semi-structured interviews, focusing on 3 major topics: personal life story, including the involvement in the diaspora community; the represented diaspora organization's history, situation, and challenges; and in the most detail, the organization's relationship with Hungary, their views and impressions about Hungary's diaspora policy.

I analyzed the interviews with the software ATLAS.ti. I coded small narrative units of the transcripts with keywords and possible interpretations. This method helped to process the content in a more structured way, and to minimize my own preconceptions and prejudices during the research. Although it is impossible to completely switch off subjectivity in a research, this method enabled me to analyze the interviews more along their actual content than along my own perceptions.

3. Results

The research brought new results not only in terms of the Hungarian case study, but in terms of international diaspora policy literature as well. The chapter on classic and Central European diaspora policies concluded that, on the one hand, elaborated diaspora policies are formulated on the basis of a well-defined goal. On the other hand, they very much build on the proactivity and initiatives of the diaspora itself, and thus the projects of diaspora policy are realized in partnership by the homeland and the diaspora. In Gamlen's terminology, this partnership and two-directionality results in capacity-building and extending obligations at the same time, which applies to both the Israeli and the Irish model. In these cases, the homeland 'gives' something to the diaspora but at the same time it also 'expects' something from the diaspora. The other diaspora policy models investigated in the dissertation did not prove to be so balanced.

The chapter on the history of Hungarian diaspora policy concluded that ever since the first emigration wave, Hungary has been relating to Hungarian emigrant communities in some way, however, the nature of the relationship was defined by the historical context. In the examined period, Hungarian diaspora policy had clear turning points, and the relationship fluctuated between supportive, antagonistic, or neutral. At the turn of the century, diaspora policy was mostly realized with the help of priests and churches, and mostly in the Hungarian communities of the United States. In the interwar period, the most important initiation was the World Congress and World Federation of

Hungarians. This resulted in the fact that it was a civic organization and not the government that was engaged in issues regarding Hungarians emigrants. During the Cold War, the Hungarian government distinguished between Hungarians in the diaspora based on the reason and date of their emigration. While the government tried to address the economic migrants and most of the '56-ers through the transformed World Federation (that served the government's propaganda goals), it tried to undermine the communities of the nationalist '45/47-ers.

After the democratic transition, Hungary's relationship with the diaspora was redefined. However, the issue of Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries dominated Hungarian kin-state politics, thus the diaspora received incoherent, sporadic attention and support from Hungarian governments after 1990. On the other hand, professional relations have been developed in non-governmental platforms, such as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Balassi Institute, and the Hungarian Scouts Movement.

The second Orbán-government took a completely new approach in diaspora policy. This new approach has been manifested at different levels. First of all, one could experience a shift in rhetoric. Starting from 2010, the Hungarian nation has been described in the government communication as a nation that is globally spread. Thus, the formerly typical national perspective that focused on the Hungarian minorities of the Carpathian Basin became extended to the globe.

One of the iconic measures of diaspora policy was the establishment of the Hungarian Diaspora Council in 2011. This was soon followed by a range of programs that explicitly address the diaspora. The dissertation discussed and analyzed these programs in a detailed fashion.

The Hungarian case study can be localized in Gamlen's typology as mainly a capacity building model. The major elements of Hungarian diaspora policy focus on identity strengthening, symbolic gestures, and heritage preservation.

Having contrasted the Hungarian diaspora policy model with other models and with the theoretical literature, I arrived to two conclusions. Firstly, the classic models showed that diaspora policies usually are formulated along a certain goal (state building, economic development, foreign policy goals, etc.). Homelands launch diaspora policy projects so that these goals can be effectively realized with the involvement and mobilization of the diaspora. In the case of Hungary, no clearly defined goal can be found. The explicit goal of Hungarian diaspora policy is to maintain diaspora communities, and to strengthen their identities. These goals can bring some indirect benefit (the maintenance of the national idea beyond the borders) for the country, but, unlike mainstream diaspora policy models, the Hungarian model certainly lacks a strategic, instrumentalist approach to the potentials of the diaspora. Hungarian diaspora policy does not operate with economic, foreign affairs, or other pragmatic goals.

The second conclusion concerns the target group of Hungarian diaspora policy. Diaspora policies have emerged in the '90s, as the

result of the new, mostly labor-based international migration trends. The objective of the newly launched diaspora policies were to stay in touch with the recently migrated citizens – for various reasons. According to the literature, these reasons are most often economic considerations (to boost diaspora remittances and investments), but there can be different ideas behind diaspora policy projects as well, such as utilizing the diaspora’s professional network opportunities, or to encourage homecoming. Hungarian diaspora policy is atypical in this regards as well, since its main target group is not recent Hungarian emigrants. Hungary addresses both in rhetoric and in its projects the old, established diaspora communities, such as the ’45/47-ers and the ’56-ers. The organizations of these diaspora groups are the main partner organizations in the Hungarian Diaspora Council, and they are the primary recipients of the different scholarship and grant programs as well.

An important finding of the research is that from the perspective of the interviewees, 2010 is a more outstanding milestone in Hungarian diaspora policy than 1990 was. The interviews also showed that Hungary’s discursive and program-based attention towards the diaspora is being received with an obviously positive response in the diaspora communities. The program that the diaspora most appreciates is the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program, which enables young Hungarian professionals to help out certain diaspora communities with their everyday life (teaching, event organization, administration, etc.). The Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program was a dominant topic in the interviews, therefore I found it necessary to interview some of the

grantees, who also have a direct, but different perspective of the program. I conducted a focus group interview with the participation of one grantee per continent from the 2016/2017 program. The grantees' impressions significantly diversified the information I gathered from the diaspora representatives. While the diaspora respondents overwhelmingly praised the program and expressed how well it works, the grantees highlighted some structural problems and deficiencies of the program.

The research concludes that 2010 opened up a new era in Hungarian diaspora policy not only in volume, but also in structure. Before 2010, diaspora policy was primarily realized either through a civic organization (World Federation of Hungarians), or through the Hungarian parliament (via the Hungarian Standing Conference). Starting from 2011, with the establishment of the Hungarian Diaspora Council, diaspora policy has been technically assigned to the Hungarian government. This structural shift is not interpreted negatively by the diaspora; however, they also consider the creation of the Diaspora Council rather as a symbolic than as a pragmatic measure. The interviewees attach more value to the programs that provide actual help or assistance within their communities, hence the unquestioned popularity of the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program. The attention, recognition and support coming from Hungary is highly appreciated by the diaspora, which also outshines the considerations on the possible indirect consequences of the newly introduced diaspora policy.

If we examine the Hungarian case study in the international context, we can conclude that while elaborated and successful diaspora policy models (Irish, Israeli) to a large extent build on the proactivity and initiatives of the diaspora, and realize diaspora projects in cooperation and partnership with the diaspora, the Hungarian diaspora policy model is one-sided, since it primarily 'provides', 'gives'. This, however, makes it more challenging to cultivate a mutual partnership between Hungary and the diaspora. Some respondents already perceive this deficiency, but most of them do not. The long-term success of diaspora policy would require, on the one hand, real strategic planning with the involvement of the diaspora. On the other hand, it would also require the diaspora to be not only the recipient, but an actual partner and co-operator of the diaspora policy projects as well. In the past 8 years there have been some initiatives – facilitated mostly by the diaspora – that point into this direction, which is a promising sign. It also gives reason for optimism that self-organization, responsibility, and proactivity has been essential for Hungarian diaspora communities, and hopefully these qualities will enable them to vindicate more and more rights to be a part of shaping Hungarian diaspora policy.

4. Papers published in the topic of the dissertation

Eszter Kovács: Post-Socialist Diaspora Policies: Is There a Central-European Diaspora Policy Path?

Hungarian Journal of Minority Studies 1:(1) pp. 89-109. (2017)

Herner-Kovács Eszter: Identitásmintázatok az amerikai magyarok sokadik generációjában: A magyar birthright program résztvevőinek magyarság- és Magyarország-képe

REGIO 24:(4) pp. 140-172. (2016)

Herner-Kovács Eszter: Elméleti keretek a diaszpóra-politikák vizsgálatához

Kisebbségkutatás 2015/2: pp. 34-49. (2015)

Eszter Herner-Kovács: Nation Building Extended: Hungarian Diaspora Politics

Minority Studies 2014:(17) pp. 55-67. (2014)