

The Diasporisation and Transnationalism of New Hungarian Migrants and the Related Potentials of Hungarian Diaspora Policy

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This paper attempts to discover whether or not there have been diasporisation processes unfolding among recent Hungarian migrants. Based on the results of an online survey, 3 distinctive groups were identified among Hungarian migrants: a group undergoing a process of diasporisation, a transnational emigrant group with strong political interest and a group that is characterised by indifference in terms of diasporisation and transnationalism. The statistical analysis indicates the presence of these 3 distinctive groups, which allows for a comprehensive analysis of diaspora policy consequences. The paper first introduces a theoretical framework in which Hungarian diaspora communities and diaspora policy can be interpreted. Second, it provides an overview on Hungarian diaspora policy and emigration trends. Third, it offers an analysis of quantitative data on Hungarian migrants and presents a potential typology of Hungarian emigrant groups. Finally, it interprets the results in the context of possible diaspora policy outcomes.

Keywords: migration, emigrants, diaspora, diaspora policy, transnationalism

Introduction

The Hungarian emigrant population abroad consists of extremely diverse and heterogeneous groups in terms of the motivation for emigration, the length of stay abroad and the Hungarian heritage cultivated by them. It incorporates recent emigrants with effective ties to Hungary as well as further generation diaspora members with symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979). Based on the available statistical data, the number of emigrants has significantly risen in the past decade. The number of Hungarian emigrants is challenging to quantify due to methodological reasons and to the fluidity of contemporary migration strategies as well. Emigrants appear in domestic statistics only if they officially report their absence; however, only a small fraction of them do so, therefore home-country statistical sources are not reliable to estimate the number of emigrants. Furthermore, population surveys (i.e. census) in Hungary do not include those who have moved abroad with their entire household, so they are only relevant to the analysis of the emigrant population if there are family members left behind. Host-country mirror statistics are other sources through which to assess the number of Hungarian emigrants: those who register and intend to stay on for at least 1 year are included in host-country statistics. However, free movement within the EU resulted in fluid labour-migration patterns: many migrants move only temporarily or commute between home and host countries. These migrants thus also often remain invisible to both national and host-countries statistics. Taking into consideration all the methodological challenges, Gödri (2018) provided an estimate for the number of Hungarian emigrants and found that their number was 637,000 in 2017, which equates to 6.6 per cent of the Hungarian population.

This paper attempts to discover whether there have been diasporisation processes unfolding among recently emigrated Hungarians which could lead to the establishment of new diaspora communities. The analysis explores the complex processes of diaspora formation, focusing on Hungarian emigrants – and especially on those who have left the country in the past 25 years. The ambiguous and politicised social narratives encompassing migration, besides the governmental attention devoted to integrational and identification opportunities offered by diaspora policies, place social mobility into an extremely vibrant context for emigrants who left the country in the previous decades. Data about their reactions, attitudes and strategies may significantly contribute to the interpretation of recent and present social discourses and processes. For this reason, this research paper analyses the impacts of post-2010 Hungarian diaspora politics on emigrants, aware of the fact that observants represent only a portion of the governmental policies' main target groups.

The research findings suggest that, among recent emigrants, features of diaspora can be identified based on Brubaker's (2005) typology: the individuals maintain relatively solid cultural–ethnic relations with the home state and have, at the same time, integrated into the host society. Based on the results of an online survey, 3 main migration groups were identified: a group undergoing a process of diasporisation, a transnational group with strong political interest and a group that is indifferent to diaspora initiatives and transnational practices. The latter group was labeled as the 'unengageable migrants', as they do not resonate with potential homeland engagement. The statistical analysis indicates the presence of these three distinctive groups, which allows for a comprehensive analysis of diaspora-policy consequences.

The paper first introduces a theoretical framework in which Hungarian diaspora communities and Hungarian diaspora policy can be interpreted. Second, it provides an overview of the history of Hungarian diaspora policy, as well as the emigration trends and a potential typology of Hungarian emigrant groups. Finally, it offers an analysis of quantitative data on Hungarians abroad – gained from an online survey – and interprets the results in the context of possible diaspora-policy outcomes.

Theoretical considerations on diaspora and diaspora policy

From a sociological perspective, diasporas have received considerable academic attention since the 1960s. Diaspora politics – i.e. the home country's attempts to engage its diaspora groups (in certain scenarios, even the 'construction' of such groups) – has only been subject to academic scrutiny in the past 25–30 years. The increased attention devoted to the subject may be due not only to growing migration inflows but also to the significant development of the telecommunication sector, which has resulted in stronger connections between those who emigrated and the home-country community. Thus, transnationalism has become more accessible and of a higher quality, which has presented new challenges for home-country diaspora policies too. These policies have largely been based on the strengthening and increasing visibility of migrant and diaspora communities. At the same time, in some cases, it has been the diaspora policy of the home country itself that catalysed diaspora identification in the mentioned communities.¹

According to Brubaker (2005), the academic and public interest in diaspora groups has intensified over the past 3 decades to the point where the use of the term 'diaspora' has become rather confusing. While it is true that no consensual definition of the term has been established and its use continues to be diffuse, there are 3 key elements that seem to be inextricably linked to the concept of diaspora. These 3 elements are (1) dispersal, i.e. the forced or voluntary absence from the country of origin; (2) the connection with the country of origin, which can manifest itself in the real or desired idea of returning home and also in the maintenance of intense cross-border ties; and finally, in (3) the formation and maintenance of boundaries with other groups, which serves the goal of identity preservation (Brubaker 2005; Faist 2010).

As international migration intensified, the conceptual framework of diaspora increasingly began to be substituted by the framework of transnationalism to describe the formations and phenomena that international migration produced. While there have been convincing attempts to define both terms of diaspora and transnational formations, as Faist (2010) points out, the literature did not succeed in substantially delineating the 2 concepts the one from the other. A useful clue to the use of the 2 terms is that, while the notion of diaspora carries connotations such as boundedness and demarcation, the transnational approach tends to emphasise the fluidity and non-demarcation that is so inherent in the migratory experience (Lacroix 2007). In a similar fashion, Féron and Voytiv (2021) argue that migrant groups develop into a diaspora through organisational and imaginative elements that serve as the foundations of a common identity and linkages to the homeland. Accordingly, diaspora research focuses more on groups and communities who seek to preserve their national, cultural and religious specificities, while transnationalism research examines all kinds of social formation, including transnational professional networks or social movements. In our empirical research, later in the paper, we strongly build on these concepts when we use the term 'diaspora' for emigrant formations that show some level of diaspora institutionalisation and the term 'transnational' for migrant individual's transnational practices. In the paper, we refer to the process of becoming a diaspora through institutionalisation – and community organisations as diasporisation.

Diaspora policy may be defined as government initiatives, programmes, institutions or legal regulations that aim to address, support and engage with diaspora communities. Gamlen's (2006) typology of diaspora policy reflects the main objectives of diaspora policies. He has conducted a comprehensive research on diaspora engagement policies in 70 countries and identified 3 main categories: capacity-building, rights extension and obligation extraction policies.

The 2 main pillars of capacity-building policies rest on symbolic nation-building and institutionalisation. According to Gamlen (2006), the home state first discursively construes the diaspora. This may involve rhetorical elements such as the heroisation of emigrants – placing emphasis on their role in national independence – or the paternalist responsibilities of the home state towards the diaspora communities. In the

construction of national identity and its extension to diasporic communities, cultural programmes and language teaching – as well as support for mother-tongue media – all play an important role. The other tool of capacity-building – namely, the founding and support of institutions – is essential in making diaspora groups governable. While symbolic nation-building creates a ‘relationship of communication’, institutionalisation enhances the state’s objective capacity (Gamlen 2006: 10) over the diaspora. Various institutional forms may be effectively used for this purpose: diplomatic consulate networks, governmental bodies dedicated to diaspora management (ministry, state secretary, office, etc.) or the already-existing diaspora institutions.

Policies aiming to extend rights to the diaspora may be categorised in 2 subgroups: the political incorporation and the extension of social and civil rights to the diaspora. The former refers to the extension of citizenship to the diaspora, which may have several underlying motives. The most often, it is the prospect of appealing to diaspora groups upon which they may be willing to further economic growth in the home state via remittances and investments (Leblang 2017). At the same time, Gamlen (2006) highlights that, while the extension of citizenship is considered as a common diaspora-policy tool, the extension of unconditional voting rights to the diaspora is less frequent. As Gamlen emphasises, home states ‘economise’ the rights extended to diaspora communities. This could be illustrated by some states’ restriction of extraterritorial voting rights. Civil and social rights may involve the mediation of labour or labour protection (e.g. health insurance), as well as the easing of administrative burdens for those expatriates who return to the home country.

The third model, extracting obligations, may be divided into 2 subtypes according to Gamlen: the exploitation of the diaspora’s economic resources and of its political resources. Gamlen refers to the former category as investment policy; however, it is more suitable to address this type as economic benefit policy, as it is not solely about inward investment flows into the home country. These policies include ‘brain drain taxation’ – e.g. retracting taxes from highly qualified expatriates (through formal or informal channels), incentives for remittance and investment (through the reduction of transaction costs) and various knowledge-transfer or brain-circulation programmes (e.g. the inclusion of highly qualified diaspora in home-country education, training programmes and innovative initiatives). The extraction of the diaspora’s political resources may refer to the openness of the home country to reflect on diaspora groups’ needs but may also materialise in diaspora lobby promotion activities in the receiving state in favour of the sending country.

In order to be able to interpret Hungary’s diaspora engagement practices in Gamlen’s framework, the paper firstly covers governmental diaspora policies and, secondly, the target group of diaspora policy through macro statistical and quantitative methods.

Post-2010 diaspora policy

At the beginning of the 2010s, migration from Hungary started to increase. This contemporary wave of emigration has exclusively been framed by the opposition parties, specifically in a ‘national loss’ narrative, while the government has not addressed the social process either discursively or at a policy level. While it did not start to engage contemporary migrants, the Hungarian government did introduce a comprehensive diaspora policy, only for the most part focusing on the older, more-established diaspora communities that had left the homeland mostly for political reasons after WW2 and after the 1956 revolution. This happened in line with the Fidesz government’s nationalistic agenda in the realm of external nation-building (Pogonyi 2017).

The launch of a dedicated Hungarian diaspora policy can be considered as the foundation of the Hungarian Diaspora Council in 2011, which serves as the coordination forum for the representatives of the Hungarian diaspora communities and the Hungarian government. This has been followed by other governmental initiatives and programmes and the adoption of a strategic document for diaspora policy in 2016 (*Magyar Diaszpórapolitika* 2016). Politicians and government officials regularly visit diaspora communities and the

financial support provided for the diaspora has undergone annual growth;² the diaspora's incorporation into the 'unified Hungarian nation' has become one of the cornerstones of governmental political communication.

The 2016 diaspora strategy document mentions a differentiated typology of Hungarians abroad. This typology is essential for our research as it mentions recent emigrants among strategically relevant groups of the Hungarian diaspora:

Recent emigrants are to be strategically targeted by diaspora policy. Recent emigrants need to be integrated into Hungarian diaspora institutions and addressed by programmes provided by the home state (such as online learning materials for young people and children). The main objective of this strategy is to make the option of return migration more appealing to recent emigrants (Magyar Diaszpórapolitika 2016: 25).

The document nevertheless acknowledges that the potential Hungarian diaspora is diverse: it includes individuals either belonging or not belonging to diaspora institutions, further generation descendants of Hungarian migrants and the economic, academic and political diasporic elite as well. However, the 2016 diaspora policy strategy document does not go further than defining the goal of promoting return migration among recent Hungarian emigrants, which suggests that luring home recent emigrants is a much more complex process and requires more enhanced, varied policy methods and tools.

The incorporation of recent emigrants into the diaspora strategy essentially acknowledges their role as (potential) members of diaspora. The extent of diasporisation processes among recent emigrants, however, poses a central challenge for policy-makers. International examples show that engaging new migrant communities can be a somewhat challenging task for homelands (Fiń, Legut, Nowak, Nowosielski and Schöll-Mazurek 2013). The second part of the research paper aims to address this aspect through empirical data analysis.

In Gamlen's (2006) typology, Hungarian diaspora policy may be considered as an example of the capacity-building and extending-rights models. In addition to the Hungarian Diaspora Council, the Hungarian government introduced several diaspora engagement projects that aim to help these communities to preserve their language, culture and identity. For example, the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Programme, the flagship project of Hungarian diaspora policy, offers an internship for young Hungarian professionals to assist diaspora communities to revitalise their cultural and community life through language teaching, folkdance teaching or the organisation of cultural events. Another diaspora policy project, the Mikes Kelemen Programme, offered to help to preserve the diaspora's book collections.³ In addition, the government also supports diaspora birthright journeys and Hungarian Sunday Schools to help the next generation of diaspora members to keep their language, culture and identity alive. These identity-focused programmes, alongside the symbolic gestures and national rhetoric, may be best categorised as capacity-building practices.

The extension of citizenship and voting rights to the diaspora belong to the extending rights category. Hungarians abroad who received citizenship via the preferential naturalisation process after 2010 were able to vote for the first time during the 2014 elections. The political campaign for the new Hungarian voters in neighbouring countries was strong but the governmental campaign was not equally intense in the diaspora (Herne-Kovács, Illyés and Rákóczi 2014). The campaign also showed similar trends in 2018. That year, the number of Hungarians living abroad who registered to vote in the national elections was relatively low – except for the Hungarian minority communities living in neighbouring countries. While only 1,495 Hungarians in the USA, 892 in the UK and 3,827 in Germany decided to vote, in Romania altogether 173,773 Hungarian citizens registered to vote.⁴ A striking – and often criticised – feature of the election system has been the discriminatory approach to the voting rights of new emigrants and Hungarian minority communities in the neighbouring countries. While emigrant Hungarians (who have not given up their residency in Hungary) are only allowed

to vote in person at consulates in their respective host countries, members of the Hungarian minority communities in the neighbouring countries (who do not have residency in Hungary) can also cast their vote by post. Thus, the accessibility of voting rights of the 2 extraterritorial Hungarian groups differs significantly and suggests that the new emigrant community, unlike Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries, does not constitute a potential source for extracting obligations for the Hungarian government (Kovács 2020).

Emigration statistics

Emigration has become a focus of academic interest and the centre of social, political debates in the last decade in Hungary. This is due to the fact that, unlike in the case of other countries in the CEE region, the volume of emigration was not substantive until the end of the 2000s – i.e., the post-communist migration tendencies started with a significant delay (Hárs 2016). The situation abruptly changed at the beginning of the 2010s; since then, ever-growing – yet still fragmented – data are available about Hungarian emigratory trends, including their volume, dynamics and demographics.

Due to the methodological and definitional differences of sources on migration, the available data indicate significant variance. According to the 2016 Hungarian Microcensus, there have been some 265,000 ‘people with Hungarian (ex-)spouses who reside temporarily or permanently abroad with past or current permanent residency in Hungary’ (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2018). Due to the technical specifics of the dataset (i.e., the respondents of the questionnaire were family/household members of the emigrants), the set excludes those who emigrated long ago and those who left with their whole family. Another statistic with the same technical limitations was the national census in 2022, which again found 360,000 emigrants (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2022). The UN Population Division prepares annual estimates about emigrants based on the host countries’ relevant statistical data. According to these estimates, approximately 632,000 persons born in Hungary were living abroad in 2019. This number was 514,000 in 2010 and 555,000 in 2015, which also indicates growth, although to a more limited extent than the population census and micro census suggest (United Nations 2019).

There are multiple explanations for the increase in emigration: the appeal of labour market opportunities in Western Europe following Hungary’s EU accession, the disadvantageous labour market situation after the 2008 economic crisis and the parallel weakening social and welfare system in Hungary have all been significant factors. The wage gap between Western European and Hungarian labour markets, the growing opportunities for social mobility and the increasing migrant networks have motivated more and more Hungarians to consider emigration as an attractive – even if only temporary – alternative (Hárs 2016).

Various databases confirm that most Hungarian expatriates reside in 4 countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria and the United States. In terms of the number of Hungarian emigrants, the relative ranking of these 4 countries has slightly changed over recent decades, though they still have a solid dominance. Germany, the UK and Austria are the 3 dominant target countries (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2014).⁵ The main social and demographic features of Hungarians living abroad may be illustrated based on 2016 micro-census data. According to the datasets, the ratio of male, young and highly qualified Hungarians among emigrants is higher than among those who stayed at home (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2018: 12). Most Hungarian expatriates (86 per cent) reside abroad for employment reasons in 3 main industries: commercial/services, industrial/construction and low-skilled jobs. Most expatriates have prior work experience, though most frequently in different types of job than after their emigration.

Empirical research

The main question of the research is as follows:

To what extent are recent Hungarian migrants undergoing diasporisation processes, what are their main socio-demographic and other social variables and to what extent could new emigrants resonate with the homeland's engagement?

As indicated in the theoretical section of the paper, in our understanding, the core features of a diaspora are the physical dispersion from the homeland, the cultivation of some kind of connection to the homeland and the maintenance of various (physical, emotional, symbolic, imaginative) boundaries with other groups in order to reinforce and preserve their members' identity. To explore the extent of diasporisation among recent Hungarian emigrants, we interpret a diaspora not as a static state but, rather, as a series of interactions and processes. Members of the diaspora become devoted to their community through participation in activities and events. This performative act may take place at the level of the individual. However, a diaspora is unimaginable without institutional elements as it essentially represents a link between emigrants and the home state, language and culture, which are shared with other members of the community. Thus, the migrant individual's participation in co-ethnic institutional and community initiatives in the host state are indicative factors of diasporisation processes.

Methodology

The online survey was conducted from 1 June to 30 September 2019 with Hungarian emigrants. The survey invited Hungarians who had moved abroad to answer the questions, so all Hungarian emigrants, including Hungarians from the kin-minority territories, were welcome to fill it out. The questionnaire was sent to several Hungarian news sites and was also distributed through the online channels of the Institute for Minority Studies (website, Facebook page). We made a conscious effort to minimise the network (or bubble) bias arising from the dissemination through online news sites: we sent the survey to government-critical and pro-government news sites alike and asked them to share the survey with their readers.⁶

The main questions of the research focused on the motivation for and circumstances of the respondents' emigration, their changing labour-market position, their relations with the home country, their personal relationships and their cultural ties – and on general socio-demographic indicators. The extent to which Hungarian expatriates are likely to participate in activities that may be supported by the home state's diaspora policy was also part of the survey.

Due to the lack of sufficient and precise available data on the emigrant population, online surveys are not representative of the whole observed population. Data derived from the survey indicate a larger ratio of women, a higher average age and a higher ratio of highly qualified emigrants than the previously mentioned micro-census data. Nonetheless, the main objective of the questionnaire was not to provide representative data but to explore and describe social processes and patterns among statistically relevant groups.

The survey was completed by more than 18,000 respondents, most of whom resided in Germany (3,809), the United States (938), Austria (2,071) and the United Kingdom (4,343). Thus, we limited our data analysis to these 4 countries and the results presented below describe this filtered sample. The average age of the respondents was 38; it was highest in the United States (42 years) and lowest in the United Kingdom (36 years). Respondents had been residing for an average of 6–7 years in the host countries, with the longest migration experiences in the USA (approximately 10 years). In terms of gender distribution, 48 per cent of the

respondents were women: there is a more or less balanced gender distribution in the United States and the United Kingdom, while the ratio of male respondents was slightly higher in Germany and Austria (54 per cent). The online survey indicates higher qualifications than the data derived from traditional surveys: in the 4 observed countries, approximately 60 per cent of respondents had a higher education qualification.

Results

The respondents' participation in diaspora activities and events is illustrated in Table 1, based on the data derived from the 4 observed countries. Most expatriates visited gastro events and festivals, while scouting was the least-popular activity among emigrants. The high popularity of gastro events suggests the gastronomisation of diaspora identity, which is a classic pattern of the evolution of diaspora identification. The preservation of ethnic/national identity is often constituted and reinforced by a particular cuisine (Billig 1995; Malesevic 2006). Not surprisingly, participation in scouting activities was low; as a core institution in the 'old' diaspora,⁷ scouting engages members of the more recent diasporic communities, only to a lesser extent. The Hungarian Scout Movement was one of the most significant diaspora organisations of the political emigrants of WW2 and of the 1956 revolution (Bodnár 1989).

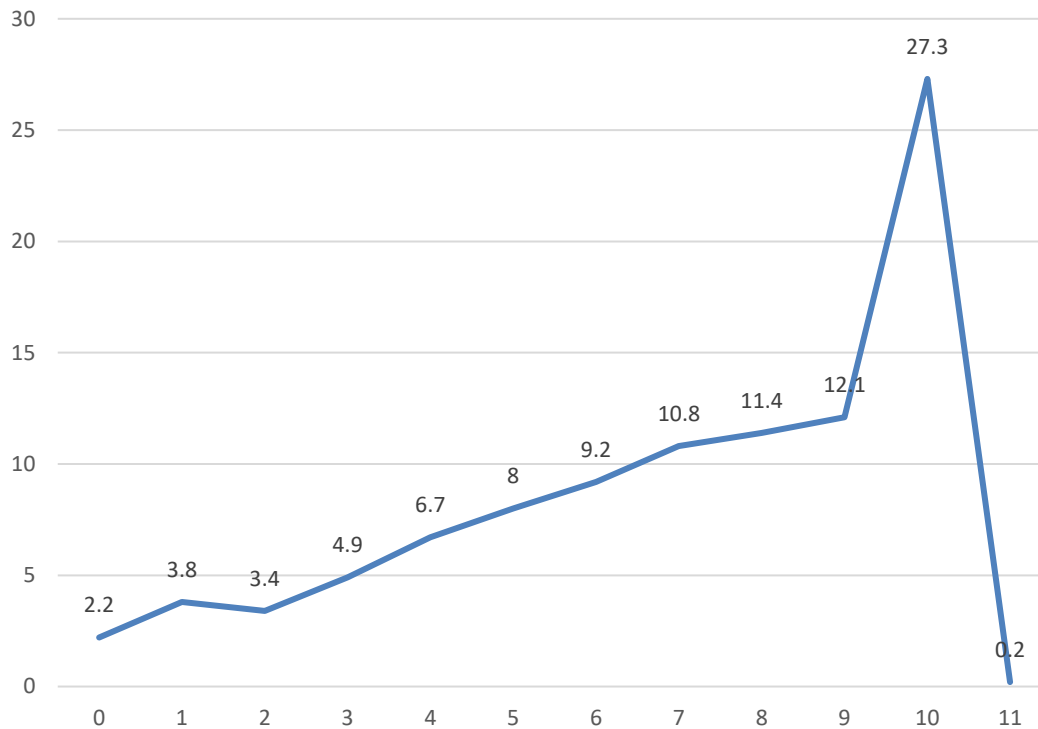
Table 1. Participation rate at diaspora institutions' events (average, Likert scale: 1 = never, 5 = very frequently)

	Germany	USA	Austria	UK	Total
1. Gastro events	2.09	2.21	2.13	1.90	2.03
2. Festival	2.09	2.17	2.16	1.88	2.03
3. Cultural events (commemoration, literature)	1.68	1.89	1.67	1.63	1.68
4. Professional events	1.67	1.61	1.76	1.58	1.65
5. Sports events	1.64	1.58	1.73	1.53	1.61
6. Movie screenings	1.53	1.59	1.55	1.46	1.51
7. Hungarian supplementary schools	1.36	1.54	1.36	1.29	1.35
8. Folk dance events	1.30	1.38	1.34	1.25	1.29
9. Political affairs events, forum	1.29	1.27	1.23	1.25	1.26
10. Scouting	1.11	1.28	1.14	1.10	1.13
11. Other	1.92	1.87	1.95	1.80	1.88

Note: Grey cells refer to above-average rate.

Data regarding the participation at various activities and events were examined in the 4 countries and significant variations were found. The highest average participation in diaspora organisations and events was found among respondents from the United States. This suggests, on the one hand, that Hungarian migrants in the US were more active and were preserving a particular 'diasporic tradition' for historic reasons, which might attract and involve recent emigrants as well. On the other hand, most Hungarians emigrated to the United States much longer ago and have longer migration experiences than migrants in other host countries.

Figure 1. The rate of emigrants not participating in diaspora activities (ratio of ‘never’ answers per 11 diaspora activity items)



Diasporic integration and engagement can be analysed in multiple ways based on the questions regarding the frequency of participation in diaspora events. Firstly, the frequency of choosing the option ‘never’ at a specific event item may be indicative of diasporic integration. Figure 1 suggests that 2.2 per cent of respondents were active members of diaspora communities and had participated at all 11 activities to some extent (they did not indicate the option ‘never’ for any activity) and around 10 per cent chose ‘never’ a maximum of twice, meaning that they had participated at least in 9 activities, to some extent, out of 11. The other extreme of the scale shows respondents who would never have or only rarely (once or twice) engaged in the listed activities (that is, they chose the option ‘never’ for most activities): about 40 per cent went to, at most, 2 activities, which suggests low institutionalised diasporic engagement. Overall, at best 10–20 per cent of the respondents actively engaged in some institutionalised forms of the Hungarian diaspora community in their respective host countries, while about 40 per cent were not at all or were to a lesser extent interested in the activities of the diaspora community. The remaining respondents, around 40 per cent, had to some extent participated in certain diaspora events, though their motivation and the nature of their engaging in events remains unknown. As indicated formerly, concerning cross-country trends, expatriates in the United States were most actively participating in diaspora activities.

Migrant groups and main features

The research explored the nature and correlation patterns of the diaspora activities. By applying a multivariate dimension reduction method on the 11 items, we were able to outline 3 main attitude groups: a more general cultural attitude, an explicitly value-based institutionalised diasporic attitude and a group of attitudes with more explicit political motivation.⁸ These attitude groupings illustrate the potential motivational differences in

the patterns of participation in diaspora events. However, the statistical relevance of the attitude results is ambiguous in terms of theoretical modeling. For this reason, 3 plausible groups have been defined by cluster analysis (Table 2). Based on the frequency of participation in Hungarian events, emigrants may be categorised into 3 groups. Firstly, members of the committed diaspora or groups currently undergoing diasporisation processes were interested in cultural events in addition to their visits to different forms of diasporic institutionalised activities, such as scouting, Hungarian Sunday Schools or folk-dancing. The group's diasporic features are embodied in their affinity towards events that are potentially part of current Hungarian diaspora policy.

Table 2. Hungarian migration groups by degree and motivation to visit diaspora events (cluster analysis, cluster centres noted)

	Engaged, diasporic (‘diaspora’) diaspora groups	Neutral groups, hardly engaged (‘unengageables’)	Migrants interested in political affairs
Cultural motivation	0.58813	-0.19328	0.87403
Diasporic values	2.47212	-0.2159	-0.51437
Political motivation	-0.12882	-0.24775	1.84534
N	965	8,250	1,175
%	9.3	79.4	11.3

Secondly, the group of politically interested or politicised emigrants were primarily interested in Hungarian political events, partially complemented by cultural affection. Peculiarly, although the 2 smaller groups – committed diaspora and politically interested emigrants – both have some cultural affection, for the diaspora group members, this interest took the shape of participation in co-ethnic community events, while politically interested migrants did not participate in such initiatives. Thirdly, members of the ‘unengageable’ migrant group⁹ did not express interest in any kind of Hungarian diasporic events, neither in terms of culture nor of politics. Out of the 3 groups, the largest was the unengageable group, accounting for about 80 per cent of the respondents, while the diaspora group (9.3 per cent) and the politically-culturally interested emigrants (11.3 per cent) were roughly equal in size.¹⁰

The 2 smaller groups’ social embeddedness was also different: while there were more respondents with lower qualifications in the diasporic group than the average (14 per cent of emigrants with a vocational school degree compared to an average of 9 per cent), higher-qualified emigrants were over-represented in the politicised group (67 per cent compared to the 60 per cent average). The group members’ average age similarly deviated. Members of the diasporic group were older: the average age in the diasporic group was 40, while it was 38 and 37 in the politicised and the indifferent groups. In addition, members of the diasporic group had left Hungary a somewhat longer time ago than members of the 2 other groups. Members of the diasporic group were more likely to have migrated – either with their partners/families or with the objective of family unification – than the other 2 groups’ members (18 compared to 14 and 17 per cent). These details partially explain why co-ethnic institutions and events were more appealing to members of the diasporic groups: they probably sought to provide their family with opportunities to experience Hungarian culture through attending weekend schools, folk dance, scouting, etc.¹¹

The motivation for emigration in the 3 groups also varied (Table 3). The relevance of economic motivation was the highest among the ‘unengageables’ and it is fair to assume that the lack of diasporic engagement might originate in this underlying factor. Not surprisingly, dissatisfaction with the current Hungarian political situation was a strong factor in the migration decision for members of the politically engaged migrant group,

although the professional and education prospects of emigration also played a significant part in their decision. The diasporic group – in line with previous theoretical assumptions – had the strongest considerations for their economic situation in the home country: the data suggest that those who were more active in diaspora activities and events still hoped to return to the home country after having made sufficient financial savings. Furthermore, diasporic group members were considering living in Hungary in the future in a significantly higher proportion than the average respondent and had been visiting Hungary more frequently as well (though still less often than members of the politicised group).

Table 3. Migration motivation of selected migration groups (average, Likert scale: 1 = Not at all important, 10 = very important)

Why did you emigrate from Hungary?	Engaged, diasporic ('diaspora') diaspora groups	Neutral groups, hardly engaged ('unengageables')	Migrants interested in political affairs	Total	Sign
To find a better job	7.54	7.70	7.51	7.66	0.048
To increase living standard, better subsistence	8.05	8.32	7.97	8.26	0.000
To pursue higher-quality education	5.12	4.85	5.74	4.97	0.000
To save money for own investment/enterprise in the home country	2.85	2.39	2.48	2.44	0.000
To save money for loans in the home country	3.26	2.53	2.48	2.6	0.000
To escape the hopeless Hungarian economic situation	7.45	7.65	7.41	.6	0.011
To escape the hopeless Hungarian political situation	7.00	7.39	7.78	7.4	0.000
Due to personal (family, relationship) reasons	3.74	3.63	3.59	3.64	0.616
Out of curiosity, adventure	4.53	4.92	5.16	4.91	0.000
To develop personally or professionally, self-realisation purposes	6.19	6.52	7.11	6.55	0.000

Note: Grey cells refer to above-average rates.

A section of questions was focused on emigrants' interests in the home and host country's cultural, political and economic affairs in order to explore aspects of homeland orientation and ethnic border maintenance. Our hypothesis was that members of the diasporic group were more interested in the home country's cultural, economic and public affairs, while politicised emigrants were more engaged in political affairs. In terms of symbolic border maintenance, diasporic group members had been assumed to showcase less interest towards local affairs and events. The findings of the survey confirmed the hypothesis (Table 4). Members of the diasporic group demonstrated a higher-than-average interest in Hungarian economic and cultural affairs but less so in Hungarian political affairs. Politically active emigrants revealed a peculiar feature: they were extremely interested in both home- and host-country affairs, which may originate in their higher-than-average educational background. To some extent, this group also embodied diasporic features but was clearly

distinguished from the diasporic group due to their high interest in host-country affairs. Here we have to relate to the diaspora group's ethnic border maintenance feature: it is quite clear that they were less invested in the host country's affairs and society than the politicised migrants, who were engaged in both the home- and the host-country's directions. The distinct integrational patterns reinforce the necessity to differentiate between the two groups: politically active emigrants were interested in Hungarian culture and the home state affairs (even though they did not visit diaspora events), they visited Hungary often but, at the same time, they intensively participated in the host country's local, political, economic and cultural affairs. These findings indicate the highly transnational nature of this group (Portes 2001; Tsuda 2012).

Table 4. Interests of migration groups in terms of home- and host-country economic, political and cultural affairs (average, Likert scale: 1 = not at all interested, 10 = very interested)

To what degree are you interested in...	Engaged, diasporic ('diaspora') diaspora groups	Neutral groups, hardly engaged ('unengageables')	Migrants interested in political affairs	Total
Hungarian political affairs, news?	6.19	6.05	7.44	6.22
Hungarian economic affairs?	6.27	5.96	7.13	6.12
Hungarian cultural, public affairs, events?	6.33	5.69	7.00	5.89
Political affairs in your current country of residence?	6.70	6.75	7.76	6.86
Economic affairs in your current country of residence?	7.06	7.06	7.81	7.14
Cultural and public affairs in your current country of residence?	6.89	6.78	7.74	6.90

Note: Grey cells refer to above-average rates.

Border maintenance elements in interpersonal relations were observed through several questions, primarily in terms of the emigrants' social connections and relations. Our hypothesis assumed that the diasporic group engaged with their fellow Hungarians to a greater extent than the politicised emigrant group, while the latter, as a transnational group, was presumed to connect more with other transnational migrants and locals. These hypotheses were entirely confirmed (see Table 5). The 3 groups showcased completely different behaviour patterns: diasporic group members met up with other Hungarians to a more substantial degree than with locals or other migrants, while transnational group members were more open to locals and other migrants than to co-ethnics.

Table 5. Migration groups' informal relations (average, Likert scale: 1= not at all friendly, 10 = very friendly)

To what extent do you have friendly relationship with...	Engaged, diasporic ('diaspora') diaspora groups	Neutral groups, hardly engaged ('unengageables')	Migrants interested in political affairs	Total
Other Hungarians in your current country of residence?	6.55	4.77	5.80	5.05
Other (non-Hungarian) migrants in your current country of residence?	6.39	6.10	6.79	6.21
Non-migrant citizens in your current country of residence?	7.02	6.83	7.39	6.91

A similar trend can be observed concerning who migrants relied on the most when they needed help (Table 6). Members of the diasporic group relied on Hungarian co-ethnics in their host country to a greater extent than members of the other 2 groups and they tended to count on Hungarian civil society organisations (CSOs) more compared to members of the other 2 groups. On the other hand, members of the transnational group trusted host-country actors and offices as well as home-country friends and acquaintances. These findings reinforce homeland orientation among members of the diasporic groups and also reinforce the transnational feature of the politicised migrant group.

Table 6. Relations in migration groups when in need (average, Likert scale: 1 = would not rely on them, 10 = would completely rely on them)

If you had difficulties, to what extent would you rely on...	Engaged. diasporic ('diaspora') diaspora groups	Neutral groups. hardly engaged ('unengageables')	Migrants interested in political affairs	Total	Sign
Your family, living in Hungary?	7.50	7.56	7.67	7.57	0.451
Your friends living in Hungary?	6.21	6.17	6.58	6.22	0.000
Your Hungarian friends who live in your current country of residence?	6.96	6.30	6.81	6.42	0.000
Your other migrant friends who live in your current country of residence?	6.29	6.02	6.57	6.11	0.000
Local (non-migrant) citizens, friends in your current country of residence?	6.77	6.66	7.11	6.72	0.000
Local district offices, authorities?	7.61	7.64	7.88	7.66	0.003
Local civil-society organisations?	7.10	7.05	7.42	7.1	0.000
Hungarian district offices, authorities?	3.37	3.11	3.28	3.15	0.001
Hungarian civil-society organisations?	3.38	3.33	3.93	3.41	0.000

Diasporisation processes and transnationalism

Among the identified groups, members of the diasporic group confirmed the main features of diaspora following Brubaker's (2005) theory: spatial dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance. Spatial dispersion was a given feature since the survey targeted migrant individuals. Homeland orientation was identified at several levels: members of these groups participated in diasporic events (which were relevant for Hungarian diaspora policy) and they maintained a more explicit interest in return migration to the home country. The dominant economic motivation of their migration also revealed a homeland orientation. Conceptually, should the return migration aspirations materialise, the diasporic group could not be considered as a diaspora, because it did not undergo the specific diaspora institutionalisation process. Instead, the group only featured certain diasporic elements: their social life took place at events that were targeted by the home government as part of its diaspora policy. Eventually, the underlined process corresponded to the main objectives of the Hungarian diaspora policy laid down in the strategic documents: to 'encourage' recent

emigrants to return home. Diasporic elements were identified concerning border maintenance as well: at an informal level, members of this group sought more connections with their fellow expatriates and would ask for help to a greater extent from Hungarian offices when in need than members of the other 2 identified groups (see Table 6).

Politically interested migrants were found to have higher qualifications than members of the other groups and they actively engaged in both host- and home-country affairs. In their case, home-country relations did not involve border creation towards the host-country society. Group members tended to be integrated in the host country, thus they could be considered as a transnational group. Strong political interest, enhanced informal relations with the home country and frequent visits to Hungary were also characteristics of them.

It is noteworthy that academics – both in diaspora and transnational studies – risk forfeiting or depreciating the substantive meaning of transnationalism by using it all too frequently and generally to describe migration processes (Brubaker 2005; Durst 2019; Portes 2001). At the same time, this group is best characterised as transnational following Portes *et al.*'s (1999) definition of 2 prerequisites for transnational groups: 1) generally prevailing connections with the home and host country on a wider scale among the members of the group; and 2) the regularity of solid transnational social, economic, cultural and political activities. The research findings convincingly suggest the existence of this group, as well as their active presence in both home and host societies simultaneously. Members of the group were highly qualified, which positively affected their opportunities to benefit from resources in the transnational sphere.

Discussion

The paper aimed to discover whether recently emigrated Hungarians showed signs of diasporisation that could lead to the establishment of new diaspora communities. Based on an online survey carried out among recent Hungarian emigrants, we identified 3 main groups: a group undergoing a process of diasporisation, a transnational emigrant group with strong political interest and a group that were also indifferent to diaspora initiatives and transnational engagements. The first group of emigrants (approximately 10 per cent) had engaged, to some extent, in cultural heritage and identity preservation institutions, initiatives or activities. Even though this group seemed to be undergoing certain diasporisation processes, we were aware that the future of this process – i.e., the participation in diaspora institutions and activities – is inherently ambiguous. The current Hungarian government's diaspora policy is supportive of diaspora institutions, both discursively and financially, which could contribute to the preservation of ties between the home country and emigrant communities; thus the identified diasporic group was a potential beneficiary of the homeland's diaspora policy.

Our research identified a transnational group as the second distinctive cohort of emigrants. This group consisted of younger and more-qualified emigrants who maintained strong relations with both home- and host-country actors. They had a strong interest in culture, politics and public affairs but were distinct from the first group due to their disinterest in traditional diaspora activities (such as scouting or Hungarian weekend schools). For the members of this group, all the prerequisites and resources were given for successful transnational positioning.

The third and largest group in the survey was labeled as the 'unengageables', as they were not engaged in diaspora initiatives and did not show any interest in transnational activities. As a result, they did not resonate with any elements of the homeland's diaspora policy. Though the short online survey method does not enable a more thorough, deeper analysis uncovering daily interactions, the statistical analysis indicates the presence of these 3 distinctive groups, which allows for a comprehensive analysis of diaspora policy consequences.

To put home country and diaspora communities' relations under more scrutiny, research findings suggest that Hungarian diaspora policies engage and, to some extent, produce and consolidate groups undergoing the process of diasporisation: while home-country initiatives mostly address already established institutions,

seeking support from the home state may play a significant role in the emergence of new diaspora institutions. In Gamlen's (2006) capacity-building model, the engagement of new diaspora groups through various supporting programmes not only bears a symbolic meaning; it may even shed light on and facilitate the governmentality of these groups by the home state. The extending rights model does not predominate in the new diaspora, as members – recent emigrants who are overwhelmingly Hungarian citizens – already possess rights in the Hungarian social and political system. The analytical frame offered by the extending rights model may become increasingly relevant with time, in terms of second- and third-generation emigrants. A key element of future diaspora policy will be based on the need to socially, culturally and even politically engage and integrate recent emigrants' descendants into a home state where they have not socialised.

However, it remains an open question whether Hungarian diaspora policy attempts to address the described emigrant communities. In the case where the home country successfully engages with these groups, the transnationalisation of capacity-building could result in migrant individuals and groups who are integrated into both the home- and the host-country societies. Nonetheless, should diaspora policy fail to engage with these groups, the politically active transnational communities may become a kind of counter-diaspora, acting in opposition of the home state's diaspora policy. This paper provided a detailed analysis of diaspora processes, home-state relations and integration in the context of new Hungarian emigrants. The analysis focused on exploring the new, young and emerging diaspora groups; however, the consolidation and institutionalisation of these groups is highly dependent on global and home-state factors that are yet to be seen.

Notes

1. For a good example, see the members of the emigrant Russian-Jewish community and their relations with the home state in Israel (Ben-Porat 2011).
2. In 2024, the Hungarian government provided HUF 500 million in support for Hungarian diaspora organisations; see: https://bgazrt.hu/wp-content/uploads/palyazati_kiirasok/kulhoni_tamogatasok/2024/ENP_DSZ_palyazati_kiiras_2024.pdf (accessed 7 March 2025).
3. The Mikes Programme has been closed. It ran between 2014 and 2022.
4. <https://www.valasztas.hu/hu/kulhoni-magyar-allampolgarok-valasztasi-regisztracioja>.
5. According to the 2016 micro census, altogether 71 per cent of emigrants were living in 1 of the 3 countries at the time of completing the questionnaire.
6. The survey was sent to index.hu, hvg.hu, 24.hu, azonnali.hu, mandiner.hu, demokrata.hu, magyarnemzet.hu and to a blog dedicated to Hungarian emigrants, hataratkelo.hu.
7. Old diaspora refers to the emigration waves of the 20th-century political turmoils.
8. In statistical terms, principal component analysis.
9. They could be labeled as a secluded, neutral or disengaged group as well. However, this analysis observes the diaspora from the home state's perspective, which is why this group is named 'unengageable', e.g. falling beyond the reach of the home state.
10. These numbers correlate with former academic results. Gyula Borbándi, one of the most significant scholars of Hungarian emigration, also came to the same conclusion – though without a questionnaire. In terms of Hungarian emigrants in Denmark, he notes that only 10–15 per cent of Hungarians participate in Hungarian social life and suggests that the tendency is the same in other countries as well (Borbándi 1996: 68).
11. On the socialisation functions of Hungarian weekend schools in the UK, see: Papp, Kovács and Kovács (2023).

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