

Ágnes Vass

Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary

**THE EXTENDED NATION AS A POLITICAL PROJECT –
HUNGARIAN DIASPORA LIVING IN WESTERN CANADA**

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Author

Ágnes Vass is an international relations scholar with a focus on extraterritorial citizenship and kin-state politics of CEE countries. She is currently finishing her dissertation at Corvinus University of Budapest. In 2015–2016 she was a research fellow at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. Prior to this, she was a Junior Research Fellow at the Institute for Minority Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Currently she is working as project coordinator in a Budapest-based think tank organisation focusing on Central Europe.

ORCID no. 0000-0002-7789-1767**e-mail:** agnesvass87@gmail.com**Abstract**

Policy towards Hungarians living in neighbouring countries has been a central issue for Hungarian governments, yet Hungarian diaspora living mainly in Western Europe and North America have received very little attention. This has changed after the 2010 landslide victory of Fidesz. The new government introduced a structured policy focused on engaging Hungarian diaspora, largely due to the nationalist rhetoric of the governing party. The article argues that this change reflects a turn of Hungarian nationalism into what Ragazzi and Balalowska (2011) have called post-territorial nationalism, where national belonging becomes disconnected from territory. It is because of this new conception of Hungarian nationalism that we witness the Hungarian government approach Hungarian communities living in other countries in new ways while using new policy tools: the offer of extraterritorial citizenship; political campaigns to motivate the diaspora to take part in Hungarian domestic politics by voting in legislative elections; or the never-before-seen high state budget allocated to support these communities. Our analysis is based on qualitative data gathered in 2016 from focus group discussions conducted in the Hungarian community of Western Canada to understand the effects of this diaspora politics from a bottom-up perspective. Using the theoretical framework of extraterritorial citizenship, external voting rights and diaspora engagement programmes, the paper gives a brief overview of the development of the Hungarian diaspora policy. We focus on how post-territorial nationalism of the Hungarian government after 2010 effects the ties of Hungarian communities in Canada with Hungary, how the members of these communities conceptualise the meaning of their “new” Hungarian citizenship, voting rights and other diaspora programmes. We argue that external citizenship and voting rights play a crucial role in the Orbán government’s attempt to govern Hungarian diaspora communities through diaspora policy.

Keywords: extraterritorial citizenship, external voting rights, diaspora, Hungary, nationalism, Central Europe

Recent diaspora strategies and tools

While analysing diaspora strategies of Central European states, it is important to clearly differentiate minority communities living in the territory of other states from those living in diaspora communities. Diaspora communities are those whose existence is based on migration, or whose members left their homeland due to different reasons. Minority communities, on the other hand, came into existence due to the border changes after the second world war ; their existence is a result of political decision. As Bárdi (2012, 531) defines, ethnic Hungarian communities living in neighbouring states around Hungary are involuntary communities, or “groups that were forcibly severed from the process of Hungarian nation building”. Despite the fact that Hungary as a kin-state is one of the most active kin-states in the region, Hungarian diaspora communities¹ experienced no or very little attention before 2010. The second Orbán government (2010–2014) was the very first government to introduce programmes and policies addressing diaspora communities. These calls towards diaspora members have been in synchrony with the main aim of the government, namely, to unify the Hungarian nation, regardless of where its members reside.

The meaning of diaspora cannot be understood as a static social group with fixed boundaries. Rather, it is an ever-changing social category. According to Gamlen (2014, 184), diaspora communities today are seen mainly as political projects and are understood as constituencies. Diaspora, defined by Anthias (1998, 559), is “a connection between groups across different nation-states whose commonality derives from an original but maybe removed homeland; a new identity becomes constructed on a world scale which crosses national borders and boundaries”. As Gamlen (2014, 184) highlights, half of all member states of the UN have their own institutions which deal with diaspora communities. Diaspora institutions are important, as “they connect new developments in the global governance of migration with new patterns of national and transnational sovereignty and citizenship, and new ways of constructing individual identity in relation to new collectivities”. Building a diaspora community is similar to the nation building process: it is about “creating and maintaining links with emigrant populations around the world to foster a common identity” (Collyer 2014, 56).

Diaspora institutions are significant both from political science and international relations perspectives. Their existence shows the changing character of state sovereignty and national citizenship as well (Gamlen 2014, 181–183). The most relevant character of diaspora institutions lays in the fact that they also have an identity-shaping function, through which the nation-state defines who belongs to the respective diaspora community (in this way to the nation, too), and also redesigns the relations between the state, the citizenry and sovereignty. The existence of diaspora institutions demonstrates that the state today is more resilient and sovereignty itself is flexible, and both can be attached to individuals regardless of their territorial position (Brand 2006).

Based on the theory of nationalism, states maintain relations with diaspora mainly because these communities are understood as a detached part of the nation no matter what kind of citizenship they have or where they reside. These countries often offer differ-

¹ The estimated number of Hungarian diaspora living mainly in Western Europe and North America is almost equal with the number of Hungarian ethnic communities living in neighbouring countries around Hungary (app. 3 million people).

ent kinds of social and political rights or statuses for the members of these communities based on their ethnic self-identification. Analysing Hungarian kin-state policy, Csergő and Goldgeir (2009) define this kind of nationalism as trans-sovereign nationalism, while Pogonyi (2014) uses the similar expression of transnational nationalism. The most important aspect of trans-sovereign nationalism is that the ideology of the nation is not defined by state borders, but instead the nation as an “imagined community” can be transnational. In this way, citizenship practices of post-communists state are not only ethnic or civic, but rather territorial or post-territorial (Ragazzi 2014a, 492).

No matter what the main motivations of a state establishing diaspora strategies for their emigrants are, the existence and development of such strategies clearly show the changing in the last decades of the relation between state’s territory and sovereignty, as established by the Peace of Westphalia. Collyer (2014) underlines that making extraterritoriality of citizenship and voting rights possible shows us how state authority is respatialised. Some scholars argue that dual citizenship as a world phenomenon together with diaspora strategies undermines the main character of citizenship, namely that citizenship is a principle of dividing populations into nation-states as defined by territory. However, how can we be sure that it is the concept of citizenship that is changing and not our understanding of the state and sovereignty? Soysal (1994), for instance, already criticised the fixed meaning of citizenship at the beginning of the 1990s by claiming that “the state is no longer an autonomous and independent organization closed over a nationally defined population. Instead we have a system of constitutionally interconnected states with a multiplicity of membership” (Soysal 1994). Nowadays, the rights and obligations connected to citizenship are more attached to the individual than to the territory. A fact that is also weakening the understanding that citizenship can be seen as a membership in a territorialized state. Citizenship offered by the homeland can serve two main purposes. First, the homeland can determine who can be included into the given community/nation (especially if citizenship requirements are connected with national self-identification or language knowledge). Second, states can control and co-opt access to diaspora resources (King, Melvin 1999).

Making external voting available for emigrants is one of the most controversial tools of maintaining links with external citizens, as political rights connected to citizenship used to be bounded to territory. The extension of voting rights has an important meaning both symbolically and pragmatically. Symbolically in that making participation in elections available for those who do not reside in the territory of a country equals to the recognition of external citizens as full members of the political community or the polity, which is still understood as a state-based category. Spiro (2006, 102) conceptualises voting as “the only significant right in modern democracies that distinguishes the citizen from the alien”.

In analysing Hungarian diaspora policy after 2010, we argue that it can be understood both as a political project and as an identity project. We believe that the diaspora programme of the Fidesz government can be seen as a political project aimed at bringing diaspora communities into the domestic political arena. The symbolic or concrete support of the elites of different diaspora communities worldwide serves as a tool of legitimisation for Fidesz in the domestic political sphere, approving that the project of the reunification of the nation is a success and that Hungarians outside of the country are in favour of the nationalistic character of the Fidesz governance. On the other hand, we claim that to achieve political aims, the diaspora policy of Fidesz can be understood as a trans-border nation-building project based mainly on symbolic gestures. Thus, we argue that the

diaspora policy of Hungary after 2010 serves aims that are twofold: political (mobilising diaspora in domestic politics, using diaspora as source of legitimisation and gaining their support on elections) and symbolic (strengthening personal national self-identification of diaspora members, re-unification of the nation across borders). These two main directions of the Hungarian diaspora policy complement each other.

Engagement of diaspora as a political project

The amendment of the Hungarian constitution in 1989 (and later in 2010) introduced a symbolic reference to transborder Hungarians saying that “the Republic of Hungary bears a sense of responsibility for what happens to Hungarians living outside of its borders and shall promote and foster their relations with Hungary”. Although the policy towards Hungarian minority communities living in neighbouring countries around Hungary has been a central issue for Hungarian government after the regime change, Hungarian diaspora communities living in Western countries enjoyed very little attention. The second Orbán government changed this trend radically and introduced a structured policy focusing on the engagement of diaspora Hungarians living mainly in Western Europe and North America after 2010. This (re)discovery of diaspora communities meant that a large series of initiatives and programmes were launched targeting diaspora Hungarians, regardless of their command of the Hungarian language or their residence. One of the most successful programmes launched in 2010 is the cultural revitalization programme. In the framework of the so-called Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Programme (KCSP), Hungary sent interns into the diaspora whose task was to encourage their community activity, strengthen their relations towards Hungary and help them preserve their identity and culture.

The second Orbán government established the cornerstones of Hungarian diaspora politics by separating it from kin-state policy. This meant that not only different programmes and scholarships were launched but also a new institutionalized background was created. In doing so, the government acknowledged the different characters of diaspora communities and ethnic minority communities. At the same time, when the Hungarian Standing Conference² started its operation after a six-year break in 2010, a consultative forum for diaspora organizations was also set up, although the diaspora communities were still represented in the Hungarian Standing Conference as well. The new forum is called the Hungarian Diaspora Council and it serves as an independent representative body of Hungarian diaspora communities.

In trying to answer the question of what is the main motivation behind offering extra-territorial citizenship and external voting rights, Ragazzi (2014b) concludes that not only the conception of ethnicity or material actors influence diaspora strategies, but also the broader political-economic rationality which defines ethnic or material conceptions plays an important role regarding the direction and methods of diaspora strategies. He argues that the concept of governmentality developed by Foucault can also be applied in diaspora research. If we understand governmentality as a category associated with the willing participation of the governed, the Hungarian diaspora strategy can be understood as a good example of governmentality. Soon after coming to power, Orbán adopted dual citizenship for the kin abroad and voting rights were extended right before the 2014 elections. More

² A consultative organisation between political forces of Hungary and the Hungarian minority political parties with parliamentary or provincial representation in neighbouring countries.

than 90% of diaspora members voted Fidesz, moreover, when the Orbán government initiated its campaigns against migration or the “harmful” EU, these messages reached not only domestic Hungarians but the “new members” of the unified Hungarian nation as well since the programmes offered for the diaspora have served as good couriers of the government.

There are no exact numbers of how large the Hungarian diaspora living in Canada is, but estimates based on Canadian national statistics see it at approximately 320,000 people. We should also note that the Hungarian diaspora consists not only of emigrants who were born in Hungary but it also includes those ethnic Hungarians born in neighbouring countries around Hungary. These people did not live on the territory of Hungary and they do not have Hungarian citizenship but they self-identify as Hungarians. There are Hungarian diaspora communities in Canada in which a large number of members (in some cases the majority) originally come from Ukraine, Romania, (Czecho)Slovakia or Yugoslavia. As immigrants, only a minority of them maintain relations with their “origin countries” and the majority of them completely ignore the diaspora communities of their state of origin. Their relation towards the “homeland” is replaced by their relation towards Hungary, despite the fact that the majority have never lived in the territory of Hungary. This fact makes the Hungarian diaspora policy more complex, as Hungary acts simultaneously as a “state of origin” and also as kin-state for the diaspora.

Diaspora policy through everyday perspectives

We now examine the effects of the new Hungarian diaspora policy from a micro-level perspective to understand the meaning of these gestures and symbols from the angle of everyday life of those who are the members of these communities. We are particularly interested on how diaspora members construct the meaning of transnational citizenship and voting rights, and how they evaluate diaspora programmes in which they participate. Our aim is to understand why Hungarians in Western Canada apply for Hungarian citizenship, what their main motivations to vote in Hungarian elections are and how they see the relations between their community and the Hungarian state. To make us able to better understand the effects of the Hungarian diaspora policy, we also analyse how symbolic aspirations and political goals are met by looking at the reactions stirred in the focus group discussions.

In order to be able to examine these questions, we opted for a qualitative research design and organised focus group discussions as these are well suited to study one’s perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a specific idea, as well as for analysing in-group interactions. Focus groups capture everyday understandings, thoughts and feelings, and they also show how people discuss issues with each other. We conducted four focus group discussions in Edmonton, Calgary, Victoria and Nanaimo – all in Western Canada. Focus groups were made up of persons who have and have not obtained Hungarian citizenship. The moderators of the focus groups followed the same set of questions but all groups had their own dynamics – different shifts of emphasis in the discussions occurred in each group. The discussions were kept anonymous. Due to the boundaries of this article, the possibilities to quote our participants are also limited – here we highlight some of them to illustrate the main arguments.

Citizenship as marker of identity – feelings vs. rationalities

Citizenship could be a flexible bond between the state and the individual and, in the case of dual nationality, the values of different citizenships can be unequal for their owners (Soysal 1994, Ong 1999, Spiro 2010). Allowing for dual citizenship is in fact changing the homogenising nature of “traditional” citizenship concepts, because dual citizenship policies assume a kind of individualization since the new citizenship (the second one) is obtainable only individually (Gustafson 2005). National identity and citizenship are contextual. This is only more likely to be in the case of dual citizenship as individuals own simultaneously more than one membership and can use these memberships differently in different contexts (Bosniak 2002). In other words, in the case of dual citizenship, nationhood is replaced by individual personhood (Soysal 1994).

Our aim is to understand this personhood, how citizenship(s) can be integrated into the identity structures of the diaspora members, to see the relations between different citizenships and to explore the structure of identity/citizenship hierarchy built from these categories, i.e. which citizenship is more important for the respondents.

The majority of Hungarians in Canada are at least dual citizens, as they possess their “original” citizenship and their Canadian citizenship both of which they can complement with their Hungarian transnational citizenship. This means our focus group participants could have citizenships with three different countries: most often Romania/Serbia, Yugoslavia/Slovakia or Czechoslovakia, Canada and Hungary. For our participants, their original citizenship (mainly those of Romanian and Serbian citizenship) had no special meaning to them. It is part of the past; it is something they have because it was given to them and it is good to have if they want to visit their families. Canadian citizenship was more special, as they have obtained it based on their own decision. It is something they have achieved; it was not guaranteed that they will get it. It is equal with success, but, on the other hand, it is also the sign of the fact that they were uprooted from their homeland. Generally, it is positive achievement and something they are proud of: *“When I had my Serbian and Canadian passport in my pocket, I arrived home and showed my Canadian one. It was such a weird feeling. Weird, but so good. I felt myself important. OK, maybe not important, but special. That I have it and I am not Serb, but I can say I am Canadian, and it has so different meaning for me!”* (1st FGD, Alberta)

Those who obtained Hungarian citizenship were generally positive about it. For some, this citizenship is only symbolic, but the symbol itself is more important than everything else. It is interpreted as the connection to the nation (and not to the country only), as a rectified injustice of the past, and some respondents are more proud of their Hungarian passport than their Canadian one.

“That was such a good feeling for my soul (to know) that I am Hungarian citizen. You will laugh, but I do not have a Canadian passport. And when I go to the bank and I have to identify myself, I do not show my Canadian ID, but my Hungarian passport!” (4th FGD, British Columbia)

Elder participants associated the meaning of Hungarian citizenship with other dimensions of acknowledgement. According to their interpretation, citizenship can ease their own feelings connected to the fact that they left their country. As one of the participants expressed, for him, Hungarian citizenship is an act of forgiveness from Hungary: *“It is a very positive thing, [...] that we are not considered as traitors. Because in Hungary, some*

people think that those who left the country after 1945 or 1956 are traitors. It seems that even the government acknowledges us. That we are not enemies of Hungary, that we are also a living cell of the nation.” (2nd FGD, Alberta)

For the majority of participants, however, the meaning of the new Hungarian citizenship was not mainly symbolic but practical. Different motivations in the background convinced them to apply for Hungarian citizenship. For some, this practical meaning of Hungarian citizenship is that it gives the possibility for them to return to Hungary, while for others it opens new doors and perspectives, such as the doors of the European Union. With both Canadian and Hungarian passport, they have additional rights and possibilities available than just with their Canadian passport. In this case, we can witness the instrumentalisation of citizenship, as one participant put it: *“It is a good thing to have Hungarian citizenship and I really appreciated that it was possible to submit the application for my children as well. I am a father of a five- and a seven-year-old. These girls will never speak Hungarian... but with EU citizenship they will be eligible to apply for scholarships in other English-speaking countries in the EU and study for free. Here, tuition fees are high. This is one of the main reasons we decided to get Hungarian citizenship for them as well.” (4th FGD, British Columbia)*

Our focus group discussions also proved that citizenship itself is an important identity marker, and in case of multiple citizenship, a hierarchy of citizenships can be outlined. In case of multiple citizenship, one of the citizenships is always closer to its holder than the other, however, the order is based on an individual’s experiences and feelings. Our results show that although acquiring Hungarian citizenship includes a broad selection of positive associations. It is not able to bridge over the distance between the home and the homeland, and that the practical life of our participants is now in Canada. This is especially common for participants who left their homeland a long time ago, and who claim that acquiring citizenship did not replace the feeling of uprootedness. Although they evaluate their “new” Hungarian citizenship as a good possibility, their personal experience is that they are “just” visitors in Hungary now, and they do not feel they belong there since their life is established in Canada.

“We know it better from here” – voting without consequences?

As we underlined above, offering voting rights for non-resident citizens is considered a controversial decision which further questions how we understand sovereignty and non-resident citizenship itself. The most pressing question regarding external voting is how one can be an active participant in at least two political communities, which raises not only legal or political questions, but ethical concerns as well. Spiro (2006, 110) differentiates three types of dangers attached to non-resident voting rights: irresponsibility, being uninformed and being undisciplined. In the age of disinformation, where borders do not stop the spread of fake news, it is very easy to be irresponsible with votes, and to be uninformed or undisciplined is not connected to geographical position either.

Questions about participation in Hungarian elections created deep cleavages between our respondents, as some of them felt voting rights were more important than acquiring Hungarian citizenship, while others raised ethical questions against these rights. Participants were divided by the fact that they are not living (and some of them never lived before) in Hungary. One group felt that the gesture of making voting possible is so signif-

icant that one cannot afford to miss the opportunity to support the party that made this possible for them, while the other group clearly denied this offer based on its unfairness towards those Hungarians who physically live in the country. It is also interesting to note that mainly those participants supported external voting, who migrated to Canada from states surrounding Hungary (minority Hungarians), while those coming directly from Hungary were more critical: *“You know what? [...] all of us should go back to Hungary and live there for at least five years. And after that you can vote. But now... that I am not living there [...] How can I decide those questions?”* (3rd FGD, British Columbia)

It is important to add here that legislation makes it easier to vote for “new citizens” than emigrants from Hungary – a new citizen can vote via mail. Those who retained their citizenship and have an address in Hungary cannot vote by mail and need to visit their nearest Hungarian embassy, which, in the case of Canada, causes serious troubles due to big distances. The semi-open atmosphere of focus group discussions made it possible for participants to express their thoughts regarding this issue, too: *“To be honest, I was so angry when, during the last parliamentary elections, I, as a Hungarian citizen who lived there for 40 years, was not able to vote because I had to travel to Ottawa. But those who never ever lived there and got Hungarian citizenship last year [...] they were allowed to vote via mail. I agree with the gesture, and yes, let’s give Hungarian citizenship for those who wants to have it. But I do not really support voting rights in this form.”* (1st FGD, Alberta)

For some of the participants, the fact that voting rights have more significant meaning than the citizenship itself was also proved by how they argued against external voting being unfair. Some claimed that although they do not live in the territory of Hungary, the distance makes them able to understand different processes and developments in a broader perspective. Since they are not part of the small battles of everyday life in Hungary, they see the big picture, and this fact authorises them to participate equally in elections in Hungary: *“I was always told in Facebook that I should not be so confident about my opinion as I do not live there, but I say we can see the big picture from here – what Hungarians living in Hungary are not able to see.”* (2nd FGD, Alberta)

In some cases, this attitude was coupled by the feeling of “we know it better”, claiming that they, those living in Canada, have already experienced what is just in the process of formation in Central Europe. They already know what it means to live in a globalised multicultural country. As one focus group participant expressed, Hungarians living in Canada can help Hungary with their votes to avoid making mistakes regarding globalisation or multicultural society: *“We can see here another development in politics, as Canada is more developed in this regards than Hungary. I am not sure you agree with me, but [...] sooner or later Hungary will also be forced into globalisation as Canada was, and as other developed countries were. For this reason, I think it is natural that we will support national politics from here as we do not agree with these processes.”* (2nd FGD, Alberta)

Another positive argument regarding external voting is that opening up the borders of the political community by offering voting rights for citizens, regardless of their residence, actually made the political community equal with the Hungarian nation. Participants argued that, in their understanding, the elections in Hungary are not just about the future of the country, but instead about the future of the nation. They participate in elections not because they want to make decisions about certain questions in Hungary, but because they can now make decisions about the future of the nation: *“First, I thought I will not vote on Hungarian elections, because I do not live there. Then I understood that actually my vote can*

influence the national policy of Hungary. When I see that there are parties which care about the nation, not only about the country, but the nation as well, I will support these parties. I do not want to decide the price of Parisian salami, because I will not feel it. But I want to make a decision about the national policy and about the nation.” (1st FGD, Alberta)

As other participant explains it: *“But we can see the big picture. Just think about Brexit. The identity is more important than the promised well-being. Actually, we say the same. Identity is more important than another Volkswagen factory.” (3rd FGD, British Columbia)*

Although moderators did not inquire about it, the Hungarian referendum about refugee quotas in October 2016 also created heated debates in some of the focus group discussions, since extraterritorial citizenship enables diaspora Hungarians to vote on referendums as well. It was interesting to see that Hungarians coming from countries other than Hungary felt more motivated to take part in the discussion and vote on the referendum than those who lived in Hungary before they left. This was the first major political issue in which “new” Hungarian citizens were involved. As it is visible from the official referendum results, few used their voting rights. However, discussions show that they felt addressed during the government campaign against “illegal migration” and the government’s nationalistic/xenophobic political agenda was channelled into their discourse. Although the majority of participants in our focus groups are migrants to Canada, it is interesting to see how they are ready to reject migrants in Hungary: *“In this referendum, which will be held in October in Hungary, that Brussels wants to decide who will live on the territory of Hungary... I will support the Hungarian government. I feel like this question is about the independence of Hungary, and I want to support Hungary’s independence with my vote.” (2nd FGD, Alberta)*

Evaluation of Diaspora Programmes

Participants also discussed what it means for them that the Hungarian government launched several new programmes which aim to support and preserve their Hungarian heritage and cultural life. The most successful program is the KCSP programme, where the government sends volunteers to diaspora communities to help them to preserve their identity. Although the majority of our participants were active in their local Hungarian community, they were sceptic about the role of the volunteers sent by the Hungarian government. Not only the programmes’ bureaucratic character was criticised (lack of clear rules, unsecured future of the programme, financial insecurities regarding the transfer of support) but in some communities the selected volunteers’ relations with domestic political actors was also mentioned with negative connotation.

“The basic idea behind the initiative is not bad, but the lack of rules makes it possible to cheat a bit [...] It is not fair that [...] we are good friends, so send here your son, and we will take care of him while he is on vacation in Canada on a governmental budget.” (2nd FGD, Alberta)

Although some of the participants were satisfied with the programme itself, its uncertain future raised ambivalent feelings while they were evaluating it: *“We had a wonderful, excellent volunteer last year. But I have no idea about the future of this programme. I think they still have two volunteers in Vancouver, but I am not sure [...] I think this programme will also finish soon.” (3rd FGD, British Columbia)*

The majority of participants, however, were sceptical about this programme. One reason was that they do not see the main use of it, as in some cases the communities are not big or active enough to give regular tasks for volunteers. Furthermore, as participants expressed, they are able to maintain themselves without any kind of external help or support. In some cases they are not sure whether their community profits from this programme. The biggest questions asked regarded the financial background of this programme. Participants are unsure if the money was put to good use: *“I have some friends in Hungary who are teachers and I know what kind of problems they have to face with [...] When I saw the amount the Hungarian government is spending on this program [...] Oh my [...] Why they are sending these students here? Well, these students are packing books, peeling potatoes or reading some poems when we have a commemoration. To be honest, we can manage our lives here quite well. As you can see, we are still alive. [...] Do not get me wrong, it is a wonderful gesture from Hungary [...], but when you see the amount behind it... It is just a bit suspicious. Why is the government spending so much money on us? What is in the background?”* (2nd FGD, Alberta)

Participants also discussed with each other about what could be the motivation for the Hungarian government to create and maintain these programmes. The moderator asked questions aiming to map what kind of information they have about other programmes and how they evaluate these in regards to the future development of their communities. It was interesting to see that, in some groups, even the leaders or main representatives of the community were not able to identify or explain the role of the Diaspora Council, or how the volunteers get their salaries. Some participants were sure that Hungary gets funding from the European Union to maintain relations with the diaspora, while others characterised the Diaspora Council as an umbrella organisation, representing and defending Hungarian positions in Canada. Participants see the whole process that started in 2010 as a diasporisation process coordinated mainly from Budapest and with little input from local communities. Participants also felt financial tools play a much too important role in shaping the relations of Budapest with the local community: *“Instead of supporting us to create our own communities, no, they want to organise our communities. And in this way they can better control to whom to give the money. It is not allowed to spend that money for ideas we want to realise. The aim of the Diaspora Council is exactly this: here is the money, but they tell you how to spend it. The Council itself is a good idea. The KCSP itself is a good idea. But not like this.”* (2nd FGD, Alberta)

Regarding the function and the role of the Diaspora Council, participants expressed the same thoughts: it is not a bottom-up organisation functioning as a consultative platform for leaders of the diaspora community, rather it is based on the relations between the given community and the ministry responsible for its work: *“From Canada, there are sixteen representatives in the Council. Sixteen representatives have sixteen opinions. And due to this there is no dialogue. The result of this is that we have two presidents from Canada. I think the Diaspora Council functions as the extended arm of the Hungarian government [...] they will decide what we will have to do.”* (2nd FGD, Alberta)

Conclusion

We reviewed Hungarian diaspora policies such as external citizenship, external voting and diaspora engagement programmes from an everyday perspective in the Hungarian

diaspora communities living in Western Canada, 8,000 kilometres away from Budapest. The Western Canadian Hungarian diaspora is interesting because it comprises communities of Hungarians originating both from Hungary and its neighbouring countries, thus we could see how those who do and do not have a “real” relation with the Hungarian state, having never lived in the territory of the country, conceptualise the meaning of diaspora policies, what kind of thoughts and feelings they attach to these issues and how these effect their everyday lives. Our assumptions are that the diaspora strategy of the Hungarian government after 2010 has twofold aims: it can be seen both as a political and as an identity project, aiming to channel diaspora community members into the Hungarian domestic politics through symbolic gestures based on national self-identification of persons belonging to diaspora communities.

Our results show that extraterritorial citizenship is a crucial part of addressing the diaspora, gaining their trust and engaging them with the government. Extraterritorial Hungarian citizenship mainly equals with the feeling of belonging to the nation, to the Hungarian community or to Hungary. The answers from our focus group participants clearly show that those who evaluated citizenship as a symbolic call from the state feel compelled to express their gratitude towards the political party which made this possible. Some of them conceptualised citizenship offered by the homeland as a gesture expressing that they are members of the nation, a community of all Hungarians. Citizenship confirmed that they, as emigrants, are not enemies who betrayed the country when they decided to leave it, but they are also part of the nation, no matter where they live or what kind of citizenship they have today. On the other hand, for some younger participants, the meaning of Hungarian citizenship was instrumentalised. They see it as an opportunity to get easier access to the European Union.

Granted external voting rights created clear cleavages within participants, with those originally from Hungary being much less in support of external voting rights than those who originate from countries other than Hungary. For the majority of participants, voting in Hungarian elections without facing the consequences of their votes is an ethical question, meaning they should not interfere into the everyday life the country where they do not live. Other participants, however, had an opposite answer to this question and claimed that, as outsiders, they are able to make more conscious and wiser decisions than those living in Hungary as they see the bigger picture and can evaluate the country’s position from a broader perspective. Yet for others voting on the Hungarian elections was equal with making decisions about the nation and not about the country.

When participants evaluated current diaspora programmes financed by Hungary, they were critical of its unclear financial background, ill-defined purposes, indefinite rules and mixed effects. Some participants expressed that they do not see themselves as a diaspora community due to the huge distances between the different Hungarian communities within Canada, their weak representation as a community, and the absence of any kind of institutionalisation. Although we had participants coordinating governmental programmes on a local level, the majority identify their community only on a local level (Hungarian community in Calgary, Hungarians in Victoria, etc.), and only the minority see themselves as a structured community. Participants were also unaware of the government’s institutionalization efforts, as some were not able to say what the Diaspora Council is or who represents them on annual meetings in Budapest.

These discussions highlight that the programmes of the Hungarian government can be understood as parts of its systemic and one-sided diasporisation strategy, which is a top-down process coordinated from Budapest. The focus group discussions show there is a lack of solidarity and cooperation between the Hungarian diaspora organisations and communities in Canada, which makes it hard to create and sustain those characteristics that are essential for diaspora communities. The focus group discussions also confirmed the two-foldness of the Hungarian diaspora strategy – although symbolic gestures, such as the acknowledgement of their belonging to the nation, offering extra-territorial citizenship and external voting rights, are positively evaluated by participants in most cases, in general, the participants are more critical with other programmes aiming to create their own diaspora identity through a top-down process coordinated mainly from Budapest.

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