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Increasing Marginality, Ethnic Parallelism and Asymmetric Accommodation. Social and Political Processes Concerning the Hungarian Community of Transylvania

Our paper outlines some of the major social and political processes affecting Transylvanian Hungarians. It is a progress report relying on empirical investigations carried out mainly within the framework of the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities. It will focus on problem areas and will underscore some of the policy and political challenges the ethnic elites of this community have to face.

Our first thesis is that social and demographic processes are not independent from political-institutional structures framing the everyday life of a minority community. In this sense, the all-embracing power asymmetry between minority and majority categories characterizing modern nation states is of central importance. Andreas Wimmer highlighted that the question of “*Who owns the state?*” (in ethnic terms) is crucial, even if largely ignored in the social sciences.¹ The importance of this question is due to the fact that modern nation states have created new mechanism of social exclusion, namely they have systematically privileged the titular ethnic groups. Brubaker et al. analyzing the everyday relations between Romanians and Hungarians in Cluj/Kolozsvár also highlighted the deeply asymmetric nature of this relation and emphasized that this asymmetry has severe demographic and social consequences on the long term.² The first part of our paper will describe major macro-social and demographic trends from this perspective, highlighting some of the consequences of the power asymmetries.

Our second thesis is that the Hungarian elites of Transylvania responded to this asymmetric institutional setting with a program of ethnic parallelism. Our paper will present this parallelism not only as a political program, but also as a social and institutional reality. However, we should also highlight that ethnic parallelism in Transylvania is only partial. The situation of the Transylvanian

¹ Wimmer, Andreas: *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict. Shadows of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002. 85–114.

² Brubaker, Rogers – Feischmidt, Margit – Fox, Jon – Grancea, Liana: *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 2006. 211–217.

Hungarian community can be correctly characterized as a duality of the ethnically integrated and non-ethnically integrated social fields. In our opinion ethnic parallelism existing in the educational system, respectively in local politics is of central importance in sustaining the ethno-cultural reproduction of the Hungarian community.

Our third thesis is that the existing model of political integration of the Hungarian community in the Romanian polity has a dual existence. While tacitly allowing for some forms of ethnic parallelism, it maintains the profoundly asymmetric character of the institutional structure. In this model the possibilities of productive policy-making on ethnic grounds have been practically exhausted. In the third part of our paper we will try to describe this situation from the perspective of Brubaker's triadic model, focusing on the nationalising (Romanian) state, ethnic elites and Hungarian kin-state policy.³

1. Social processes: toward increasing asymmetries

1.1. Regional differences

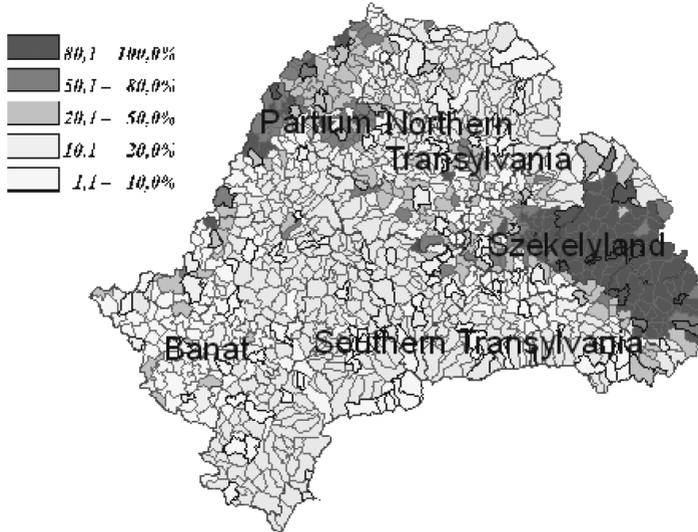
Before drafting some of the macro-social and demographic trends affecting Transylvanian Hungarians we have to underscore that Transylvania is an extensive area of 107 thousand square kilometres, while Transylvanian Hungarians are a highly diverse ethno-linguistic community. In this area (which is larger than Hungary proper) live nearly 1.3 million Hungarians making up 19 percent of its total population. However the local Hungarian communities are highly divergent, due to the different ethnic structures of the different regions that they inhabit.

Székelyland is a clearly distinguishable ethno-historical region and its inhabitants share a strong sense of regional identity. It is the most compact Hungarian ethnic block in the Carpathian Basin outside Hungary, and the sole region belonging to Transylvania that is populated overwhelmingly by Hungarians. In our understanding, Székelyland comprises Harghita/Hargita and Covasna/Kovászna counties, and the East-Central part of Mureş/Maros county. The proportion of Hungarians in this territory is 80 percent. The number of Hungarians living in Székelyland is 475 thousand persons, making

³ Brubaker, Rogers: *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996; Brubaker, Rogers: *Accidental Diasporas and External Homelands in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present*. Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna, Political Science Series no. 71. October 2000.

up 38 percent of the entire Transylvanian Hungarian community. The Hungarian majority of the territory creates a unique opportunity for putting to work minority institutions, the use of the Hungarian language, as well as to formulate ethno-political claims.

Figure 1. *Hungarians in Transylvania*



Source: 2011 census data

The Hungarian-Romanian border-region called *Partium* by Hungarians (Crişana by Romanians) is another region with a relatively high concentration of Hungarians. In Bihor/Bihar, Satu-Mare/Szatmár and Sălaj/Szilágy counties live 315 thousand Hungarians, making up 25 percent of the Transylvanian Hungarian community. The proportion of the Hungarians in these three counties is 28 percent on average, but in the ethnically mixed North-Western part of the region almost half of the population is Hungarian.

Central Transylvania is composed by Cluj/Kolozs county and the Western part of Mureş/Maros, including the town of Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely. Hungarians make up 22 percent of the population. The two main political and cultural centres of the Hungarian community (Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár and Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely, with 16 percent of Hungarians and 45 percent of Hungarians, respectively) are situated in Central Transylvania. The number of Hungarians in this region is 262 thousand making up 21 percent of the Transylvanian Hungarian community.

Finally, *Northern- and Southern Transylvania* and *Banat* are also home of Hungarian communities of significant size. However, these communities are dispersed, and live locally in a minority situation. The proportion of the Hungarians is below 10 percent in all of the counties situated in these three regions. The total number of Hungarians living dispersed in these extended areas is 216 thousand, making up 17 percent of the Transylvanian Hungarian community.

1.2. *The demographic evolution of the Hungarian population in Transylvania*

The Hungarian community of Transylvania has been characterized by an accelerated population loss following the collapse of the state socialist regime. The number of Hungarians decreased by almost 350 thousand (21 percent) in the time period between 1992 and 2011. As is shown in the table below, the overall proportion of Hungarians (in Transylvania and Romania) has also dropped.

Table 1. *The number and proportion of Hungarians in Romania and Transylvania according to the censuses of the period between 1966 and 2011*

	Number*	% of total population	
		Transylvania	Romania
1966	1 619 592	23,8	8,5
1977	1 713 928	22,5	7,9
1992	1 624 959	20,8	7,1
2002	1 431 807	19,6	6,6
2011	1 279 402	18,9	6,3

Source: census data

* The number refers to the whole territory of Romania (99 percent of Hungarians of Romania live in Transylvania)

The population loss was caused by several factors. In order of their importance these factors are the following: emigration, negative natural growth, and assimilatory processes.⁴

⁴ Csata István–Kiss Tamás: *Népesedési perspektívák. Az erdélyi magyar népesség regionálisan tagolt előreszámítása húsz és harminc éves időtávra.* (Demographic perspectives. A projection of the Hungarian population for 20 and 30 years by regions) Kolozsvár: Kriterion Könyvkiadó–RMDSZ Ügvevezető Elnökség. 2007.; Kiss Tamás–Barna Gergő: *Népszámlálás 2011. Erdélyi magyar népesedés a XXI. század első évtizedében. Demográfiai és statisztikai elemzés* (The 2011 census. Demographic processes affecting Transylvanian Hungarians in the first decade

One can distinguish at least three consecutive waves of *emigration* for the last three decades.⁵ The first wave began in the late 1980s and ended in 1991. An approximate number of 100 thousand Hungarians left Transylvania during this period. The main target country of the emigrants (and refugees) was Hungary. The majority of the emigrants was highly qualified and from urban areas (especially Cluj/Kolozsvár, Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely and Oradea/Nagyvárad).⁶ The second wave of emigration occurred in the time period between 1992 and 2002, when an additional number of 90 thousand Hungarians left the country. Hungarians were highly overrepresented among the Romanian emigrants during this period. Their main target country was still Hungary, but new forms of the migration emerged, namely, the labour force migration and the educational migration. Transylvanian Hungarians were present in all segments of the Hungarian labour market from the highly qualified professionals⁷ to those engaged in the secondary labour market.⁸ As part of the process of EU enlargement, Romanian citizens have been exempted from visa in the majority of the EU countries. This marked the beginning of a very intensive process of Romanian emigration. Since 2002, approximately 3 million Romanian citizens left the country, the main receiving countries being Italy and Spain. All strata of Romanian society were affected by the migratory processes, however, former industrial workers and subsistence farmers were overrepresented among migrants.⁹ In this third wave of emigration, Hungarians were clearly underrepresented among Romanian emigrants.¹⁰ One can observe that a relocation of the main destination places of Romanian migrants has occurred

of the 21st century. A demographic and statistical analysis). Kolozsvár: ISPMN Working Papers 43.

⁵ Horváth István: *Erdély és Magyarország közötti migrációs folyamatok* (Migratory processes from Transylvania to Hungary). Kolozsvár: Scientia Kiadó. 2005. 9–133.

⁶ Regényi Emil – Törzsök Erika: Romániai menekültek Magyarországon 1988 (Romanian refugees in Hungary 1988). In Miklós T.: *Jelentések a határokon túli magyar kisebbségek helyzetéről. Csehszlovákia, Szovjetunió, Románia, Jugoszlávia*. Budapest: ELTE. 1988. 187–241.

⁷ Gödri Irén – Tóth Pál Péter: *Bevándorlás és beilleszkedés* (Immigration and integration). Budapest: KSH Népeségkutató Intézet, 2005.

⁸ Fox, John: From National Inclusion to Economic Exclusion: Ethnic Hungarian Labour Migration to Hungary. *Nations and Nationalism*. 2007, 13 (1).

⁹ Horváth István – Kiss, Tamás: *Dynamic Historical Analysis of Longer Term Migratory, Labour Market and Human Capital Processes in Romania*. Country report developed within the project ‘SEEMIG Managing Migration and Its Effects – Transnational Actions Towards Evidence Based Strategies’. 2013.

¹⁰ Kiss Tamás – Barna Gergő: *Népszámlálás 2011. Erdélyi magyar népesedés a XXI. század első évtizedében. Demográfiai és statisztikai elemzés* (The 2011 census. Population processes affecting Transylvanian Hungarians in the first decade of the 21st

in the last years, that is, from the Mediterranean Area to (North)-Western Europe.¹¹ It is possible that in time Hungarians are going to be overrepresented among emigrants targeting Germany and the United Kingdom. This is due in part to the new possibility of acquiring Hungarian citizenship.¹²

The second factor causing population loss is the *negative natural growth* of the Hungarian population. The number of deaths exceeded by almost 140 thousand the number of new-borns in the time period between 1992 and 2011. As in the rest of the Eastern European region the level of fertility (TFR) is well below the replacement level (at 1,3-1,4 children per woman). We should emphasize however that the fertility of Hungarian women is not below the Romanian national average. The negative natural growth is more accentuated due to the more advanced process of ageing of the Hungarian population.¹³

A last component to be discussed here is the *assimilatory process*. Regarding this aspect sharp regional differences have to be highlighted.

Table 2. *The evolution of the Hungarian population in Transylvanian regions in the period between 1992 and 2011*

	1992	2002	2011	Population loss 1992-2011 (%)
Székelyland	531 568	499 219	475 164	10.6
Partium	385 246	342 254	314 741	18.3
Central Transylvania	337 875	291 553	262 185	22.4
Northern-, Southern Transylvania and Banat	349 234	282 692	216 154	38.1
Transylvania (Total)	1 603 923	1 415 718	1 268 244	20.9

Source: census data

The intense emigration and the negative net migration characterize both the Transylvanian Hungarian and Romania populations. However, the dispersed Hungarian communities in the Northern and Southern parts of Transylvania and in Banat are also affected by an

century. A demographic and statistical analysis). Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj, Working Papers No. 43.

¹¹ Horváth-Kiss, 2013. *Dynamic Historical Analysis*. op.cit.

¹² Kiss Tamás: Nemzetdiskurzusok hálójában. Az állampolgárság-politika, mint a magyar nemzetre vonatkozó klasszifikációs küzdelem epizódja és eszköze. (Defining the nation. Citizenship policy, as tool of the classificatory struggle concerning the Hungarian nation). *Magyar Kisebbség* 2013, 69-70 (3-4). 8–95.

¹³ Kiss-Barna, 2012. *Népszámlálás*. op. cit.

accelerated process of assimilation. In these areas, the proportion of ethnically mixed marriages reaches very high levels¹⁴ and – due to an imbalanced model of ethnic socialization inside mixed families¹⁵ – this results in a demographic and ethno-cultural erosion of the dispersed Hungarian communities. The (mixed) family is not the sole channel of the assimilatory process through which members of dispersed communities depart from the Hungarian ethno-linguistic category. Another key institution undermining the reproduction of the Hungarian ethno-cultural community is the educational system. Hungarian language education has practically collapsed in several regions (like Banat, Maramureş/Máramaros and some Southern Transylvanian counties), and the majority of Hungarian children have ended up receiving only a Romanian language education. In sum, the accelerated process of assimilation is one of the major factors causing the decrease of nearly 40 percent of the number of Hungarians living in dispersed communities. The assimilatory process (although to a much lesser extent) is also characteristic in Central Transylvania and Partium, while it is completely absent in Székelyland.

We should also highlight the relatively favourable demographic prospects of Székelyland. In this region, the proportion of the Hungarians has not dropped after the change of the regime, and the population of Székelyland has decreased in a significantly lesser degree than the (Romanian) national average. Besides, the significance of the Székely region from the perspective of the Transylvanian Hungarian community is increasing. A telling figure in this sense is that the ratio of Hungarians living in Székelyland has increased from 33 percent in 1992 to 38 percent in 2011. The trend is even more evident when studying the younger generations. In 2010, 49 percent of the Hungarian children were born in Székelyland, and the majority of children who started their elementary education in Hungarian language schools were from this region. The most important challenge regarding the ethno-demographic future of the region is the social integration of (Hungarian speaking) Roma communities. The majority of Roma living in Székelyland identifies itself with the Hungarian category in official situations (census, elections, educational enrolment etc.) but

¹⁴ In Timiş/Temes, Hunedoara/Hunyad and Sibiu/Szeben and Caraş-Severin/Krassó-Szörény counties the majority of marrying Hungarians choose a Romanian spouse. In Maramureş/Máramaros, Bistriţa-Năsăud/Beszterce-Naszód, Alba/Fehér, Braşov/Brassó and Arad the proportion of marrying Hungarians entering in mixed marriages is above 40 percent. .

¹⁵ As a matter of course, offspring of ethnically mixed families master the Romanian language, but it is rather an exception that they also learn Hungarian.

in everyday life there is a huge social distance between the Roma and the non-Roma.¹⁶

1.3. *A changing system of ethnic stratification*

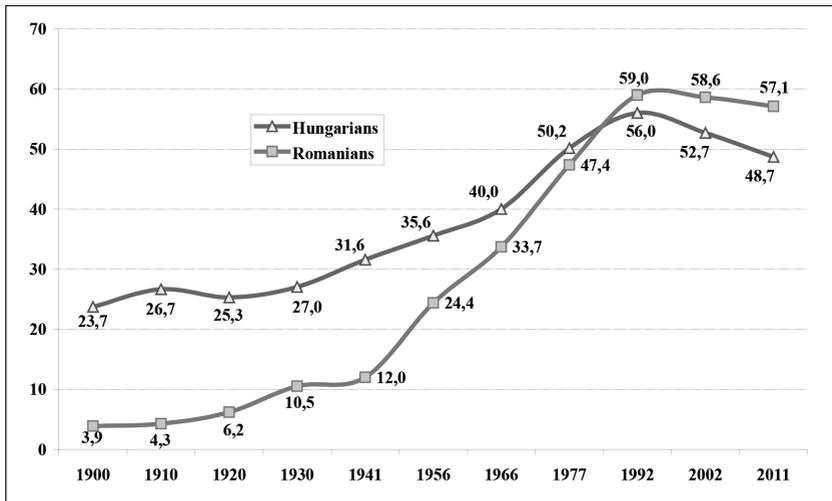
Two important aspects of ethnic stratification system will be outlined here: first, the process of social marginalization affecting the Hungarian community, and second, the level of social inequalities within the Hungarian community. The next section will discuss the dual character of the social structure of the Transylvanian Hungarian community, which in several respects is organized as a quasi-parallel ethnic society, while in other respects is integrated into the mainstream (Romanian) social structure.

The process of *social marginalization* affecting the Hungarian community can be observed from a historical perspective, but the process also has an obvious territorial aspect. There are sharp regional differences in what concerns the level of economic development in Transylvania. There is an economically prosperous corridor, linking Timișoara/Temesvár with Arad, Oradea/Nagyvárad, Cluj/Kolozsvár, Târgu Mureș/Marosvásárhely, Brașov/Brassó and Sibiu/Nagyszeben. The regions outside this corridor, the ethnically mixed Partium, the preponderantly Romanian Maramureș/Máramaros, Bistrița-Năsăud/Beszterce-Naszód, Caraș-Severin/Krassó Szörény, Hunedoara/Hunyad, and Alba/Fehér, as well as the preponderantly Hungarian inhabited Székelyland can be considered as economically peripheral areas. From the perspective of the ethnic stratification system, the key problem is that while the demographic prospects of the Hungarians living in the economically peripheral regions is relatively favourable; spectacular demographic erosion has taken place in the prospering urban areas. As a consequence, the proportion of Hungarians living in disfavoured regions is sharply increasing.

A similar process can be identified by looking at the rural-urban distribution of the Hungarian population. The major urban centres of Transylvania were overwhelmingly Hungarian (and Saxon in Southern Transylvania) during the interwar period, while the rural areas (outside Székelyland and Partium) had a Romanian majority. The idea that Hungarians are an urban ethnic group had some sociological relevance up until the 1960s. However, the processes taking place during the period of state socialism have completely reversed the rural-urban distribution of different ethnic groups.

¹⁶ According to the 2011 census, the number of Roma in Székelyland is 25 thousands. However the number of those identified as Roma by their surroundings is 71 thousand (11 percent of the total population).

Figure 2. *Proportion of the urban population among Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania*



Source: census data

During the state socialist period Romanians were highly over-represented among internal migrants moving from rural to urban areas. After the late 1980's, the emigration of Hungarians was more accentuated in urban areas, and the assimilatory processes were also more intense in town centers. As a consequence, one could witness a "ruralization" of the Hungarian community.

Another important aspect is that Hungarians are evidently disadvantaged from the perspective of educational attainment. University graduates are clearly underrepresented in all birth-cohorts. The expansion of higher education certainly increased the chance of Hungarians to graduate. It is characteristic of their studies however that their studies are in the least marketable universities and specializations. Hungarians are overrepresented among the graduates of art, human and social science faculties, and teacher's training colleges, and underrepresented among graduates of economic, law, and public administration faculties. This is in part due to the "unhealthy" structure of the Hungarian language university education which limits Hungarian instruction mainly to less marketable specializations.¹⁷

¹⁷ Kiss Tamás: *Etnikai rétegződési rendszer Erdélyben és Romániában. A magyarok társadalmi pozíciói (The system of ethnic stratification in Transylvania and Romania: The social positions of Hungarians)*. *Regio*. 2014, 2. 187–245.

Turning to the second aspect, it is worthy highlighting that *income and wealth inequalities* are smaller within the Hungarian community than in Romania in general. The degree of income inequality in Romania is the highest among EU countries; however, they are lower than in most of the post-soviet states. The inequalities among Transylvanian Hungarians are lower than in Romania but higher than in Hungary. Hungarians are underrepresented not only among those with higher income and status but also among the poor. In other words, to be Hungarian means fewer chances for high income and upper middle class status, however, it does not increase risk of poverty.¹⁸

1.4. Language usage and linguistic rights

Two points have to be highlighted regarding language use in Transylvania. First, in the Hungarian-Romanian relations, language use is intimately linked to ethnic boundary lines.¹⁹ Second, the institutionally sustained power asymmetries between the ethnic minority and majority have a crucial role in shaping everyday linguistic practices.

The distinction between Romanians and Hungarians is defined by two factors: the subjective identification with one of these ethnonational categories, and a particular set of linguistic and cultural abilities.²⁰ In formal contexts, the Hungarian community is delimited most frequently according to self-identification. But in everyday situations language knowledge and language use are at least equally important. Those who do not possess the proper linguistic abilities fail to be recognized by other Hungarians as members of the Hungarian community. From a majority (Romanian) perspective, the proper knowledge of the Romanian language and preferring the use of Romanian to the use of Hungarian is a prerequisite to being recognized as a member of the Romanian community.²¹

A second aspect of the language use in Transylvania is the deeply asymmetric relation between Romanian and Hungarian. Due to the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Brubaker et al., 2006. *Nationalist politics*. op cit.

²⁰ Different factors are employed in the making and maintaining the boundaries between Hungarians and Roma. Linguistic abilities and self-identification are not of primary importance in defining who is Roma and who is Hungarian in everyday life. The category of Roma is delimited primarily by “others” through hetero-identification based on phenotypic/racial features and elements of way of life (Ladányi János – Széleányi Iván: *Patterns of Exclusion. Constructing Gypsy Ethnicity and the Making of an Underclass in Transitional Societies of Europe*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). In several formal contexts (educational enrollment, electoral mobilization, census); however, Hungarian speaking Roma can be categorized as Hungarians.

²¹ Brubaker et al., 2006. *Nationalist politics*. op cit.

powerful linguistic ideology – emphasizing the primacy of the Romanian language – proclaimed by the Romanian state and shared by an overwhelming majority of Romanians, the local and everyday contexts characterized by a balanced and reciprocal language use have become scarce. The strength of the Romanian linguistic ideology is well shown by the data below:

Table 3. *Do you agree that Hungarians have the following linguistic rights? (June 2012)*

	Romania (N=1691)	Romanians of Transylvania (N=703)
To study in Hungarian language schools	48,3	53,6
To study in Hungarian language universities	41,0	43,1
To have their own Hungarian language university	27,3	24,9
To use Hungarian in the communication with local authorities	24,7	18,2

Source: Survey carried out by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities

Only half of the Romanians asked agree that Hungarians can study in Hungarian, and only slightly more than 40 percent agree that they can study in Hungarian at the university level. The official use of the Hungarian is nearly unanimously rejected by Romanian public opinion. It is important to note that Romanians of Transylvania support the official use of Hungarian less compared to their co-nationals living in other parts of the country.

Another important indicator of the linguistic asymmetry is the extremely limited knowledge of Hungarian outside the Hungarian community. The following table refers to 20-45 aged generations in 2007 (*Table 4*).

The *Turning points of our life-course survey* was carried out in 14 Transylvanian counties,²² where the proportion of Hungarian ethnics was 20,4 percent among the 20-45 aged generations according to the 2002 census. The proportion of those able to speak Hungarian was 23,4 percent, that is only slightly higher than the proportion of Hungarian ethnics. An additional 3,6 percent had some Hungarian knowledge, but not enough to answer the questions of a Hungarian language questionnaire. The circle of the Hungarian speakers was significantly larger than the Hungarian ethno-national community in Mureş/Maros, Bihor/Bihar, Satu Mare/Szatmár and Sălaj/Szilágy counties (the latter three forming the region of Partium). In Bihor/

²² Caraş-Severin/Krassó Szörény and Sibiu/Szeben were not included.

Table 4. *The proportion of persons able to speak in Hungarian among 20-45 aged generation in Transylvania by counties and towns*

	Do you speak Hungarian? (2007; 20-45 aged generations)			The proportion of Hungarian ethnics (2002 census: 20-45 aged generations)
	Not at all	Not well enough (to respond to the questions of the survey)	Well enough	
Arad county	87,6%	3,3%	9,1%	9,5%
<i>Arad (town)</i>	82,6%	6,0%	11,3%	10,6%
Bisrița-Năsăud/ Beszterce-Naszód	93,6%	2,0%	4,4%	5,4%
Bihar/Bihar	64,1%	4,2%	31,7%	25,2%
<i>Oradea Nagyvárad</i>	54,6%	9,1%	36,3%	24,2%
Brașov/Brassó megye	85,6%	3,6%	10,8%	7,5%
<i>Brașov/Brassó (town)</i>	92,0%	1,1%	6,9%	6,5%
Alba/Fehér	93,7%	1,8%	4,5%	5,1%
Harghita/Hargita	13,7%	1,0%	85,3%	83,1%
<i>Miercurea Ciuc/ Csíkszereda</i>	6,3%	1,0%	92,7%	77,9%
Hunedoara/Hunyad	93,3%	2,7%	4,0%	4,7%
Cluj/Kolozs	80,1%	5,2%	14,6%	15,7%
<i>Cluj-Napoca/ Kolozsvár</i>	78,2%	6,1%	15,6%	16,1%
Covasna/Kovászna	18,0%	3,4%	78,6%	72,5%
<i>Sfântu Gheorghe/ Sepsiszentgyörgy</i>	13,1%	7,3%	79,6%	72,5%
Maramureș/Máramaros	87,2%	5,2%	7,5%	8,5%
Mureș/Maros	46,5%	4,6%	48,9%	37,5%
<i>Târgu Mureș/ Marosvásárhely</i>	43,9%	4,9%	51,2%	42%
Satu Mare/Szatmár	48,1%	6,7%	45,7%	34,7%
<i>Satu Mare/ Szatmárnémeti</i>	32,7%	6,8%	60,5%	37,1%
Sălaj/Szilágy	67,0%	4,6%	28,4%	23,2%
Timiș/Temes	92,5%	2,7%	4,8%	6,4%
<i>Lugoj/Lugos</i>	89,5%	6,1%	4,4%	8,3%
Urban area total	71,4%	4,9%	22,2%	17,3%
Rural area total	72,6%	2,2%	25,2%	22,5%
Total	72,6%	3,6%	23,8%	20,4%

Source: Turning points of our life-course survey (Hungarian Central Statistical Office)

Bihar and Satu Mare/Szatmár a significant part of the Romanians also spoke Hungarian. In all of these counties the majority of Roma is Hungarian native speaker or at least speaks Hungarian. We should highlight that in Partium (and in Satu Mare/Szatmár in particular) important changes did occur during the last decade: the prestige of Hungarian has dropped considerably, and younger generations of Romanians did not learn it. On the other side, the survey results show that there are counties (Bisrița-Năsăud/Beszterce-Naszód, Alba/Fehér, Hunedoara/Hunyad, Cluj/Kolozs, Maramureș/Máramaros and Timiș/Temes) where the circle of Hungarian speakers is more limited than the Hungarian ethno-national community. This is an indicator of an accentuated process of linguistic assimilation. We should also highlight that the majority of Romanians in Székelyland was not able and did not want to speak Hungarian. Here, the expected logical consequence of the overwhelmingly Hungarian local milieu is clearly overridden by the linguistic ideology sustained by the nationalizing state.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the legal norms in force concerning the official use of the Hungarian language are simply not implemented. RMDSZ succeeded in early 2000s to pass a law regulating the official use of the Hungarian language in administrative units where the percentage of the Hungarian population is at least 20 percent. Furthermore, Romania signed the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages* under conditions very favourable for Hungarian language usage. In spite of a quite permissive and favourable legal framework, everyday norms related to Hungarian language usage in public institutions in Transylvania have not changed substantially. Public institutions (particularly in administrative units where Hungarians are in minority) simply refuse to implement legal norms in force.²³ The stake (potentially) is great. If the laws were implemented, tens of thousands of public officials unable to speak Hungarian would have to learn the language or would have to be replaced.

And finally, we should underscore that not only Romanian linguistic ideologies are to be blamed because of the failure to implement language rights. Actually RMDSZ seems not to be concerned with this issue. It does not pressure its political partners and does not even support NGOs that struggle for the enforcement of linguistic

²³ See Civic Engagement Movement: *Shadow Report to the Initial Periodical Report on the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Romania*. 2014

rights.²⁴ The strategies of the RMDSZ are mostly limited to the political bargaining process with the parties of the majority and focused on primary legal codification.

2. The institutional underpinnings of ethnic parallelism

2.1. A dual structure: the existence and the lack of parallel institutional structures

Ethnic (or other kinds of) parallelisms are well known in the literature of divided societies. Lijphart in his classic works regarding consociational democracy introduced the notion of social pillars (deriving from the Dutch *zuilen*).²⁵ Pillars constitute dense institutional networks, which makes it possible for group members to live their everyday lives among their “own”, without considering the existence of other pillars (of the existing social mainstream). This idea is well-known in Transylvanian Hungarian political thinking since the interwar period.²⁶ In the political rhetoric and self-representation of the Hungarian elites pillars (and institutionalized ethnic parallelism) appear under the notion of Minority Society (*Kisebbségi Társadalom*). Through this Transylvanian Hungarian political thinkers envisaged an ethnically integrated institutional structure which enables the members of the community to live their life inside a “Hungarian world” (without considering that they live physically in Romania). According to this approach, this institutional structure, this parallel Hungarian world is also of central importance in the ethno-cultural reproduction of the Hungarian community.

However, as an analytical tool, the metaphor of “Minority Society” can only adequately describe the social organization of the Transylvanian Hungarian community.²⁷ In certain contexts, the existence of a well-structured and ethnically integrated institutional system suggests that Transylvanian Hungarians can be perceived as

²⁴ In the city of Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely (where about 45 percent of the population is Hungarian) there is a relatively strong social movement aiming to promote the linguistic rights of the local Hungarian community. RMDSZ is in a pronouncedly hostile relation with the NGO sustaining the movement.

²⁵ Lijphart, Arend: *The Politics of Accommodation. Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968; Lijphart, Arend: *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977

²⁶ Sulyok István: A kisebbségi kérdés szociológiai oldala (The sociological aspect of the minority question). *Erdélyi Múzeum*, 1931. 4–6., 170–181.

²⁷ Brubaker et al. (2006. *Nationalist politics*. op cit.) proposed the metaphor of institutional archipelago.

a distinct social segment or social pillar. In other respects, however, the lack of certain institutional structures and the fact that the institutional system does not cover the entire community suggests that the Transylvanian Hungarian community cannot be perceived as a stand-alone societal segment.

Churches are the first institutional structure sustaining the Hungarian community as a separate societal segment clearly distinguishable from the Romanian mainstream. In Romania, ecclesiastical religiosity is very intense in a European comparison, and the church plays a relatively important role in the everyday life of the society.²⁸ In Transylvania, contrary to some other regions of the Carpathian Basin the religious and ethnic cleavages reinforce each-other. Romanians are overwhelmingly Eastern Orthodox today, and the Romanian Greek Catholic Church represents the other historically Romanian confession. 94 percent of Hungarians belong to one of the “Hungarian religious denominations”: 46 percent belong to the Calvinist Reformed Church, 41 percent to the Roman Catholic Church, 5 percent to the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, and 1 percent to the Lutheran and the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, respectively. These can be considered (more or less) the “Hungarian national churches”, but neo-protestants (comprising 2.5 percent of the Hungarian population) also have separate Hungarian congregations.

The second institutional structure sustaining the parallel Minority Society is the *Hungarian language media*. The media consumption of the Transylvanian Hungarians is characterized by the dominance of the Hungarian language. However, there is no unitary media structure controlled by the Transylvanian Hungarian elites. As for television watching, Transylvanian Hungarians seem to be integrated into a Hungary-centred “mediascape”. Transylvanian Hungarians spend on average nearly 3 hours a day in front of the television, and they watch nearly two hours (public and private) channels broadcasted from Hungary. As for radio stations and printed media, Transylvanian Hungarian language organs dominate. However, there are no radio stations and newspapers covering the whole Transylvania, but county level newspapers and local radio stations are prevail. Approximately one quarter of the Transylvanian Hungarians consume primarily Romanian language media, but this pattern of media

²⁸ 34 percent of the Transylvanian Hungarians attend church weekly and 60 percent at least once per month. Practically all Transylvanian Hungarians are baptized and an overwhelming majority of them get married in church.

consumption is predominant in the dispersed Hungarian communities of Transylvania and Banat.²⁹

Transylvanian Hungarians have also a dense network of *cultural institutions* financed primarily by the Romanian state or by the local authorities. This cultural infrastructure focuses almost exclusively on the production of high culture (dramatics, literature etc.), whereas the production of the Transylvanian Hungarian popular culture is incomparably less institutionalized. Transylvanian Hungarians consume the popular culture produced in Hungary or consume Romanian language popular culture.

Additional important institutional pillars underpinning the separate social organization of the Hungarian community are represented by the Hungarian language educational system, the Hungarian dominated local governments, and political participation through ethnic parties. The functioning of these pillars will be presented in more detail in the following subsections. Here we have to enumerate some of the social fields where the ethnic parallelism and separation does not work. The incomplete character of institutionalized ethnic parallelism is important from two aspects. First, the separateness of ethnic segments and their institutional completeness constitutes the basis of all accommodationist/autonomist political projects. Second, institutional completeness is a major condition for the successful control of social mobility channels by the ethnic elite, and for keeping the socially mobile members of the ethnic group within the community.³⁰

In short, the institutional parallelism of the Hungarian community is far from being complete: for example, health care, trade union and social care are not ethnically organized at all. Additionally, the (possible) ethnic determinants of economic activity are also systematically underestimated by the Transylvanian Hungarian elites.³¹ The *economic sector* is not perceived as being ethnically divided. There are of course Hungarian entrepreneurs in Transylvania, their networks might be ethnically segmented and Hungarians might be overrepresented among their partners or employees. However, – as several investigations have shown – business is perceived in Transylvania by

²⁹ See Kiss Tamás – Barna Gergő: *Az erdélyi magyarok médiafogyasztása* (Media Consumption among Transylvanian Hungarians). Research Report. Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities 2015.

³⁰ Here Horowitz's distinction between *ranked* and *unranked* groups is of primary importance. See Horowitz, Donald: *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. UCLA Press: Berkeley, 2000 [1985], 21-22.

³¹ For instance ethnic determinants of consumption are underestimated. Nobody has tried to construct a Hungarian market segment.

economic actors just as business and not as “Hungarian business”.³² This perception has far-reaching consequences on the institutional organization of the Hungarian community.

2.2. *Administrative structure and changing positions in the local governments*

With regards to the current Romanian *administrative structure* the legacy of the former regime has some important consequences. First, the present territorial structure was established in 1968, and it has not been changed until the present. In 1968, a total number of 41 counties were established in Romania, out of which 16 counties are in Transylvania. The administrative reform was carried out in accordance with the policies concerning economic development of the state socialist regime,³³ but ethnic considerations also played an important role.³⁴ From the perspective of the Hungarian community some regions were among the losers and some regions among the winners of the administrative reform. The winners were Harghita/Hargita and Covasna/Kovászna which became separate administrative units with an overwhelming Hungarian majority. The most important loser of the reform was Mureş/Maros county, which became an entity with a Romanian majority, and Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely, which had been the capital of the Hungarian Autonomous Region up until 1968, then becoming the centre of a Romanian majority county. As a consequence of the reform, a radical change of the ethnic composition of the town also followed in the 1970s, and Târgu Mureş became a Romanian majority town at the turn of the Millennium.

A new administrative reform has been put on the political agenda several times but none of the initiatives received the support of a political majority. The persistency of the present administrative division is due to the fact that during the last 46 years it became quasi-unanimously accepted and has been perceived as “organic”. The local elite structures have been built on the basis of the present administrative structure and a strong resistance to change characterizes the situation when central elites tried to modify the structure. However, in the last few years the operations of the Anti-Corruption Agency

³² See Brubaker et al., 2006. *Nationalist politics*. op cit.

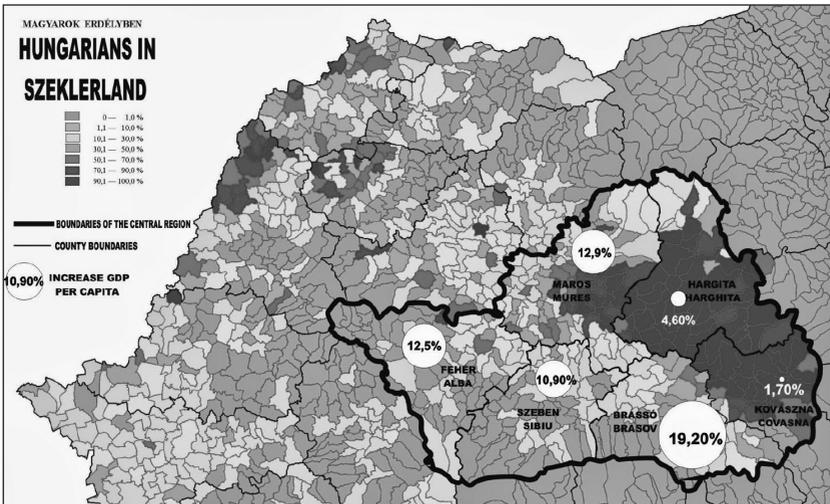
³³ See Ronnås, Per: Urbanization in Romania. A Geography of Economic and Social Change Since Independence. Stockholm, The Economic Research Institute, 1984.

³⁴ Novák Csaba Zoltán – Tóth-Bartos András – Kelemen Kálmán Lóránt: *Újjászületés. Háromszékből Kovászna megye megszervezése és intézményesülése 1968-1972 (The rebirth. The establishment of Covasna county, 1968-1972)*. Sepsiszentgyörgy: Háromszék Vármegye, 2013.

(DNA) have significantly weakened the local elite structures and a re-centralization of the country has become more possible.³⁵

The maintenance of the present structure is clearly in the interest of the Transylvanian Hungarian political class and also of the community. The sole territorial division more favourable to the Hungarians would be the establishment of a unitary administrative region in Székelyland, taking into account the ethnic borders of the region. However this is highly unlikely in the present political situation. All alternatives proposed so far by the Romanian political actors were based on larger territorial units than the present counties. Consequently they are certainly less favourable when compared to the present structure. The most realistic scenario implies the strengthening of the present “Developmental Regions”. The Central Developmental region includes six counties and has a clear Romanian majority. *If it won't create a unitary and separate administrative structure in Székelyland, the administrative reform is the greatest challenge for the Hungarian elites and the worst thing that could happen to the Hungarian community of Transylvania.*

Figure 3. Hungarians in the Central Developmental Region



Source: Balázs Izsák's (Székely National Council) blog (2011 census data)

³⁵ The majority of presidents of County Councils (representing the strongest segment of local political elites) are under the investigation of the Anti-Corruption Agency.

A second important aspect of the state socialist legacy is the highly *centralized character of the Romanian state*. The centralization of the state was more far-reaching in Romania than in other countries of the Eastern Bloc. In the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia or even in Hungary strong local elite-structures could be formed during state socialism. In Romania, this process did not take place: one of the most important tools of centralizing and preventing the strengthening of the local elites was the territorial rotation of the leading cadres. As a consequence, strong local elites did not exist in the 1990s.

The first steps towards a more *decentralized structure* were performed during the time period between 1996 and 2000 but the most important measures of decentralization were introduced after 2000 under the pressure of EU enlargement.³⁶ It should be highlighted that in several respects the decentralization of the administrative functions was only virtual.³⁷ But in spite of the incomplete and asymmetric character of the decentralization of the administrative functions, the political importance of the local governments has increased considerably. In the new system, the mayors of the major towns and the presidents of the County Councils have become more powerful. The latter have a key role in the allocation of the public funds for the county's municipalities. The Romanian political system was characterized by the dominance of these powerful local actors. In fact, the mayors of the major towns and the presidents of the County Councils controlled the parliamentary deputies. The main role of MP's was lobbying for local interests as they are formulated by the powerful local politicians (called *local barons* in the

³⁶ The 215/2001 Law on the Local Administration, 45/2003 Governmental Ordinance on the Budgeting of the Local Authorities, the 339/2004 and the 195/2006 Law on Decentralization and the 273/2006 Law on Budgeting of the Local Administrations can be mentioned here.

³⁷ A telling example is the decentralization of the management of the population register. The personnel operating the system of the population register (the so-called Public Services for Persons' Record) were transferred from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the local authorities. So the local authorities started to fill identity cards and other official documents and to register the changes of one's status. However, the Ministry of Internal Affairs holds the integrated database and continues to have exclusive access to the data. In fact, the Public Services for Persons' Record are paid by the local authorities, but they are coordinated exclusively by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There are other segments of the public institutional system (education, health care system, etc.), where the personnel are paid by the local authorities, but the coordination belongs exclusively to central authorities. See Kiss, Tamás: *Analysis of existing migratory data production systems and major data sources in Romania*. Country report developed within the project 'SEEMIG Managing Migration and Its Effects – Transnational Actions Towards Evidence Based Strategies', 2013.

Romanian political slang). This structure has been called into question by the political processes of the last 1-2 year, hallmarked by the operations of the Anti-Corruption Agency. As mentioned already, this process could be followed by a more explicit recentralization of the country.

However, the positions in the local administration are of primary importance for RMDSZ. These positions are also of particular importance from the perspective of political mobilization of the Hungarian community. It is obvious that the possibilities and interests of the Hungarian elite differ sharply from one region to the next in Transylvanian. The main difference is that in Székelyland local authorities function in some contexts as “Hungarian” institutions, which play an important role from the perspective of the ethno-cultural reproduction of the Hungarian community.

It is important that RMDSZ³⁸, the dominant ethnic party representing Transylvanian Hungarians won the 2012 local elections against its intra-ethnic competitors but lost very important positions in other parts of Transylvania against the mainstream (Romanian) parties. Presently 52 percent of the Hungarians live in municipalities led by RMDSZ and 56 percent in municipalities led by Hungarian parties (RMDSZ and its competitors, MPP³⁹ and EMNP⁴⁰). In Székelyland, these proportions are 90 and 99 percent, respectively. Harghita/Hargita and Covasna/Kovászna County Councils are also led by RMDSZ. The most important losses of RMDSZ were in Partium. The mayor’s seat in Satu-Mare/Szatmárnémeti (with 100 thousand inhabitants, 40 percent of them Hungarian speaking) was lost in spite of the fact that the electoral procedure has changed favourably for RMDSZ. RMDSZ lost the presidency of the Satu-Mare/Szatmár County Council too. RMDSZ also lost ground in Central Transylvania, being defeated in the battle for the presidency of the Mureş/Maros County Council. It also failed to regain the position of mayor of Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely (lost in 2000).

³⁸ Románai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania).

³⁹ Magyar Polgári Párt (Hungarian Civic Party) was established in 2008.

⁴⁰ Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt (Hungarian People’s Party in Transylvania) was established in 2010.

Table 5. *The proportion of Transylvanian Hungarians living in municipalities led by RMDSZ, the Hungarian competitor parties and by Romanian parties*

	Total number of Hungarians	2008-2012			2012 -		
		Living in municipalities led by a mayor belonging to...			Living in municipalities led by a mayor belonging to...		
		RMDSZ	Other Hungarian parties or independent	Romanian parties	RMDSZ	Other Hungarian parties or independent	Romanian parties
Székelyland	475 164	76,7	20,5	2,7	89,7	8,8	1,5
Partium	314 741	55,2	1,6	43,2	49,1	1,6	49,2
Central Transylvania	262 185	22,9	1,7	75,4	21,3	0,9	77,8
Northern and Southern Transylvania, Banat	216 154	6,2	1,2	92,5	8,7	0,0	91,3
Total	1 268 244	48,5	8,7	42,7	52,1	3,9	44,0

Source: The author's calculation based on electoral and census data

In sum, although the 2012 local elections were (rightly) communicated by RMDSZ as a victory over the intra-ethnic competitor parties, it can also be perceived as one of the greatest defeats of the Hungarian national movement in Transylvania. After the 2012 local elections, the administrative positions of the Hungarian community outside Székelyland have been reduced to positions at the level of rural municipalities and townlets.

2.3. The educational system

The Hungarian language educational system is of primal importance both from the perspective of the institutional system underpinning ethnic parallelism and the ethno-cultural reproduction of the Hungarian community. The present structure of Hungarian education was actually established during the early 1990s, following a substantial extension of Hungarian secondary education compared to the 1980s. One of the most important pluralistic characteristics of the Romanian minority policy regime is the publicly financed Hungarian language educational system. However, no forms of cultural/educational autonomy exist. The Hungarian language schools are subordinated to the Ministry of Education just as all the Romanian language schools, and they do not constitute a separate organizational entity.

In practice, RMDSZ has a significant influence on the functioning of Hungarian language education through the Directorate for Minority Language Education of the Ministry of Education, the county level inspectorates and the local governments. Additionally, aspects of the proportional representation of the minorities in the directorate of the (partially) minority language schools and the inspectorates were codified by the (1/2011) Law on Education.

The importance of the Hungarian educational system from the perspective of the minority institutional system is indicated by the 10 thousand teachers working in it. They make up 4,9 percent of the total number of Romanian pedagogues, and according to the 2002 census, 6,6 percent of the Hungarian non-agricultural working force was employed in education.⁴¹ Besides the local government, the Hungarian language educational system constitutes the second largest institutional network/social field whose players are interested in the maintenance of the ethnic separateness of the Hungarian societal segment.

Hungarian language education is also of primary importance from the perspective of the ethno-cultural reproduction of the community. Next to ethnic exogamy (and closely interrelated with it) the practical collapse of Hungarian language education is one of the most important factors lying behind the accelerated process of assimilation of the dispersed Hungarian communities of Transylvania and Banat. The following table contains the proportion of children/students enrolled in Hungarian language education at different levels for the time period between 2005 and 2009.

Table 6. *Proportion of students attending Hungarian language schools (2005/2009)*

Nursery	83,2
Elementary (1-4 classes)	85,9
Lower secondary (5-8 classes)	81,5
High school	74,3
Vocational	55,7

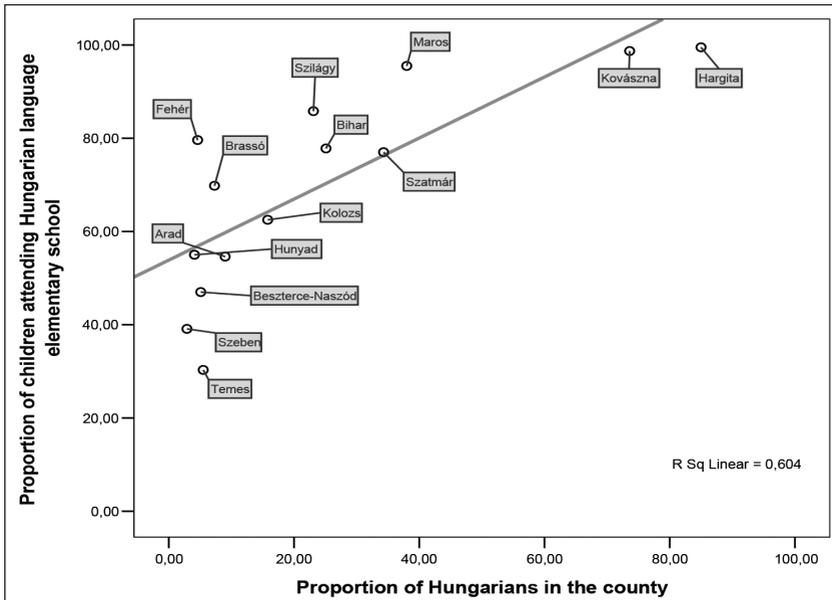
Source: Ministry of Education

83 percent of the Hungarian children attended Hungarian language groups in kindergartens; 86 percent of Hungarian students received Hungarian language education at the elementary level, 82 percent of them in the lower secondary level, 74 percent in high

⁴¹ Not only teachers but also the auxiliary personnel were included in this figure.

schools, and 56 percent in vocational education. Regional differences are significant in this respect. In Székelyland, the proportion of students enrolled in Hungarian language schools was nearly 100 percent, whereas in some counties of Banat, Southern and Northern Transylvania is below or just slightly above 50 percent.

Figure 4. *The proportion of children attending Hungarian language elementary school by the proportion of Hungarians in the county (2005/2009)*



Source: Ministry of Education

Another characteristic trend is that the proportion of students receiving native language education is dropping from higher to lower levels. In other words, there is a significant number of students who begin their educational career in Hungarian but switch to Romanian. The inverse educational pathway is insignificant. The situation in Székelyland is different again: here the higher secondary and vocational education is also overwhelmingly Hungarian.

Finally, we have to emphasize the rapid dissolution of the Hungarian language educational system in the area of the dispersed Hungarian communities. There is a continuing decrease in the number of the Hungarian newborns since 2004, and in 2010 their number fell first time below 10 thousand. The decline in the number of newborns

was far more accentuated in dispersed Hungarian communities. For instance, in Banat the decrease was 50 percent between 2004 and 2010. In a total number of 235 settlements Hungarian language education will probably cease by 2020. One should keep in mind that 17 percent of all students receiving Hungarian language education live in these settlements. The demographic decline is the most important but not the sole factor causing the rapid disintegration of Hungarian language education. A well-coordinated educational strategy would be needed to prevent Hungarian children from ending up in Romanian language schools. The elaboration and implementation of a well-founded strategy is hampered by the lack of cultural autonomy granted by the Romanian state, and the present condition of the Transylvanian Hungarian political class.⁴²

3. Political processes: asymmetric accommodation

3.1. *The duality of the Romanian minority policy regime*

From the point of view of political processes, the Romanian regime's minority policy and the model of political integration offered to the Hungarian community are of central importance. The Romanian model is characterized by a duality which makes difficult to place it on the existing literature's integrationist-accommodationist.⁴³ The dual character of the Romanian minority policy means that on the one hand it sustains the nationalizing project by defining the state as the state of the Romanian people (in an ethno-cultural sense)

⁴² See Barna Gergő – Kapitány Balázs – Kiss Tamás – Márton János: *Iskolák veszélyben. A Székelyföldön kívüli magyar oktatás helyzete* (Schools in danger. Report on Hungarian language education in Transylvania) Cluj: Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities. 2016.

⁴³ Accommodationism and integrationism are normative perspectives of the management of the ethno-cultural diversity. According to the accommodationist argument ethnic identities (if they were once politically activated) tend to have a durable character. Accommodationists perceive ethnic communities as relatively homogeneous and bounded entities and as a consequence they foster a political arrangement which enables communities to express and live their identity publicly and defend it against the majority. The integrationists see ethnic identities as more changeable and blurring. Under these circumstances the politically activated ethnic differences could be de-activated. However in the case of many integrationists this is not just an analytical finding but a normative expectation. As a consequence they foster strategies (from electoral to constitutional design) which strengthen the common ("supra ethnic", "civic") civic identities and are conducive to political deactivation of the ethnic identities. See McGarry, John – O'Leary Brendon – Simeon, Robert: *Integration or Accommodation? The Enduring Debate in Conflict Regulation*. In S. Choudhry ed.: *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 41–88.

while on the other hand it also encourages the political activation of ethnicity and the political participation of minorities through ethnic parties. This regime could be called *asymmetric accommodation*.

On the one hand, there is an unambiguous consensus among Romanian political actors to maintain the nationalizing project and the present institutional order of the Romanian nation state. This institutional order clearly privileges the majority ethnic group and strengthens its social and political dominance. The social marginalization and the ethno-linguistic assimilation of the Hungarian community are obviously and primarily due to this institutional order privileging the majority ethnic group and establishing a hierarchical order between minority and majority.

On the other hand, it would be mistaken to categorize – deducing from its nationalizing character – the Romanian regime of minority policy as integrationist. It has also some clearly accommodationist/pluralist characteristics, as in several respects it treats minority groups as separate socio-political entities.

First, from the perspective of the ethno-cultural reproduction the publicly financed Hungarian language educational system is of primary importance. The present (and currently eroding) system of the (entirely and partially) Hungarian language schools was in fact established in the early 1990s. The substantial enlargement of the Hungarian language educational system, the establishment of separate Hungarian language high-schools, as well as a state financed university in the Hungarian language were the most important goals behind the mass mobilization of the Hungarians in the early 1990s.⁴⁴ The Hungarian language educational system was substantially enlarged in the years immediately following the change of the regime, and this represented the most important concession of the Romanian minority policy towards Hungarians.

Second, Romanian political elites actually accept that minority groups participate in the political processes through their own ethnic parties. This is also an achievement of the Hungarian mass mobilization of the early 1990s when the political activation of the ethnic Hungarians could not be ignored. Partially as a reaction to the Hungarian mass mobilization an electoral law and an institutional system was worked out. The novel system recognized the small (and assimilated) groups as political entities,⁴⁵ offered them a parlia-

⁴⁴ See Stroschein, Sherrill: *Ethnic Struggle, Coexistence, and Democratization in Eastern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

⁴⁵ In some cases one may even question the existence (in substantial ethno-demographic sense) of some minorities. Such evident cases are Albanians, Macedonians or Ruthenians.

mentary seat (per minority) under very favourable conditions, and granted them relatively substantial public financial support. From the perspective of the Hungarian community, it was of central importance that the Romanian electoral system maintained proportionality and it made possible for Hungarians to gain proportional representation.

The third element is intimately linked to the previously presented one. A relatively regular top level political bargaining process has taken shape between RMDSZ and the Romanian political actors after 1996, and since then RMDSZ – with a few intermissions – has been permanently part of the executive power. During the short intermission periods, RMDSZ always had “special” relations with one of the governing parties, sustaining these parties against their formal coalition partners. As a consequence, these intermissions did not imply a real opposition role for the RMDSZ.

However, the governing role of RMDSZ did not provide either a legal and institutional framework or ethnic power sharing. The governing position of RMDSZ is based exclusively on current processes of political bargaining. It is true that RMDSZ sometimes is able to effectively lobby for public funds allocated for Hungarian institutions or for state financed investments of Hungarian populated regions. However, without a form of autonomy or any other legal form of ethnic power sharing, these results do not have institutional guarantees. The model of asymmetric accommodation is characterized by political bargaining between the RMDSZ leaders and the Romanian political actors that also has an asymmetrical character. Another adequate notion describing this relationship is *control through cooptation*.⁴⁶ This means that Romanian political actors achieve the moderation of Hungarian claims. They do not provide concessions related to the institutional-legal order of the Romanian nation state and offer no form of autonomy or power sharing. Former Prime Minister Victor Ponta was the first one who explicitly and publicly talked about this control through cooptation. He argued in 2013 that RMDSZ should have been included in the governing coalition to prevent the “radicalization” of Hungarian claims.

In sum, Romanian minority policy does not institutionalize any form of segmental autonomy and does not guarantee forms of ethnic power sharing. However, it expressly supports the political activa-

⁴⁶ See Medianu, Narcisa: “Analysing Political Exchanges between Minority and Majority Leaders in Romania.” *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*. 2002, 1 (4). 28-41.; Horváth, István: *Facilitating Conflict Transformation: Implementation of the Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to Romania, 1993-2001*. Working Paper. Hamburg: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg. 2002.

tion of ethnicity and the political participation of the Hungarian minority through ethnic parties. As part of the minority policy regime, mainstream (Romanian) parties do not target all of the Hungarian electorate, rather they behave in the regions (overwhelmingly or partially) inhabited by Hungarians as *titular ethnic parties* (i.e. Romanian parties). However, ethnic power sharing has no legal guarantees, and in practice RMDSZ has gained a monopoly over the redistribution of public funds allocated to Hungarian institutions and Hungarian inhabited regions. The stability of the ethnic vote makes sense in this context.⁴⁷

3.2. *The political strategies of RMDSZ*

The political strategy employed by RMDSZ is also intrinsically ambivalent. There is a continuous tension between the formal program and the electoral rhetoric of the Alliance and the actual mode of its integration into the Romanian political field based on the asymmetric bargaining situation.

In the vision of the Transylvanian Hungarian elites on the political future of the community, the ethnic parallelism (parallel Minority Society) has a central role and also shapes the formal program of RMDSZ. The core conviction behind urging ethnic parallelism is that the long term ethno-linguistic and social reproduction of the Hungarian community is possible only if a parallel institutional system is established and the social needs of the group members can be met within the community. As already mentioned, this idea of the Minority Society can be traced back to the interwar period, and was reinvented by the Hungarian elites following the change of regime. In the political program taking shape in early 1990 for intensive community building the critical points were establishing ethnic networks, operating minority institutions and mobilizing the community and also the demand for several forms of segmental autonomy.

At the level of the formal program and electoral rhetoric (or more generally the political discourse produced for “internal use” within the group) these elements occupy a central place even today. However, the continuous governmental participation and engagement in the process of asymmetric bargaining has radically changed the real strategies and goals of the Transylvanian Hungarian political class. The process of asymmetric bargaining had several important

⁴⁷ See Kiss Tamás – Székely István: Shifting Linkages in Ethnic Mobilization: The Case of RMDSZ and the Hungarians in Transylvania. Manuscript 2015 (Forthcoming in Nationalities Papers).

consequences, which are not evident to political scientists focusing exclusively on the formal/explicit aspects of the political processes:

First, as already mentioned, the core characteristic of asymmetric bargaining is that minority *claims moderate* without a changing the nationalizing institutional order determining the forms of the social and political integration of the minority community. RMDSZ adopted different strategies to cope with this situation. At the turn of the Millennium the dominant coping strategy was the formal adaptation of the ethnic claims to the political “realities”. As a consequence, the 2000 electoral program of RMDSZ did not mention the claim for autonomy. Later, around 2004, under the circumstances of the emerging intra-ethnic competition, an alternative strategy based on dual discourse emerged. In other words, a split occurred between formal program elements and the actual agenda of political negotiations with Romanian political partners. This means that while autonomy, for instance, is a central element of the political program and the internal political rhetoric of the RMDSZ, there is no real strategy to implement it. Political scientists often categorize RMDSZ as an autonomist party but – given their restricted focus on the formal party program – they completely misunderstand the nature of the political exchanges. As a matter of fact, formal programmatic elements have little relevance in shaping the political strategy of RMDSZ.⁴⁸

Second, the nature of the political process has also changed compared to the 1990s. While the importance of the parliamentary, Bucharest political arena has increased, the political class distanced itself from the formerly well integrated stratum of *sub-elite political and community activists*.⁴⁹ This stratum of community activists

⁴⁸ This situation raises also relevant theoretical questions. The shift from the formal-programmatic moderation of ethnic claims was caused by the emergence of the intra-ethnic competition (László Tóké and the radical-wing left the Alliance in 2003). It is well known Rabushka-Shepsle’s and Horowitz’s (Rabushka, Alvin, & Shepsle, Kenneth: *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1976; Horowitz, Donald: *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London, 2000 [1985]) thesis of ethnic outbidding, presuming that intra-ethnic competition leads to a radicalization of ethnic claims. The strategies of RMDSZ however did not strengthen this argument. The situation is rather similar to that described by Mitchell-Evans-O’Leary (Mitchell, Paul, Geoffrey Evans and Brendan O’Leary 2009. “Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems Is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland.” *Political Studies* 57 (2): 397-421, 2009). They labelled as ethnic tribune politics the dual strategy of radicalizing electoral messages while maintaining a rather pragmatic stance toward external political partners.

⁴⁹ On the tensions between parliamentary and electoral arenas in culturally divided constituencies see Lijphart, Arend: *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977; Tsebelis, George: *Nested*

linked to the Hungarian institutional network (teachers, clergymen, civil activists and also members of the local councils) used to play, and potentially still have a crucial role in mobilizing the Hungarian community.

Third, new principles of political legitimacy and *new political habits* have emerged inside the Transylvanian Hungarian political field. The former generations of Transylvanian Hungarian politicians were committed to building up a Hungarian institutional system and organizing the community. These activities were regarded as a source of political legitimacy. The perspective of the presently leading forties and thirties generation is radically different. It is limited strictly to political negotiations and success in resource allocation, and these politicians are significantly less engaged in community organization.

Fourth, RMDSZ and the Transylvanian Hungarian political class have *no international political strategy* or “foreign policy”. Parallel with the engagement in governmental work they have practically renounced the Transylvanian Hungarian question on the international political agenda.

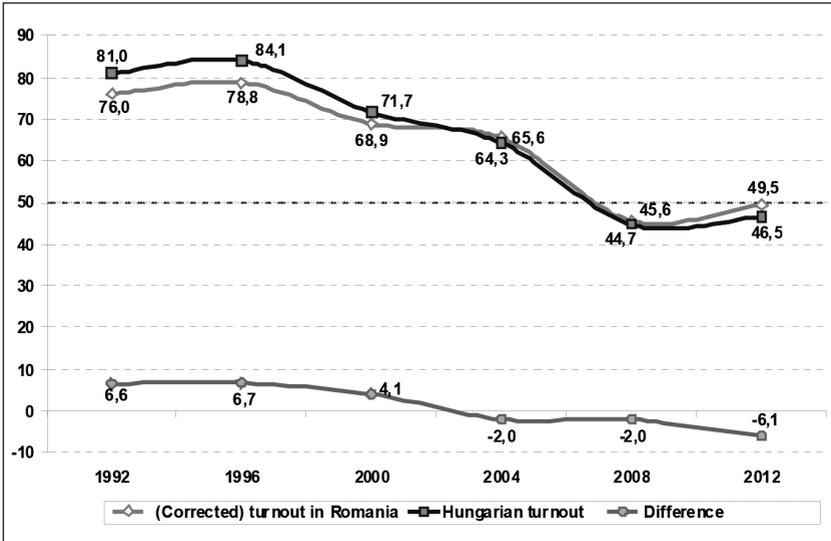
And finally, the *political cleavages* within the Hungarian community also have their roots in different positions towards asymmetric accommodation. The governmental participation increased the polarization between the so-called moderate and radical wings of RMDSZ. The “radicals” left the party in 2003. However, it has become clear that EMNP and MPP did not succeed in building up a political and organizational alternative for RMDSZ. It seems that RMDSZ has remained again alone in the Transylvanian Hungarian political arena.

3.3. Political mobilization

The electoral turnout of the Hungarians at parliamentary elections has been roughly the same as the national average. However, during the 1990s, the turnout of Hungarians was slightly higher than the national average, while in the 2000s it has remained constantly below it.

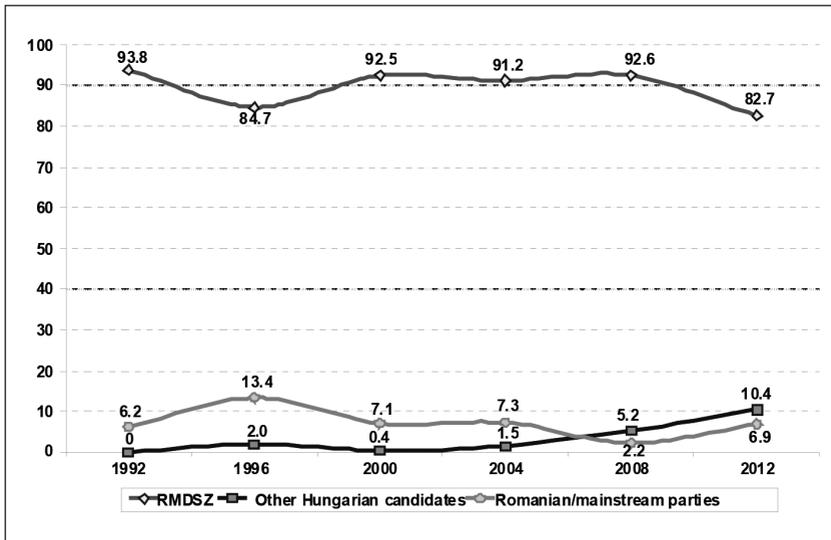
The electoral options of the Hungarians in the parliamentary elections have remained strikingly stable during the last two decades. According to our estimations, the proportion of RMDSZ voters among ethnic Hungarians casting a ballot has never fallen below 80 percent. This is not equally true for local elections.

Figure 5. *The (corrected) voter turnout in Romania and among ethnic Hungarian voters at the parliamentary elections between 1992 and 2012*



Source: Central Electoral Bureau, authors' own calculations

Figure 6. *The distribution of electoral options within the Hungarian community*



From the perspective of electoral results, the voting behaviour of the Transylvanian Hungarians can be regarded as relatively stable, and as a consequence, RMDSZ has remained the dominant actor in the minority field during the last 25 years. Yet, despite this seemingly stable surface the nature of the political participation of the Hungarian community has changed considerably.

In the early 1990s, RMDSZ was not merely a party-like organization, but also provided the framework for large-scale, social movement type activism. The intellectuals who re-organized the Hungarian national movement after the fall of the state socialist regime returned to the idea of the Minority Society and ethnic parallelism. According to this program, reaching a certain level of institutional complexity may enable the community to maintain a parallel Hungarian society. The autonomy of the Hungarian social sector was of central importance. Furthermore, it was emphasized that reliance on conventional political and legal means of minority rights protection was not enough. It had to be complemented by a social movement and active work in *community organizing*, which would create, maintain, and broaden the Minority Society. However, the situation has changed gradually starting with the late 1990s. During its almost continuous governmental presence, RMDSZ underwent significant changes, most importantly, it developed *accommodative behaviour* towards the Romanian political actors.

It is also crucial to note changes in the linkages between RMDSZ and the Hungarian electorate. In this respect *pork barrel* has become of primary importance, overshadowing programmatic or policy-related goals.⁵⁰ Nowadays Hungarians vote for RMDSZ primarily because they think that the organization is able to extract direct publicly funded investments for Hungarian inhabited regions and Hungarian institutions.

The key question is whether or not a political turn from asymmetric accommodation towards a stronger emphasis on segmental autonomy and ethnic parallelism would receive electoral support from Transylvanian Hungarians. The answer is a partial yes, and two aspects should be highlighted in this respect. First, in the eyes of Hungarian voters asymmetric political bargaining is not necessarily

⁵⁰ On ethnic parties and political particularism see Fearon, James: *Why Ethnic Politics and "Pork" Tend to Go Together?* Working Paper. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1999; Chandra, Kanchan. 2004. *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Laitin, David D., and Maurits A. Van Der Veen. "Ethnicity and Pork: A Virtual Test of Causal Mechanisms." In *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*, edited by Kanchan Chandra, 341-358. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

at odds with an intransigent position regarding the protection of the “interests of the Hungarian community”. This is well illustrated by the fact that in spite of the importance of pork barrel considerations, voters appreciate representatives who “*represent the interests of the Hungarian community firmly, without compromise*” or who “*are concerned primarily with the problems of the Hungarian community*”. Second, there are significant regional differences regarding the chances of ethnic mobilization for more “radical” ethno-political goals. In Székelyland – where the segmental separateness and institutional structure of the Hungarian community is more coherent – there is significant support for territorial autonomy and institutionalized forms of ethnic parallelism. In regions outside Székelyland – in spite of a strong expectation for a more intensive involvement of the Hungarian political class in community building – the possibilities are rather limited to further institutionalize the ethnic parallelism.

3.4. The role and possible options of the Hungarian kin-state policy

According to the frequently cited work of Rogers Brubaker, the minority’s political existence is in continuous interrelation with the nationalizing state on the one hand, and with the kin-state policy or ethnic homeland on the other.⁵¹ First should highlight that in our case Romanian political actors are far more influential than Hungarian kin-state policy. The Romanian regime’s minority policy shapes to a great extent the social and political processes affecting the Transylvanian Hungarian community. Compared to the strong influence of the Romanian political actors, Hungarian kin-state policy has a rather marginal effect. For the dominant Transylvanian Hungarian political elites Bucharest is much more important, and the relations towards Budapest are perceived as a question of “external affairs”.

The fact that neither left-wing, nor right-wing Hungarian governments succeeded in restructuring substantially the Transylvanian Hungarian political field, indicates that the room for manoeuvre is rather limited for Hungarian kin-state policy. The kin-state policies of the right-wing and left-wing Hungarian governments were different in two respects. First, while left-wing governments supported asymmetric accommodation, the right-wing governments were relatively consequent opponents of it. And second, while (until now) the right-wing Fidesz government tried to establish its own patronage networks and to operate a financing policy that bypassed RMDSZ, the

⁵¹ Brubaker, 1996: *Nationalism Reframed. Op. cit.*

left-wing governments left the resources and the redistribution of the Hungarian public funds allocated for Transylvanian Hungarians in the hands of the dominant RMDSZ leaders (the “elected representatives of the Transylvanian Hungarian community”⁵²).

The right-wing government led by Fidesz openly supported the radical wing of RMDSZ (László Tókécs and the Reform Platform) and opposed the accommodative strategy fostered by RMDSZ moderates during its first governing period between 1998 and 2002. The Fidesz support for the internal opposition was perceived by the RMDSZ leadership as external intervention to control the political processes and the symbolic discourse of the Transylvanian Hungarian political field. According to their interpretation, there existed a real danger for the largest and best organized trans-border Hungarian ethnic party to fall into the patronage network of Fidesz.⁵³ It was important, however, that the anti-accommodation opposition was still inside RMDSZ between 1998 and 2002. Under these circumstances an agreement was reached between Fidesz and RMDSZ regarding the Romanian implementation of the 2001 Status Law and the Status Offices. This created 200 jobs paid by the Hungarian state inside the RMDSZ organization.

The left-wing MSZP-SZDSZ governments followed a different pathway of kin-state policy between 2002 and 2010. This is evident not only regarding the citizenship policy but also in other dimensions of the relationship towards ethnic kin communities. One of the main aims of the left-wing governments was to eliminate the networks built by Fidesz between 1998 and 2002. This was important for the left-wing because of the active and sometimes spectacular involvement of some pro-Fidesz and pro-right trans-border Hungarian actors (László Tókécs, Miklós Duray) in the political battles taking place in Hungary. The main tool of the left-wing governments to limit the ability of the right-wing to maintain its patronage network was the centralization and the so called “depolarization” of the trans-border financing policy. The “depolarization” meant that decision-making regarding the financial support of the transborder institutional system was left to a great extent to the “legitimate representatives” (i.e. the dominant political elites) of the transborder communities. This way, the left-wing government accepted and reinforced the *status quo* in the

⁵² Erika Törzsök, a key figure of the Hungarian kinstate policy during the 2002-2010 period, labelled the leaders of the trans-border ethnic parties (sarcastically but well fittingly) elected princes (*választott fejedelmek*, making in Hungarian a comic allusion to price-electors).

⁵³ See Waterbury, Myra: *Between State and Nation. Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary*. New-York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010: 107.

political fields of the minority communities, namely, the dominance of the pro-accommodation “moderate” wing. This new situation was quite favourable for the RMDSZ leadership, as they succeeded in monopolizing the redistribution of both Romanian and Hungarian public funds allocated for the maintenance of the Transylvanian Hungarian institutional system.

The second Fidesz government tried to enforce more radically its intentions regarding the transborder Hungarian communities between 2010 and 2014. The financing policy for transborder Hungarian communities was drastically restructured and, as a consequence RMDSZ has lost considerable ground. The greatest damage for RMDSZ was that the Fidesz government ceased to finance the Status Offices and that the administration of the Educational Allowance was passed to the Hungarian Teacher’s Association of Romania (a pro-Fidesz NGO). Parallel to these measures, 30 Democracy Centers were established under the coordination of EMNT⁵⁴ with approximately 150 employees. The local and parliamentary campaigns of MPP and EMNP⁵⁵ were almost entirely supported by Hungarian state owned corporations.⁵⁶

These attempts demonstrated however, that the possibilities of the Hungarian kin-state policy to influence the structure of the Transylvanian Hungarian political field are rather limited. Paradoxically, the radical opposition of RMDSZ was the most successful in the time period between 2002 and 2010. And additionally, following the December 5, 2004 referendum the RMDSZ leadership (otherwise opposed to Fidesz) could not openly admit its close relationship with the Hungarian left-wing. Fidesz did not succeed in reconfiguring the Transylvanian Hungarian political field. The 2012 local and parliamentary elections in Romania can be considered a total failure of the competitor parties, which had been supported by Fidesz.

The Hungarian kin-state policy theoretically had four options to attract Transylvanian Hungarian elites or to modify the present situation of asymmetric accommodation:

(1) First, it could try to *outbid Bucharest in terms of the material rewards*, funds offered for the Hungarian elite and institutional structure. However, this alternative is not a real option. As

⁵⁴ Hungarian National Council of Transylvania is an NGO strongly linked to EMNP (Hungarian People’s Party in Transylvania).

⁵⁵ Fidesz however was not unitary at all regarding its strategy on Transylvanian Hungarian political field. László Kövér, one of the founding fathers of the party and the president of the Hungarian Parliament supported Jenő Szász and its Hungarian Civic Party (MPP). Zsolt Németh, another influential actor of the Hungarian kin-state policy favored Tibor T. Toró and EMNP.

⁵⁶ See <http://itthon.transindex.ro/?cikk=20082>.

we mentioned, the main problem is that tools and resources in this respect are rather limited (even if not all actors of the Hungarian kin-state policy seem to realize it).

(2) The second option was tested during the time period between 2010 and 2014. It sponsored alternative elites and networks, and tried to push RMDSZ towards a more “radical” alternative through intra-ethnic competition. However, this *tactic of “ethnic outbidding”* did not work and not only because of the inability of opponent leaders and the lack of resources. RMDSZ successfully employed a dual discursive strategy radicalizing its electoral rhetoric without questioning actually the framework of asymmetric accommodation.

(3) A third alternative would be to return to the strategy of *sponsoring interest groups within RMDSZ* and trying to push for change through them.

(4) The fourth alternative is to admit the failure of the “*autonomist scenario*” and to renounce the attempt to influence the political strategies of the dominant political elites. Instead of the first three strategies the Hungarian kin-state policy can try to establish an institutional network which links just a part of the Transylvanian Hungarians directly to “Budapest”, to the structures of the Hungarian nation state. This scenario, however, might eliminate for a long or middle term the Transylvanian Hungarians as a political community or at least the relative self-sufficiency of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority in the political field.

3.5. *The effects of the new Hungarian citizenship legislation*

According to our opinion, there are several signs showing that the Hungarian kin-state policy shifted towards the fourth direction. Our main argument is that the new citizenship legislation accepted in 2010 pushes it strongly in this direction. The newly introduced *simplified naturalization* has made it possible for transborder ethnic Hungarians, more precisely for the former Hungarian citizens and their descendants, to obtain Hungarian citizenship without having residence in Hungary- This can be obtained within a few months long and very simple bureaucratic procedures. In November 2012, the Parliament also modified the electoral law and entitled Hungarian citizens without residence in Hungary to vote in Hungarian parliamentary elections. These measures *radically modified* both the relation between the Hungarian state and the transborder Hungarian communities and the legal definition of the Hungarian nation.

The results of our surveys coincide with the Hungarian official data on the number of applicants and newly naturalized persons through

simplified procedure. According to our data, by June 2013 one third of the Transylvanian Hungarians applied for Hungarian citizenship and one fifth became Hungarian citizens. However, the proportion of the applicants and Hungarian citizens increases continuously among Transylvanian Hungarians.

Table 7. *Did you apply for Hungarian citizenship? Transylvanian Hungarians (%)*

	July 2012 (N=1176)	June 2013 (N=1232)	September 2014 (N=783)
Obtained Hungarian citizenship	11,1	18,2	32,3
Applied for Hungarian citizenship, but did not obtain it yet	8,1	13,1	3,1
Intend to apply for Hungarian citizenship	36,3	38,6	21,6
Do not intend to apply for Hungarian citizenship	34,6	22,6	33,0
Has not decided yet, NA	9,9	7,5	1,5

Source: Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities

According to our results, an additional 39 percent of the Transylvanian Hungarians intended to apply for Hungarian citizenship in June 2013. The proportion of those who did not intend to apply for Hungarian citizenship had decreased from 35 to 23 percent in the time period between July 2012 and June 2013. Our results anticipated a continuous and dynamic increase in the number of Hungarian citizens among Transylvanian Hungarians. Their proportion will most probably reach two thirds.

Two aspects should be highlighted with regards to the citizenship and electoral legislation:

First, the extension of the Hungarian political community (the so-called re-unification of the Hungarian nation) has led to a new political structure in which Transylvanian Hungarians could exercise their voting rights but in which Transylvanian Hungarian elites have no institutional room for maneuver and actually do not have any direct role. The new electoral law extended the right to vote to extra-territorial citizens without working out an effective institutional framework for the right to public office. In other words, Transylvanian Hungarian elites have no institutional opportunity to represent their community as a specific segment of the newly established Hungarian political community. Without this opportunity Transylvanian Hungarians (as voters) have a single alternative, to vote for a Hungarian mainstream party. As we know, the overwhelming majority of them supported Fidesz at the 2014 parliamentary elec-

tion. From this perspective Fidesz is also a Hungarian mainstream party, which – even if it employs a definition of the Hungarian nation much more acceptable for Transylvanian Hungarians than its left-wing competitors – does not have an explicit program targeting the problems of this community. The Transylvanian Hungarian elites apparently have no role in managing the situation that a new political arena has opened for Transylvanian Hungarians as voters. The Transylvanian Hungarian political class was simply not invited to be a player in this new arena.

Second, there is the problem of defining the relationship between extra-territorial Hungarian citizenship and the integration strategies employed by the Hungarian elites. As was presented in this paper, two models of co-existence with the Romanian political community were elaborated. The first prevails in the political programs and normative discourse of the Transylvanian Hungarian elites, and has as its core elements the institutionally sustained ethnic parallelism and segmental (plus territorial) autonomy. The second model of coexistence is not a normative but a real one, and it was labelled as asymmetric accommodation (or, from the perspective of the Romanian political actors, control through cooptation). Empirically, the latter model better captures the political integration of the Hungarian community in Romania. According to a mainstream perspective in normative political science there is a trade-off (incompatibility) between ethnic autonomy and dual citizenship.⁵⁷ A key question remains what kind of arguments could be raised against this interpretation?

⁵⁷ See Bauböck, Rainer: The Trade-Off between Transnational Citizenship and Political Autonomy. In Thomas Faist and Peter Kivisto (eds.) *Dual Citizenship in Global Perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2007, 69-91. In Transylvania Salat had similar arguments against the simplified naturalization, but the RMDSZ leadership also accepts (tacitly) this argument. See Salat Levente: A politikai közösség kérdése a többség-kisebbség viszonyának a nézőpontjából II (The political community from the perspective of minority-majority relations). *Korunk*. 2012, 2. 58–67.