

Thesis booklet

Dániel Gázsó

At Home Here and There
The Hungarian Diaspora and Its Kin-State

Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

Pázmány Péter Catholic University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Doctoral School of Political Theory
Political Theory Program
Director of Doctoral School: Dr. Balázs Mezei

Supervisor: Dr. Zoltán Kántor

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1. Antecedents of the research and main questions

Imagination is the most fundamental human ability. This is what allows us to cooperate flexibly even in large crowds; to create religious communities, dynastic empires, and modern nation-states; and lets us identify with them as well. The diaspora is also an institutionalization of group cohesion based on human ideas. To use Benedict Anderson's phrase, it is an "imagined political community". Due to the complexity of the human imagination, diaspora communities are very complex phenomena. While Eric J. Hobsbawm's assertion about nations—that they are constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people—also holds true for diaspora.

Starting from this dual top-down and bottom-up perspective, I began to study the effects of Hungarian kin-state policies on the everyday ethnicity of the affected minority communities in the late 2000s. I also wrote my predoctoral dissertation (*tesina*) on this topic, defended in December 2011 at the University of Granada (Spain), in Spanish. I carried out the necessary ethnographic research for it in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) and Prekmurje (Slovenia). I also wanted to extend my existing knowledge about Hungarian minorities living in neighboring countries to include the diaspora. Partly for this reason, I applied for the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program in 2014, within the framework of which, while helping the community-building work of

the Chilean-Hungarian Cultural Corporation, I gained an insight into the organizational life of Hungarians living in South America. In 2015, following my assignment, I became a research fellow at the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad. From then on, I was able to continue my diaspora research in full-time employment. Thanks to my new job, I could get to know the development of diaspora policy in more detail; from the inside, so to speak. From 2015, I was an invited expert at the largest consultative forums of the Hungarian government and the leaders of diaspora organizations: at the annual meetings of the Hungarian Diaspora Council; at meetings of the Committee on National Cohesion dealing with diaspora matters; at the Meeting of the Hungarian Weekend Schools; and in open and private discussions on a number of issues affecting the diaspora. All this provided an opportunity for a comprehensive examination and analysis of the Hungarian diaspora both from below and above. The present dissertation is the culmination and fruit of these years of research. In terms of its structure, it consists of three parts.

In the first part, I clarify the conceptual framework. Summarizing the various diaspora definitions, interpretations, and typologies, I outline the group cohesion components of the diaspora: the criteria by combination of which we can decide which dispersed macro-communities should be called diasporas and which should not. I am, of course, not seeking a closed definition. I am not looking for static group characteristics; rather my goal is an interpretive explanation of

the social and political processes that are the subject of diaspora studies.

In the second part, I present the Hungarian diaspora's historical evolution. How did Hungarian communities dispersed around the world develop? How long can the presence of Hungarians overseas be traced back? From what point can we talk about diasporic Hungarian communities? What migration processes contributed to their formation and subsequent growth? Looking at the various waves of Hungarian emigration, we can ask who and how many emigrated, as well as from where and to where they did so. What kind of reception did they receive in the host-states? What change did they bring to the organizational life of the Hungarian diaspora communities already living there? How did their relationship with Hungary develop? In my analysis, I seek answers to these questions. I describe the Hungarian diaspora's historical evolution in four phases, according to the nature of the emigration processes of different time periods and the impact on the already existing diaspora communities. The first phase marks the period before the First World War, the second the twenty years between the two world wars, the third the years after the Second World War and the time of Hungarian state socialism, and the fourth the present age, i.e. the period from the end of the bipolar world system to nowadays. Here it is important to emphasize that the Hungarian diaspora does not have a single, generalizable, universal history. Each of the Hungarian communities dispersed around the world has developed under different circumstances, shaping its institutional framework

according to local needs. However, in the possession of existing data, historical documents, and scientific dissertations, the events and social processes that contributed significantly to the development of the current forms of these geographically fragmented communities and their institutional systems can be outlined, without claiming to be exhaustive. I supplemented this comprehensive historical analysis with in-depth interviews with organizational leaders of the diaspora. I have approached people who, in addition to their community-building activities at the local level, play a significant role in building the regional, cross-border network of the Hungarian diaspora, setting up larger umbrella organizations and maintaining dialogue with kin-state leaders. The interviews shed light on the diversity of self-organization processes that differ from area to area, the old and new challenges and opportunities of community life, and the reception of support from Hungary.

In the third part, I focus on the political dimensions of diaspora. Instead of global comparisons and generalizations, I concentrate on regional and national specifics and their historical aspect. Why and under what circumstances did the commitment to the diaspora develop in the Central and Eastern European region? Are there similarities in this regard between different states, and if so, how can they be explained, from where can they be derived? What are the domestic and foreign policy implications of supporting diasporas? Can kin-state policy in the classical sense be distinguished from diaspora policy? I will begin my investigation with these questions. I first study the historical aspects of the topic, the formation and

consequences of the national question, and then I examine in more detail the specific measures of the Central and Eastern European kin-states towards the diaspora. After that, I focus on Hungary's diaspora engagement practices, especially in the years after 2010. I will examine this new and increasingly extensive political sector on four levels: (1) at the level of legislation; (2) at the level of decision-making bodies and consultative forums; (3) at the level of programs; and (4) at the level of financial support. In a separate chapter, I discuss in more detail the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program (KCSP) launched in 2013. I present the results of the questionnaire research I carried out by interviewing KCSP interns who completed a mission between 2016 and 2018. After analyzing and summarizing the responses received, I will share my personal experience gained during my above-mentioned mission to Chile in 2014, providing insight not only into the operation of the program, but also into the daily lives of Hungarian communities in this Latin American country that stretches alongside the Pacific Ocean. However, with all this I still have not answered the question of how and why practices similar to the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program are created. Why is it important for the Hungarian government to support those living in the diaspora? What shapes communication and support policy strategies? How are diaspora policy decisions made? Only the decision-makers themselves can give an authentic answer to these questions. That is why I also conducted in-depth interviews with some Hungarian politicians working in this field of public administration.

2. Methodology

Diaspora studies is a multidisciplinary field *par excellence*. Its practitioners need to combine the theories and methods of different social sciences to gain a holistic picture of the sociopolitical processes that shape the diaspora, and thus make comprehensive interpretations of the communities studied and the policies that target and construct them. However, the multidisciplinary approach has one drawback: if the researcher tries to master it alone, he or she can easily become a polymath, which is not accepted in the current state of science. One cannot be a political scientist, a sociologist, a historian and an anthropologist at the same time. The possibilities for social scientists are not limitless. On the contrary, each researcher is limited by his or her qualifications: each has a starting point, a methodological background, a specific perspective on a particular discipline that defines the entire course of his or her research, from questioning to data collection to analysis. This is somewhere natural and should not be confused with a preference for personal ambitions and individual value judgments. My starting point is cultural and social anthropology.

In my case, the anthropological approach as a basic methodological position means that, during the research of the Hungarian diaspora, I do not look for regularities, but rather interpretive frameworks that allow us to get to know, understand and explain the intertwined meanings of diaspora life. Following the principle of historical particularism results in a critical attitude towards the typologies

characteristic of diaspora studies on the one hand, and a scientific rejection of the normative approach on the other. From this point of view, there is no perfect or ideal diaspora organization or diaspora policy against which certain practices can be judged as good or bad. Each diaspora-related phenomenon can only be interpreted in its own context. The combined application of the emic and etic perspectives, i.e. the views and interpretations of the field subject and the researcher—which are considered the basic techniques of participant observation—, allows the study of specific cases of the diaspora category from above and below without falling into the vicious circle of the problem of ‘groupism’, the labyrinthine dilemma of group vs. category (see Figure 1).

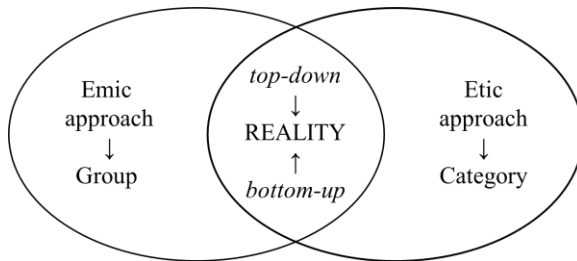


Figure 1: A technique of combining emic and etic approaches

To interpret the concrete manifestations of the national question that forms the historical basis of diaspora policies in Central and Eastern Europe, I use Rogers Brubaker's three-element model, the *triadic nexus*, augmented with two additional elements. On the one hand, I take into account the controlling and regulating role of international organizations—such as NATO and the EU—in the ethnopolitical conflicts in the region. On the other hand, I consider minority

communities formed as a result of border changes and diaspora communities of migratory origin to be two separate political fields. Their separation is justified, amongst other things, by the different nature of their institutional forms, their relations with the kin-state and with the majority society around them, as well as the interplay between their organizations. With all this in mind, the political dimensions of the diaspora can also be analyzed via a five-element model (see Figure 2).

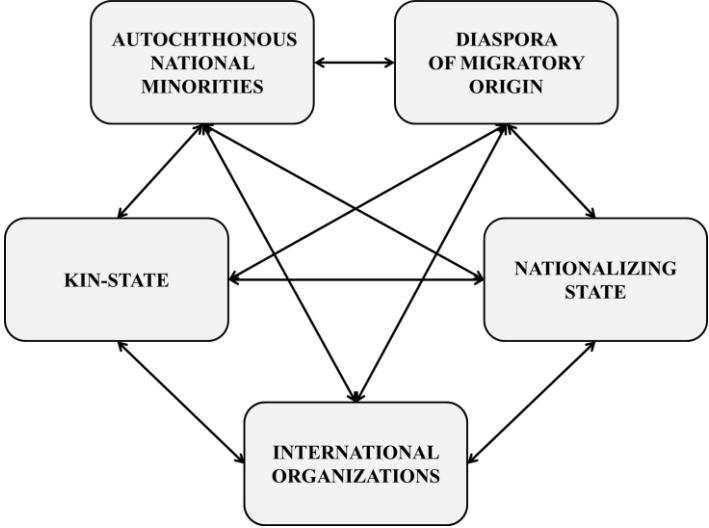


Figure 2: Pentagonic nexus

Here, however, it is important to note that such models allow only a general description of the studied social phenomena and systems of relations. They are not suitable for learning about the stratified plural contents of local identities that determine the existence of community.

During the in-depth interviews that form part of the empirical research, I conversed with the leaders of diaspora organizations and the decision-makers of diaspora policy in Hungary from the point of view of Max Weber's interpretive sociology. During our conversations, I sought to understand their social actions, the individual ideas behind their decisions, their desires, problems, and goals. It is also methodologically important that their selection was made on an arbitrary basis in all cases. I could not strive for quantitative representativeness, because in the research of Hungarian diaspora communities, even measuring the population is doubtful. However, this does not mean that I have selected my interlocutors solely on the basis of amiability. On the contrary, pushing my personal emotions into the background, I tried, based on my professional experience, to reach people who know the topic comprehensively, live “in it” and are able to pass on their knowledge. I did not divide the interview transcripts published in the appendix of my dissertation into parts, nor did I quote the passages considered more important. This is in order to pass on the knowledge and connections within them in their own context, through life stories compiled on the basis of audio materials. The aim of the in-depth interviews was to seek meaning through interpretively understanding the examined phenomena: I followed the footsteps of the reports, searching for the human nature of the formation and institutionalization of the Hungarian diaspora, and of the support afforded to them by the kin-state.

3. Conclusions and results

Two important conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the group cohesion components of the diaspora; namely migratory origin, social integration, ethnic boundary maintenance and homeland orientation. First of all, the diaspora is essentially a communal way of life and not an individually chosen lifestyle. The migratory origin—as the most generally accepted criterion of this type of community—does not primarily refer to actual migration personally experienced, but the manifestation of the event of migration in the collective consciousness and its symbolic, community shaping force. In avoiding cultural assimilation, the emphasis is also on community existence: the institutionalization of ethnic boundaries and the formation of the organizational life of the diaspora. Second, the study of the group cohesion components also revealed how decisive a factor time is for diaspora life. Integration into the society of the host-state and the maintenance of ethnic boundaries do not happen overnight. It will take longer for a community of migratory origin to find out whether it is able to integrate into the society around it, and whether it is able to pass on a desire to exist as a distinguished ethnic group from one generation to the next. Consequently, diaspora as a communal form of existence is essentially a long-term phenomenon.

The dominance of the quantitative approach as a legacy of positivism can also be felt in the field of diaspora studies. When beginning to study a particular diaspora, one is basically expected to give the

populations of the related communities. The quantification of Hungarian diaspora communities dispersed around the world, however, is made difficult by multiple factors: first, the incompleteness of the census data of host-states regarding ethnic and national affiliation; second, the frequency of the phenomenon of hiding ethnicity resulting from multiple attachments; and third, doubts regarding the data of the size and ethnic composition of the Hungarian emigration waves. During the rural exodus before the First World War, most of the host-states classified immigrants of Hungarian nationality in the same category as immigrants of other nationalities from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Between the two world wars, the majority of Hungarian emigrants did not come from Hungary, but from neighboring successor states, and so were registered as citizens of other countries. Consequently, however we try to determine the number of Hungarians living in the world, we do not get a scientifically acceptable and verifiable result. In this respect, we can only rely on professional estimates, which can vary greatly due to the diversity of methodologies applied. Comparing the various sources, it can be said in general that approximately as many Hungarians abroad live in the diaspora as in the minority communities formed as a result of border changes, i.e. roughly 2–2.5 million people. However, far less people participate in the organizational activity of the diaspora, only 5–15% of the estimated total number.

In the twentieth century history of Hungarian diaspora communities, the political segregation of the post-World War II period caused a

major schism. Several waves of emigrants left during and after the war: the mainly young soldiers and refugees of the war who had no desire to return home, referred to as “45ers”; the so-called “47ers” who took part in the democratic aspirations of the years before state socialism; and the so-called “56ers” who left due to the revolution of 1956. While these waves all added to the populations of Hungarian diaspora communities worldwide, they also increased their internal division along sociopolitical lines. Grievances brought from home, differing political creeds and disagreements led to the divisions of Hungarian organizations operating abroad and the establishment of new organizations in conflict with each other. Although signs of the divisions that emerged during this period can still be found today, the resulting conflicts have now been consolidated. Most of the organizations created along political interests and their ensuing struggles have become obsolete or have disappeared over the course of a few decades. In order to keep the desire to exist as a distinct ethnic group alive, that is, to maintain ethnic boundaries, it was necessary to create new organizations that were able to address and involve the next generation in community life. Furthermore, after the turn of the millennium, several umbrella organizations were formed, which unite Hungarian institutions operating in different countries at the regional level. Prominent examples of this are: the Western European Association of Hungarian Country Organizations established in Europe in 2001, and, overseas, the Federation of Latin American Hungarians Organization, founded in 2004.

Compared to the classical waves of emigration, the new Hungarian emigration following the end of the bipolar world system is more distributed over time, and has more of an economic rather than a political nature. In addition, in the last quarter of a century, Hungary has become a destination and transit country. According to domestic statistics, the number of immigrants was higher than that of emigrants almost constantly. With regards to the latter, however, the data of the mirror statistics show significantly higher values: between 2013 and 2015, more than 85,000 immigrant Hungarian citizens were registered per year in European destination countries alone, which in total exceeds the number of emigrants estimated at approximately 200,000 in the wake of the 1956 revolution. However, we do not yet know whether these new migrants will integrate into the society of the host-state, or whether they will migrate on, or return home over time. Only time will tell whether or not the recent Hungarian emigration processes will increase the diaspora communities dispersed all over the world in the long run.

Regarding the relationship between the diaspora and the kin-state, Hungary became open to Hungarian communities living outside its borders after forty years of state socialist isolation, after the regime change of 1989. This recent manifestation of kin-states' responsibility was not a unique phenomenon in the region. In most of the countries recovering from socialism and moving towards democracy, in addition to the idea of Europeanization, the 'national question', that is, the question of the proper relation between the territorial borders of the state and the imagined limits of the nation,

had become significant once again. Due to the historical, political and cultural peculiarities that determine the conditions of the region, the diaspora engagement practices of different Central and Eastern European kin-states indeed show some similarities, especially at the level of legislation (see Table 1).

Initially, successive governments sought to fulfill the kin-state's responsibility expressed in the 1989 Constitution of the Republic of Hungary (amendment of Act 20 of 1949) with the support of the Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries. Laws, forums, programs and financial support specifically for diaspora communities living outside the Carpathian Basin only came into being after 2010 (see Figure 3). Due to the diversity of these practices, Hungary's current diaspora policy is adapted to several ideal types: it can be interpreted as both a policy of extending rights and capacity building. Here, however, it is important to emphasize that the relationship between the diaspora and the kin-state is not constant but instead constantly changing. A rearrangement of geopolitical relations, an economic crisis or a change of government can all result in a complete strategic change of direction in this area.

COUNTRIES	LEGISLATION				GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS			
	Benefit laws for co-nationals abroad	Ethnic preferential citizenship laws		External voting possible	Ministry level	Subministry level	Other diaspora oriented government institutions	
		only for residents	also for non-residents					
Bulgaria	Act 30 of 2000 on Bulgarians Living Outside the Republic of Bulgaria		Yes since 2001	Yes			State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad	
Croatia	Act 124 of 2011 on Relations of the Republic of Croatia with Croats Abroad		Yes since 1991	Yes	State Office for Croats Abroad			
Hungary	Act 62 of 2001 on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries		Yes since 2010	Yes		Prime Minister's Office, State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad		
Poland	Act 180/1280 of 2007 of the Polish Charter	Yes since 2000		Yes		Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Cooperation with Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad	Polish Senate, Emigration Affairs and Contacts with Poles Abroad Committee	
Romania	Act 150 of 1998 on Regarding Support Granted to the Romanian Communities from all over the World		Yes since 1991	Yes		Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for Relations with the Romanians Abroad		
Serbia	Act 88 of 2009 on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region		Yes since 2004	No	Ministry of Religion and Diaspora			
Slovakia	Act 70 of 1997 on Expatriate Slovaks Act 474 of 2005 on the Slovaks Living Abroad	No	No	No		Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office for the Slovaks Living Abroad		
Slovenia	Act 43 of 2006 on Regulating the Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians Abroad	Yes since 1991		No	Government Office for Slovenians Abroad			

Table 1: Diaspora policies in Central and Eastern Europe

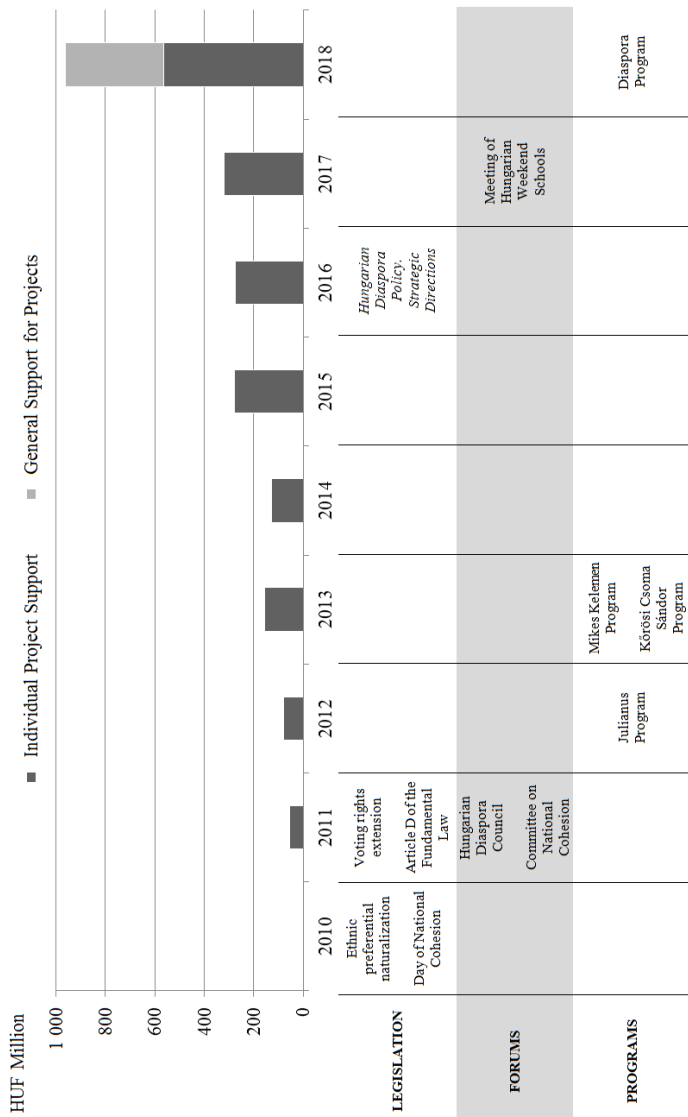


Figure 3: Hungary's diaspora engagement practices in the 2010s

The interview texts in the appendix provide an opportunity for a deeper understanding of what has been summarized so far. Discussions with organizational leaders of the diaspora and the decision-makers of diaspora policy reveal, among other things, that the Hungarian diaspora policy that unfolded in the 2010s did not follow a pre-planned strategy. Due to the lack of knowledge regarding the internal structure and local needs of the target groups, there was nothing to base a strategy on. Published in 2016, the framework document entitled *Hungarian Diaspora Policy. Strategic Directions (Magyar diaszpórapolitika. Stratégiai irányok)* summarized the already existing diaspora engagement practices. The direct influence of the Hungarian Diaspora Council in the decision-making is less noticeable, however, the opinion and will of the leaders of each member organization who have an appropriate network of contacts is decisive. The growing importance of relationship capital and personal motivation has made Hungary's diaspora policy more plastic and more difficult to predict. My interlocutors also highlighted that the increasingly intense symbolic and pragmatic presence of the kin-state in the organizational life of the diaspora can not only strengthen but also make the affected communities more vulnerable. The institutions and community-building activities of the diaspora may become increasingly dependent on the support of the government in power in the kin-state, which may alter, decrease, and change direction over time. In the analysis of diaspora policy decisions, one cannot ignore the broader historical aspects of kin-state policy. Their importance was

also highlighted in interviews with politicians working in this field of public administration. They themselves profess to having chosen this career path because they “love history”: they were touched by the idea of historical injustice and reconciliation. This is why they see the primary goal of kin-state policy not in the protection of minorities, but in nation-building. In this approach, the support provided by the kin-state ultimately serves to unify and enrich the Hungarian nation, which has been torn apart due to historical reasons. This, of course, includes enforcing and extending the rights of those living in minorities, but it goes far beyond that. Nation-building applies not only to parts of the nation outside the state borders, but to the entire Hungarian society. Thus, both kin-state policy as well as diaspora policy are foreign policy and domestic policy issues. Consequently, the support of the diaspora by the kin-state is realized not only depending on the needs of the affected communities, but also depending on the political and economic power relations within Hungary. However, a whole nation-encompassing, centralized kin-state policy strategy is only an ideological stance. Actual practices, forums, programs and financial support are more characterized by chance and contingency. Finally, the interview texts also contain sections that may help formulate new research goals. Generational differences in the attachment of the descendants of emigrants to Hungarian roots, the new Hungarian emigration experienced in the 2010s, and the long-term effects of the kin-state support that unfolded during that decade may provide the basis for future challenges in diaspora studies.

4. Publications related to this topic

- Gazsó Dániel: Diaspora Policies in Theory and Practice. *Hungarian Journal of Minority Studies*, 2017. 1 (1). 65–87.
- Gazsó Dániel: La nación dividida: análisis multidimensional de las políticas de construcción nacional en relación con las minorías húngaras transfronterizas. *Revista de Paz y Conflictos*, 2013. 6. 32–52.
- Gazsó Dániel: An Endnote Definition for Diaspora Studies. *Minority Studies*, 2015. 18. 161–182.
- Gazsó Dániel: Egy definíció a diaszpórakutatás margójára. *Kisebbségkutatás*, 2015. 24 (2). 7–33.
- Gazsó Dániel: A magyar diaszpóra fejlődéstörténete. *Kisebbségi Szemle*, 2016. 1 (1). 9–35.
- Gazsó Dániel: A magyar diaszpóra intézményesülésének és anyaországi viszonyainak története. In: Ambrus László – Rakita Eszter (eds.): *Amerikai magyarok – magyar amerikaiak. Új irányok a közös történelem kutatásában*. Líceum Kiadó: Eger, 2019. 15–33.
- Gazsó Dániel: A diaszpórakutatás elméleti és módszertani kérdései. In: Dobrai Katalin – László Gyula – Sipos Norbert (eds.): *Ferenc Farkas International Scientific Conference 2018*. Pécsi Tudományegyetem Közgazdaságtudományi Kar, Vezetés- és Szervezéstudományi Intézet: Pécs, 2018. 758–767.
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- Jarjabka Ákos – Gazsó Dániel: A diaszpóra csoportkohéziós összetevői. In: Pap Norbert – Domingo Lilón – Szántó Ákos (eds.): *A tér hatalma – A hatalom terei. Tanulmánykötet a 70 éves Szilágyi*

- István professzor tiszteletére.* Pécsi Tudományegyetem Egyetemi Nyomda: Pécs, 2019. 137–146.
- Dabis Attila – Gaszó Dániel – Nagy Sándor Gyula – Tóth Norbert: Függetlenség vs. Integráció – A katalán autonómia kérdése. *Kisebbségi Szemle*, 2018. 3 (1). 47–64.
- Gaszó Dániel: Volt egyszer egy Trianon. *Valóság*, 2015. 58 (8). 70–88.
- Gaszó Dániel: Zelei Miklós: A kettézárt falu. *Kortárs Irodalmi és Művészeti Folyóirat*, 2017. 60 (11). 100–103.
- Gaszó Dániel: Föld alatt s föld felett, Szelmencen zajlik az élet. *Forrás*, 2013. 45 (2). 85–90.
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- Gaszó Dániel: A státustörvényről, a kettős állampolgárságról. *Együtt*, 2010. 4. 58–68.