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Factors Affecting Turnout among Ethnic Minority Voters: The Case of Hungarians in Transylvania

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Abstract

Our article investigates minority voting behaviour through an in-depth analysis of the case of Transylvanian Hungarians, one of the politically mobilised ethnic groups of post-communist Eastern Europe. Members of this minority community have overwhelmingly supported RMDSZ, a robust ethnic party, in each of the parliamentary (and other types of) elections following the regime change. We argue that both macro-political processes and the micro-foundations of voting behaviour should be analysed to properly understand the factors conducive to ethnic block voting. Our main focus is on micro-determinants; however, we also discuss some elements of the macro-political context. Without considering these factors we cannot account for the sustained ethnic mobilisation of the minority group in question. However, the main goal of this article is to provide a micro-level analysis of voting behaviour. We focus primarily on turnout, which is the most important determinant of electoral outcomes in the case under analysis. Our main empirical question is whether the impact of the main factors discussed in the theories of electoral turnout is similar in the case of minority (Transylvanian Hungarian) and national (Romanian) electorates. We conclude that social embeddedness has different effects on the two populations: namely, embeddedness measured through network density supports political mobilisation only in the case of the minority group.

Keywords: Electoral Turnout, Social Embeddedness, Ethnic Voting, Ethnic Parties, Hungarians in Romania.

Numerous scholars have argued that Transylvanian Hungarians have been the most successful of the large, territorially concentrated ethno-national groups of post-communist Eastern Europe in sustaining peaceful ethnic mobilisation and political agency.[1] The Transylvanian Hungarian case is also a typical example of ethnic block voting, as until now the overwhelming majority of the Hungarians who cast a ballot have supported RMDSZ,[2] an ethnic party established right after the fall of the Ceauşescu regime. In this respect, the Transylvanian Hungarian case contrasts sharply with that of some of the other ethno-national minorities of Eastern Europe. For instance, the Russian speakers of Estonia and Latvia have supported mostly non-ethnic (or mainstream) parties during the last two and a half decades.[3] In the case of the Hungarians in Slovakia, there was a split in the Party of the Hungarian Coalition in 2009, and, following this event, Hungarians have voted in an almost equal proportions for either an ethnic party (Party of the Hungarian Community) or a multi-ethnic one (Most-Híd).[4] This variety in minority voting behaviour emphasises that neither the persistence of the political salience of group boundaries nor the gradual loss of their political significance can be taken for granted. The problem of minority voting behaviour should be addressed through empirical research, and the factors beyond different types of voting patterns should be identified.[5] Our article is an in-depth case study with a focus on the Transylvanian Hungarian case in this respect.

The focus of our paper is on the micro-determinants of the 'ethnic vote'. We concentrate primarily on factors that affect turnout; more precisely, intentions to participate. In another paper we have discussed the instrumental and expressive factors behind the support for RMDSZ.[6] Expressive forms of motivation, such as manifesting group identity, and instrumental forms of motivation, such as the desire for favourable public policies or for resources to be allocated to the Hungarian community, play a crucial role in sustaining the dominance of this robust ethnic party in the long run. Nevertheless, voting for RMDSZ is mostly habitualised. Consequently, the major decision each individual Transylvanian Hungarian has to make before elections is whether to turn out or abstain from voting. Further, the electoral campaigns of RMDSZ are more about mobilisation and less about persuasion, thereby confirming the hypothesis of Horowitz (1985) concerning electoral politics in an ethnic context.

Under these circumstances, the article focuses on the factors affecting the intention to participate in parliamentary elections as they appear in opinion surveys representative for Transylvanian Hungarians. We rely on a secondary analysis of

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[1] See Csergő and Regelmann (2017). See also Csergő (2007); Stroschein (2012); Kiss and Székely (2016); Kiss (2017).

[2] In Hungarian: Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség, in English: Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, in Romanian: Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România (UDMR). We use the Hungarian acronym.

[3] See Csergő and Regelmann (2017: 6–10).

[4] See Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013).

[5] Recently, this was suggested by several scholars. Chandra (2012: 12) has argued that in several cases formerly (politically) activated categories can lose their (political) significance, while in other cases the ethnically divided character of the electorate is persistent. Importantly, both cases need explanation. Wimmer (2013) outlined a similar program concerning the general characteristics of group boundaries.

[6] See Kiss (2017).

opinion polls conducted between 1999 and 2017. A survey conducted in July 2012 plays a special role in our analysis. This survey was designed for scientific purposes and consisted of two samples: one representative of the Hungarian minority electorate, and another representative nationally (in Romania), with some of the relevant items being asked of both groups of respondents. This allows us to compare the impact of some explanatory variables among Hungarians and Romanians. We included into the questionnaires several items inspired by three distinctive general explanatory models of turnout: (a) rational choice theory, (b) resource-based theories, and (c) theories regarding social embeddedness. Starting from the third theoretical orientation we also introduce measures for the concept of *ethnic embeddedness,* by which we mean the extent to which the personal network of an individual remains limited to the in-group (his/her own ethnic community) or reaches beyond it to contacts that do not belong to the respective ethnic group. Through this variable we try to establish a link between the political salience of ethnicity and another major characteristic of group boundaries, namely the degree of social closure.[7]

In our main argument two conceptual elements are crucial. First, in our understanding of the rationality of voting behaviour, the *strategic politicians* or *mobilisation hypothesis* (Aldrich, 1993) is pivotal. This hypothesis posits that an electoral calculus is made by political actors who invest more or less energy in mobilising voters based on this calculus. Second, the mainstream hypothesis is that socially embedded voters can be more easily mobilised (Franklin, 2004). However, some analysts who focus on Eastern Europe have found exactly the inverse relationship. According to Howard (2003: 121-146), the resilience of personal and family networks can be perceived as a factor in political passivity. To put forward one of our results, denser networks contribute to higher turnout among Hungarians, but do not have the same effect among Romanians. Even if this is in line with the mainstream hypothesis concerning embeddedness, in an Eastern European context the positive relation between network density and participation among Hungarians (not the lack of such relations among Romanians) requires explanation. The concept of ethnic embeddedness is of central importance in this respect.

The article is structured in five parts. First, we present our conceptual premises, discussing the interplay between macro- and micro-level factors and then presenting the different approaches to the factors that influence electoral participation. Second, we describe briefly the electoral trends among Transylvanian Hungarians and the data we used in the analysis. Third, we present the variables used in the analysis. Fourth, we discuss factors affecting the voting turnout among minority voters and compare the impact of these to that on the majority (Romanian) electorate. The last section contains our concluding remarks.

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[7] On the dimensions through which ethnic boundaries can be characterised, see Wimmer (2013).

1. Conceptual Background: Macro- and Micro Level, Approaches to Turnout

1.1. Macro- and Micro-determinants of Ethnic Vote

The factors that lie behind the political salience of ethnic boundaries and the persistence of ethnic block voting can be investigated at different levels. The institutional and political context that favours ethnic parties and helps ethnic elites to mobilise their constituency can be labelled macro-determinants of the ethnic vote. The Romanian electoral system, as well as the broader Romanian regime of minority policies, is of primary importance here. Several authors have emphasised the importance of EU integration in creating a favourable context for claim making through ethnic parties (Horváth, 2002; Csergő and Regelmann, 2017).

The role of 'electoral engineering' in strengthening certain kinds of party systems throughout post-communist Eastern Europe is widely acknowledged (Shvetsova, 2003; Bochsler, 2006). From the perspective of RMDSZ, the most important features of Romania's electoral system are its relatively proportional nature and the existence of a second, compensatory tier for seat allocation at the national level (the first tier being at the level of the counties). This prevents the wasting of votes cast for RMDSZ, even if they come from regions where the share of Hungarians is too low to allow the election of MPs in the first tier; thus RMDSZ is able to secure representation proportional to the share of votes obtained nationally. The new law also contains an alternative threshold, which is beneficial mostly to RMDSZ (a relatively small party with a territorially concentrated electorate): parties that do not obtain five per cent nationwide can still enter parliament by obtaining at least 20 per cent of the vote in four counties.

This electoral legislation also helps RMDSZ to avoid intra-ethnic competition and to maintain its dominant position inside the Hungarian community. The electoral system contains a five per cent threshold, applied at the national level.[8] For electoral alliances a progressively increasing threshold is applied (eight per cent for two parties, nine per cent for three and ten per cent for four or more). Given that the proportion of Hungarians in Romania is approximately 6.5 per cent, these provisions have rendered nearly impossible the success of an alternative Hungarian party.

With regard to the broadly defined regime of minority policies,[9] although Romania is a nation-state, it would be misleading to consider its ethno-political establishment purely integrationist.[10] A sort of duality would be a more appropriate

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[8] At the 1992 and 1996 elections the threshold was only three per cent, being raised to five per cent before the 2000 elections.

[9] By 'minority policy regime' we refer to the totality of legal and institutional norms and political practices designed to manage ethno-cultural diversity. See Bernd (2009).

[10] McGarry, O'Leary, and Simeon (2008) distinguish between integrationist and accommodationist approaches to managing ethno-cultural differences. These are obviously ideal types in a Weberian sense. Integrationists support institutions that help consolidate so-called 'common' or 'shared' political identities (e.g. 'moving beyond' or 'transcending' ethnicity, conceptions of civic citizenship or patriotism, etc.) and inhibit or discourage the political activation of ethnic identities. Accommodationists promote institutional-political arrangements that provide opportunities for the various groups to publicly express their identity,

description: while maintaining the hierarchical relations between the various ethnic groups and defining the state as the state of the Romanian people (in ethnic terms) in the constitution, Romania also accepts and supports the political activation of ethnicity (e.g. the participation of minorities in politics through their own ethnic parties) (see Székely and Horváth, 2014). This kind of arrangement could be labelled asymmetrical accommodation. RMDSZ has been part of various government coalitions or managed to establish 'special' relations with governing parties (parliamentary support) since 1996.

An important implication of this ethno-political model is the fact that mainstream parties practically do not appeal at all to Hungarian voters, but behave as *titular ethnic parties*[11] in regions where Hungarians constitute the local majority or are present in substantial proportions (see Kiss and Székely, 2016). On the other hand, through the opportunity of being part of government coalitions, RMDSZ has practically gained a monopoly over public resources allocated to regions where Hungarians form a majority. With voter's choices embedded in this context we can better understand the relative stability of the ethnically informed voting behaviour of Hungarians.[12]

The transnational institutional and political context of Europeanisation has also favoured asymmetric accommodation and thus indirectly the ethnic vote and the dominance of RMDSZ among the Hungarian minority community. Asymmetric accommodation as a minority policy regime can be located somewhere between ethnic democracies[13] and formally institutionalised ethnic power-sharing.[14] This model of managing cultural differences, although severely undertheorised,[15] is quite prevalent throughout Eastern Europe and, arguably, was facilitated by transnational actors during the pre-accession period. The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life explicitly calls for the inclusion of minority representatives in the executive power (but without urging institutionalised power-sharing). Horváth (2002) argued that transnational actors played a crucial role

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[10] to protect it from the majority, and to be in charge as much as possible in terms of the management of community issues.

[11] The term was coined by Stroschein (2001).

[12] It is important to stress that the argument above only holds for the parliamentary elections. Local elections and elections for the European Parliament posed a more serious challenge for RMDSZ's dominance within the Hungarian community. In the first election for the European Parliament (2007), an independent candidate (László Tőkés) obtained approximately 38 per cent of the votes cast for Hungarian candidates, and was elected to the EP. Subsequently, both intra- and inter-ethnic competition intensified in the local elections. On the one hand, MPP has put RMDSZ to a rather serious test in Székely Land. On the other hand, in settlements where Hungarian candidates for mayor do not stand a chance of getting elected, Hungarian voters often vote strategically (i.e. they vote for their most preferred Romanian candidate in order to prevent the election of others perceived as less attractive), and this tactic may also spill over to the choice for local or county councils. On the effect of ethnic demography on party fragmentation at a local level, see Stroschein (2011).

[13] In ethnic democracies one group dominates exclusively one ethnic group (Smooha, 2001). The Eastern European examples close to this ideal type are Estonia and Latvia (Järve, 2000; Melvin, 2000).

[14] Consociational arrangements (different forms of territorial and non-territorial autonomies) are located in this category.

[15] Several comparative investigations have focused on non-territorial (Maloy et al., 2015; Smith, 2013) and other forms of autonomy (Constantin et al., 2015). Arrangements based on informal rules of bargaining are more difficult to investigate comparatively.

in initiating a process of bargaining between RMDSZ and Romanian political actors in the early 1990s;[16] additionally, in keeping RMDSZ within the governmental coalition between 1996 and 2000.[17] One should also mention that the pressure of transnational actors on national governments to bargain with minority organisations or to include them in the executive power decreased during the 2000s. This was connected to a general shift towards an integrationist approach and discourses stressing the norms of non-discrimination and individual rights and emphasising the dangers of empowering minority groups such that empowerment strengthens ethnic boundaries and leads to permanent institutional segregation.[18]

Csergő and Regelmann (2017: 292–294) establish a linkage between the macro-level factors supporting political participation through ethnic parties and motivational drivers of voting for ethnic parties by employing the notion of collective rationality. Through collective rationality they mean the outcome that minority voters support parties that are in the best position to bargain for the interests of the minority group. One should emphasise that this outcome does not necessarily mean ethnic block voting. According to their typology, individual voting (the case that ethnicity and party option are not correlated) and diversified ethnic voting (the case when members of a group support several parties associated with the group in question) are also possible outcomes. Actually, the authors focus on macro-political factors which are conductive to certain structures of opportunities, and hypothesise that voters behave in an instrumentally rational way and are able to recognise the most promising political alternatives for minority claim-making. However, the reference to collective rationality does not involve a micro-level analysis. Thus, collective rationality remains a 'black box' in the sense that the authors do not specify the concrete mechanisms through which elites are able to mobilise voters or the motivational drivers behind certain types of voting behaviour.

The literature concerning the micro-determinants of ethnic block voting is quite extensive. Many scholars have been engaged in identifying different expressive[19] and instrumental[20] factors towards this end. As for the Transylvanian Hungarian case, analysts have emphasised primarily the role of (expressive) identity voting and the capacity (or the lack of capacities) of elites to mobilise along policy issues concerning national identity (Biró, 1998; Brubaker et al., 2006; Csergő, 2007; Stroschein, 2012). In this article we treat the problem from another angle. The desire to manifest a Hungarian identity and the conviction that without the parliamentary presence of RMDSZ Hungarian institutions and Hungarian-inhabited regions would receive far

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[16] The *Project on Ethnic Relations* (sponsored by the US government) had a key role in this respect (Horváth, 2002: 33-36).

[17] Horváth (2002: 47) emphasised the role played by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel.

[18] See in this respect, the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (OSCE 2012) and also Csergő and Regelmann (2017: 4) for a similar argument.

[19] The model of expressive voting emphasises that the reward for participation is the act of voting itself, through which one can publicly manifest group identity. See in this respect, Horowitz (2000 [1985]).

[20] Instrumental models of voting concentrate on the consequences of options, namely policies perceived by the voters as beneficial and direct resource allocation (clientelism, patronage). Authors connected to the theory of rational choice emphasise mostly this perspective. See for instance, Chandra (2004); Posner (2005); Ferree (2011).

less funding are important drivers for sustaining the ethnic vote. However, at an individual level the ethnic vote (i.e. voting with RMDSZ at least in parliamentary elections) can be perceived as a habitus-oriented behaviour. In this respect we rely on the concept of agency employed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), which treats habitualised elements (iteration) as an important component of human action. Other elements, such as reflected future-oriented planning (projective aspect), and the deliberative process of establishing new norms (practical-evaluative aspect), come to forefront only in situations of 'crisis'. In our case of ethnic voting, the changes of the macro-political context might create such a situation of crisis when they question seriously and credibly the ability of RMDSZ to bargain for 'Hungarian interests'. However, without such a crisis situation 'iteration' dominates, meaning that voting for RMDSZ is barely a reflective choice but merely a taken-for-granted option. The table below underscores this perspective. Data were provided by Kvantum Research, which conducted a post-election survey representative for Transylvanian Hungarians in March 2017. Their question referred to the moment when respondents decided which party or candidate to support in the December 2016 parliamentary elections. Answers showed that an overwhelming majority of respondents already knew which party they would support before the campaign started.[21]

Table 1. When did you decide which candidate/party to support?

	Hungarians who casted a ballot	RMDSZ supporters
Before the campaign period	74.2	76.8
In the first part of the campaign period, several weeks before the elections	9.2	8.7
During the last week before the election day	5.9	6.3
During the election day	6.4	5.3
Don't know, no answer	4.3	3.0

Source: Kvantum Reseach

From this perspective, it seems obvious that the RMDSZ campaign was more about mobilisation and less about persuasion, at least under 'normal' circumstances (e.g. when macro-political factors did not question the utility of voting for RMDSZ). Thus, our case confirms the classic although recently contested[22] argument of Horowitz that in ethnically divided societies, electoral results primarily depend on the turnout of different groups, while parties are interested primarily in increasing the participation of their co-ethnics.

From the perspective of individual voters, 'normal circumstances' means that the party option is mostly taken for granted and individual decisions refer to casting a ballot or abstaining from voting. Consequently, the micro-level investigation of ethnic

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[21] A total of 91.2 per cent of respondents declared their support for RMDSZ.
[22] Ferree (2011) and Jeremy Horowitz (2015) argue that in the ethnically divided societies of South Africa and Kenya the main concern of parties and candidates is not to mobilise their (ethnically or racially defined) core constituencies but to convince voters who belong to swing groups or live in swing areas. Others, like Chandra (2004) and Posner (2005), agree that ethnic parties seek mostly to mobilise their core constituency; however, they also argue that parties and political entrepreneurs seek to redefine politically salient ethnic boundaries and categories (or in other words, their 'core constituency').

voter behaviour should focus on factors affecting turnout. In what follows, we deal with this issue and compare the effects of different variables on the turnout of Transylvanian Hungarians and the Romanian majority.

1.2. Factors Influencing Turnout

We draw on three different theoretical orientations which address the factors influencing voter turnout in a general (non-ethnic) context. These are (1) rational choice theory, (2) resource-based theories, and (3) theories of social embeddedness. In the survey we conducted in 2012 we tried to operationalise some variables connected to these approaches. This issue will be discussed later in the empirical part of our paper.

(1) According to the *theory of rational choice,* voting is an instrumentally rational act, meaning that participation and options are the result of the individual cost-benefit calculus of self-interested actors. Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968) describe the well-known free rider dilemma[23] as it applies to electoral participation. The former emphasise that, from an instrumental perspective, abstaining from voting is the only rational option as the chances of one vote being decisive are minimal, and one would benefit from favourable policies even if they abstained from voting.

Nevertheless, the model calls our attention to four basic relations. First, we should expect a lower turnout when the *cost of voting* increases. This means that rules that make participation easier, or on the contrary, more difficult, influence turnout. Such rules include pre-registration, extensions of the duration of voting, and so on (Blais, 2006). Second, the willingness of voters to participate in the electoral process should increase if the *benefits expected from the winning candidate* are more substantial: when there are greater differences between the candidates' programs or when greater power is concentrated in the institutions people vote for (Pacek, Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2009). Third, participation increases if there is a greater chance that *one's vote could be decisive.* This occurs when, according to voters' perceptions, the race is close, the constituency is small, or participation is very low. Proportional electoral systems, where the chance of wasting one's vote is lower, can also increase turnout. Fourth and last, we must mention the issue of self-efficacy; that is, voters' belief that they *can influence political decisions.* The term *self-efficacy* was coined by social psychologist Albert Bandura to refer to the extent to which an individual trusts their own competences or believes that they are responsible for their own life. In politics, it refers to what the voter thinks about their personal power or capacity to influence political processes.

(2) The second theory we draw on is the *resource model of political participation.* This model also builds on rational choice theory to some extent, but also includes sociological characteristics of voters to explain their participation and electoral behaviour.[24] Authors subscribing to this theory criticise rational choice

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[23] See Olson (1965).

[24] The resource model was not primarily or exclusively developed to explain electoral turnout, but also other types of political participation. Research on civic voluntarism and on non-electoral political

approaches primarily because these are unable to properly model the costs in the calculus of voting, although the costs obviously depend on the resources available to voters (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995). The most important resources regarded as producing higher turnout are material wellbeing, educational level, professional skills, and membership in various organisations (Whiteley, Clarke and Sanders, 2001), or, for other authors, civic skills or competences, money, and spare time (Brady et al., 1995).

(3) The third turnout model we rely on emphasises the role of *social networks and social embeddedness*. This approach holds that socialisation is pivotal to understanding voting behaviour, since it is the time at which patterns of participatory behaviour emerge and crystallise. For example, one can best understand party identification using this model, as attachment to a party can involve a lifetime bond, or at least a very long period of time. On the other hand, in contrast to the atomised individuals theorized in the rational choice model, socially embedded voters consider values, norms, and interests, as well as group sanctions in their own reference group when making a decision (Franklin, 2004).

A first important remark refers to the possible interpretations of rational choice theory. The most widespread interpretation is that voters make an individual cost-benefit calculus and decide whether to turn out or abstain from voting. Nevertheless, the model of socially embeddedness is much more compatible with an alternative reading, namely the *strategic politicians* or *mobilisation hypothesis* (Aldrich, 1993). This approach does not apply the mechanisms of rational choice to individual voters, but to politicians. Generally speaking, individual voters' thinking about political issues is not that sophisticated as to consider turnout in terms of a cost-benefit calculus; however, political elites do the analysis for them. According to Franklin (2004), mobilisation models are more realistic than the rational calculus of individual voters, because in their more complex forms they are able to combine rationality with socialisation mechanisms and social embeddedness. Mobilisation is hardly imaginable without networks; the elites are able to mobilise provided that they invest in the maintenance of networks, and if they fail to do so, their mobilisation capacity decreases.

As a second remark, the relation between social embeddedness and political participation in Eastern Europe should be discussed. Advocates of the mainstream hypothesis, in fact, are adherents of an expressive model of voting. In this model, social norms held in the community matter more than the calculus of the individual voter. However, this interpretation of the social embeddedness approach focuses to a great extent on Western societies (or classic, consolidated democracies) and implicitly presumes that the social norms facilitating turnout are dominant in society. However, according to the literature on Eastern Europe we may suppose that the region is different in this respect. Based on a study by Howard (2003), one may argue that in Eastern Europe the density of personal networks may shape participation in politics or civil organisations in a way that is exactly the opposite of what the literature focusing on Western Europe implies. Howard starts from the idea (also sketched out by many other scholars), that in Eastern Europe masses perceive a very sharp dichotomy

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participation also draws heavily on the resource model. See for example, Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995); Whiteley, Clarke and Sanders (2001).

between the private and the public spheres, a distinction inherited from the former regime.[25] Without going into detail, one can say that one of the particularities of socialist regimes was precisely the deep penetration of (party) politics into various social domains. This does not mean, however, that the regime destroyed informal personal networks. Quite the contrary: personal networks strengthened because the relations valued by people were removed from the public sphere and found their place in personal, informal networks (Howard, 2003: 28). These networks also played an essential role in the adaptive and survival strategies of the population in the midst of economic hardships, and an economy of penury. Based on these considerations, Howard (2003: 121-146) associates the low intensity of participation in public life (as broadly defined) to three concrete factors. First, post-communist institutional systems have not succeeded in overwriting the distrust and disdain towards public life inherited from the former regime. Secondly, Howard emphasises the disappointment with transition. Thirdly, passivity in public life is related to the resilience of personal and family networks. It is important to note that the structure of personal networks was transformed to a great extent after the change of regime, being influenced by social changes that promoted self-fulfilment and prosperity, or which have contributed to increasing social inequalities. In spite of all this, the role of personal networks remains essential in different areas of life throughout Eastern Europe.[26] This also shows that the relation between social networks and active participation in public life is not necessarily what we would expect, based on Western-focused literature.

As a third remark, we introduce the notion of ethnic embeddedness. This is closely related to social embeddedness; however, it is also a topic found to be highly relevant in the literature on ethnic parties and ethnic politics. Arend Lijphart (1977) uses the notion of *encapsulation* in his theory of consociationalism, arguing that it is a fundamental characteristic of pillar-type social organisation. For Lijphart the phenomenon is related primarily to organisational and institutional systems and networks. Social encapsulation emerges if communities possess an organisational-institutional network that is able to satisfy a variety of needs and claims of pillar members. The ideology of a minority society that is promoted by the Transylvanian Hungarian elites rests on institutional complexity as the primary means of achieving this encapsulation (see Kiss and Székely, 2016). Our notion of ethnic embeddedness is also related to the concept of *social closure*, which in turn exerts great influence on the prospects of ethnic and cultural differences gaining political significance (Wimmer, 2013). We use the ethnic closure or openness of social networks (the proportion of members who belong to the in-group and the majority group, respectively) as an indicator of *ethnic embeddedness*.

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[25] For Romania, the argument appears in the work of Verdery (1996) and Kligman (1998), and in work by Biró (1998).

[26] For example, Sandu (1999) highlights that personal relations play a key role in the strategies of the entrepreneurs in Romania.

2. Electoral Trends and Available Data

As mentioned already, Transylvanian Hungarians have overwhelmingly supported one ethnic party, namely RMDSZ, since the beginning of the 1990s. As a consequence, RMDSZ has been the most stable political organisation in the Romanian political field with a continuous presence in the national parliament since 1990. Electoral results for RMDSZ have been quite closely associated with the demographic proportions of Hungarians.

Table 2. The results of RMDSZ for the Chamber of Deputies, 1990-2016

Parliamentary election	RMDSZ votes	RMDSZ %
1990	991,583	7.23
1992	811,290	7.46
1996	812,628	6.64
2000	736,863	6.80
2004	628,125	6.17
2008	425,008	6.17
2012	380,656	5.14
2016	435,969	6.19

Source: Central Electoral Bureau

The sole parliamentary election when a relatively potent Hungarian political formation (EMNP)[27] ran against RMDSZ was held in 2012. Under these circumstances, the main factor affecting the number of votes obtained by RMDSZ was the turnout among Hungarians.

Survey data also show that among decided partisan voters support for RMDSZ has changed very little over the past fifteen years (varying between 78 and 93 per cent). The highest levels of support for Hungarian challenger parties were recorded in 2008 (after MPP[28] was established), and again after 2010 (when EMNP was established). The highest propensity to vote for mainstream parties was measured in 1999, 2004, and 2012. Consequently, RMDSZ managed to preserve its dominant position within the Hungarian community for the entire period under scrutiny. However, the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ appears less stable when compared to the total Hungarian electorate.

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[27] Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt in Hungarian, Partidul Popular Maghiar din Transilvania (PPMT) in Romanian, Hungarian People's Party in Transylvania in English.
[28] Magyar Polgári Párt in Hungarian, Partidul Civic Maghiar in Romanian, Hungarian Civic Party in English.
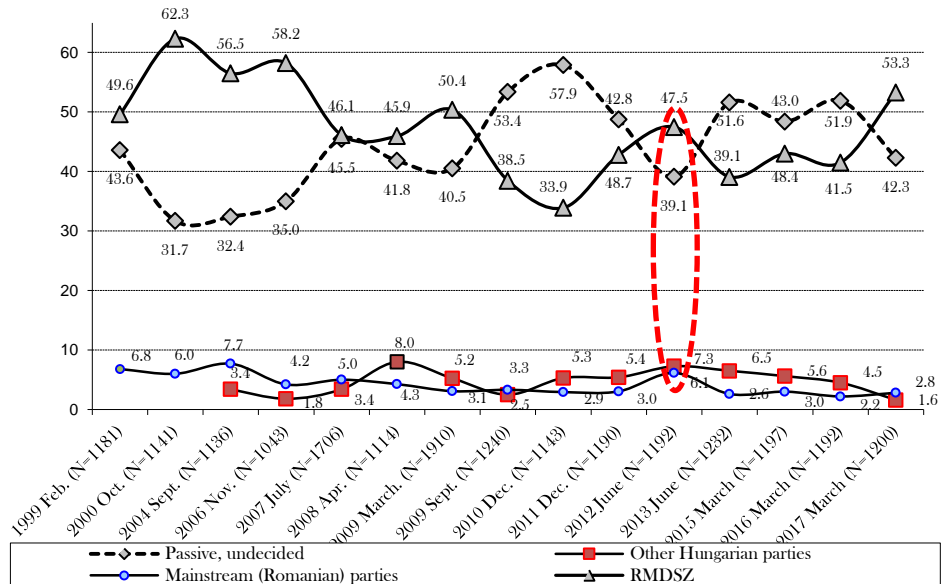
Figure 1. Party options of Transylvanian Hungarians, 1999-2012, all respondents[*]
[*] The logistic regressions reported in the second part of this article are based on the survey marked with a circle

As already mentioned, our analysis relies on survey data. Survey data containing individual records have a series of advantages compared to electoral results which are available in aggregated form (usually at the municipality level). Fortunately, in the case of Transylvania's Hungarians such surveys exist, and our ability to draw on such data represents the greatest added value of this article. Nevertheless, some methodological issues still have to be addressed with regard to the data we use.

First, in spite of the large number of existing surveys, the possibilities for theoretically informed analysis are rather limited. The majority of opinion polls representative for Transylvanian Hungarians carried out between 1999 and 2017[29] investigated the turnout intentions and electoral options of voters in a pre-electoral context. The majority of these surveys were commissioned by RMDSZ itself, serving the purpose of informing party leaders about the estimated support the party enjoyed at different moments. The surveys provide only a reduced and incidental set of relevant explanatory variables. In this respect, one survey should be highlighted. This survey was carried out by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities in 2012 and was designed for scholarly purposes. On this occasion we had the opportunity to include in the questionnaire theoretically relevant items concerning

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[29] The surveys of February 1999, February 2000, October 2004, September and November 2006 were carried out by CCRIT (Research Center on Inter-Ethnic Relations); TransObjective Consulting coordinated the surveys of July 2007, April 2008 and April 2014; Kvantum Research carried out the surveys of March and September 2009, December 2010 and December 2013 March 2015, March 2016 and March 2017; the surveys of December 2011, July 2012 and June 2013 were conducted by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities. All surveys were based on similar sampling methods (multi-stage, stratified, random samples). We weighted the databases according to sex, age and region using the same method. Sample size is reported in the tables and figures.

participation in elections. The survey is all the more relevant since it targeted not only Hungarians in Romania, but also included a sample representative of the entire population of Romania, enabling us to compare the impact of some relevant variables for the two populations.[30] The regression models as well as the descriptive statistics presented in the fourth section of this paper are based on this survey.

Second, surveying minority electorates poses further challenges. One of the most important problems is to delimit the minority population. The surveys we rely on were conducted in Hungarian, meaning that respondents were selected following screening based on language proficiency. This method may exclude people who identify themselves as Hungarian but do not have the proficiency in the minority language that would permit them to respond to the questionnaire (Kiss and Kapitány, 2009). A related problem is a special manifestation of the more general issue of social desirability: when respondents face an interviewer who addresses them in the minority language, they tend to provide answers that conform more to the discourses perceived as dominant or legitimate within the minority community than their actual opinions or behaviour.[31]

Third, a more general problem is that in a pre-electoral context interviewees only report intentions and not about action they have already performed. That is, respondents tend to exaggerate their intention to participate, leading to an overestimation of turnout. The most important cause of overestimation is the so-called social desirability effect, meaning that respondents adjust their answers regarding turnout intention to meet perceived or presumed social expectations.

3. Factors Influencing Turnout and RMDSZ's Mobilisation Capacity

As we perceived, electoral campaigns among Transylvanian Hungarians are more about mobilisation than persuasion. From a micro-perspective, habitual elements govern electoral behaviour. Many Transylvanian Hungarians take it for granted that they support RMDSZ and they rarely reflect on the possibility to vote for another party. In this section we focus on the factors that influence the turnout of Transylvanian Hungarians and the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ.

3.1. Operationalisation and Univariate Analysis of the Factors Influencing Turnout

In our survey from June 2012 we tried to operationalise the factors presented above to explain individual turnout intentions. In this section we discuss the operationalisation of the variables and present some univariate analyses, while in the next section we turn to multivariate regressions.

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[30] The sample representative of the Hungarian electorate consisted of 1192 respondents; the national representative sample of 1691 individuals.

[31] Of course, a different and arguably more serious problem (in the opposite direction) arises when minority members respond to questions addressed to them in the majority language instead of their mother tongue. Accordingly, we would like to stress that we are not arguing against conducting interviews in the respondent's mother tongue.

3.1.1. Rational choice

Drawing on the rational choice model of turnout, we created five explanatory variables based on attitude scales.[32] (1) We grasped *internal self-efficacy* with the following question: *'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I and individuals like me can influence politics and public affairs.'* (2) Regarding *external self-efficacy* we asked the following: *'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Politicians, leaders are concerned with what I and individuals like me think.'* (3) Our third rational choice-inspired variable operationalised the *benefits perceived by the voters in the case that certain candidates win* the elections. It was created from two survey items: *'There are parties that represent my interest'* and *'There are politicians I trust.'* (4) A fourth variable was designed to measure *commitment to democracy and its operation* and was created from the following items: *'Democracy works only if the majority of people vote'* and *'Every citizen should vote.'* (5) The fifth variable was meant to capture the perceived *stake of elections*, and was computed from two survey items: *'It does not matter which party wins, because parties are all the same'* and *'Each election has its stakes, since it decides the leaders for the years to come.'*

Table 3 shows the mean values by ethnicity for the five attitudinal items linked to the rational choice model of turnout. The results indicate that internal self-efficacy and expected benefits from the winning candidate are significantly lower in the case of Hungarians than in the case of Romanians. There are no significant differences with regard to the other three variables.

Table 3. Mean values of attitude scales linked to the rational choice model of turnout, by ethnicity*

	Romanians (N=1533)	Hungarians (N=1192)	Romania (N=1691)
Internal self-efficacy	4.3	**-18.2**	2.9
External self-efficacy	-18.1	-25.2	-18.5
Benefits from winning candidate	-6.4	**-17.4**	-7.2
Commitment to democracy	60.5	62.8	60.7
Stakes of elections	31.0	27.0	30.8

* All variables transformed to scales ranging from -100 to 100. Values in bold represent significant differences between the groups according to ANOVA tests. Values for Romania are computed from the merged (and reweighted) samples, while values for ethnic Romanians are calculated from the sub-group of Romanians in the merged sample. Values for Hungarians are computed from the sample representative of Hungarians in Transylvania.

3.1.2. Resource model

Next, we turn to the resource model. For measuring the level of citizen competences, our questionnaire included two sets of questions for grasping *interest in politics* and *forms of political participation other than voting*. We measured interest in

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[32] All survey items referenced in this section were measured on four-point Likert scales, with response options ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement.

politics by creating two cumulative scores: one from four items about the frequency of political news consumption (in newspapers, on the internet, radio and TV, each measured on six-point scales), and another from four items grasping the frequency of discussion of politics (with family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues, each measured on four-point scales). Concerning non-electoral political activities, we counted the number of different activities each respondent engaged in (out of ten listed types).[33]

Table 4. Interest in politics and non-electoral forms of participation, by ethnicity

	Romanians (N=1533)	Hungarians (N=1192)	Romania (N=1691)
Frequency of following politics in the media *	49.9	**45.2**	49.6
Frequency of talking about politics *	54.6	51.4	54.4
Number of non-electoral political activity forms engaged in**	0.85	0.83	0.85

*Mean value, transformed to 0-100 scale
**Mean value of the number of various forms of political participation the respondents engaged in
Values in bold represent significant differences according to the ANOVA tests. Values for Romania are computed from the merged (and reweighted) samples, while values for ethnic Romanians are calculated from the sub-group of Romanians in the merged sample. Values for Hungarians are computed from the sample representative of Hungarians in Transylvania.

Table 4 shows the means of the variables inspired by the resource model according to ethnicity. On average, there is a significant difference between Hungarians' and Romanians' consumption of political media-content: overall, Romanians consume more. Breaking down the results further, according to the different types of media (data not shown), we can observe that the difference comes mainly from the more intense consumption of political content in electronic media (mainly TV).

Concerning non-electoral political activities, there is no significant difference between Hungarians and Romanians in overall levels of engagement.[34] However, there are certain forms of political participation that Hungarians prefer in higher proportions, most importantly engaging in voluntary work and participating at events organised by a political party; therefore, we have good reason to consider these activities ethnically specific forms of participation. It should be noted that these are forms of participation that presuppose longer-term involvement and commitment to organisations as compared to most other types of participation that require only one-time involvement. We believe that this particular trait is related to the Hungarian elites' project of building ethnic institutions, which is aimed at forging long-lasting institutional structures (see Kiss and Székely, 2016).

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[33] The ten types of non-electoral activities are listed in Figure 2.
[34] For an earlier analysis of non-electoral participation in Romania, to which our data are to a certain extent comparable, see Sum (2005).
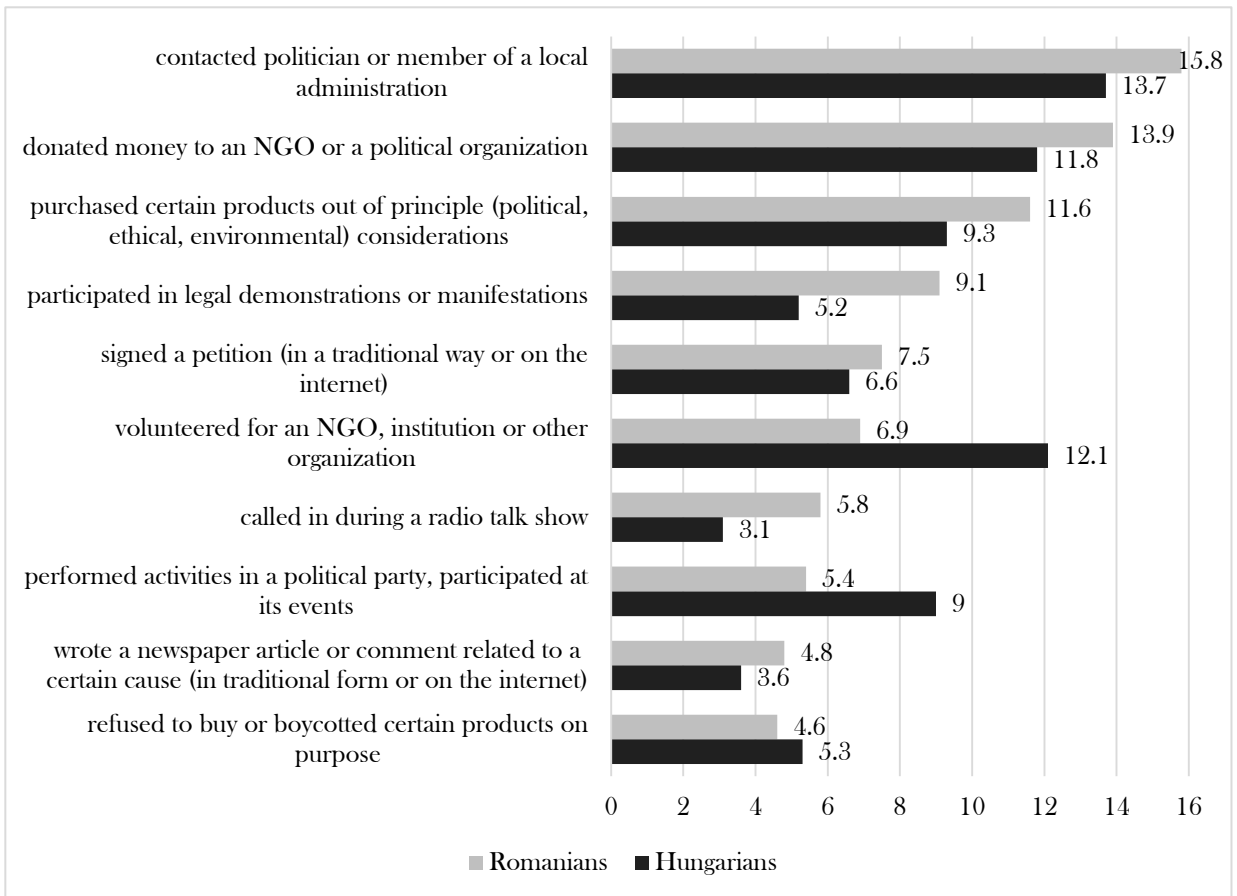
Figure 2. Types of non-electoral participation, by ethnicity

3.1.3. Social and ethnic embeddedness

We approached the operationalisation of social networks and social embeddedness in two ways. First, we constructed a composite scale which we named *community embeddedness*. The survey items we used for this purpose referred to how often voters attended church and various community events.

Table 5. Community embeddedness, by ethnicity

	Attends church		Participates in local festivities, events	
	Romanians (N=1533)	Hungarians in Transylvania (N=1192)	Romanians (N=1533)	Hungarians in Transylvania (N=1192)
Several times a week	3.6	3.6	3.7	1.1
Once a week	18.2	22.9	4.6	3.4
A few times a month	24.8	26.0	17.5	19.9
A few times a year	30.8	26.6	42.8	40.2
Less frequently	22.5	20.7	31.3	35.2
Mean (on 0-100 transformed scale)	*37.4*	*40.5*	*26.6*	*23.4*

As Table 5 shows, there is no significant difference between Romanian and Hungarian respondents regarding community embeddedness. Hungarian respondents attend church somewhat more often, while Romanians attend local festivities or events more often, but neither of the differences is significant.

Second, the questionnaire included several questions about personal networks. We asked respondents to name up to three persons who would best match the following five situations: *(1) 'Have you been someone's guest, or has someone been your guest in the last three months?' (2) 'Are there persons with whom you go out for entertainment (to pubs, the theatre, sport events, hiking, etc.)?' (3) 'Apart from family members living in the same household with you, are there persons with whom you regularly talk about confidential issues and problems?' (4) 'Let us suppose you needed money immediately. Are there any people you could borrow from?' (5) 'People often need legal counselling or advice, and help in official matters. Is there anyone you can rely on in case you need to?'*

Each person could name a maximum of three persons for each situation described above, resulting in a total of maximum 15 persons. Based on these items we created two indicators. On the one hand, we measured *the density of the personal network* by the number of persons the respondents mentioned. Romanians mentioned 2.3 persons on average, while Hungarians 2.9 persons (the average for the sample representative for Romania was 2.4). The difference between these values is statistically significant. This higher value for Hungarians is rather surprising,[35] especially knowing that compared to the national average Hungarians occupy more unfavourable positions according to several indicators of social stratification (Kiss, 2014).

On the other hand, we mapped *the ethnic structure of personal networks.* Table 6 shows the values of two indicators, cross-tabulated with various sociodemographic variables. The first is the proportion of Romanians in the personal networks of ethnic Hungarian respondents. The second shows whether there are persons of Romanian ethnicity in the family, meaning close relatives (father, mother,

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[35] Density of personal networks and social position in a stratified system are usually positively correlated. Our survey confirmed this relation.

or spouse). The table also displays the results of ANOVA tests, indicating statistically significant differences between the groups for most of the listed explanatory variables.

Table 6. Ethnic Romanians in the personal networks and families of Hungarians

		Proportion of Romanians in the personal network	Sig.	Proportion of Hungarians with Romanian family members	χ^2	Sig.
Region	Dispersed communities (N=202)	25.2		22.6		
	Central Transylvania (N=218)	16.8		17.6		
	Partium (N=295)	7.9	8.6	11.1	62.1	0.000
	Székely Land (N=478)	3.8	0.000	2.7		
Proportion of Hungarians	Below 20% (N=244)	27.9		23.7		
	20-40% (N=206)	12.5		15.2		
	40-60% (N=109)	7.3	6.7	6.3	71.5	0.00
	60%+ (N=634)	5.1	0.000	5.1		
Size of municipality	Below 2000 (N=342)	6.6		6.0		
	2-10 thousand (N=309)	11.2		9.8		
	10-100 thousand (N=280)	12.2	0.3	13.6	12.8	0.005
	100 thousand + (N=261)	15.2	0.000	15.0		
Type of municipality	Urban settlement (N=612)	14.1		13.7	9.1	0.03
	Rural settlement (N=580)	8.0	9.1	7.8		
			0.000			
Age	18-34 (N=367)	11.9		13.8		
	35-54 (N=375)	12.5	0.6	12.3	4.4	0.109
	55+ (N=451)	8.9	0.075	8.5		
Education	Elementary (N=365)	6.1		6.9		
	Secondary (N=658)	12.4	.3	12.7	5.5	0.066
	Higher (N=169)	12.9	0.001	12.0		
Religion	Protestant (N=601)	10.7		10.6		
	Catholic (N=524)	10.0	0.0	11.0	18.3	0.000
	Other (N=66)	22.7	0.001	20.0		
Church attendance	Weekly (N=300)	7.7		9.7		
	Several times a month (N=305)	11.0		11.4		
	Several times a year (N=306)	13.2	0.2	11.8	0.947	0.814
	Less often (N=245)	12.6	0.024	11.0		
	Total (N=1192)	11.0		11.4		

For the total population of Hungarians in Romania, on average 11 per cent of the contacts in personal networks are ethnic Romanians. While almost all sociodemographic variables produce significant differences, the greatest ones emerge with regard to region and the ethnic structure of the settlement.

While the personal networks of Hungarians comprise on average 25 per cent Romanians in the 'dispersed Hungarian communities' where the proportion of Hungarians is very low, in the compact Hungarian-inhabited area of Székely Land this proportion is as low as 3.8 per cent. The table also shows that the proportion of Romanians in the personal networks of Hungarians in Central Transylvania (where Hungarians are a significant minority) is well above the proportion measured in the Partium region (where ethnic demography is more balanced).

The revealed impact of region is to a great extent an indirect consequence of ethnic geography. This is confirmed by the impact of the ethnic composition of the settlement on the composition of personal networks. The type of settlement also has an impact: the personal networks of Hungarians show more ethnic homogeneity in smaller settlements. The influence of educational level on network structure is also significant, individuals with at most eight finished classes having the most homogenous personal networks. Conversely, the influence of age is not significant (or only marginally so). Religion also matters: the proportion of Romanians is higher in the personal networks of individuals belonging to other churches than the Hungarian historical ones (Catholic, Protestant). It is also important to note that with the exception of church attendance, the same variables have a significant effect on both the presence of Romanians in the family and their proportion in personal networks.

Furthermore, there are also great differences in the ethnic structure of personal networks of families according to party choice, as shown in Table 7. One third of the supporters of Romanian parties have Romanian family members, and the proportion of Romanians in their personal networks also approaches one third. Conversely, among voters of RMDSZ or the other Hungarian parties these proportions remain below ten per cent.

Table 7. Ethnic Romanians in personal networks and families, by party option

	Ratio of Romanians in the network (average, %)	Ratio of Hungarians having Romanian family members (%)
RMDSZ voters (N=565)	7.9	7.7
Other Hungarian parties (N=82)	6.9	5.7
Romanian parties (N=74)	30.6	33.0
Passive, undecided (N=424)	12.7	12.3

3.2. Factors Influencing the Mobilisation Capacity of RMDSZ

In the last part of our analysis, we present multivariate regression models for the electoral mobilisation of Transylvanian Hungarians. First, we report a multinomial logistic regression which models the odds that respondents will not vote for RMDSZ but (1) remain passive /undecided, or (2) vote for one of the Romanian (mainstream) parties, or (3) for an alternative Hungarian party (MPP, EMNP), respectively. We should note that support for RMDSZ reached a nadir in 2012 and both the support for mainstream parties and Hungarian competitor parties was at its highest. Our category of reference is *RMDSZ voters*. The table shows odds ratios (Exp B), flagged for the conventionally used significance levels. An odds ratio of less than one indicates how much a one unit change in the explanatory variable reduces the odds of belonging to the respective group (compared to the vote for RMDSZ). An odds ratio greater than one indicates how much a one-unit change in the explanatory variable increases the same odds. The table also shows the reference values for categorical explanatory variables.

The model presented in Table 8 includes the explanatory variables we have derived from the theories of turnout, as well as control variables. The latter include the usual socio-demographics, a variable grasping general levels of satisfaction (with the direction the country is going; namely with actual and expected living conditions), as well as a variable about Hungarian citizenship. The explanatory power of the model is relatively good (Nagelkerke $R^2=0.402$).

Table 8. Turnout and political options of Hungarians in Transylvania: July 2012 (multinomial logistic regression)

| Variable | Category | Basic distribution (%) | | | | Multinomial logistic regression | | |
| | | | | | | Passive vs. RMDSZ | Other Hungarian party vs. RMDSZ | Romanian party vs. RMDSZ |
		Passive	Other Hungarian party	Romanian party	RMDSZ	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Region	Dispersed communities (N=202)	45.6	5.3	15.6	33.5	1.01	1.39	6.82**
	Central Transylvania (N=218)	35.5	6.1	11.7	46.7	0.47*	0.85	6.05**
	Partium (N=295)	30.7	4.8	4.8	59.7	0.33***	0.66	1.58
	Székely land (N=478)	37.7	12.8	1.2	48.2	.	.	.
Proportion of Hungarians	Below 20% (N=244)	43.7	3.1	16.1	37.0	0.79	0.29*	3.54**
	20-40% (N=206)	33.5	4.5	9.5	52.5	1.48	0.42	1.69
	40-60% (N=109)	41.1	7.1	5.4	46.4	1.00	0.95	1.41
	60%+ (N=634)	35.3	11.4	2.6	50.7	.	.	.
Settlement size	Below 2000 (N=342)	34.1	6.9	4.5	54.4	2.33**	0.47	1.38
	2-10 thousand (N=309)	33.6	10.2	8.5	47.7	2.79***	0.94	2.83
	10-100 thousand (N=280)	42.6	10.4	5.9	41.2	1.21	1.71	0.98
	100 thousand + (N=261)	40.1	4.7	8.7	46.6	.	.	.
Type of settlement	Urban (N=612)	43.2	7.1	7.1	42.5	3.18***	0.57	0.74
	Rural (N=580)	31.2	9.1	6.5	53.3	.	.	.
Sex	Woman (N=622)	38.9	6.8	7.4	46.8	1.20	0.79	1.18
	Man (N=570)	35.0	9.6	6.1	49.3	.	.	.
Age	18-34 (N=367)	38.9	8.2	6.1	46.8	1.36	0.88	1.39

Variable	Category	Basic distribution (%)				Multinomial logistic regression		
						Passive vs. RMDSZ	Other Hungarian party vs. RMDSZ	Romanian party vs. RMDSZ
		Passive	Other Hungarian party	Romanian party	RMDSZ	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
	35-54 (N=375)	34.0	8.9	6.3	50.8	0.97	0.84	0.87
	55+ (N=451)	38.2	7.5	7.7	46.6	.	.	.
Educational level	Elementary (N=365)	40.4	5.2	7.7	46.7	0.86	0.70	2.56**
	Secondary (N=658)	36.5	8.6	6.4	48.4	0.75	0.84	1.29
	Higher (N=169)	34.1	11.1	6.5	48.4	.	.	.
Hungarian citizenship	Applied for (N=229)	27.9	16.4	2.3	53.4	0.50***	2.71***	0.23**
	Would like to apply for (N=433)	29.0	8.6	7.2	55.2	0.54***	1.79	1.02
	Do not want to apply for (N=509)	43.8	4.1	8.4	43.8	.	.	.
Religion	Protestant (N=601)	37.5	7.2	6.7	48.6	0.98	0.66	0.50
	Catholic (N=524)	36.8	9.3	5.6	48.2	0.77	0.51	0.52
	Other (N=66)	36.6	7.0	16.9	39.4	.	.	.
General satisfaction						1.15**	0.91	0.90
Internal self-efficacy						1.00	1.00	1.00
External self-efficacy						1.00	1.00	1.00
Perceived benefits from winner						0.97***	1.00	1.00
Commitment to democracy						0.98***	1.00	1.01
Stakes of elections						0.98*	1.00	0.99**
Community embeddedness						0.97***	0.001	0.99
Network density						0.73***	0.94	0.95

Variable	Category	Basic distribution (%)				Multinomial logistic regression		
		Passive	Other Hungarian party	Romanian party	RMDSZ	Passive vs. RMDSZ	Other Hungarian party vs. RMDSZ	Romanian party vs. RMDSZ
						Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Proportion of Romanians in personal network						1.09	0.33**	1.47**
Romanian person in family	No (N=1067)	6.6	8.6	5.1	49.7	0.67	1.18	0.36**
	Yes (N=125)	1.5	4.2	20.4	33.8	.	.	.
Frequency of political conversations						0.99	1.00	1.00
Other forms of political activity						0.95	3.17**	1.00
Consumption of political media-content						0.99***	1.01	1.00

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Of the rational choice-inspired attitudinal scales, commitment to democracy, the perceived stakes of elections and the perceived benefit associated with the election of particular candidates had a significant negative effect on remaining passive, as opposed to voting for RMDSZ. However, only the stakes of elections had a significant impact with regard to voting for other parties than RMDSZ: those who perceived higher stakes were less likely to support Romanian parties instead of RMDSZ.

With regard to the resources model, we find that the consumption of more political content in the media reduces the likelihood of being passive. A much more interesting finding is that more intense non-electoral political activities increase the support of RMDSZ's Hungarian challengers: engaging in one additional form of non-electoral activity more than triples the odds of voting for a Hungarian challenger instead of RMDSZ. The most plausible reason for this is that the competition between RMDSZ and its opposition is more intensive among the politically active strata of the community (among a sub-elite level of community activists) and less intensive among the masses.

The level of social and ethnic embeddedness also has a significant impact. The weight of Romanians in personal networks is not related significantly to the probability of remaining passive, but it increases the likelihood of votes given to Romanian parties and decreases the probability of voting for other Hungarian parties. The presence of Romanians as close family members also matters; those without Romanian family members are almost three times less likely to vote for Romanian parties, although there is no significant effect with regard to supporting Hungarian challenger parties.

Turning now to the control variables, the region where the respondents live significantly differentiates both the undecided and the supporters of Romanian parties from RMDSZ voters. On the one hand, voters from Central Transylvania and the Partium region are significantly less likely to be passive than those who live in Székely Land. This conclusion is in line with the findings of Stroshein (2011) and Tătar (2011) that ethnic mobilisation is more successful and the dominance of RMDSZ is more accentuated in regions where ethnic demography is more balanced. On the other hand, the odds of voting for Romanian parties are seven times greater in the dispersed Hungarian communities, and six times greater in Central Transylvania than in the Székely Land.[36] The ethnic structure of the settlement influences the support of both Romanian parties and the Hungarian challengers. Supporting Romanian parties is 3.5 times more likely in localities with less than 20 per cent Hungarians than in settlements with more than 60 per cent, while voting for challenger Hungarian parties is about three times less likely. Thus, the findings corroborate the electoral results which show that the main challenge for RMDSZ comes from two different sources depending on the ethnic composition of the region: Romanian parties are the primary competitors in the regions where Hungarians are dispersed – where the ethnic embeddedness of the Hungarians is considerably lower – while in the ethnically more homogeneous Hungarian region of Székely Land, the main challenge is mounted by the smaller Hungarian parties who promote more radical programs.

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[36] The finding that the Central Transylvanian region seems to resemble the diaspora in this respect was a novelty in the 2012 survey: previous polls did not indicate higher support for Romanian parties in this region.

The mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ is stronger in rural areas and smaller settlements than in larger cities.[37] However, settlement type and size exert a significant impact only with regard to passive voters, but not to supporters of Romanian parties or RMDSZ's Hungarian challengers.[38]

Apart from these sociodemographic variables,[39] only education displays a relevant effect, and only with regard to the likelihood of supporting Romanian parties. The data show that persons with the lowest educational level were more than 2.5 times more likely to vote for Romanian parties than respondents with a higher education. Although the effect is not significant, we still find it useful to dwell on the impact of education on passivity because education is not a mere control variable but can also be understood as being related to the resource model. Thus, it is against our expectations that with regard to the RMDSZ-undecided comparison it is the most educated who display the highest likelihood of remaining passive.[40]

Hungarian citizenship has an interesting effect.[41] Hungarians who already applied or were planning to apply for citizenship were less likely to remain passive in elections, were more likely to vote for smaller Hungarian parties compared to RMDSZ, and less likely to vote for Romanian parties. In other words, this category was easier mobilised than the average and, based on their party preferences, tended to adhere to more radical positions regarding ethnic issues.

Finally, a higher level of general satisfaction produces passivity instead of support for RMDSZ. This rather unexpected finding is probably related to the fact that RMDSZ was in opposition by the time of data collection.

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[37] This tendency is revealed by all opinion polls that have been carried out from 1999 to 2017.

[38] Moreover, the impact of type and size are contradictory, which may be some sort of a methodological artefact (one of the variables captures a residual effect).

[39] The lack of impact of age is somewhat surprising because surveys carried out from 1999 to 2009 showed that older generations used to support RMDSZ in greater proportions. However, relations changed in 2010 (probably related to the fact the RMDSZ supported the austerity measures introduced by Emil Boc's government in response to the economic crisis, which also included cutting back pensions). See Kiss and Barna (2011).

[40] Here too a brief contextualisation could be useful: RMDSZ used to enjoy more substantial support among higher educated segments until the emergence of the Hungarian opposition. However, after the successful campaign of László Tőkés for the European Parliament as an independent, and the registration of the first Hungarian challenger party (MPP), the proportion of passive voters as well as supporters of alternative Hungarian parties increased among the most educated group of voters. After RMDSZ reached an agreement with Tőkés before the 2009 EP elections whereby Tőkés got re-elected on RMDSZ's ticket, support for RMDSZ increased to the largest extent among more highly educated voters. However, RMDSZ once again lost the sympathy of the most educated segment, the lowest level of support among university graduates being recorded in December 2010; this also coincides with the lowest level of overall support ever measured in surveys for RMDSZ. The trend could be summarised as follows: while support for RMDSZ among the higher educated strata was above average until 2007, since then the most educated voters seem to have been reacting somewhat more sensitively than the rest of the community to important political events see Kiss and Barna (2011) for details.

[41] According to the survey, 18 per cent of Hungarians were Hungarian citizens. Since then, the proportion has increased significantly to 50 per cent.

3.3. Factors Influencing Turnout Among Hungarians and in the National Electorate

Now we compare the effects of the investigated factors on voting intentions of Romanians and Hungarians through two binominal logistic regressions. Table 9 shows odds ratios and significance levels. The explanatory power of both models is weaker compared to the multinomial model presented in the previous section (Nagelkerke R^2 for the national sample is 0.275, and for the Hungarian sample 0.288). The decrease in explanatory power in the case of Hungarians comes from the fact that, for the sake of comparability, we had to exclude a series of relevant variables that were included in the multinomial model. For example, we left out regional distributions in Transylvania, the ethnic structure of settlements and the indicators of ethnic embeddedness.

Table 9. Factors determining election turnout in Romania and among Transylvanian Hungarians July 2012 (binominal logistic regression)

Variable	Categories		Romania			Hungarians	
		N	Proportion of certain voters	Exp (B)	N	Proportion of certain voters	Exp(B)
Region	Transylvania	575	60.9		1192	65.0	
	Moldova	491	83.2	1.71***			
	Wallachia	625	72.1	2.13***			
Settlement size	Below 2000	508	73.3		342	68.5	
	2-10 thousand	382	77.6	0.88	309	64.7	0.69
	10-100thousand	331	69.6	0.57	280	61.3	0.78
	100 thousand +	321	66.7	0.38***	261	64.8	0.99*
	Bucharest	149	53.4	0.12***			
Type of settlement	Urban	892	67.2		612	60.8	
	Rural	799	74.1	0.63	580	69.5	2.76***
Sex	Woman	877	70.7		622	62.5	
	Man	814	70.2	0.82*	570	67.8	1.46**
Age	18-34	503	65.0		367	63.5	
	35-54	557	68.9	0.93	375	69.0	1.31
	55+	631	76.0	1.99***	451	63.0	1.16
Educational level	Elementary	492	73.3		365	62.0	
	Secondary	890	70.9	1.42**	658	66.3	0.91
	Higher	309	64.7	1.03	169	66.7	0.74
			Mean	Exp (B)		Mean	Exp (B)
General satisfaction			3.77	1.01		3.59	0.81***
Internal self-efficacy			2.9	1.01***		-18.1	1.00
External self-efficacy			-18.5	1.01***		-25.2	1.00
Perceived benefits from winner			-7.2	1.01***	-17.3		1.01***
Commitment to democracy			60.7	1.01***		62.8	1.01***

Stakes of elections	30.8	**1.01*****	27.0	0.99
Frequency of political conversations	54.4	**1.01*****	51.4	1.00
Other forms of political activities	0.85	**1.02**	0.83	**1.08***
Consumption of political media content	49.6	**1.00*****	45.2	1.00
Network density	2.4	0.95	2.9	*1.13***
Nagelkerke R²	0.275		0.288	

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

The comparison of the two models reveals important differences. First, the effects of variables connected to the model of rational choice and resource model seem to be more important in the case of the national sample. Here, all the indexes modelling rational cost-benefit calculus are significant. In other words, Romanians were more likely to vote if their internal and external self-efficacy was higher, if they perceived the stake of the elections and the benefits from the winning of one candidate as higher, and if they were committed to democracy. In the case of Hungarians only commitment to democracy and perceived benefits had such effects. In the case of Romanians, resources also matter; consequently, those who are more informed (who talk about politics and consume political media content) were more likely to vote. In the case of Hungarians no such relation existed. However, perhaps the most significant finding is that social embeddedness has different effects on the two samples. The density of personal networks is relevant (with a positive impact) in the case of Hungarians, but it does not have a significant impact in the national sample. Moreover, analysis of only the ethnic Romanian respondents in the national sample shows that the effect of personal network density becomes marginally significant, but in the opposite direction.[42]

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[42] 6.4 per cent of the respondents in the national sample are Hungarians. We do not show the re-computed model here; the effect of other variables has not changed in important ways. We report, however, the mean network densities among voters and non-voters by ethnicity: among Romanians, voters' networks consist on average of 2.2 persons, while non-voters' of 2.4 persons. Among Hungarians these values are 3.1 and 2.7, respectively.
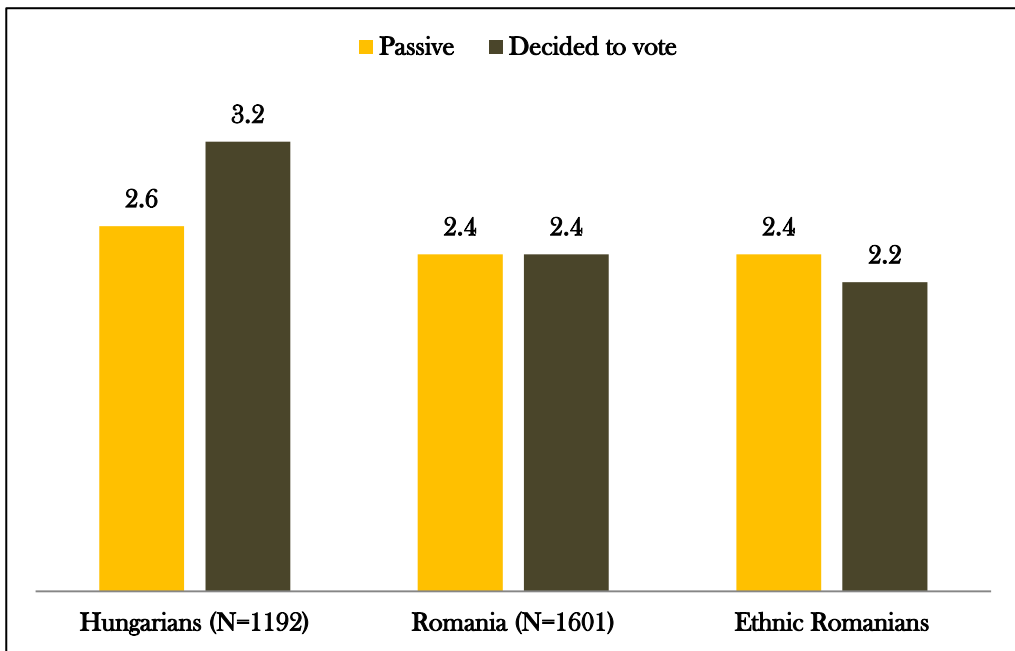
Figure 3. Network density by voting intentions

4. Conclusion

Our paper has examined the factors that lie behind ethnic block voting through an in-depth analysis of the Transylvanian Hungarian case. In this respect, one should distinguish between macro- and micro-level determinants. We have argued that the notion of collective rationality employed by Csergő and Regelmann (2017) is not satisfying. The authors suppose (most probably correctly) that minority voters will support political parties that are best able to bargain for their interests. However, they reveal neither the concrete mechanisms through which parties mobilise their ethnically defined electorate, nor the individual motivations of people who vote for ethnic parties.

In this article we noted that, at least under 'normal circumstances' (e.g. when the capacities of RMDSZ to bargain for the 'Hungarian interest' are not profoundly and credibly questioned), the voting behaviour of Transylvanian Hungarians is habitually driven, or as Emirbayer and Mishe (1998: 976–983) would say, can be perceived as an 'iteration' of a routinised behaviour. In such a context, the option of voting for the dominant ethnic party is taken for granted and the question is rather whether Hungarian voters can be mobilised and whether they cast ballots in sufficient numbers for RMDSZ to pass the electoral threshold.

Consequently, we investigated the micro-foundations of the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ and the micro-level factors affecting voter turnout. Our first regression model that was run on the Hungarian sample revealed that the capacity of RMDSZ depends strongly on ethnic embeddedness. The factors that increase the likelihood of voting for mainstream (or Romanian) parties was influenced strongly by this factor. In our second regression model, we compared the factors influencing

turnout intentions among Hungarians and among the majority population. This comparison led us to important conclusions. In the case of Hungarians, rational cost-benefit calculus matters less, while social embeddedness matters more. In the Romanian sample the density of one's social network did not have a significant effect on voter behaviour. This latter result is less surprising if one takes into account the literature focusing on Eastern Europe. Howard (2003) highlighted that the resilience of personal networks has exactly the opposite effect to that which one mainstream hypothesis predicts: it actually supports a turn away from the public sphere and political passivity. From this perspective, the opportunity for RMDSZ to build on existing social networks and on the embeddedness of Hungarian voters in terms of mobilisation (rather than the lack of a relationship between embeddedness and participation in Romania) is pronounced.

In sum, the ethnic vote is sustained by the capacity (or by the belief in the capacity) of RMDSZ to bargain for the interests of the Hungarian minority. However, individual voting behaviour is mostly habitualised, while the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ is mediated by social embeddedness and ethnic encapsulation.

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