Summary

Nábelek Fruzsina

Negative campaigning in Hungary

Negative campaigning in Hungary at the elections between 1998 and 2018

Ph.D dissertation

Supervisor:

Papp Zsófia, Ph.D

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Department of Political Sciences

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I. Background and relevance of the research

Negative campaigning is an integral and at the same time widely debated part of election campaigns. Even in the case of the Hungarian elections one can often come across terms like 'mudslinging', 'character assassination', 'dirty campaign' or statements like 'the most negative campaign ever' both by the media and by politicians. Negative campaigning has become a natural part of the political communication in Hungary accompanied by the perception of campaigns becoming more and more negative. It is a phenomenon considered to lead to the deterioration of public discourse, that is harmful to the political debate and generally to democratic politics.

Despite its importance and prevalence, we have relatively little knowledge about the nature of negative campaigns in Hungary and in Europe in general (Nai and Walter 2015) . The same way as with other phenomena in the field of political communication, most of the research focuses on the U.S. election campaigns. However, studies about Western European campaigns show that the findings about the American case are not clearly adaptable to the European context. European campaigns show several differences that influence the use of negative campaign. Such differences are the characteristics of the multiparty system (Dolezal, Ennser-Jedenastik, and Müller 2016; Elmelund-Præstekær 2008; Walter 2014), the political culture (Hansen and Pedersen 2008), the aspects of coalition bargaining (De Nooy and Kleinnijenhuis 2015; Walter and van der Brug 2013) or the pecularities of the party organizations (Dolezal et al. 2016).

The cases outside the U.S. and the Western European context might show further differences in the use of negative campaign. As for the Hungarian case, there are several important studies about individual election campaigns (see e.g. Kapitány and Kapitány 2002, 2003, 2014; Kiss, Mihályffy, and Szabó 2007; Mihályffy 2009; Szabó, Mihályffy, and Kiss 2011; Török 2006, 2011) but about the phenomenon of negative campaigning in particular only few studies (Nábelek 2014; Sükösd 2002; Tóth 2002) exist in the literature. This is so despite the fact that negative campaigning in Hungary is influenced by distinct characteristics such as the rapid development of election campaigning (Mihályffy 2009), the distinct features of the media system (Kiss and Szabó 2015), the high and growing level of party polarization (Patkós 2018), the antagonistic relation between the opposing parties (Enyedi 2016; Körösényi, Illés, and Gyulai 2020; Palonen 2018) or the party-centred campaigns (Papp and Zorigt 2016). Based on this argument the dissertation aims to complement the international literature with an

Eastern European case and the Hungarian political communication research with the first comprehensive examination of negative campaigning.

In addition to the gap identified in the literature, the examination of negative campaigning is important because previous research has expressed certain concerns about its impact on the functioning of democracy, such as the demobilizing effect of negativity, and that negative campaigning may diminish the trust of the electorate towards politicians and towards the whole political system (Ansolabehere et al. 1994). Furthermore, a generally accepted finding of studies is that although negative campaigning is often used by politicians, voters might find it repulsive (Brooks and Geer 2007; Fridkin and Kenney 2011).

The main question of the dissertation reflects this contradiction: *what motivates political actors to use negativity in their campaign while it is a tool that seems to be rejected by the electorate?* In addition to examining the explanations of negative campaigning, the broader aim of the dissertation is to explore *how political actors use negative campaigning in Hungary*, and whether Hungarian campaigns really are becoming more and more negative over time.

Building on these questions, the dissertation examines negative campaigning of the Hungarian elections between 1998 and 2018 from two aspects. First, from a *descriptive aspect* it presents the use and the changes of negative campaigning during this period. As part of this, the dissertation examines the content, the types, the partisan characteristics of negative campaigning and the possible increase in its use. On the other hand, the aim of the dissertation is to apply and test the common *explanations of negative campaigning* and complement these with new explanations based on the Hungarian case.

The first, theoretical chapter of the dissertation examines the role of negative campaigning in the political system as a whole and its functions in the campaign strategy. In this context the dissertation presents the theories on the presumably 'damaging' effects of negative campaigning to the political system (Ansolabehere et al. 1994; Broh 1980; Earl Bennett et al. 1999) and the opposing arguments about its usefulness in the political debate (Geer 2006; Mayer 1996). The chapter discusses the possible motivations and limitations of negative campaigning, presenting the phenomenon of *negativity bias* (Baumeister et al. 2001; Dolezal et al. 2016; Lau 1985; Rozin and Royzman 2001) and *boomerang effect* (Garramone 1984; Haddock and Zanna 1997; Polborn and Yi 2006) which serve as a deeper explanation of the hypothesis regarding the use of negative campaigning.

The second chapter presents the explanations of the use of negative campaigning in the campaign strategy, aiming to answer in which cases parties and candidates chose negative

messages instead of positive ones during the campaign. The first group of explanations are the so called 'static explanations' which argue that certain positions and characteristics of the candidates and parties that do not change during the campaign period explain negative campaigning. The static explanations typically use a rational choice approach[1]: they argue that actors use negative campaigning if they are at a disadvantage in some way, but in principle they avoid such a risky strategy. Another group of static explanations emphasize that politicians and parties react to the expectations of the electorate when they choose between positive and negative campaigning. If a candidate or party believes that negative campaigning does not fit to their characteristics and roles in the eyes of voters, and this incoherence might threaten with a loss of votes, they prefer to choose positive messages. However, if they think that voters do not have such expectations, they can consider to afford the riskier strategy of negative campaigning. The third group of static explanations approach negative campaigning from the characteristics of the targets of negative messages, arguing that certain candidates and parties are more likely to be attacked than others.

In my dissertation I argue that the static explanations of negative campaigning alone cannot explain in which cases negative messages are used during the campaign, as evidenced by the fact that research results on these explanations often contradict each other, with explanations working for some election campaigns but not for others. I argue that the shortcomings of static explanations may be due to the fact that they do not consider the dynamic characteristics of the campaign, the fact that actors change their communication during the campaign, reflecting to their previous messages and reacting to the campaigns of other actors.

Thus, the main hypothesis of the dissertation is that in addition to the static explanations, *dynamic factors such as the course of the campaign, the relationship between the actors and the communication about each other also play a role in the use of negative campaigning*. In the dissertation, in addition to the descriptive examination of negative campaigning in Hungary, I also test the most common hypotheses related to static explanations in the literature, and the hypotheses formulated about the dynamic explanations.[2]

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[1] Early research on negative campaigning (that serve as the basis of subsequent research) typically explained negative campaigning using different rational choice (game theory) models (see, e.g. Doron and On 1981; Skaperdas and Grofman 1995; Theilmann and Wilhite 1998).

[2] For the hypotheses of the dissertation in details see Table 1 and Table 2.

II. Methods and data

Definition of negative campaigning and related terms

Most of the research defines negative campaigning as an act of communication in which a party or candidate running in an election attacks an opponent based on his or her political program, achievements, ideology, values, or characteristics (see Nai and Walter 2015:11–12). The function of negative campaigning is to convince voters that the opponent is unsuitable for a position, so the attacker is the better choice. In contrast to negative messages, positive campaigning seeks to achieve the same goal by arguing for the campaigner. In the dissertation, following the directional definition of negative campaigning (Benoit 1999; Geer 2006) I consider every communication that expresses criticism towards an opponent to be negative campaigning regardless of the content of the criticism. Following the cited authors, the dissertation uses the concepts of negative campaigning (the phenomenon) and negative message/appeal (the unit of analysis for negative campaigning) as synonyms.

In the dissertation, however, I examine the content of negative campaigning as well. In the analysis I distinguish between policy and valence type messages. Policy messages are related to policy issues and represent topics in which voters can choose between opposing policy alternatives depending on which alternative is closer to their interests. Valence messages, on the other hand are expressed in issues in which there is general agreement, where parties *'are differentiated not by what they advocate but by the degree to which they are linked in the public's mind with conditions or goals or symbols of which almost everyone approves or disapproves'* (Stokes 1992:143). Thus, valence messages are about how well a party meets certain universal values or goals.

Case selection and the method of data collection

The dissertation examines negative campaigning defined above in the case of the Hungarian parliamentary election campaigns between 1998 and 2018. Analysis of the Hungarian case is supported by the fact that we have relatively few research results on Hungarian and Central and Eastern Europe campaigns in general, although these cases show significant differences to the frequently examined U.S. and Western European campaigns. Such differences include the media system, the rapid and radical transition of the political system, political communication and campaigns, as well as high levels of partisan polarization and party-centred features of campaigns.

The analysis focuses on campaigns after 1998, mainly because previous research show that during the first two democratic elections negative campaigning was a tool that was

relatively rarely used (Nábelek 2014). The examination of parliamentary election campaigns is supported by the fact that they are primary elections on which parties spend most of their resources and their campaign strategies are the most developed in these types of competitions.

The method used for the examination of the campaigns was qualitative content analysis which is a common method in negative campaign research. At the same time, it makes it possible to analyse the changes and the content of negative campaigning in Hungary, and to test the hypothesis on the different explanations. During the data collection I examined the six-week period before the election for all parliamentary election campaigns between 1998 and 2018. The units of observation in the content analysis were the press releases of the parties and the reports on their most important campaign events that were published in the news archive of the MTI (Hungarian News Agency). The analysis of these sources had several benefits in answering the research questions. First, these are sources that are available at national level, in each election year studied and are accessible to all parties participating in the elections, thus they allow a comprehensive study and comparison over time. On the other hand, press releases and campaign events are channels over which the actors have great deal of control. The examination of these avoids the possible distortions that arise from the selection mechanisms of the media, thus allowing the analysis of the parties' 'original' campaign strategy. Lastly, unlike advertisements, spots, posters, or debates, press releases and campaign events can be considered more dynamic campaign tools that allow immediate reactions making them suitable for testing hypothesis about the course of the campaign.

The first step of the content analysis was the exclusion of any news item that contained irrelevant or technical information after which I took a sample from the relevant articles. The sampling was done using a stratified random design, using constructed weeks, where the strata of the sample were the weeks and days of a given election campaign. Sample size for each election was determined by the number of news releases published during the campaign period. The articles were coded by a student coder and the author and for reliability part of them were coded by both. Based on the results of the intercoder test the coding proved to be reliable.

Following the most prevalent method in negative campaign research (Geer 2006) we recorded every *appeal* appearing in the news releases, both those that were related to the speaker's party and those that were about other parties or their politicians. Thus, an article could contain more than one appeal/campaign message. The content (policy or valence, and subcategories of these) and the tone (positive, neutral or negative) of the appeals were also recorded. Furthermore, information as the speaker, the party of the speaker and whether the article contained any reaction to previous statements were also recorded.

The databases used in the empirical analyses

The result of the content analysis was a 'raw' database for each election campaign that contained the news releases as cases. The units of analysis for further investigations however, were the campaign appeals, therefore I created a message-level database that among other basic information, contained the type and the tone of each message, if the message was about another party, and the target of the appeal as well. Using this method, 5093 appeals were identified in the statements analysed for the campaigns between 1998 and 2018.

In the descriptive chapter of the empirical analysis of the dissertation I used this appeal level database to present how the proportion of negative messages has changed in the Hungarian election campaigns, what type of negative campaign messages were used, what differences appear between negative and positive campaigning, and what other characteristics each campaign had between 1998 and 2018.

Testing the hypotheses related to the static explanations of negative campaigning the message level database was used as well, complemented with variables on the characteristics of parties and speakers. In the case of the hypotheses on the targets of negative campaigning the appeal level database was converted to a dyadic database in a way that the cases for each election year were each combination of two parties that participated in the campaign. A dummy variable indicated if the first party of the dyad engaged in negative campaigning against the second party of the dyad during the campaign period. In the analyses I used bivariate analysis and multivariate, binary logistic regression models where the dependent variable was the tone of the campaign message (0= neutral or positive, 1=negative) or the existence of a negative tie within the dyad, while the independent variables were the indicators constructed for each hypothesis.

In the chapter discussing the empirical results on the dynamic explanations I depicted the networks of each campaign and presented some of their main characteristics related to the hypothesis using some of the indicators applied in social network analysis. Next, I used a dyadic database for the analysis which contained the possible party-dyads for each week of each election campaign. In this analysis as well, the existence of negative ties from party A to party B in the given time period were recorded. This variable became the dependent variable of the logistic regression models applied in the analysis while the variables related to the dynamic hypothesis were the independent variables of the models.

III. Results of the dissertation

The main results of the dissertation

- The dissertation is the first comprehensive research based on extensive data collection on the use of negative campaigning in Hungary. In addition to contributing to research on Hungarian political communication, it complements the international literature by examining a case belonging to a region that rarely appears in previous research.
- The dissertation also contributes to the literature of the negative campaign by examining the content and the change of negative campaigning over time.
- The dissertation complements the most common explanations of negative campaigning appearing in the literature by testing rarely used and new hypotheses. The empirical analysis shows that beside the static explanations, dynamic characteristics also play a crucial role during the campaign. Overall, the presented dynamic factors have a more significant effect on the probability of negative campaigning than the static explanations, which supports one of the main hypotheses of the dissertation: the communication of opponents and allies and the course of the campaign play a decisive role in the use of negative campaign messages.

Results of the descriptive analysis

- The analysis shows that the campaigns between 1998 and 2018 were generally positive but at the same time the proportion of negative campaign messages increased during this period: campaigns in Hungary are becoming more and more negative. The increase in the proportion of negative campaign messages was most significant between 1998 and 2006, and then slowed down, which can be explained by the fact that there were smaller differences in terms of professionalisation in post-2006 campaigns than before. One feature of the 2018 election campaign, however, was that nearly half of the campaign messages were negative.
- The professionalization of political communication, similarly to other countries, may play a significant role in the growth of negative campaigning in Hungary. Mediatization may also have contributed to the prevalence of negative campaigning as the number of channels and the amount of content competing with political messages increased the significance of the news value of negative appeals.
- In Hungary, the use of negative messages is inversely proportional to the amount of undecided voters: the lower the proportion of undecided, nonpartisan voters was at the beginning of the election campaign, the higher the proportion of negative messages were

during the campaign. This suggests that Hungarian parties engage in negative campaigning to mobilize their own supporters instead of convincing undecided voters.

- The use of negative campaigning as a tool of mobilization can be associated with the phenomenon of polarization. This is further supported by the changes seen in the content of negative campaigns. The analysis of each campaign shows that the role of valence messages over policy messages increased over time, the opposition between the parties evolved from a debate on government performance and competence to a more antagonistic struggle between systems. The dominance of negative valence messages may contribute to the perception of campaigns becoming more and more negative, and at the same time can be considered a type of populist communication strategy by the political actors.

- Negative campaigning in Hungary is party-focused but there is also an increase in the proportion of negative messages against individual politicians. This suggests an increasing personalization of Hungarian campaigns.

- The empirical analysis also shows that negative campaigning cannot be considered as a tool of one party in Hungary: during the period discussed no significant differences can be observed between the parties in the use of negative messages or in the type of negative messages used. Although the opposing parties often accuse each other of making the campaign too harsh, the data for the campaigns 1998-2018 as a whole, do not support any of these claims.

Results on static explanations of negative campaigning

After presenting the general characteristics and tendencies of negative campaigning in Hungary, the dissertation examined its static explanations appearing in the literature. The main results on the static hypotheses were the following.

Hypotheses on party characteristics

- The first group of static explanations considered the characteristics of parties. Among these characteristics, the study confirmed the role of being in opposition: being an opposition party increases the likelihood of engaging in negative campaigning. Generally, the challengers engage negative campaigning in order to reduce their disadvantage to the incumbent.

- The position in public opinion polls, on the other hand, has no significant effect. All in all, this suggests that the role of the opposition is a more important factor in the use of

negative messages in the 1998-2018 campaigns than the party's position in opinion polls.

- The dissertation examined the role of coalition potential in negative campaigning, assuming that parties with a lower coalition potential may use negative messages with less risk than those with a chance to participate in a coalition agreement. The analysis shows that in the Hungarian case the moderating effects of the coalitional aspects do not prevail when a party chooses between a negative or positive campaign: there is no significant difference between the old and new parties, those with and without government experience, while the party size has a negligible effect. The dissertation explains these results this with the characteristics of the party system that reduce the role of coalitional aspects during the campaign: the alliances that are often formed before the campaign period; the few and relatively permanent actors during the campaigns examined; the centralized party system after 2010; and later the electoral system that reduces the role of post-election coalition bargaining. The loss of the mitigating role of coalition potential likely increases the negativity of the Hungarian campaigns.

- In the Hungarian case, parties further from the median position are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than those closer to the median. Examining the data, this results appears as a sign of increasing polarization: as the major parties (and their voters) are getting further from the median position, the probability of negativity increases.

- Contrary to the results of some international studies, ideological characteristics such as conservativism or radicalism do not affect the probability of negative campaigning in Hungary. All this supports the result that negativity cannot be considered a tool of only certain parties. At the same time the results show that negative campaigning is the tool of both mainstream and radical parties.

- In Hungary, issue-ownership plays a significant role in negative campaigning: parties take advantage of their credibility in certain policy issues, and in addition to the positive, they also conduct a negative campaign on these issues. All this also refutes the hypothesis appearing in the literature that parties would engage in negative campaigning in certain issues to cover up any lack of competence.

Hypotheses on the characterisitics of the speakers

- The second group of static explanations considered the role of certain characteristics of the speaker in the use of negativity:

- In Hungary, there are no significant differences in negative campaigning between female and male politicians.
- Within the parties a division of labour can be observed in the use of negative messages:
  o Overall, party leaders are less likely to engage in the risky strategy of negative campaigning compared to actors who do not hold such a position. However, in the case of opposition parties this moderating effect disappears, the communication of opposition party leaders does not differ from the communication of other politicians of their party in terms of campaign negativity.
  o Holding a government position or the position of speaker of the parliament decreases the likelihood of negative campaigning. Those politicians who hold these positions usually aim to convey an image of being above the debates of party politics fulfilling a more nonpartisan, representative role than those politicians who do not have such a position, thus, they avoid the use of campaign negativity.
  o On the other hand, party spokespersons whose position is strongly attached to the party can be considered the mediators of negative campaigning: they are more than twice as likely to engage in negative campaigning as other speakers.

Hypotheses on the targets of negative campaigning

As the third group of static explanations, the dissertation examined the role of the characteristics of the targets of negative campaigning. Among the explanations about the targets, the analysis confirmed that:

- government parties are more likely to become the target of negative campaigning than other parties, thus negative campaigning is mainly the tool of the opposition parties against the incumbent;
- typically negative campaigning against 'third parties' (that is, parties that are neither the incumbent, nor the biggest challenger parties) is rare: smaller parties defined as those who have less or no parliamentary seats and that have smaller voter support are less likely to become targets of negative campaigning than larger parties typically negative campaigning against 'third parties' (that is, parties that are neither the incumbent, nor the biggest challenger parties) is rare: smaller parties, defined as those who have less or no parliamentary seats and that have smaller voter support, are less likely to become targets of negative campaigning than larger parties

- In Hungary, the ideological distance between parties influences the choice on the target of negative messages: the increase in the ideological distance between two parties increases the likelihood of negative campaigning.

The possible role of the party system and the electoral system

- Analysis of the election campaigns between 1998 and 2018 provides an opportunity, at least in a limited fashion, to examine the effect of some contextual factors such as the changes in the electoral and in the party system. According to previous comparative research on negative campaigning theoretically, change in the fragmentation of the party system after 2010 would lead to less campaign negativity (see the arguments about the effects of coalition bargaining) while the change in the electoral system since 2014, the system becoming more majoritarian, would lead to more negativity.
  - The analysis does not confirm the effect of the changes in the party system: while in 2010 the proportion of negativity decreased compared to the previous campaigns, the campaigns after 2010 were more negative than ever before.
  - The variable of post-2014, on the other hand, increased the probability of negative campaigning in the models. Campaigns after 2014 were significantly more negative compared to campaigns before.
  - All in all, however, the effects of these contextual factors were smaller than the effect of the factors presented previously.

Table 1.: Hypotheses related to the static explanations of negative campaigning

Type of the explanation	Hypothesis	Result
Party characteristics	Parties that are behind in opinion polls are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than those that are in advantage.	0
	Challenger parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than incumbents.	++
	Larger parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than smaller ones.	0
	Parties further from the median position are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than those that are closer to the median.	++
	New parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than established parties.	0
	Parties with no government experience are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than those with previous government experience.	0
	Conservative parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than other parties.	0
	Radical parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than other parties.	0
	Parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning in issues that they own than in other issues.	++
Characteristics of the speaker	Women are less likely to engage in negative campaigning than male politicians.	0
	Party chairmen are less likely to engage in negative campaigning than those who do not have such a position.	++
	Politicians that are part of the leadership of their party are less likely to engage in negative campaigning than those who do not have such a position.	++
	Prime ministers are less likely to engage in negative campaigning than those who do not have such a position.	++
	Politicians in the government are less likely to engage in negative campaigning than those who do not have such a position.	++
	The speaker of the parliament is less likely to engage in negative campaigning than those who do not have such a position.	++
	Leaders of the parliamentary group are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than those who do not have such a position.	0
	Spokespersons of parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than those who do not have such a position.	++
	Politicians of youth organizations of the parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than other politicians.	0

Characteristics of the target of negative campaigning	Incumbent parties are more likely to become targets of negative campaigning than other parties.	++
	Parties leading in the opinion polls are more likely to become targets of negative campaigning than other parties.	++
	Parties with low coalition potential are more likely to become targets of negative campaigning than other parties. - parties with less mandates - new parties - parties further from the median position - parties with no government experience	-- 0 0 0
	Parties that are further from the speaker on the ideological spectrum are more likely to become targets of negative campaigning than those that are closer	++

Key: 0: the variable had no significant effect on the probability of negative campaign; ++: the analysis confirmed the hypothesis; --: the analysis refuted the hypothesis

Dynamic explanations of negative campaigning

One of the main hypotheses of the dissertation was that beyond the static factors there are dynamic characteristics of the campaign that shape the probability of negative campaigning. The dissertation derived the hypotheses on dynamic explanations from the conceptualization of campaigns as a communication network of the parties participating. Besides, the analysis examined the role of timing as a dynamic characteristic of campaigns.

Timing

- There are several alternative hypotheses in the literature regarding the timing of negative campaign messages. The most confirmed observation is that the amount of negative messages increases as the election approaches, which can be explained by the fact that at the beginning of the campaign the actors focus on presenting themselves and their program to the voters. Towards the end of the campaign when they are unable to convince new voters by positive campaigning they decide to engage in negative campaigning (Damore 2002).
- Another hypothesis suggest that actors engage in negative campaigning right at the beginning of the campaign period to draw attention to themselves. Other authors (Peterson and Djupe 2005) assume that by combining these two strategies, the timing of negative messages describes a U-shape: the campaign starts and ends with negative messages, with a positive campaign phase between the two.
- In the Hungarian campaigns, although different stages can be described for some parties, there is no general trend as to when they will time their negative campaign messages. Examining the weekly distribution of the proportion of negative messages, overall, the pattern of campaign attacks is similar to the U-shaped strategy, but there are significant differences between the individual campaigns. All these results suggest that the timing of negative messages is greatly influenced by the course and events of the campaign.

Reciprocity

- An important feature of social networks consisting of directional relations is reciprocity: the ties between actors are typically reciprocal and symmetric. Regarding negative campaigning, the dissertation assumed that if one party used negative messages against another, the other party would reciprocate the attacks during the campaign, increasing the probability of negative campaigning. This can be explained by the fact that due to

voter expectations and media attention actors are interested in responding to negative messages with negative messages.

- The analysis showed that reactions and reciprocity play a huge role in Hungarian campaigns: if a negative campaign is conducted against a party, it will most likely be reciprocated. The result suggests that the parties are not running their campaigns independently from each other but they are actively reacting and responding to other parties' campaigns.

- The results on reciprocity also show us that campaigns in Hungary are not characterized by refutations using positive messages but by retaliation and counterattacks or occasionally by non-response to campaign attacks. All in all, this logic of campaigning increases the negativity of the campaigns.

Structural balance

- Another common feature of networks is the phenomenon of structural balance (Cartwright and Harary 1956): the actors of a three-node triad behave consistently: if A likes B, it will treat C in a similar way to B, and if A does not like B, A will have the opposite attitude towards the third actor than B. A friend of a friend will be a friend (increasing the probability of positive campaign), an enemy of a friend will be an enemy (increasing the probability of negative campaign), a friend of an enemy will be an enemy (negative), and an enemy of an enemy will be a friend (positive).

- In the case of campaigns, structural balance indicates different alliances. The dissertation assumed that the actors would run their own campaign taking into account the campaign of opponents and allies.

- Based on the results, parties behave consistently during the campaign: Hungarian parties typically do not campaign negatively against the opponents of the opponent (treating them as quasi-friends), while they are more likely to engage in negative campaigning against their opponents 'allies.

- The existence of a structural balance suggests that actors will run their campaign taking into account their alliances and the alliances and communication of the opponents. In the communication networks of the parties clusters are formed, the separation of clusters and the intense negative campaigning between them can be seen as a sign of polarization.

- The results on structural balance are confirmed by the fact that the phenomenon of transitivity does not prevail in the networks of campaigns. In the campaigns examined it is uncommon that the opponent's opponents attack each other.
- The existence of structural balance in the campaigns shows us that there are clusters forming in the communication networks of parties. The separation of clusters and the intense negative campaigning between them is a sign of polarization.

Steadfastness and preferential attachment

- Finally, the dissertation examined two hypotheses related to the concentration of campaign appeals. First, I assumed that, like other networks, campaign networks are characterized by the persistence of relationships (steadfastness): that is, if A engages in negative campaigning against B, it increases the likelihood that A will use negative messages against B at a later in the campaign as well. This can be explained by the fact that parties focus their resources on their most important opponents.
- The results confirm this hypothesis: the targets of the negative campaign are proved to be lasting. If one party attacks another, it is more likely that it will continue to campaign against that party later in the campaign as well.
- Another related hypothesis is that there are prominent nodes in the networks that have multiple connections compared to other nodes (preferential attachment (Barabási and Albert 1999)). In the case of negative campaigning this means that the campaign is likely to be ran against some actors, with speakers typically attacking the party that the other parties attack as well.
- A sign of polarization is that campaigns in Hungary are not concentrated in this way: the main target of negative campaigning is typically not one party (e.g., the largest incumbent party). The phenomenon of preferential attachment does not prevail: campaign networks show that typically two major opponents and their allies attack each other during the campaign.

Table 2. Hypotheses on the dynamic explanations of negative campaigning

		Hypothesis	**Result**
Timing		Closer to the date of the election the probability of negative campaigning increases.	0
Network characteristics	Reciprocity	The probability of negative campaigning from party A against party B increases if party B attacked party A previously in the campaign.	++
	Structural balance	Balance in the relation towards the opponent's allies ('enemy's friend is an enemy') AND balance in the relation towards the ally's opponent ('friend's enemy is an enemy') increase the likelihood of negative campaigning.	++
		Balance in the relation towards the ally's allies ('friend's friend is a friend') AND balance in the relation towards the enemy's enemies ('enemy's enemy is a friend') decrease the probability of negative campaigning.	++
	Transitivity	Transitivity in the campaign networks increases the probability of negative campaigning.	0
	Steadfastness	Previous negative campaigning of party A against another party increases the likelihood of subsequent negative campaigning of party A against this other party.	++
	Preferential attachment	Previous negative campaigning against a party increases the likelihood that other parties will engage in negative campaigning against this party.	0

Key: 0: the variable had no significant effect on the probability of negative campaign; ++: the analysis confirmed the hypothesis; --: the analysis refuted the hypothesis.

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