MÁTYÁS, Máté

The Impact of the Party System Under Populism on Civil Society and the Media

A Temporal Social Network Analysis of Civil Society Media and Mass Media in Post-Communist Hungary (1990–2020)

Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science

Supervisor:
KOLLAI, István, PhD, Assistant Professor

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 765224.

CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

The Impact of the Party System Under Populism on Civil Society and the Media

A Temporal Social Network Analysis of Civil Society Media and Mass Media in Post-Communist Hungary (1990–2020)

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Author:
MÁTYÁS, Máté

Budapest, 2024

CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science

The Impact of the Party System Under Populism on Civil Society and the Media

A Temporal Social Network Analysis of Civil Society Media and Mass Media in Post-Communist Hungary (1990–2020)

Doctoral dissertation

MÁTYÁS, Máté

Budapest, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

Figures

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Three decades after the *annus mirabilis*, Hungary has travelled a remarkable political economic trajectory.

Well-established scholarship suggests that Hungary's political economic developments might be appropriately described by the term autocratisation (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019).[1] While this is a global trend affecting many societies around the world (*ibid.*), Hungary's experience is uniquely pronounced and puzzling: LEVITSKY and WAY note that *"[t]he clearest case of this new pattern of competitive authoritarianism is Hungary"* ((Levitsky and Way 2020, p. 60). This route has been travelled without significant international backlash[2] — making the country a critical case to study.[3]

Since 2006, Prime Minister (PM) ORBÁN Viktor's[4] Fidesz has won all elections in Hungary to date. In 2010, the party achieved a landslide victory, securing a two-thirds supermajority in the national legislative elections. This overwhelming mandate allowed the party to adopt a new constitution, Hungary's Basic Law, in 2011, along with a new electoral law later. Their remarkable electoral successes were repeated in 2014, 2018, and 2022, accompanied by similarly overwhelming victories in European Parliamentary and local elections. Today, PM ORBÁN is the longest-serving head of state or government in the EU and the longest-serving PM in Hungarian history since 1848.[5] Fidesz has not only secured constitutional

[1] The authors justify the term with the following:

> *"Three different terms are commonly used for moves away from democracy: backsliding, breakdown of democracy, and autocratisation. We suggest that it is preferable to conceptualise autocratisation — the antipode of democratization — as a matter of degree that can occur both in democracies and autocracies."* (*ibid.*, 1098)

[2] (Levitsky and Way 2020) emphasise the European People's Party's (EPP) role in this — although Fidesz' exit from the EPP in 2021 further colours this observation. Moreover, both the lack of sanctions and sustained constitutional supermajorities have not co-existed in similar contemporary political economic regimes (such as in Israel, Russia, or Turkey).

[3] They emphasise the systematic capture, packing, and subversion of state (e.g. Constitutional Court, Electoral Commission, National Judicial Office, National Bank, etc.) and strategically important private (primarily, the media; but also public utilities, monopolies, large segments of economic sectors, and civil society) institutions (Levitsky and Way 2020, pp. 60–61)

[4] This dissertation uses the Hungarian name order, marking LAST NAMES with small caps. This is also to highlight individual actors in line with the underlying epistemological approach of the work.

[5] In Europe, his time in office has only been rivalled by former Chancellor MERKEL of Germany (whose CDU/CSU party has not attained legislative majority in general elections). In similar dominant party systems in Malta and Bulgaria, the largest political parties also failed to achieve supermajorities.

changes and legislative supermajorities more effectively than any other European party or movement but has also maintained a stable, growing economy.

Within a large segment of the political science community, ORBÁN and his Fidesz party are widely regarded as populist. Populism is a central concept contributing to Hungary's political economic development — and it is a phenomenon that shapes global politics as well—especially since, but also well before, the election of Donald J. TRUMP to the presidency of the United States and the Brexit referendum in 2016. Therefore, it is not just the curious political and economic trajectory of Hungary and the accompanying electoral success of ORBÁN's Fidesz party that merits attention — although the unprecedented three consecutive constitutional supermajority victories in general elections in an EU member state would justify scrutiny on their own.

The continued resilience of an EU member state's incumbent political leadership, ORBÁN Viktor's prolonged hold on power, sustained electoral mass support, and efficient political survival are all the more puzzling. This is particularly notable because established scholars, such as TAGGART, MÉNY and SUREL (Albertazzi and Mueller 2013) among many others) used to regard populism as a temporary, fleeting aspect of electoral politics. However, Hungary's example demonstrates that populism can prove to be remarkably stable over an extended period. To understand Hungary's peculiar case, this dissertation analyses the relationship between populism, civil society, and the media. The focus on these areas has been selected for two main reasons.

First, from a theoretical standpoint, civil society and the media play primary roles as intermediaries in electoral politics. It is difficult to imagine long-lasting electoral success without both civil society and media interacting with power holders in meaningful ways — both supporting and contesting, challenging the exercise of power.

Second, there is a creative tension between populism and civil society on the one hand, and populism and the media on the other. Civil society — through activism, mobilization, organization, protests, and movements — is seen as both a contributor[6] to and a potential counterbalance against, "antidote" [7] to populism. Similarly, whether we consider

[6] In the form of, for example, "bad" or "uncivil society", see for example (Kopecký 2003), (Krzyżanowski and Ledin 2017) or (Ruzza 2020), just to name a few.

[7] *"…various civil society groups have increasingly relied on nonviolent methods to resist populist figures. Civil resistance scholarship embraces these efforts to defend liberal democracy from right-wing populism."* (Sombatpoonsiri 2018, 7)

"mainstream" or "alternative" media, these have been identified as a key avenue for popularising populism.[8] Consequently, addressing these phenomena could potentially reduce populist political tendencies.

Moreover, the concept of mediatization — the process by which many aspects of politics, the economy, culture, and our daily lives are reshaped (Vásárhelyi 1999)(Lundby 2014) — appears to be a parallel global trend driven by rapid advancements in information and communication technologies. As the world has become increasingly digitized over the past decades, largely due to the global spread of the internet, populist trends have also intensified across various regions. Within this broader context, the (re-)transformation of Hungary's media system (Polyák 2015) stands out as a significant development.

Ultimately, understanding the interaction between civil society and the media is crucial for studying populism. Key questions arise: Is the isolation and separation of these two functions beneficial for populism? Can cooperation or coordination between them reduce populist influence? A closer examination of the relationship between civil society and the media is essential to better comprehend the success of populism and the political-economic system it has fostered in Hungary.

This system has been called by many — often incompatible — names.[9] This makes conceptual clarity is a challenging task. As a result, understanding the drivers of Hungary's political economic development is difficult. Current research indicates that theories of political economy and socio-political communication[10] are the most well-suited for illuminating these processes.

---

[8] Through phenomena such as echo-chambers, polarisation, fostering confirmation bias, fake news — *see* for example (Törnberg 2018).

[9] Observers term it a "flawed democracy" (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2015), "populist democracy" (Pappas 2014), "hybrid regime" (Bozóki and Hegedűs 2018), "competitive authoritarian" (Levitsky and Way 2020) system, "Orbánism" (Bruszt 2015), but even "goulash populism" (Benczes 2016), "polypore state", (Pető 2017) and "mafia state" (Magyar 2016); many accept the PM's self-styled "illiberal democracy" (Fukuyama 2020) label, too. Likewise, the incumbent political elite has called the new order[9] by many names. These include the "System of National Co-operation" (Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere, NER — as declared by the National Assembly (Országgyűlés 2010)), "work-based society" (Fabry 2019), and "Christian democracy" (András Kovács 2019), etc.

[10] There is a rich tradition of social communicational network studies (e.g. (R. Huckfeldt 2007; R. R. Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995) somewhat discounting the role of mass media. (Schmitt-Beck 2004) finds a strong support for the mass media–electoral behaviour link, but an even stronger one for the personal networks–electoral behaviour relationship. Briefly put, this dissertation argues that not only the nature of media has changed profoundly since these analyses, but also logically, the electorate rarely has direct, immediate personal experience with politics, policy, and polity. Therefore, mass media has not only been demonstrated to have a strong effect on electoral support but can be reasonably assumed to have *primacy* over personal communicational networks.

However, because theories of electoral support and behaviour[11] in political science, autocratisation[12] scholarship, and social movement theories do not offer a clear-cut explanatory framework for Hungary's unique situation, this dissertation adopts a relationalist, actor-centred institutionalist (Büthe 2016a; 2016b; Scharpf 1997) approach. This lens can showcase the role civil society and mass media actors play in the populist autocratisation of Hungary. This dissertation therefore develops the research question:

How has the party system under populism affected civil society and the media in post-communist Hungary?

To explore this question, this dissertation builds a unique theoretical framework. It draws upon a novel and less conventional epistemic school of thought, named relationalism here, and it combines different theories of political economy and communications. Within this distinctive framework, the study aims to identify interpersonal interaction networks among the focus areas using temporal social network analysis (tSNA). This methodology is not only the best-suited to meet the criteria established by relationalist epistemology. Also, its properties also allow it to serve as a consistent, meticulous process-tracing tool that can be automated through software. This helps shed light to phenomena that may remain hidden or fall out of scope of other, more mainstream social science methodologies, such as probabilistic statistical analysis of non-relational data.

As an experimental effort, this research is positioned as an exploratory case study. It investigates the career trajectories and the interpersonal interaction network within a balanced sample of editors-in-chief who served at some of the most prominent civil society media outlets and mass media outlets in Hungary between 2010 and 2020. The interaction network of these chief editors[13] is studied due to their highly influential role in shaping social discourse and the relative ease of identifying the impact of the party system. In constructing the sample of chief editors, this dissertation puts the emphasis on creating a

[11] (Dalton and Klingemann 2007b) recounts several approaches to explaining electoral support, such as social position (e.g. class and religious divisions explaining outcomes of party competition); the electorate's partisanship and party identification; economic voting; and political communication (Semetko 2007).

[12] *"…despite a rich and diverse literature, we lack readily available theories to explain backsliding…"* (Waldner and Lust 2018, 93). They provide a six-fold categorisation: agency-based theories; theories of political culture; the role of political institutions; political economic theories; theories of social structure and political coalitions; and international relations-centred approaches.

[13] In Hungary's highly politicised and polarised media, institutional (and collegial) affiliations strongly suggest linkages to parties and ideologies. Hence chief editors' entire work histories between the post-communist era, between 1990 and 2020 are interrelated, charted, and analysed using temporal social network analysis.

purposeful balance — both politically and regarding the types of civil society media and mass media represented[14] — rather than creating a random representative sample. This approach is designed to focus on some of the most influential actors, whose activities are most relevant to exploring the research question. Their interpersonal interactions can be seen as some of the most consequential phenomena under examination in this dissertation. Scrutinising their interactions and behaviours can be expected to yield the most significant insights due to their expertise and status as professional elites — rather than, for example, relying on a sample of randomly selected journalists.

Hence this dissertation's findings cannot definitively confirm or refute previous evidence presented on populism in Hungary. However, its results align with a significant body of literature. The analysis finds ample evidence of transformative impacts of the party system on civil society and the media. It conforms to earlier findings that show Fidesz' autocratic trajectory aimed at building hegemony within (and beyond) civil society and the media to maximise its power within the delicate political economy of an EU member state.

However, while the research initially sought to demonstrate the gradual right-wing hegemonisation project within the selected sample, it unexpectedly discovered a different, though not entirely disparate, phenomenon: the emergence of a somewhat looser left-liberal interpersonal interaction network that quickly disintegrated as the party system under populism started to solidify.

While not intended to be a robust confirmation, this dissertation offers important insights for populism research in Hungary and globally. For Hungarian populism research, this study further underscores the critical role that media and civil society play not only in the rise of populist governance but also in its remarkable stability, due to, in part, the ineffective opposition and resistance from these sectors alongside opposition parties. The "Hungarian lesson" can thus serve as a cautionary tale for other societies, including established democracies.

Moreover, this study also provides valuable contributions to global populism research. It makes a compelling case for the strategic conception of populism. It demonstrates that this approach is not only operationalisable in a quantifiably measurable way but also applicable in settings beyond less institutionalised political systems (and outside of Latin America,

[14] Hence this selection strategy resembles purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method. (Daniel 2012) See more about the case study strategy and sample selection considerations in the Research design chapter.

Africa, and Asia, where it is often assumed to be most relevant). (Moffitt 2020, p. 26) This dissertation shows that by relating the strategic approach to populism with relationalism and selected, compatible political economic thought, new ideas, emphases, and ultimately, measurable and testable hypotheses can be produced — the ultimate purpose of research.

Including this introduction, the dissertation is structured into six chapters. The following second chapter presents a literature review. Its aim is to describe the development of the theoretical framework of the research from the fundamental ontological approach to the more specific conceptual, methodological building blocks of this enterprise. Applying these it also describes the specific context in which the studied processes take place: the brief political economic history of civil society and the media in post-communist Hungary (1990–2020). The third chapter presents the research design. This links the theoretical framework and the study's context in order to trace the main focus of the dissertation: the impact of the party system under populism on civil society and the media system. In doing so, this chapter further details the case and sample selection logic, the research question, and explains the development of the suitable data collection and data analysis methods. The fourth chapter puts the research design into action. It describes the analysis of the collected data, highlighting the main, overarching trends and patterns identified as well as the key empirical findings. In five, Interpreting the Results and their Limitations, the analytical results are revisited within the broader framework of the scholarly literature and the epistemological, theoretical foundations of this work. This also considers the manifold limitations of this dissertation. The last chapter concludes, offering a summary of findings. It also considers normative ideas related to the results of the dissertation. Also, it briefly touches upon potential avenues for further academic research.

This research is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 765224. The project is a collective effort of more than a dozen researchers under the name *"FATIGUE — Delayed Transformational Fatigue in Central & Eastern Europe: Responding to the Rise of Illiberalism and Populism"*. However, this dissertation is the individual work of the author.[15]

[15] Within the framework of this project, the author's dissertation will be published as a book chapter later in a shorter, modified form.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

— CHAPTER OVERVIEW —

This chapter consist of three main parts:

1. *The introduction of the epistemological foundations of this dissertation that guides all the rest of the work, including*
2. *the review of the scholarly literature on the main concepts used, as well as*
3. *the overview of the case-specific context, post-communist Hungary.*

Relationalism sees social phenomena constructed from interactions between individuals. Hence this dissertation focuses on individual interactions as the primary unit of analysis, arguing that these interactions, not preconceived categories or collective entities, should form the basis of understanding social phenomena. This relationalist perspective is applied to actor-centred historical institutionalism, critiquing existing theories and advocating for a nuanced, interaction-focused approach to understanding political coalitions and institutional change within the case study context. This is a critical sub-chapter as it guides the research's theoretical framework, conceptualization, methodology, and interpretation.

Literature on the main concepts — populism, civil society, and media — provides a rich intellectual history. The study acknowledges the complex and contested nature of populism, which has various interpretations—ideational, discursive-performative, and strategic. Among these, the strategic approach, focusing on how populist leaders mobilize unmediated support, is preferred. The research seeks to investigate the relational aspects of populism, specifically how it interacts with civil society and the media. Civil society is a contested term often defined differently depending on normative or empirical perspectives. Based on relationalist thought, the dissertation's concept of civil society falls closest to seeing it as a type of social interactions and relationships whose logic differs from the state or markets. Influenced by literature on media systems, the dissertation sees the media as a network of linkages among media producers, media consumers, and media regulators.

The overview of the case-specific context interrelates these concepts throughout the history of post-communist Hungary. It also develops the periodisation of the study of investigation based on the history of party system development in Hungary.

II.1. The epistemological foundations: relationalism

The present sub-chapter is one of the most consequential in this dissertation. This is because choosing a theoretical perspective among the vast multitude of competing social science theories is not only necessary, but has a profound impact on the research (its subject, all the methodological elements of the research design, the interpretation of the analytical results, etc.).

The epistemological foundations of this research, *relational sociology*, guide the selection of building blocks of this dissertation, including:

- the theoretical framework — the political economy of communication, more specifically: actor-centred historical institutionalism;
- conceptualisation — mainly, party system under populism, civil society, and the media;

- methodological tools — most importantly, social network analysis; and
- the interpretation of the results.

Accordingly, this sub-chapter outlines these epistemological foundations, which are referenced throughout the dissertation. Relational sociology, a relatively novel sociological school of thought, simply referred to as *relationalism* in this work, not only precedes all other theoretical, conceptual, and methodological choices but also motivates the subject of this study.

Relationalism is understood here as an epistemic approach that posits that

> *"Any natural or social phenomenon is constituted though interactions between various human and non-human interactants. The same principle is valid for the co-production of knowledge." (Dépelteau 2018, p. 18)*

The selection of relationalism as the underlying epistemological approach for this work has three main, interrelated consequences: one, the unit of analysis; two, reification; and three, causality.

II.1.a. The unit of analysis

> *"The development of relational sociology is a positive step forward for sociological theory through its emphasis on the key category of the relation and its refusal to engage in individualistic reductionism, central conflationism, or substantialist inflationism." (McFarlane 2013, p. 45)*

Accordingly, this study also considers an *interaction of human individuals* (Crossley 2016; 2011, p. 1) as the primary unit of analysis — to be understood and interpreted in the same manner *as the participating individuals perceive it*. This approach requires researchers to closely engage with the human participants involved in the phenomena under study, aiming to view events, relationships, and processes from the perspective of the participants as they unfold in interactions. It is an effort to see the world with the eyes of the participants: interrelating *their* views, considerations, actions, and motivations and not those of the observer's or researcher's — whether these are identical, convergent, diverging, competing, conflicting, or confused approaches to their interactions.

This approach is not a regression to radical methodological individualism. Individuals as units of analysis only become meaningful within their interrelationships. They are not considered to possess uniform, universal tenets and preferences; rather, each individual has

diverse and temporally changing self-definitions and perceptions of others. This approach fundamentally opposes pre-defined models, such as the "homo oeconomicus", by rejecting the assumption of uniform human experience and instead valuing individuals' personal differences and complex positionalities. Researchers are thus compelled to continually seek out the individual subjects and their cognitions behind every social phenomenon, making relationalism a challenging endeavor that requires tirelessly identifying individuals' interactions as the foundation of social phenomena.

> *"…[S]ome relational sociologists even claim that 'there is no such a thing as a society' (which would exist outside the individuals)" (Dépelteau and Powell 2013, p. XV).*

This dissertation aligns with this view: asserting that the starting point must always be human individuals' interactions rather than other conceptual categories such as ideas, ideologies, groups, entities, organizations, systems, societies, countries and nations, or humanity as a whole.

II.1.b. Reification

The focus on individual interactions is closely related to the concept of reification —more precisely, the principle of *avoiding* reification.

Reification can be defined as

> *"[t]he treatment of something abstract as a material or concrete thing" ('Reification' 2018)*

although (Fenichel Pitkin 1987) identifies around twenty formal-logical meanings of the term. Reification is often categorised as a logical fallacy where abstractly constructed, imagined categories are treated as human-like actors. This use of language is very common in everyday life. It most often occurs when talking about aggregates, categories, and collectives.[16]

[16] e.g. "the market creates negative social incentives", "communism killed hundreds of millions", "the United States invaded Iraq for oil", "Muslim migrants invaded Europe", "populism gives voice to the people", "racism reduces social mobility", etc. Too often are particular individuals' interactions taken as universal social "forces" or described in other natural scientific terms such as "size", "shape", "weight" (e.g. the "strength" of civil society or a political party's "weight" in decisionmaking — when these are one-time chains of individual interactions, sometimes aggregately showing patterns, but always necessary to be disaggregated for accurate understanding of the sole events.) Mistaking social relations for quantified (*"DuPont has* a lot of political power *in Delaware"* ((Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 63) — emphasis in the original)), spatial terms

Such reification can mislead not only the research process but also its outcomes. In social sciences, reification can manifest in selecting variables — most often in quantitative, statistical methodologies. Writing about this issue in Andrew ABBOTT's sociological thinking, states that

> *"This is not only a matter of theory. (...) The main discrepancy (...) is that sociological theory stresses the importance of the actor and her actions, whereas our research methods typically focus upon variables. It is not actors who act and interact in much sociological research, (...) but rather variables, a problem which we must redress." (Crossley 2016, p. 167)*

Creating collectives, categories without tracing back individual actors' interactions creates room for misattributions and establishing false cause-effect relationships.

II.1.c. Causality

This leads to the issue of causality in line with Nick CROSSLEY's call for a re-thinking of social scientific methodology. For the purposes of this dissertation, it suffices to emphasise that *causes must be discovered in human individuals' interactions* — and their cognitions from which interactions are (purposefully or accidentally) initiated.

At first glance, it might seem that relational sociology limits social sciences in general to the study of dyads, two human individuals at a time. However, this interpretation is far from its true intentions and ambitions. Through the myriad interactions that occur even in short periods, individuals constitute complex, wide-ranging human environments, chains of interactions: *social networks*. These networks, in turn, shape individual cognition and subsequently influence the course of future interactions.

This perspective is not a mere linguistic re-formulation of the structure-agency problem (indeed, still debated in relational sociology as (Burkitt 2018) demonstrates). It is a novel approach to understanding groups, society, and the "social" through the lens of *social networks of interactions*. This approach has far-ranging implications to social sciences and its methodology implying

("high" and "low politics", "top-down processes", "high status" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003) etc.), groupings (e.g. history is a "class struggle" (Fish 2013, 28)), and ordinary metaphors (the "blossoming" of the relationship between two countries), etc.

> *"…that relationalism can be entirely consistent with social network analysis. It just suggests a certain type of networks analysis, one that is dynamic, open to contingency, and concerned with the cultural, social, and historical context of social structural patterns." (Erikson 2018, pp. 271–272)*

Rather than relying on pre-defined collectives and groups, social network analysis offers a valuable tool for understanding, analyzing, and potentially predicting complex interrelationships and interactions based on participants' perceptions, rather than external actors' (such as researchers') pre-conceived notions.

Social network analysis is compatible with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (e.g. (Scott 2017, pp. 41–57)), as it focuses on the individual; and by meticulously tracing interpersonal interactions, avoids losing analytical information in an aggregative process. The initial challenge in such research is the identification of the individual human actors involved in the construction of meaningful social networks. Moreover, since direct interactions are only one aspect of all relevant interactions, attempts have been made to relate discourse analysis to individuals, creating the method of discourse network analysis (e.g. (Leifeld 2016)). This approach allows researchers to assess the impacts of verbal and indirect interactions as well.

However, it is perhaps the mode of data collection that determines the appropriateness of relational analysis methods. The argument is further sustained that individuals' responses, reactions, and interactions should not be reified into uniform, equivalent "data" as much as it is possible. Instead, these relational data should often be treated in a differentiated manner. It should take into account network positionalities of the interactions (as implied by the individuals who constitute them). Interactions only make sense in the context of the human individual subjects that they pertain to. Interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, etc. continue to remain important primary methods — however, researchers must exercise restraint to avoid inadvertently "tainting" or "manipulating" the data externally according to their own interests. As also argued by DÉPELTEAU as cited earlier (see also (Dépelteau 2018, p. 18)), analysis and evaluation are co-production. Ideally, the actors whose interactions are studied should also have a chance to reflect upon the results to add important context for interpreting results.

II.1.d. Building the theoretical framework on relational epistemological principles

This dissertation selects a specific approach to political economy, *actor-centred historical institutionalism*, as its mid-level theoretical perspective as it is the most compatible with relationalism and the set of concepts (e.g. party systems, populism, civil society, and media) whose interactions it seeks to investigate.

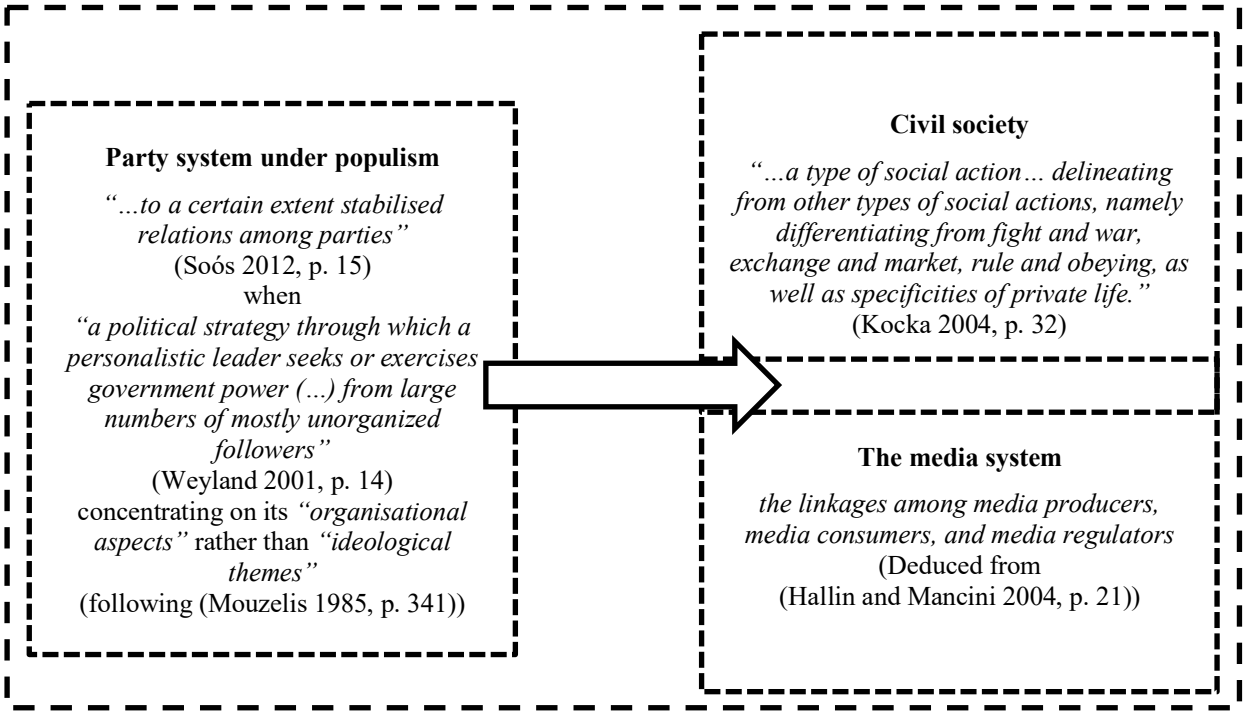

Figure 1: The theoretical, conceptual framework and logical scheme of the research

The origins of actor-centred historical institutionalism can be traced back to classical accounts of institutional economics — by Nobel Prize-winning scholars such as Williamson, Ostrom, and North, and all the way to the seminal work of (Downs 1957). Nevertheless, their frameworks are amended by historical perspective focusing on actors and their constellations as perhaps most elaborately posited by (Scharpf 1997), but further detailed by (Büthe 2016a)). Such a framework retains useful core assumptions of institutionalism, but is geared towards explaining institutional *change* and focuses on actors at the lowest necessary and possible level of analysis, in line with the underlying relationalist principles of this research.

> *"Even the recent work, however, does not cover the specific type of institutional deepening I seek to explain (...) institutional change requires agency (...). It requires identifying the key stakeholders and their ex ante*

> *interests, then theorizing how the actors, their interests, and the ways in which they pursue those interests will be affected by the opportunities and constraints of the broader institutional configuration and by institutional feedback. (…) To minimize the risk of introducing bias through my choice of assumptions, I assume for all actors only the conventional core preferences that are commonly attributed to all composite actors: self-preservation (survival, physical well-being), power (influence and/or freedom), and plenty, that is, a preference for the possession of at least basic resources and a general preference for more over less (…). I submit, however, that we can, ex ante, derive more specific preferences from the core preferences as a function of each actor's institutional position and how the composite actor is constituted. (…) I do not, however, assume those preferences to be fixed, but instead assume that feedback effects and the broader institutional context may re-shape those interests over time in ways that again should be examined separately for each potential change-agent." (Büthe 2016a, pp. 46–47)*

It is within this framework that the present literature review, identifies the most important political, civil society, and media phenomena, processes, actors, their interactions, and networks, as well as their individual strategies within these contexts as the focus of the dissertation research. It is these actors and participants who act as citizens with political rights who vote, participate in politics, protest, petition, boycott, organise activities, etc. in instances that may be essential to political actors' strategies, hold on power, political survival. They also act as audiences, consumers of media information, generate revenue through subscriptions, advertising value, share information obtained from media sources, etc. thereby influencing media actors' strategies, choices, livelihoods. They do these very often all at the same time, many seamlessly and without much consideration.

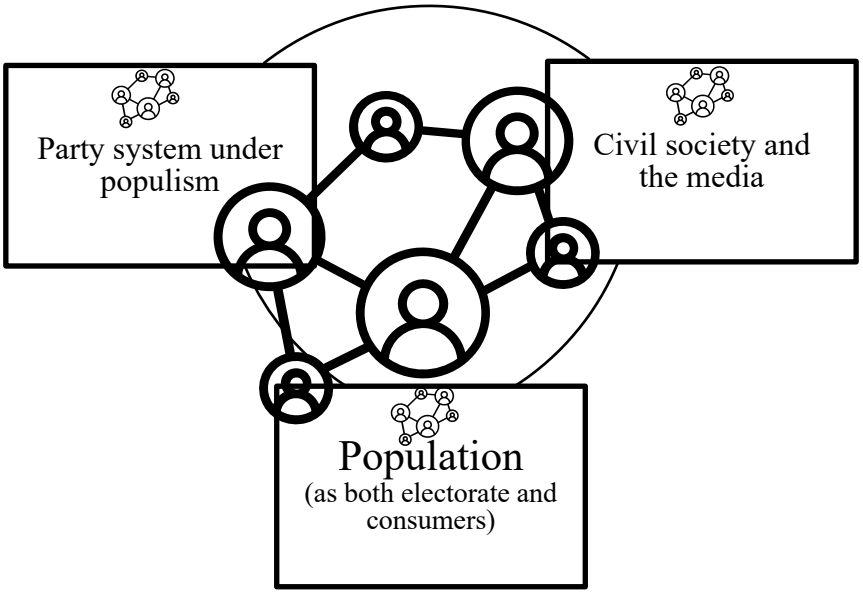

Figure 2: The networked interrelationships of the macro-context

The phenomenon of populism takes place within (and is often related in scholarly literature to) the global macro-trend of *democratic backsliding*: it is not only Hungary or eastern Europe (Greskovits 2015b) which has been experiencing it, but as some scholars claim, also consolidated, established democracies such as the United Kingdom and the United States (Fukuyama 2020) alongside with the rest of the world since the end of the cold war. Based on a recent, highly influential[17] study by Anna LÜHRMANN and Staffan I. LINDBERG democratic backsliding is termed here as *autocratisation*:

> *"As an overarching concept autocratisation covers both sudden breakdowns of democracy á la Linz and gradual processes within and outside of democratic regimes where democratic traits decline — resulting in less democratic, or more autocratic, situations…" (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019, p. 1099)*

The authors' goal was to conceptualise and measure autocratisation — and they found a support for an apparent ongoing "third wave of autocratisation" as a virtual mirror image of Huntington's "third wave of democratisation" idea from the 1990s (Huntington 1993).[18]

[17] At the time of the writing, the article has garnered an extraordinary number, more than 28,000 views in the impactful journal "Democratization". See the online reference for (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019).

[18] It is worth noting here that the "wave" as well as the "rising" physical metaphors are often used in discussions of populism internationally.

The masterful overview of "democratic backsliding" (Waldner and Lust 2018) distinguishes five main approaches to autocratisation:

- agency-based theories;
- theories of political culture, political institutions;
- theories of political economy;
- theories of social structure and political coalitions;
- and theories of the international environment.

Out of these, the authors suggest that the theories of social structure and political coalitions is the best-placed to inform research investigating autocratisation:

> *"while we have acknowledged serious shortcomings in extant coalitional accounts, we continue to believe that a coalitional approach is worth taking very seriously, perhaps centrally. We believe that further development of social-structural and coalitional arguments is the most fruitful avenue for providing an encompassing approach (...) [and] without a large prodemocratic coalition, efficaciously organized and with access to political institutions, democracy remains imperilled — with backsliding as one possible and even likely outcome — informs a great deal of the work we have surveyed. We close this article with the contention that this approach is the most fruitful way forward as well."* (*ibid.*, p. 108)

This dissertation agrees with this conclusion, drawing theoretical and methodological inspiration from it. An important corollary of this is the utilisation of the logic put forward by *selectorate theory* (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003) explicitly referenced by the corresponding subchapter:

> *"A key point of intersection between socioeconomic divisions and political processes is the formation of political coalitions. Even a ruthless dictator needs the support and loyalty of, at minimum, members of the security forces and key government officials. In almost all cases, membership in this winning coalition extends beyond members of the state apparatus to embrace citizens as well. These citizens provide a range of valuable resources, from financial support to votes. Political entrepreneurs form these coalitions by negotiating the exchange of government-controlled resources in the form of public goods (general policies) or private goods (individual payoffs) for political and economic support."* (Waldner and Lust 2018, p. 103)

However, the present study does not entirely see the need to separate the "coalitional approach" from the broader science of political economy — indeed, selectorate theory may be easily classified as a political economic theory — and especially, institutional

economics. The claim is put forward here that in building a political coalition (whether in favour or against democratic politics), the "winning coalitions" need to efficiently include a vast multitude of institutions, organisations, groups, etc. social, interpersonal interaction networks who, by a massive variety of different modes and ways, maintain political systems that can be characterised *inter alia* as democratic or autocratic.

Adding to the inter-organisational networks view, the dissertation also draws on findings by (Stark and Vedres 2012) which is an admirable effort in making sense of post-authoritarian (post-communist) political economic development in Hungary 1987–2001. They refute the previously dominant theory of political economic transitions: the "legacy perspective" (as proposed by EYAL, SZELÉNYI, TOWNSLEY, etc.) which posits that former communist cadres converted their social capital into economic capital after the transition thereby hampering economic reforms. Instead, through social network analysis of dyadic party–firm networks' distribution, they find support for the "partisan competition theory" which *"regards political polarisation of the economy as a function of economic and electoral competition."* (Stark and Vedres 2012, p. 701). While they convincingly support this theory and admittedly focus on *"how political affiliations shape business behaviour"* instead of *"how network ties in the economy shape similar political behaviour"* (Stark and Vedres 2012, p. 704), their findings still bear utmost political significance. Ultimately, as they show the "political tagging" of firms, the question arises how this phenomenon is related to political developments and electoral support.

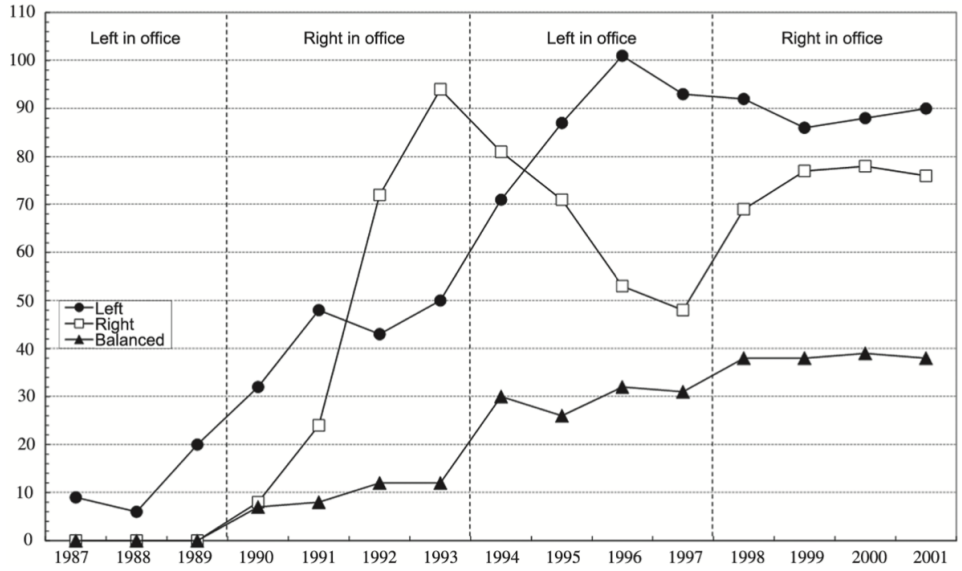

Figure 3: "Number of firms by political affiliation. Note: the vertical axis shows number of firm. Dashed vertical lines separate election terms, with the winning party indicated at the top." (Stark and Vedres 2012, p. 716)

While they find that *"after each election, political victors increased the number of their affiliated firms"* (*ibid.*), these do not explain why governments who were otherwise apt at winning support from the largest companies could not secure electoral victories subsequently to win second terms in office. Indeed, between 1987–2001 in Hungary, after the collapse of state socialism in 1989, no governing party (or party alliances) did manage to get re-elected.

In theory, STARK and VEDRES's logical propositions could be reversed. *Outcomes* of political competition may depend on the party's interorganisational (and interpersonal) network positions vis-à-vis their rivals. But to such an investigation, the electorate's behaviour needs to be taken into account, too.[19] The literature on electoral behaviour — the key component of political competition for power in electoral regimes — provides important insights into the nature of the political economy itself. Traditional electoral behaviour research has tried to locate the causes of electoral outcomes in different factors, processes, and reasons. Reviews (such as (Dalton and Klingemann 2007a)) recount several different approaches to examine electoral support, such as

- social position (e.g. class and religious divisions explaining outcomes of party competition, social cleavages);
- ideologies, partisanship, and party identification (vs. the growing personalisation and issue voting tendencies in today's politics);
- economic voting (stemming from the idea proposed by economists that voters make more or less rational, "financial" choices regarding their electoral decisions);
- political communication (Semetko 2007); etc.

This dissertation's focus on the political communication aspect is also justified by the vast scholarship on the subject (e.g. (Heath 2007)). The effect of media on the electorate's decisionmaking has already been theorised (e.g. (Loveless 2008), (Dumitrescu and Mughan 2010), (Müller 2014)) and empirically confirmed in diverse temporal, socio-cultural, and geographical settings. Studies on media consumption and electoral behaviour have resulted in meaningful conclusions about the impact of media on electoral outcomes from the United States (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007), Russia (Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya 2011), Italy (Barone, D'Acunto, and Narciso 2015), and the United Kingdom (Gavin 2018). One of the most notable ones is (Schmitt-Beck 2004) with its momentous, admirable effort to create an international comparison among four nations (the United States, the United

[19] This is also based on the reading of selectorate theory put forward in (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003) about political economic incentives of political leaders.

Kingdom, Spain, and Germany (also contrasting the western and eastern parts of the Federal Republic)) in the early 1990s. This research worked out an impressive data collection and analysis strategy which profoundly inspires this current undertaking, too, although his conceptualisation and operationalisation goes beyond media firms. He also includes interpersonal communicational networks in his analysis — which also rests on a long-established tradition (see for example research by Robert HUCKFELDT, Elihu KATZ, Paul F. LAZARSFELD, etc.). Due to the aims of this paper, however, assessing Hungarian voters' social communication networks falls outside of the current study. Rather, theoretically, the "comparative media systems" research by (Hallin and Mancini 2004) is a major point of reference. This is extended with the eastern Europe– and Hungary-specific literature inspired by them, such as (Bajomi-Lázár 2017; Polyák 2015; Školkay and Ondruchová-Hong 2012; Stetka 2012; Trappel 2008; Urbán 2016), etc.

This research makes the argument that media organisations, their participants need to be treated with extra care due to the obvious influence they wield over their consumers, the general population and the electorate's political decisionmaking. It argues that human individuals rarely have direct, personal experience with matters of politics and policy — but of course, formulate their own views (and personal perceptions however accurate or inaccurate they are). The chances of them communicating only these is yet again lower (few actually go about their day discussing social, let alone "high" political matters in painstaking detail). Therefore, when analysing solely social communication and social communication networks, chances are that the actual interactions' actually *originate from media organisations' communications* rather than from detached, independent individuals — even political actors (whose communications are *mediated by media outlets*) or from any other person. More still, the info-communicational revolutions of the past decades have profoundly transformed the way people create, consume, and spread information. This study assumes that the media — ultimately, even social media — as platforms have only gained in their importance over unmediated interpersonal social communication networks. Therefore, media organisations (as human individuals' social networks) and their relationships to political actors' social networks is expected to have far-reaching consequences to societies at large.[20]

[20] This argumentation is in line with SCHMITT-BECK's claims:

"Political information can reach its recipients through various channels. Mass media and personal conversations with other people are among the most important of these. This blends into a general renaissance of the idea that mass media can affect their audiences' orientations not only by means of complex

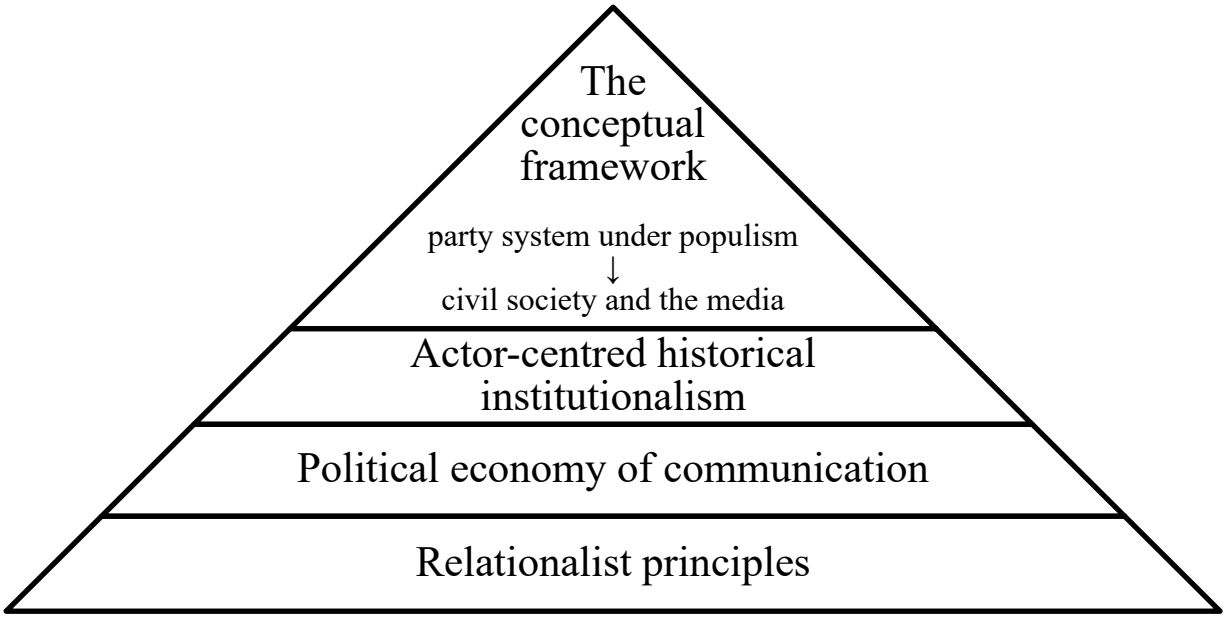

Figure 4: The structural overview of the theoretical–conceptual framework of the study

II.2. A review of the concept-specific literature

II.2.a. Political and party systems and populism

The study of political systems and regime types look back on a long and complex intellectual history, extending far beyond the scope of this research. But a related concept and sub-domain, the concept of "party system" is well-developed concept (originating from the 1970s (Sartori and Mair 2005)) and is particularly relevant to and useful for this dissertation research. Although there is no universally accepted, single definition of the term, it generally refers

> *"…to a certain extent stabilised relations among parties." (Soós 2012, p. 15)*

This conceptualization aligns with the fundamental relationalist principles of this research. The caveat this work makes is that one needs to go beyond relations *among* parties to take into account not only political *parties*, but a plethora of other types of organisations: civil

cognitive processes, such as priming or framing (…), but also in a more directly persuasive way (…) the reception of persuasive messages, carrying evaluative content, from the mass media can indeed be consequential for individual electoral behaviour. Depending on which media they use, citizens differ systematically with regard to the likelihood of voting for or against particular parties or candidates at national elections. This was shown for different countries." (Schmitt-Beck 2004, pp. 317–318)

society volunteer, business organisations, churches, etc. The research seeks out evidence of interpersonal interactions instead of ideological or programmatic features (such as deals, coalitions, collaboration, acts of support or animosity, etc.).

Given that this dissertation research examines the impact of party systems under populism on civil society and the media, it is essential to carefully define populism.

The term "populism" has been the subject of long-running, significant debate. Scholars have applied various lenses to it, including international economic (Rodrik 2018), social (Bustikova 2019), identity-based cultural (Inglehart and Norris 2016), international political (Stengel, MacDonald, and Nabers 2019), psychological-attitudinal (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017), etc. perspectives.

To address this theoretical debate, this research intends to bring attention to conclusions similar to those of Nicos MOUZELIS in the first half of the 1980s — remarkably early ones, considering that populism studies only gained prominence around the 2000s. Unfortunately, his warnings have been largely overlooked by the populism research community:

> *"Any failure to take into serious account the organisational aspects of populism not only results in the populist phenomenon appearing as a set of disembodied ideological themes, it also tends to dilute the specificity of a concept that could otherwise be very useful for the analysis of social movements." (Mouzelis 1985, p. 341)*

Mouzelis's approach is, naturally, represents only one of the many approaches to populism. This long-running definitional debate is often portrayed as a struggle for "good" or "bad" by scholars, policy professionals, journalists ((McConnell 2019), for instance), politicians, ordinary citizens alike. As a result, even works intended only to summarise the state of research and overview the manifold meanings of the term are numerous — further inundating the already saturated field of populism scholarship.[21] This dissertation aims to provide an alternative approach to assessing, analyzing, and explaining populism. In doing

[21] Numerous perspectives exist on the definition of populism. Naturally, this dissertation seeks to move beyond the simple banal observations that *"populism is popular"* (Mény and Surel 2002, p. 2) or EICHENGREEN (2018) colorfully introduction of his book by invoking the Stewart test (*"I know it when I see it"*). Others, such as New York Times columnist Roger COHEN, suggest abandoning the term altogether (R. Cohen 2018), arguing that it has become too vague to be meaningful. The term has been described as a *"contested concept"* (Chryssogelos 2018, p. 6) and a *"particularly confusing concept"* (Weyland 2001, p. 1).

so, it adopts the classification proposed by Benjamin MOFITT (Moffitt 2020) which groups populism studies into three major conceptual strands:

- ideational definitions,
- discursive-performative and political stylistic definitions, and
- strategic definitions.

This categorisation echoes an earlier, slightly less developed classification by (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013, p. 32) which provides additional insights into the three main schools of thought on populism. The overview table on the next page synthesizes these perspectives.

Naturally, other categorisations are possible, too — although several other works follow similar logic. MOFFITT himself acknowledges a growing *political communications* approach, such as that described by (Aalberg et al. 2017b), which is related to, but distinct from the discursive-performative and political stylistic group of populism definitions. Sometimes, a "socio-cultural approach" (e.g. (Ostiguy 2017)) is also differentiated. HAWKINS', however, deploys a different categorisation of populism approaches that seems to have been less influential. He divides conceptualisations into four major streams: *"structural, economic, political-institutional, and discursive"* ones (Hawkins 2009, 1042). Discipline– or subject area-focused definitions might suffer from this neat categorisation above, (see for example the institutional economics approach by (Ádám 2018), media theoretical ones by (Mazzoleni, Stewart, and Horsfield 2003) or (Aalberg et al. 2017a), or even international relations-inspired ones). However, the semantically saturated field of political science concepts related to populism, such as illiberalism, right-wing radicalism, neo-traditionalism, and patronage state, demands clear conceptual choices.

Exploring the commonalities and differences of the three-fold categorization above brings us closer to understanding populism. Notably, *"most specialists are of the view that populism revolves around a central division between 'the people' and 'the elite'."* (Moffitt 2020, p. 10) However, how to exactly understand this divide remains debated: *"What academics do disagree on is the type of phenomenon that populism is."* (*ibid.*, p. 11) As this dissertation makes strong epistemological choices, it will clearly favour one school over the other — naturally, as *"the kind of phenomenon one thinks populism to be tends to reflect very different ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches to the subject"*. (*ibid.*)

	Definition of populism	*Unit of analysis*	*Relevant methods*	*Binary or gradational concept?*	*Attribute or practice?*	*Key regions*	*Key authors*
Ideational	Ideology, i.e. a set of interrelated ideas about the nature of politics and society	Parties and party leaders	Qualitative or automated texts analysis, mostly of partisan literature	Binary	Attribute	Europe, Latin America	MUDDE, ROVIRA KALTWASSER, HAWKINS, CANOVAN, MÜLLER
Discursive-perfomative, political stylistic	A way of making claims about politics; characteristics of discourse.	Texts, speeches, public discourse about politics	Interpretive textual analysis	Gradational	Practice	Global	KAZIN, LACLAU, MOUFFE, WODAK, OSTIGUY
Strategic	A form of mobilization and organization	Parties (with a focus on structures), social movements, leaders	Comparative historical analysis, case studies	Gradational (fuzzy set)	Practice	Latin America, Africa, Asia	WEYLAND, ROBERTS, JANSEN

Table 1: Synthesizing overviews of the main approaches to populism by MOFFITT (Moffitt 2020, p 26) as well as GIDRON and BONIKOWSKI (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013, p. 32).

The most dominant approach is the *ideational* one promulgated by MUDDE. In his thinking, the definition of the concept is that populism is

> *"a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people."* (Mudde 2004, p. 543)

Populism is called a thin-centred ideology because, as GIDRON and BONIKOWSKI put it, it does

> *"…not provide answers to all the major socio-political questions, and could therefore be compatible with other, more extensively developed political belief systems, such as socialism or liberalism."* (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013, p. 6)

Thus, populism can take multiple forms, leading to classifications like right-wing versus left-wing populism (e.g. Bernie SANDERS and SYRIZA in Greece on the left; Nigel FARAGE and PiS in Poland on the political right), which are common in both journalism and academia.

The discoursive-performative, stylistic approach to populism views the concept chiefly as a *"discourse that pits 'the people' against 'the elite'*" (Moffitt 2020, p. 21), even if views on what a discourse consists of and how to study it divides this approach into two diverging schools: the Essex School of discourse analysis (spearheaded by PANIZZA, STAVRAKAKIS, KATSAMBEKIS, etc.) and a critical discourse analysis one (with WODAK and FAIRCLOUGH among its key figures).

Given its relationalist framework, this dissertation dismisses these two approaches as overly focused on ideology and discourse, which are secondary to the study of *human interactions and networked interpersonal relationships*. Thus, the third school of populism thought, the strategic approach is clearly favoured here.

Noam GIDRON and Bart BONIKOWSKI put scholars such as Kamer Daron ACEMOĞLU, Kurt WEYLAND, Paul TAGGART, Takis PAPPAS, Kenneth M. ROBERTS, Steven LEVITSKY (also a theorist of competitive authoritarianism, a concept that can be seen as related to populism), etc. to belong to this direction of research. JANSEN posits that populism is *"a mode of political practice"* (Jansen 2011, p. 75). It is nevertheless Kurt WEYLAND's definition that

substantiates this — also internally diverse — approach, substantiating the meaning of political practice (or strategy, mode of organisation, and type of political mobilisation as also termed in this strand of literature (Moffitt 2020, p. 17)):

> *"...populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."* ((Weyland 2001, p. 14) — also re-cast more recently in: (Weyland 2017))

Unlike ideologies or discourses, this approach focuses on how populist strategies enable actors to *"pursue and sustain power"* (*ibid.*, p. 50), specifically

> *"...the principal ways and means by which a political actor captures the government and makes and enforces authoritative decisions".* (*ibid*., p. 55)

This research entertains WEYLANDS' definition because of its compatibility with relationalism:

> *"[w]hat matters here then is not the content of policies or the style of discourse employed by political actors, but rather the relationship of those actors toward their constituents."* (Weyland 2001, p. 11)

The effort to trace relationships among political actors and constituents is further usefully substantiated by the article *"Between Support and Confrontation. Civic Society, Media Reform, and Populism in Latin America"* by George Washington University scholar Silvio WAISBORD (WAISBORD 2011). Nevertheless, a number of caveats need to be made.

First, as it is made clear in the title, WAISBORD's focus is on the Latin American region — not only in this work of his, but also more generally also shown by the fact of the number of his Spanish-language publications. This, however, is not necessarily a downside in the context of this research undertaking, as this gives a chance for this research to expand the cultural and geographical boundaries of strategic populism research. Second, more importantly, perhaps the biggest reservation is that the issue focus of the article is *"...media policies promoted by populist administrations and the reactions of civic groups in contemporary Latin America"* (Waisbord 2011, p. 98) which is very closely related to the line of thinking presented above. However, media is much more an *object* rather than a *subject* for WAISBORD; he observes direct polity–"*civic* society" relations which is only a

subset of all interactions in the focus of the current inquiry. Moreover, his end goal is not to assess the interrelationships between the three (in his analysis, much rather two) "kinds" of actors, it is much more

> *"…to draw attention to the need to study specific 'images and visions' of civil society underlying proposals for media reform. The heated debates about populism's media politics reflects its peculiar understanding about civil society, as well as the absence of unifying models of civil society."* ((Waisbord 2011, p. 98) — also quoting a later edition of (Keane 1998))

And in this sense, the article has achieved its goals as it has deeply inspired the present project — as WAISBORD's conclusive observation is that

> *"Just to view civil society as a communicative space of opposition to the state and the market is insufficient. (…) Civil society encompasses heterogeneous and contradictory interests about desirable media systems, policy priorities, and paths to reform. This heterogeneity should make us more cautious about making categorical generalizations about 'civic society' or 'civic engagement with the state.' Who are we talking about? What are their priorities? How are civic actors positioned vis-à-vis competing state interests? What alliances are formed between civic and state interests? What views of civil society inform policy debates and proposals? Asking these questions is necessary to understand ideological and political divides in civil society as well as the articulation between civic groups and political elites."* (Waisbord 2011, p. 112)

This serves as a major impetus for re-conceptualisations and re-focusing proposed in this work. Third, related to this, naturally, "Between Support and Confrontation", as an article, does not ambition creating a framework, while this current dissertation can afford that ambition and attempt: it is intended to be an early empirical application of relational sociology's core theoretical insights in populism studies. Lastly, while WAISBORD clearly puts populist media policies in the centre of his investigation, he fails to deeply engage with the concept of populism itself or its contextual interrelationships such as "populism and the media" or "populism and civil society".

In sum, this study has the view that among the various competing definitions of populism, the political strategic conceptualisation is the most suitable for understanding the issue at hand: the interrelationship among a party system under populism, civil society, and the media. It intends to combine (Mouzelis 1985) approach with (Weyland 2001) political strategy of a personalistic leader relying on *"unmediated, unorganised"* (*ibid*., p. 14) mass

support. However, the notion of completely unmediated mass support is nearly impossible to achieve and untenable — especially in contemporary mass societies where communication between a leader and large groups of constituents inevitably involves some form of mediation, typically by the media or info-communicational technologies provided by private companies, just as a certain level of organization and institutionalization.

Indeed, this study explores how these two perspectives converge in understanding the interpersonal relationships between populist actors, the party system, and the ways in which they influence civil society and the media.

II.2.b. Civil society

The concept of civil society certainly does not suffer from inattention or under-theorisation. Quite the contrary: an immense body of scholarship reaching back as far as ancient Greece (Ehrenberg 1999, p. 3) is filled with a vast multitude of different meanings, definitions, conceptualisations, contextualisations of both theoretical and empirical kinds; related terms such as "civic society", "uncivil society", "civil sphere", "public sphere", "civic engagement" or "participation", and even "social capital" have been introduced further enriching — but also complicating the term. For the sake of this short review, this study intends to briefly review the recent scholarly history of the concept and showcase some of the most widely used approaches to the term.

Even summarising overviews of civil society-related works are numerous — ((Hall 1996) (Ehrenberg 1999) (J. L. Cohen and Arato 1999) (Keane 1998) (Edwards 2014) just to name a few). The definition of the term often elide clarity or wide acceptance as the study of civil society is a domain contested (see for example (Roginsky and Shortall 2009)) by large number of academics across time, space, cultures, ideological stripes, etc. — let alone public intellectuals or politicians utilising the concept for their own purposes. As EBERLY writes: *"The shape and definition of civil society is often affected by the purposes to which a given group directs it."* (Eberly 2000, p. 5) Nevertheless, there seems to be an overarching consensus that civil society as both a political and academic term re-emerged from the oblivion following Enlightenment and 19th century political philosophers' works thanks to the eastern European social experiences with one-party communist states. (Hall 1996) (J. L. Cohen and Arato 1999) (Kocka 2004) (Baker 2002) KOPECKÝ points out political dissidents' role in the reassertion of the term — and that *"the conception of civil society in most dissident writings was unclear and amorphous, conflating civil society with*

opposition per se" (Kopecký 2008, p. 4), which may be one of the factors contributing to the unclarity of the term. The normative intentions behind formulating and using it — not only in the context of eastern European struggles against political oppression, but also, for example neo-conservative thought employing the idea against perceived regulatory transgressions of "the state" (Eberly 2000) or "government" — may also be one of the reasons for the manifold "loadedness" of the term. Normative approaches can often be found in democratisation scholarship (such as (Baker 2002)); nevertheless, empirical accounts aiding analysis are naturally numerous as well. Studying this normative–empirical divide, Heinrich observes that

> *"Normative–theoretical and empirical–analytical conceptions of civil society differ substantially on the issue of defining civil society's boundaries. A review of the literature finds that, as a general rule, the more normative-oriented the study, the narrower the definition of civil society. (…) whereas empirical accounts of civil society tend to use rather inclusive concepts of civil society, normative–theoretical work, which aims to advance what civil society should look like, often sets the bar high for an actor or activity to belong to civil society by demanding certain criteria to be met…"* ((Heinrich 2010, p. 24) — emphasis added)

According to this point of view, for example the popular voluntary association-centred approach of Michael WALZER should be regarded as an "empirical–analytical" one — defining civil society in terms of *"'the space of uncoerced human association' and the 'set of networks — formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology — that fill this space'"* ((Eberly 2000, p. 7) cites (Walzer 1997)). Moreover, according to (Kopecký 2008, p. 9) often quoted (Pérez-Díaz 1998) also argues similarly in a broader, "empirical–analytical" fashion. In the meantime, Jan KUBIK's rigorous four-step approach to analysing civil society — "legal transparent civil society" (Kubik 2005) — would qualify as a narrow, normative-theoretical conceptualisation. However, arguably, KUBIK's framework lends itself easier to analysis due to its analytically clearer, reductionist approach. This is not to criticise HEINRICH's work which puts a lot of effort into creating conceptual categories in the literature (namely, functional civil society concepts, as opposed to empirical-analytical ones) and coming up with a clear working definition *("the arena, between the family, market and state, in which people associate to advance their interests"* (Heinrich 2010, p. 29)). Rather, it is to show how difficult it is to assess the concept of civil society in overarching, general, yet simple statements.

The German historian Jürgen KOCKA seems to have produced a more coherent and conceptually helpful classification of civil society definitions. He distinguishes three major types:

> *"...firstly as a type of social action; secondly as the area between economy, state, and the private sphere; thirdly as the core of a plan or project with ever-utopian features."* ((Kocka 2004, p. 32) — the author's own translation from the original German)

I argue that the second and third kinds of definitions are truly ubiquitous. It is perhaps not an overstatement with regards to the second class which defines civil society as an area that spatial metaphors such as "space", "domain", or "sphere", etc. dominate the literature. As for the third class, also normative theoretical approaches, visions, and agendas are abound. However, the first type conceived as a form of action identified by the German historian is more difficult to come by. It is rarer to find scholars who think in terms of interactions and relations rather than substances and definite conceptual "groupings" — and according to KOCKA's study, it could be the case because of the challenge of

> *"delineating from other types of social actions, namely differentiating from fight and war, exchange and market, rule and obeying, as well as specificities of private life."* (Kocka 2004, p. 32)

Nevertheless, this is the approach closest to the present undertaking, and I find it worthy of pursuing it in order to expand this strand of scholarship. Throughout this brief review, identifying another compatible conception has proven troublesome — except for Chris BEEM's argument that the term is *"an inherently lax and expansive concept, incorporating every phenomenon that is not the state"* and that *"one's understanding of civil society has been narrowed analytically by one's normative objectives; in a phrase, civil society is what you want it to do."* ((Beem and Elshtain 1999) is quoted by (Eberly 2000, p. 6)) Because logically following from such a nihilistic view, the appropriate course of action would be the wholesale rejection and abandonment of a long-standing scholarship that has conceived important ideas and impacts to our social lives. This research, instead, understands the concept of civil society as a type of social interaction and relation whose logic differs from that of the state or markets.

II.2.c. Media

"The Media and Neo-Populism" (Mazzoleni, Stewart, and Horsfield 2003) provides profoundly important basis for the present work, too. This endeavour re-assesses and adopts many of the insights made throughout the book "The Media and Neo-Populism" (Mazzoleni, Stewart, and Horsfield 2003). Chiefly, the observation that *"depending on the degree of integration of the media systems with the dominant political elites of a country, the established news media reflect the values and views of the elites to which they themselves belong"* (Mazzoleni 2003, p. 16). This is an explicit reason to incorporate media actors into the framework of scrutiny; and the relational leadership-focused inclusion of political actors due to

> *"…the systematic attempts by government officials and policy elites, as well as by pressure and single-cause groups, to gain access to and manage the media for the purpose of enhancing respective interests or to damage antagonists (…), neo-populist leaders and parties would engage in different forms of 'communication strategies' (…). 'For their different reasons, the media and the movement needed each other. The media needed stories, preferring the dramatic; the movement needed publicity for recruitment, for support, and for political effect. Each could be useful to each other: each had effects, intended and unintended, on the other.'"* (Mazzoleni 2003, p. 17) — quoting (Gitlin 2003, p. 24))

To remain consistent with this associated line of scholarship, this work also takes into account the concept of the *media system*. There are two additional reasons for this. One, the concept of media systems is a well-studied concept with an engaging scholarship (e.g. (Bajomi-Lázár 2015; Zielonka 2015; Hallin and Mancini 2012)). Two, it is able to aptly convey the sum of the intersubjective (direct or indirect) interpersonal interactions that this relationalist investigation pursues. The concept was initially created by Daniel C. HALLIN and Paolo MANCINI in their seminal work "Comparing Media Systems" and originally entailed four major components, "dimensions":

> *"…(1) the development of media markets, with particular emphasis on the strong or weak development of a mass circulation press; (2) political parallelism; that is, the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society; (3) the development of journalistic professionalism; and (4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system."* (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 21)

While, obviously, this conceptualisation does not follow relationalist principles, elements thereof give way to the re-conceptualisation this study offers. Instead of macro-level aggregates (such as "media markets", "divisions in society", "state"), the current attempt aims to re-focus the investigation on individuals, their interactions, and their (direct or indirect) interpersonal interaction networks. To this end, it transforms the concept of the media system to be

> *the linkages among media producers, media consumers, and media regulators.*

It needs to be noted that media producers and media regulators in a given country may, most likely, be known by their personal names (e.g. journalists, editors, head of the media authority, lawmakers with strong focus on media affairs, etc.), media consumers are usually more difficult to identify. Nevertheless, even then, their specific individual characteristics (numbers, age, social status, presumed interests, location, etc.) may be known — which is not the most amenable to relationalist analyses, but may fulfil the goals set by individual research efforts.

Political communication research with similar aims and theoretical grounds[22] document the proliferation of *informational autocracy* and analyse their behavioural and incentive structures:

> *"The totalitarian tyrants of the past employed mass violence, ideological indoctrination, and closed borders to monopolize power. Most authoritarian rulers also used brutal repression to spread fear. However, in recent decades, a growing number of nondemocratic leaders have chosen a different approach. Their goal — concentrating power — remains the same. But their strategy is new. Rather than intimidating the public, they manipulate information — buying the elite's silence, censoring private media, and broadcasting propaganda — in order to boost their popularity and eliminate threats."* (Guriev and Treisman 2019, p. 123)

Their formalised theory (developed earlier in (Guriev and Treisman 2015)) focuses on the relationship between a dictators' political survival in office and the dictator's ability to confer his political competence to the public (while also co-opting and/or repressing better informed elites and dissenters). Hence this theoretical approach is essential to understand

[22] Amongst others, GURIEV and TREISMAN refer to BUENO DE MESQUITA and his colleagues' work (see (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003)

how leaders instrumentalise communication and ("communicational") institutions. This approach adds a great deal to the reasons why media system informs this study in addition to the concept of civil society. The mediatisation of political actors, leaders, their parties or social movements does theoretically and practically enrich our understanding of populism as this dissertation aims to show. These processes of mediatisation have also been described as part of an overarching, ongoing global trend by many affecting right about everything in multiple, diverse ways from arts and culture, sports, public health, education — to, of course, political economy as pioneering accounts such as (Esser and Strömbäck 2014) and (Kriesi et al. 2013) hold. Mediatisation, too, has been conceptualised, modified[23] and defined in several distinct ways. But this dissertation joins the aforementioned scholarly community consisting of authors such as KITSCHELT, DE VREESE, KRIESI, ESSER, STRÖMBÄCK, MAZZOLENI, and many others because their works specifically lie at the crossroads of not only political economy and social communication studies, but also at concepts which this dissertation relies on: populism, civil society, and the media. As KRIESI explains, a key element of the process of global mediatisation is technological change, and it has really been going for longer than nation states have started to form:

> *"As the public sphere extended beyond the local realm, it became much harder for the two [citizens and their representatives] to meet in assemblies; the communication between citizens and their representatives became essentially media-based. (…) Moreover, they [the media] have a particular importance for those non-established political actors, like social movement organizations, who do not get access to the media (…). But, for all practical purposes, in the modern representative democracy the communication between politicians and the citizens at large is media-centred. This means that the process of political communication depends on the media infrastructure and is subject to change as the media are changing. The challenge of mediatization refers to the consequences of the changing conditions of the media infrastructure for democracy, and can be defined as the growing intrusion of the media logic as an institutional rule into fields – such as political communication — where other rules of defining appropriate behaviour prevailed…"* (Kriesi 2013, pp. 9–10)

[23] See for example (Hepp 2020) which develops the concept of "deep mediatisation".

II.3. Interrelating the concepts in the case study context

II.3.a. The party system context

To align with the theoretical and empirical agenda of this study, the scholarship on the Hungarian party system is considered here (e.g. (Körösényi 2015), (Boda and Körösényi 2012)). This focus is justified by the observation that

> *"...the main players in public life are still the parties, not the trade unions, business interest groups, or social movements and organizations independent of the parties. One source of their effectiveness is the extensive party organization and centralized operation. In addition, the parties are able to acquire the material resources that they can efficiently convert into political capacities. Parties in Hungary are powerful machines that, outweighing potential alternatives, operate as the main actors in public life."*[24] (Körösényi 2015, p. 278)

This observation also informs the civil society context discussed in the following section.

Although there are multiple ways to describe and divide three decades of Hungarian party system development (c.f. (Csizmadia 2021, p. 204)), this dissertation uses a compelling, parsimonious three-fold division developed by (Soós 2012) and (Horváth and Soós 2015) that fits the theoretical framework of this dissertation research. This division outlines a system that has become increasingly polarized and concentrated — a trend also noted early on by (C. Tóth 2001) — who also observed that initially, Hungarian parties were built around core networks of intellectuals and functionaries of one-party communist regime, often only weakly and normatively connected (*ibid.*, p. 21). The multiple factors and effects recounted lead to the following stages of party system development:

- *tripartite party system,*
- *two-block party system, and*
- *dominant party system.*

These distinct stages are described in detail in their relationship to the media below.

[24] *„A közélet nagy játékosai mégis a pártok, nem a szakszervezetek, üzleti érdekképviseletek vagy pártoktól független társadalmi mozgalmak, szervezetek. A hatékonyságuk egyik forrása a legtöbb a kiterjedt pártszervezet és a centralizált működés. Emellett a pártok képesek megszerezni azokat az anyagi erőforrásokat, amelyeket hatékonyan képesek politikai kapacitásokká változtatni. A pártok Magyarországon erőteljes gépezetek, amelyek a potenciális alternatívákat háttérbe szorítva a közélet legfőbb aktoraiként működnek."* ((Körösényi 2015, p. 278) — translation from the original Hungarian by the author)

Here, it is necessary to clarify the term "party system under populism" (used interchangeably with "populist party system"). This is particularly in the context of Fidesz' political strategy and manoeuvring that has consolidated and centralised the right-wing. A correlation can be seen between this gradual polarization and concentration on one hand and Fidesz's populist strategy aiming to dominate the Hungarian political right on the other. For the first two stages, from 1990 to 2010, the party system can be described as being under "populist stress." This strategy, which focused on intensifying the left-right divide and establishing a dominant right-wing pole — the "central force field"[25] within the political spectrum —, ultimately "spilled over" to the creation of the dominant party system after 2010. Given that this appears to be a long-term, purposeful attempt, this dissertation basically equates the terms "dominant party system" and "party system under populism" in the Hungarian context — while acknowledging that, technically, they do not denote the same phenomenon. In Hungary's exceptional case, populism has been fully instrumentalized as a tool of autocratisation, resulting in a dominant party system.

II.3.b. The civil society context

A significant portion of the literature on post-communist eastern European civil society — including the Hungarian case — suggests that this "sphere" has often been disappointing in terms of democratization. Early accounts from the 1990s have already started — almost literally — burying the term with titles such as "The strange death of 'civil society' in post-communist Hungary" (Lomax 1997). Later evaluations, too, remained unfavourable. Hungarian political scientist and civil society researcher SZABÓ Máté — author of several civil society-related books and studies, but also served six years as parliamentary ombudsman for basic rights (later titled citizens' rights) — gave a rather negative assessment at the end of 2008:

> *"Is this civil society strong or weak? (…) If we were held accountable for the European success story, then unfortunately, we could not serve with one. Nevertheless, we can find the break from the traditions of dictatorships and successful breakout points in Hungary and elsewhere,*

[25] Even though the "central forcefield" phrase was coined by ORBÁN himself in 2009 to describe the future mode of party–society organization after winning the upcoming elections in 2010 (for which polls put Fidesz in a very favourable position already then). However, the "central forcefield" concept can be seen as an outcome of this centralizing tendency. Prior to that, the political slogan "one camp, one flag" (in Hungarian: „egy a tabor, egy a zászló") was already in use in the early 2000s to denote Fidesz' attempts to "unify" — and, at the same time, incorporate — right-wing political organisations and groups. (c.f. (Magyar Nemzet 2002)

> *too — twenty years after the change of system. (…) But does the civil perspective, the networks of civil organisations have a base in the wider social activity, in various initiatives of citizens? (…) The picture is nonetheless not the rosiest, and even if we can find the most optimistic authors and researchers, even their opinions are built primarily on the activism of the minority, groups of non-profit–civil counter-elite which is not rooted in wide social activism. In this regard, Hungary is often ranked rather badly in the results of international comparative research. It does not seem like we were on the verge of the great 'participatory revolution' today, actually, one can even experience a certain backsliding which has not been propped up by the EU accession visibly."* (M. Szabó 2008, pp. 8–9)[26]

SZABÓ's work is definitely an interesting read with the hindsight of Hungary's descent into competitive authoritarianism just a few years later. This weakness is underlined by political scientists stating that *"political parties are the only serious players in Hungarian public life"* (Boda and Körösényi 2012, p. 22).[27]

Indeed, this is the basic experience which informs this research, too: civil society is a concept too broad and bears very little currency in itself as an analytical category in post-communist Eastern Europe and Hungary. Moreover, his verdict that one could *"…even experience a certain backsliding…"* in civil society engagement in 2008 could prove to be an important analytical observation. Perhaps the decline of civil, social engagement may have precipitated the autocratisation after 2010. This is an issue that this dissertation will certainly undertake in its analysis. The sorts of civic engagement and activism that indeed (Gerő and Susánszky 2014) took place — as the work of GRESKOVITS Béla also attests — can be captured by the notion of *social movement* understanding of civil society, a specific mode of organisation within civil society. The Hungarian context further suggests this important distinction because the politically relevant social activities that may contribute

[26] *„Erős vagy gyenge ez a civil társadalom? (…) Ha az európai sikersztorit kérik rajtunk számon, akkor azzal sajnos itt sem tudunk szolgálni. Azonban a diktatúrák hagyományaival való szakítást és a sikeres kitörési pontokat megtalálhatjuk Magyarországon és másutt is – húsz évvel a rendszerváltás után. (…) De van-e bázisa a civil szemléletmódnak, a civil szervezetek hálózatainak a szélesebb társadalmi aktivitásban, a polgárok különféle kezdeményezéseiben? (…) Az összkép azonban nem a legrózsásabb, és ha meg is találjuk a legoptimistább szerzőket, kutatókat még az ő véleményük is elsősorban a kisebbség aktivizmusára, a nonprofit-civil ellen-elit csoportjaira épül, amely nem gyökerezik széles társadalmi aktivizmusban. Magyarország e vonatkozásban a nemzetközi összehasonlító kutatás eredményeiben gyakran eléggé rossz besorolásokra tesz szert. Nem úgy tűnik, mintha ma itthon a nagy »részvételi forradalom« előtt állnánk, sőt ma még bizonyos visszaesés is tapasztalható, amelyen az EU-csatlakozás sem lendített látványosan."* ((M. Szabó 2008, pp. 8–9) — the author's own translation from the original Hungarian)

[27] The author's translation from the original Hungarian:

> *„A politikai pártok az egyedül komolyan vehető játékosok a magyarországi közéletben."* ((Boda and Körösényi 2012, p. 22) refers to (Enyedi and Tóka 2007).)

to the understanding of autocratisation has often been initiated, organised, and maintained by elite political actors — even if their goal was to encourage the participation of civil society actors, unorganised individuals and communities. Without the concept of social movements, these actors would escape the analysis because they cannot be confidently included into the category of civil society as they were not bottom-up, grassroots civic initiatives, rather than organised mass movements run by hierarchical, centralized elites in a top-down manner. Hence they could not be included into an effort like this one that aims to understand the social "coalitional" structure of autocratisation from an actor-centric historical institutionalist point of view — thereby missing an important point in the analysis of the socio-political process aiding autocratisation.

This would be a mistake: (Greskovits 2020) argues that even if the Civic Circles conservative national movement initiated by Fidesz in the mid-2000s turned out to be electorally insignificant at the time, it did contribute to the party's work to secure further resources (e.g. human capital) in the long run. This argument has been strengthened substantially in comparison to his previous non-peer reviewed research (Greskovits 2017a; Wittenberg and Greskovits 2016) which showed an even smaller role for Civic Circles in Fidesz's organisational strategy, but nevertheless it does fully correspond to SZABÓ's point and the empirical reality on the ground formulated by conservative-leaning political scientist Edith OLTAY after 2010:

> *"Although interest groups, single-issue movements, civil organisations and local councils also articulate interests, in Hungary the parties shape the political discourse. The opinion of the parties is reflected in the media. The parties articulate and aggregate interests by offering their voters clear choices as they explain to them their alternative visions of tradition and nationhood."* (Oltay 2012, p. 65)

II.3.c. The media context

Drawing on this argument about the primacy of political parties in the public sphere overshadowing that of the civil society and organisations as well as forming the political discourses relayed by the media, this chapter seeks to identify parallel developments in the media system and the party system.

There are a number of works which inform this exercise. For example, relatively recent accounts of "Media in Third-Wave Democracies" (Bajomi-Lázár 2017) and "Media and Politics in New Democracies" (Zielonka 2015) deserve special attention. Out of the

contributions of a more universalistic, model-minded nature, (Štetka 2015) and (Bajomi-Lázár 2017) inform this research. The latter, BAJOMI-LÁZÁR Péter, as indicated above, is an established and prolific media researcher — even though his personality may not be uncontroversial (Munk 2017) —. His works (most notably, (Bajomi-Lázár 2013) advancing the concept of "party colonisation of the media") also inform this study. Beyond his personal research, his fellow colleagues at the think-tank Médiakutató ("Media Researcher") are also of vast importance (e.g. (Polyák 2012). Somewhat more loosely connected to these authors, but closely related to the topic, (G. Szabó and Bene 2016) as well as (G. Szabó 2018) are important to mention here due to their network-oriented approach to Hungarian politics and media. Moreover, (Bayer 2017), (Urbán, Polyák, and Szász 2017) also from this epistemic community provide useful Hungary–specific insight into this subject area. As already mentioned, GRESKOVITS Béla's scholarship is closely related as well, e.g. (Greskovits 2015a). Nevertheless, this current undertaking takes a conscious effort to go beyond the circles of this epistemic community and bring in the approaches of scholars of different ideological backgrounds as well (such as (Oltay 2012)).

Two other major sets of additions merit specific mention: the edited volume "Új képlet: A 2010-es választások Magyarországon" ("New Formula: the 2010 Election in Hungary") (Enyedi, Szabó, and Tardos 2011), BODA Zsolt, BOZÓKI András, and KÖRÖSÉNYI András's scholarship (Boda and Körösényi 2012; Bozóki and Hegedűs 2018). The former is an excellent source for studying the populist "turn" in Hungary — how PM ORBÁN democratically won his first two-thirds Fidesz majority in 2010 which he used to re-write the constitution and re-make the political economy of the country in his image. The reasons for 2010, in their account of political media analysis (Beck, Bíró Nagy, and Róna 2011) provide basically the reverse side of the fundamental argument in this dissertation by assessing the collapse of the popular support of Fidesz's predecessor, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) between 2006 and 2010 from the theoretical point of view of agenda-setting. They find that the *"…sustained negative news feed — and the general stream of opinion formed through it — virtually nailed down the disappointed voters among undecided voters or within the camps of other parties."* ((Beck, Bíró Nagy, and Róna 2011, p. 212) — translation of the original Hungarian by the author) as well as the personality — an overwhelmingly negative public opinion — of the former socialist PM GYURCSÁNY Ferenc, and that

> *"…the agenda — in line with the theory of priming — re-tuned the competition in a way that made the election all about the issues unfavourable to MSZP. Followingly, only a few voters were concerned about how consensus-seeking Fidesz was or what kind of consequences a two-thirds parliamentary majority would have."* ((Beck, Bíró Nagy, and Róna 2011, 213) — translation of the original Hungarian by the author)[28]

The current historical overview, in addition, relies on the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter, aiming to identify the linkages among

- *Media organisations — the supply* that produces media content;
- *Media consumers — the demand*; and
- *The media–party system interactions — political actors, media regulators* that entail the larger party system developments themselves as shaped by electoral outcomes.

Thus coupling the history of the media system with the political system in post-communist Hungary, three periods of the political economy of communication arises roughly corresponding to the three decades of post-communist history. First, the era of *fragmented competition* characterised by the initial pluralism of the party system and the monopolistic structure of the media system (1990–1998); second, the *duopoly* in both the party system and the media system with a clear, almost uncontroversial[29] "left-wing dominance" is detectable which comes to an end in 2010; when, third, the current period of *oligopolistic dominance* with Orbán's Fidesz re-shaping both politics and media. By the power of its legislative supermajorities, Fidesz has turned the party system into a dominant one, and re-formed the media system through legal and regulatory actions as well as through linked actors, businesses, and institutions, changed the incentive structures of production, consumption, and regulation — even the media market itself.

[28] The original Hungarian text reads as the following:

> *„Tehát nem a Fidesz lett »mérsékeltebb« a szavazók szemében, hanem a napirend – a priming-elméletnek megfelelően – hangolta át úgy a versenyt, hogy a választás lényegében az MSZP számára kedvezőtlen ügyekről szólt. Ebből következően csak nagyon kevés szavazót érdekelt 2010 áprilisában, hogy a Fidesz mennyire konszenzuskereső vagy milyen következményei lehetnek a kétharmados parlamenti többségnek."* (*ibid.*)

[29] The pre-2010 left-wing dominance is generally acknowledged even by critical scholars and opposition journalists. (Bajomi-Lázár 2015)

II.3.c: I. Under the tripartite party system (1990–1997)

Media organisations: the supply

Under one-party state socialism the freedom of the press did not exist, almost all media were under strict communist party control. During the negotiated transition to multi-party democracy and market economy, no resolution regarding media regulation was born out of the gridlock between representatives of the communist regime and the divided democratic opposition. Therefore, the participants agreed to a "frequency moratorium" [frekvenciamoratórium] regarding electronic media which effectively froze the media governance and market structures inherited from state communism. (Paál 2013) Thus only a few, very limited private radio stations were launched — the public television (Hungarian Television [Magyar Televízió, MTV]) and (Hungarian Radio [Magyar Rádió, MR]) enjoyed a virtual monopoly. The frequency moratorium remained in effect until 1997 (Gálik 2004a), only then could private commercial television stations start broadcasting. Regarding print media, many of the newspapers went through "spontaneous privatisation"[30] — usually a highly opaque process managed by the communist successor party MSZP. (Paál 2013)

Thus the leading media organisations of the time were the public broadcasters MTV and MR — which also introduced multiple channels at times (such as M1, M2, and Duna TV). The public broadcasters were large media organisations with considerable internal pluralism regarding their programming and staff. Contemporary sources and scholarship confirm that different public affairs contents (news, talk shows, etc.) on the same channels had observable differences in their political leanings. Moreover, one of the very few studies about journalists showed a clear political preference for liberal and left parties towards the end of the period. (Vásárhelyi 1999b)

Media consumers: the demand

Data from this time period is especially scarce and of low quality, but some sources suggest that thanks to the virtual monopoly of the public television and radio broadcasters, they

[30] Influential newspapers often ended up in foreign owners' portfolios who were either party allies or indifferent towards intervening in Hungarian domestic politics. (Sipos 2010) also recounts right-wing MDF attempts at gaining control over privatised newspapers, but their attempts failed either politically or financially. The largest daily Hungarian newspaper (1990 until 2016), Népszabadság [People's Freedom], had direct MSZP party foundation ownership stakes in its ownership structure. (Gálik 2004b) For more on foreign ownership in Hungarian media, *see also* (Galambos 2008).

enjoyed the attention of exceptionally large audiences — reaching up to five million viewers and listeners[31] for certain programmes.

As to print media, their circulation was already falling due to the competition between them and electronic media. According to the (MATESZ 1993) database, socialist-affiliated[32] Népszabadság was by far the most-widely read daily newspaper (with approx. 800,000 readers at its peak), for a long time without a solid conservative, right-wing alternative. Magyar Nemzet [Hungarian Nation] took up this role and solidified its readership only by the late 2000s.[33] Moreover, the introduction of tabloid newspapers also represented a challenge for political dailies and the political elites alike. Nevertheless, the consumers could access a pluralistic and diverse supply of information — although with a noticeable left-wing tilt throughout this period — thanks to these outlets, a plethora of local and county newspapers, and a large selection of thematic periodicals.

The media–party system interactions — political actors, media regulators

The "media war"[34] — political disagreements about media regulation — had immediately begun after 1990 across the political spectrum. The stakes were high: ending the frequencies moratorium, regulating the Hungarian media system, controlling key media outlets.

Introducing a media law would have legally required a qualified two-thirds supermajority, but the governing right-wing led by MDF and its junior coalition partners had not secured the sufficient number of seats in the legislative. In order to resolve legal issues outstanding from the transition which required constitutional supermajority approval, MDF struck a well-known deal with the largest opposition party, the liberal SZDSZ (named "MDF–SZDSZ" or "ANTALL–TÖLGYESSY pact"). One of the most important provisions of the deal entailed — aside from MDF approving the liberal opposition SZDSZ candidate for

[31] The evening news of the public service programme may have reached as many as four million people in the 1990s. (Kollega Tarsoly 2000)

[32] See *footnote 12.*

[33] Already the first freely elected National Assembly's right-wing parties had tried to establish and acquire their own media outlets (e.g. Napi Magyarország [Hungary Daily], Magyar Nemzet, etc.); nevertheless, it was late in the 2000s when right-wing media truly managed to become a "force" to reckon with. (Bajomi-Lázár 2001; Paál 2013)

[34] The sequence of these political events were publicly named as such and termed identically by academia, too. See for example (Bárány 1998), (Bajomi-Lázár 2001), (Rovó 2019). Relatedly, the concepts of "media balance" or "media imbalance" (médiaegyensúly, médiaegyensúlytalanság) and "media dominance" (médiafölény) had also been introduced in Hungarian public life. (Sipos 2010)

President, GÖNCZ Árpád — was to nominate a liberal intellectual, HANKISS Elemér for president of public broadcasting. Thus, while the governance of public media remained fractured and contested throughout the period, conservatives were unsuccessful in gaining positions in this strategically essential organisation. An exception to this was the brief tenure (1993–1994) of NAHLIK Gábor as vice-president of the public media organisations supported by conservatives. During his short term as the leader of the public media, the organisation was switched into pro-government "propaganda mode" whose sharp break from previous norms hurt the conservative MDF-led coalition more than helped it in the 1994 election which it lost by a vast margin. (Tóka and Popescu 2002)

After the defeat of the conservative MDF and the massive electoral victory of the communist successor party MSZP, SZDSZ and MSZP formed a coalition government to command a supermajority in parliament. This enabled them to settle remaining constitutional questions — and finally come up with a legislative framework for the media. The uneasy left-liberal coalition's infighting constituted the second phase of the "media war" which ultimately resulted in a compromise Media Law of 1996 (effective from 1997) (Cseh and Sükösd 2001). Some observers[35] point out that the very reason why MSZP and SZDSZ entered into coalition was to secure their domination over the media system by regulating it. (Paál 2013)

Are these political developments reflected in electoral outcomes? To the extent that data is available, this period shows a good deal of causality. Prior to MDF's victory, a conservative president led the vastly influential, monopolistic public broadcasting organisations. Throughout most of MDF's time in government, however, liberal-leaning president HANKISS was in charge thanks to a political agreement between MDF and SZDSZ. Nevertheless, SZDSZ performed worse in the 1994 elections than four years prior, but still remained the second-largest party — while socialist MSZP won an astounding victory. MSZP coming out of the anti-communist "quarantine", its close relationship to trade unions (Angelusz and Tardos 2005b, p. 96) played a part in MSZP's mobilisation — and public media employees, journalists who earned their experience during communist times may have aided this process. Remarkably, then-liberal FIDESZ earned many supporters before 1994, at certain moments leading in polls — when the party was still getting a favourable

[35] Outgoing right-wing MDF PM BOROSS is quoted to have said: *"I am convinced that (...) free democrats [SZDSZ] joined the coalition primarily (...) to grab the media world. I believe that it is obvious in the television and radio, too, how they are executing mid-level personnel changes."* (Paál 2013)

media coverage. However, a real estate corruption scandal related to FIDESZ party headquarters widely covered in the media tarnished their image, and the party barely made it into parliament in 1994. These events marked the beginning of FIDESZ's fraught relationship with the media and its strategy of shifting to the right of the political spectrum. (Oltay 2012)

With legislating the new media law in 1996 and thereby also gaining influence over newly launched mass media outlets such as commercial televisions TV2 and RTL Klub, the MSZP–SZDSZ coalition government would have been expected to survive. Nevertheless, the governing parties became affected by large-scale corruption scandals (such as the "TOCSIK scandal", see for example (G. Juhász 1999; Paál 2013)) widely covered by even supposedly "loyal" media,[36] too. MSZP even manage to slightly increase its mandates in parliament becoming the strongest party second time in a row in 1998, but SZDSZ's support collapse. This gave a chance to right-wing parties — now with Fidesz leading them — to form a multiparty coalition between 1998 and 2002. With the formation of left-liberal MSZP–SZDSZ and a right-wing Fidesz–MDF–FKgP party blocs and a new media system regulation and market competition, a new period emerged in the 2000s.

Altogether, for all these reasons, a rather strong causal relationship is observable between media system and party system developments. These, taken together with other explanations (e.g. the economic pains of the market transition; the role of trade unions, churches, and civil society organisations in politics; etc.) account rather well for trends in electoral behaviour.

II.3.c: II. Under the two-block party system (1998–2010)

Media organisations: the supply

After the 1996 Media Law entered into force, social communications in Hungary changed considerably. The role of public broadcasting had diminished drastically — with the formerly "all-powerful" MTV and MR plunging to single-digit audience shares.[37]

[36] The notion of "loyal journalism" appeared soon after the democratic transition. (Bajomi-Lázár 2001, pp. 149–151)

[37] The public service TV channels that once enjoyed a monopoly, suffered a huge loss of audiences:

"Between 1999 and 2002, i.e. under the first Fidesz government, there were no opposition delegates on the boards. The repeated failure over several months to elect presidents to lead the broadcast providers typifies the operational disorders that plagued the system. Viewer ratings for public-television channels began to drop immediately after the launch of commercial channels, a trend that continued in the years that followed.

Meanwhile commercial television channels TV2 and RTL Klub soon reached sometimes multiple millions of viewers respectively.

Technical changes have also re-shaped the media supply. With the advent of broadband internet, online media reached growing audiences towards the end of the 2000s.[38] Hungary is in the rather unique position that its media market had developed online news portals that were independent of other print or electronic media providers. Elsewhere press, television, and radio companies' websites gained prominence in the 1990s and 2000s — while in Hungary Origo.hu and Index.hu who did not belong to any other media outlet's portfolio became the largest news portals. Also, fringe news and opinion websites, communities, and in the final years of the decade, social media became influential.[39] These processes started to "even out" the left-wing media dominance somewhat — divided between left-liberal and right-wing political party blocs. This played a role in right-wing opposition media and communication networks' influence and popularity.

External economic shocks were another factor in the changes of information supply, even if indirectly. In 2008, foreign mass media investors decreased their portfolios all across eastern Europe's tight markets — making it easier for domestic actors to acquire media outlets. (Bátorfy 2017a) These processes played out at a time when traditional mass media outlets suffered from the double crisis of falling advertising revenues and the increased competition with new, online media.[40]

In 2008 the largest public channel was watched by 11% of Hungarian viewers; by 2012 the percentage had dropped to 9.2%." (Polyák 2015, p. 282)

Even today, the transformed public service media are not major players on the market.

[38] In 2000, Origo.hu became the most widely read online news outlet according to the company's website. (New Wave Media Group, n.d.) Its readership has soon reached 1 million, and by 2018, it grew above 2.7 million monthly. (Bátorfy and Urbán 2020)

[39] With regards to one of the major party system changes, the emergence of the right extremist Jobbik party, (Róna 2016) emphasises the role of Facebook as well as its partisan online media outlets (e.g. Kurucinfó, Barikád (later renamed Alfahír)) building on a vivid nationalist subculture which goes back to the 1990s.

[40] As POLYÁK puts this:

"Advertising revenue has been shrinking in almost all segments of the market. In the Hungarian television market it dropped by 42% between 2008 and 2013; print media saw a 48% decline. Though digital media (internet and mobile) registered a 95% surge in advertising revenue during this period, most of this growth benefited global intermediaries (primarily Google) rather than Hungarian content providers. In the small Hungarian media market, the recent policies that I have been discussing have destabilized the economic situation of the entire media market, thereby making the media substantially more susceptible to outside influence." (Polyák 2015, p. 308)

Media consumers: the demand

According to contemporary surveys (e.g. (Urbán 2004)), average time spent watching television was in Hungary during the 2000s was among the highest in the world, reached up to 4.5 hours a day. (Z. Antal and Scherer 2005; Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH) 2023a) This extraordinarily high proportion proves enduring. In 2023, according to (Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH) 2023b), an average Hungarian over the age of four watches 289 minutes, almost five hours daily — even though TV audiences' age is increasing and younger populations increasingly choose online media at a very early age. This effectively means that over the entire post-socialist period, TV audiences have decreased significantly (Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH) 2023b), TV viewers still spend a massive amount of time in front of their screens.

The two leading commercial television broadcasters, TV2 and RTL Klub, reaped most of the benefits: their combined audience share between 1998 and 2004 was constantly above 75% in the key audience segment, people between ages of 18 and 49. (Z. Antal and Scherer 2005)

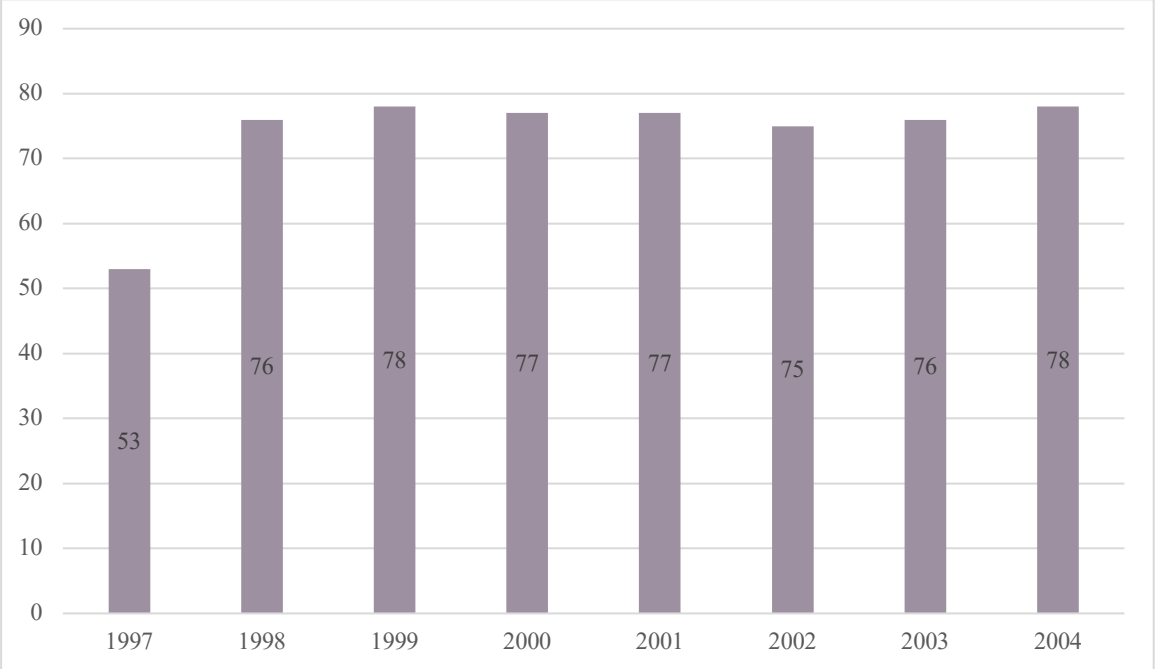

Figure 5: Joint audience share of TV2 and RTL Klub among people between 18 and 49. Source: (Z. Antal and Scherer 2005, p. 149) based on data by the media authority between 1996 and 2010, the National Body for Radio and Television (Országos Rádió és Televízió Testület, ORTT)

This, also meant that public service television and radio broadcasters suffered a plunge in their audience reach, even dropping below the 10% threshold compared to their leading position reaching even the majority of Hungarian population in the 1990s. (See also (Polyák

2015, p. 282).) A good indicator of this trend is that the Hungarian public broadcaster's ad revenues decreased by almost 90% by the early 2000s compared to its peak in 1997 (Z. Antal and Scherer 2005), when commercial radio and television were launched in the country. As a result, instead of relying on the market, the public broadcaster had to be financed by the state. Another consequence of the increased competition and the public broadcasters' incapability to shift strategy was that many of their most experienced staff members, journalists, media personalities left to work for the new commercial, private media companies as also attested by VÁSÁRHELYI in (Vásárhelyi 1999b). The rise in popularity of commercial television brought about a shift in the genre and tone of programming, too. A plethora of new content — typically lower-quality film series (especially soap operas produced in Latin America), films, infotainment, and tabloid-like shows — emerged and quickly gained popularity.

Hence, in contrast to the primacy of television in Hungary, effectively all other forms of media can only play a less important role — with the only dynamic exception being online media. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (KSH) 2023), the proportion of internet users (between the age of 16 and 74) surpassed the 50% threashold in 2007. In January 2005, the two leading online news sites, Origo.hu and Index.hu were visited by more than 600,000 and 300,000 people, respectively. (Z. Antal and Scherer 2005) Thus, by the fledging online media industry started to become an influential source of political information by the end of this period and especially in the 2010s.

The history of the radio market in post-socialist Hungary is a fraught and complex subject. It is clearly a form of media that has a mass reach. In the early 2000s, the leading stations, Sláger Rádió [Hit Radio] and Danubius Radio each reported weekly reach between two and three million listeners (Z. Antal and Scherer 2005); and the number of people who listen to radio at least once a week is at a whopping 7.5 million in 2023 (Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH) 2023b) — this 68% ratio within the population puts Hungary in the fourth place in European comparison (*ibid.*). At the same time, its role in political communication decreased in favour of entertainment, overshadowed by television and online media. Among younger audiences, it is clarly falling out of favour, with constantly decreasing time spent consuming this form of media over the full period of this investigation. (*ibid.*)

Simultaneously, the circulation of the printed press declined to a level from which it has not rebounded considerably. By 2000, the absolute leader on the daily and political periodicals' market, left-wing Népszabadság, lost three quarters of its readers compared to its peak and continued to slide well below 200,000 papers sold. (MATESZ 1993; Z. Antal and Scherer 2005) On the right-wing side of the market, adding insult to injury, this decline occurred just as their printed media outlets, most importantly, Magyar Nemzet [Hungarian Nation] were stabilised regarding their institutional, financial, and editorial background — but in an environment of eroding public interest for newspapers. Furthermore, with the increasing accessibility of overwhelming free online media, paid print media suffered further losses in readership.

The media–party system interactions — political actors, media regulators

The tremendous changes with the introduction of commercial competition in the thus far monopolistic media system and the new legal frameworks and oversight institutions,[41] also happened under dubious circumstances. The two major national commercial TV channels', TV2 and RTL Klub frequency applications tenders were not selected and implemented transparently under the ruling MSZP–SZDSZ coalition before 1998. Incomplete offers were illegally approved (as ruled by a Hungarian court); and an entirely viable and a legal application was rejected.[42] (Gálik 2004a)

With PM Orbán's Fidesz and its junior coalition partners in charge (1998–2002), however, the third phase of the "media war" ensued. The previously multi-party decisionmaking boards of public media organisations as well as the national media oversight institutions became less diverse — to the point of Fidesz unilaterally controlling them.[43] The MSZP–SZDSZ coalition reclaimed their positions in media and information authorities in 2002 and sustained a coalition government until 2010. The "media war" lost its saliency as an immediate political issue due to the legal and technical transformations of the media supply.

[41] Of course, the Media Law of 1996 also established a novel regulatory framework — with rules convenient to the governing parties.

[42] While the author describes the two major national commercial TV channels as mostly neutral towards politics (Gálik 2004b; 2004a)(see also (Bátorfy and Urbán 2020, p. 49)), other commentators have also pointed to certain biases in their coverage: TV2 was more or less linked to socialist MSZP, while RTL Klub to liberal SZDSZ. Altogether, Gálik's observation that infotainment rather than focused political coverage became more and more dominant with the advent of commercial television in Hungary is apparent. (anonymous Member of Parliament 2002))

[43] Commonly called as the "maimed curatoria" [csonka kuratóriumok] named after the media oversight and governance bodies' and boards' "missing" opposition members. (Paál 2013; Political Capital 2003)

But attempts to gain control and exert influence by other means,[44] establishing commercial mass media outlets with political affiliations remained in practice. (Sipos 2010) Hungary's EU accession in 2004 did not change this situation. Indeed, the EU does not have a strong, independent media policy, the regulatory and governance powers are mostly left at the member state governments' discretion. (European Parliament 2018)

The attempts of the right-wing to earn valuable positions in mass media or to create their own friendly media "ecosystem" largely failed in the 1990s, and only became moderately successful towards the end of the 2000s. The Fidesz-led conservative coalition government (1998–2002) holding institutional sway [45] over the fast-decreasing public service broadcasters (Vásárhelyi 1999a; Urbán 2004) was hardly a serious challenge to the booming commercial media — although, finally, the right-wing could establish smaller media outlets[46] promoting messages favourable to them. (Sipos 2010)

Over the course of the "media war", it remained constant that governing parties heavily controlled the "money taps".[47] (Bátorfy and Urbán 2020) However, this started to prove insufficient as well as increasingly unsustainable after the 2006 political and the 2008 financial crisis for the left-liberal parties in the more and more competitive media system. During the eight years of the left-liberal MSZP–SZDSZ coalition in power, these massive changes — also exogenous to political and media networks — upended relations on the media markets and in their political ties. Under these conditions, even left-liberal leaning media outlets turned out to be less "loyal" and more critical to the government (Bátorfy 2017a)[48] — covering their corruption and political scandals (such as the infamous "Őszöd

[44] For example, civil society organisation had been another way of mobilising mass support — but, ultimately, (Greskovits 2017b; 2020; Wittenberg and Greskovits 2016) find that despite their important role in consolidating Fidesz mass support, they were unable to become the "winning solution" against the left-liberal camp.

[45] See *footnote 43*.

[46] Public affairs televisions Hír TV [News TV] and Echo TV were founded in 2003 and 2005, respectively. Even if their audiences never exceeded single digits, the channels became important fora of the right-wing public sphere.

[47] (Bátorfy and Urbán 2020, p. 49) evaluate the pre-2010 era's government media spending as "relatively balanced". That is, in comparison to the post-2010 trends; governments and administrations of both sides effectively boosted "friendly" media outlets' revenues by direct government or state-owned enterprise advertising or by directing party-connected businesses advertising to them.

[48] (Paál 2013) also mentions the tendency of liberal news outlets to criticise even their "own side"; while regarding the campaign leading up to the 2010 general elections which granted Fidesz its first legislative supermajority, analysts point to an overwhelming negative news agenda which *"...Fidesz did not become 'more balanced' in the eyes of the voters, but the agenda — in line with priming theory — re-tuned the competition to be about issues unfavourable to MSZP."* (Beck, Bíró Nagy, and Róna 2011, p. 213)

Speech" in 2006) which resulted in not only the erosion of public support, but also demonstrations and riots — high-profile media events.

With Fidesz (and also the right-wing extremist Jobbik (Róna 2016)) building up an increasingly potent and digital media and communication network also thanks to broadband internet, the 2010 elections brought about a drastic change in the party system and competition therein.

As the most important segment of mass media — despite the increasing diversity of the media system — was unquestionably about the competition between the two national commercial television channels TV2 and RTL Klub, so did the party system become a "two-bloc party system" (Fricz 1999; Horváth and Soós 2015) featuring competition between the left-liberal parties and the right.

As noted, in 1998, Fidesz managed to form a right-wing majority coalition — after transforming itself from the junior liberal, anti-communist party to a right-wing catch-all party and despite finishing only second to the ruling left-wing MSZP hit hard by corruption scandals. (Paál 2013; G. Juhász 1999) With MSZP and SZDSZ retaining their positions in mass media, the 2002 elections brought about a slight, but consequential defeat for PM ORBÁN's Fidesz.[49] Unable to break the left-liberal hold on mass media and building only a moderately potent media portfolio themselves, the left-liberal MSZP–SZDSZ coalition was re-elected in 2006, too, by a narrow margin. It was only their serious political mistakes, the global financial crisis — as well as Fidesz's strong efforts to establish closer, deeper ties with civil society organisations (Wittenberg and Greskovits 2016; Greskovits 2017a; 2020)), churches, dwindling trade unions, etc. — that propelled Fidesz into power in 2010, but this time with a two-thirds legislative supermajority. Fidesz did not miss this political opportunity to completely re-form the entire political economy of the country — in which the media system played a vastly important role.

Therefore, in sum, this section also concludes that developments in the media system were strongly related to changes in electoral behaviour, the party system in this period.

[49] Fidesz achieved this on a party list joined with MDF. This may be interpreted as an increase in its vote share, but other smaller right-wing parties were annihilated (neither FKgP or KDNP could enter parliament on its own right anymore). It is widely believed that *"…Fidesz and Viktor Orbán concluded that they had not been radical enough, and they attributed their electoral defeat to the presumed persistence of the 'left-liberal media dominance' and their anti-government coverage."* (Bátorfy and Urbán 2020, p. 49)

II.3.c: III. Under the dominant party system (2011–2020, the end of the period of investigation)

Media organisations: the supply

Perhaps the biggest trend of the decade is the growth of digital media. While TV2 and RTL Klub has preserved their market-leading positions in close competition despite more channels becoming available to viewers for free thanks to the digital transition of television broadcast,[50] online and increasingly, social media has attracted users. Origo.hu, Index.hu, and 24.hu — all originally unrelated to other types of media companies — have gained audiences comparable to that of the most popular television stations. Therefore, their control has become of strategic importance — and Fidesz-linked business actors have made successful attempts to acquire them and re-make their content in favour of the party. In 2013–2015, Origo.hu met this fate, while Index.hu seems to be in this process of transformation since June 2020.[51] Therefore, the previously "third-ranked" 24.hu remains as the largest media outlet with the closest links to the very fractured opposition. Besides the largest online media organisations, several smaller-scale operations and initiatives were launched to establish a strong pro-Fidesz presence in the online media, too.

A couple of months after the 2018 elections, in an unprecedented move, several media owners had "donated" their media portfolios (worth billions of Hungarian Forints) to a single, centralised foundation named the Central European Press and Media Foundation [Közép-Európai Sajtó– és Médiaalapítvány, KESMA]. KESMA was exempted from competition authority scrutiny by the PM's order (Magyar Közlöny 2018) days after that. KESMA now effectively controls the vast majority of the public affairs media in Hungary — some studies estimate as much as 78% of it. (Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely 2019a; 2019b)

Media — consumers: the demand side

By the end of the decade, the largest online news portal (despite their sometimes radical shifts in their ownership structures and editorial approaches) reached multiple millions of real users quarterly, with both Origo.hu and Index.hu above 4 million each (Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH) 2021) — and, as a latecomer in the second half of

[50] The digital transition of television broadcasting began in 2008 in Hungary.

[51] (Index 2020) announced the resignation of the entire editorial staff who went on to launch the rival news portal Telex.hu.

the 2010s, 24.hu actually overtaking them with 4.6 million real users obtained in the fourth quarter of 2020.

Commercial television channels, in contrast, have been declining, but still holding their edge — often thanks to older viewers. An additional challenge for broadcast television besides the proliferation of social media platforms is the spread of "smart TV" towards the end of the 2010s (often called connected televisions) with streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, or HBO's Max, for example. These platforms, however, does not hold significant changes for political communications yet, they only strengthen entertainment trends vis-à-vis information on public life and politics. At the same time, social media has taken up a key role in political life across the globe — and Hungary is no exception. This subject goes beyond the limits of the present dissertation, but is obviously a key challenge for contemporary and future society, as well as researchers — on Hungarian social media, some related key contributions have already made by SZABÓ and BENE, see for example (G. Szabó and Bene 2016; G. Szabó 2018; Marton Bene 2018; Márton Bene and Somodi 2018; Matuszewski and Szabó 2019; Márton Bene and Szabó 2021; Matuszewski and Szabó 2023).

In such an environment, print media continues to have unsurmountable issues with competitiveness. Only 44.2% of Hungarians over the age of 15 reads periodicals regularly (Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH) 2023b) — the downward trend had been continuing essentially throughout the entire period of investigation, with the demographic trends looking bleak for this industry: younger generations read less and less. This trend is very similar on the radio market. In both cases, the supply has been radically transformed during the period of as noted above in the case of print media as well as by (K. Nagy 2016) in the case of the radio market. These changes may have contributed to the decline of consumption or perceived trustworthiness.

The media–party system interactions — political actors, media regulators

Many observers agree that since 2010, the Hungarian party system is a "dominant party system" under the unquestionable dominance of Fidesz securing three supermajority electoral victories in a row in 2010, 2014, and 2018. In this decade, Fidesz re-wrote the constitution and key legislation, extended the party's reach in business and society. This —

admitted[52] — *regime change*, according to many authors, does not correspond to the democratic model anymore. Official state terminology — featured in the Foundational Law of Hungary — designates it as the "System of National Co-operation", PM ORBÁN openly called it an "illiberal democracy"; many labels it a "hybrid regime", "competitive autocracy", or even a "plebiscitary leader democracy".

Most of Hungarian media scholars agree that with the first single-party[53] populist Fidesz two-thirds supermajority in the National Assembly obtained in 2010, the media system went under a systematic capture. (See for example (Bajomi-Lázár 2013)) As PM Orbán's party re-constituted the state, the media system also had to conform to new legal and political realities. The toolkit of the populist transformation of the Hungarian media system was not so much exceptional,[54] rather than rapid. Fidesz utilised legal, institutional, and business (network) tools to transform the media system into a monopolistic one serving their political interests as much as possible in an EU member state.

The adoption of the Media Law of 2011 transformed the industry's regulation and oversight bodies (Bayer 2011) — filling their staff and decisionmakers with Fidesz political actors and loyalists. The public media (M1 and four more TV channels in addition to the radio broadcasts) also went through a similar, drastic Fidesz-led reform. This meant astonishing additional budget resources which affected its content, too (Független Médiaközpont 2020) — most of the observers, and to a large extent the general population[55] characterise it as a government mouthpiece ever since. Perhaps a more novel development was the introduction of discriminative taxes which disproportionately affected companies[56] and

[52] For example, an official political proclamation of the National Assembly on 2 May 2020 decreed that *"This epoch — which could be designated as post-communist — reminded us multiple times about the impending threats of a renewed decay and external dependence of the country — has come to an end with the Basic Law entering into force on 1 January 2012."* ((Magyar Közlöny 2020) — my own translation from the original Hungarian.)

[53] Officially, Fidesz stands in elections in an electoral alliance with the Christian Democratic People's Party [Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt, KDNP]. However, due to the option of double membership, few independent political initiatives and the low direct support for KDNP, most scholars do not consider KDNP a truly separate party.

[54] Indeed, in his revised 2019 article, ÁDÁM makes a similar observation regarding Fidesz strategy for transforming the political economy of Hungary: *"When Orbán took over with a two-thirds majority in 2010, he did not have to invent a political system based on centrally controlled, hierarchical power structures and vertical political exchange. All he had to do was further centralise the control over political and economic resources."* (Ádám 2019)

[55] According to a recent poll, 70% does not agree with the statement that *„The public media conveys events in public life in a balanced, unbiased manner."* (Unyatyinszki 2021)

[56] *See for example the investigative piece by* (Erdélyi, Magyari, and Plankó 2014) (Erdélyi, Magyari, and Plankó 2014).

media outlets (Polyák 2015, pp. 298–301) strategically important for the Fidesz party. RTL Klub which retained its foreign owners and could not be acquired by Hungarian investors (with ties to Fidesz) was heavily affected by even the prospect of the "advertisement tax" in 2013–2015. As it had been usual for previous governments in Hungary, Fidesz has re-routed the government advertisement expenditures in an even more strategic manner — on a larger scale than ever before. (Bátorfy and Urbán 2020)

After a relatively unsuccessful 2014 election in which Fidesz secured its second legislative supermajority — but obtained fewer votes than in 2006 when it lost the elections to PM GYURCSÁNY's MSZP —, a more aggressive political economic media strategy was implemented. A public fallout between one of the wealthiest an oligarch at the time, SIMICSKA Lajos[57] and PM ORBÁN rippled through the entire media. SIMICSKA had to give up its far-reaching stakes in media and communications in a few years from mass media outlets to advertising companies. (Polyák 2015) To offset SIMICSKA's interests and usually acquire them — as it happened, for example, with the shutdown of Magyar Nemzet in 2018 which was later revived as a pro-government daily under the same title —, Fidesz-linked media investments soared. This time even the largest players in several types of media, such as the leading online news outlet, Origo.hu or the second largest national commercial television stations, TV2 — had been acquired by Fidesz-linked actors. (*ibid.*) Moreover, the long-time leading daily newspaper, the MSZP-linked Népszabadság was closed after a successful Fidesz-linked attempt to acquire the outlet. (see for example (Murányi 2017)) Further companies related to media infrastructure (e.g. audience measurement services, PR and communication agencies, publishing houses), too, got purchased by the Fidesz network actors. (Polyák 2015)

> *"As of 2017, the Fidesz media juggernaut included all of Hungary's regional newspapers; its second-largest commercial television company and second most popular news website; its sole national commercial radio network; its only sports daily; its only news agency; and a large number of papers that purvey what can only be called yellow journalism."* (Krekó and Enyedi 2018, p. 46)

[57] It is widely known that the former college roommate of PM ORBÁN, *"…SIMICSKA Lajos, the owner of companies that operate numerous media outlets, is one of Fidesz's founders. He served as the party's financial director between 1993 and 1998 and as the president of the tax authority in 1998 and 1999"* (Polyák 2015, p. 54) went on to become an influential businessman winning large government procurements until his fallout with the PM.

With that, the populist Fidesz-led centralisation and concentration of the Hungarian media system was not complete. KESMA was formed in 2018, further centralising control over social information in Hungary — with dire consequences to plurality and the quality of democracy in Hungary.[58] Since the onslaught of the global COVID–19 pandemic, massive developments have further distorted the media system: the largest online news website, Index.hu's entire editorial staff resigned (Index 2020) due to Fidesz-linked ownership changes and went on to establish a new online portal, Telex. Additionally, the small independent Budapest community radio, Klubrádió which is critical to the government, has failed to obtain the renewal of its frequency licence and its appeal was rejected in court. Klubrádió — which used to air its programmes in multiple regions in the country in the 2000s — stopped broadcasting on its last remaining frequency 14 February 2021.

These massive changes — the increasing concentration and centralisation of the media system linked to the governing Fidesz party — can be reasonably tied to electoral outcomes.

Prior to the 2014 elections, the Fidesz-led government mostly focused on media legislation and establishing new institutions controlled by party loyalists. In effect, therefore, although some observers pointed out that the legal frameworks had become more restrictive and difficult to conform to by independent and opposition media, the mass media supply only slightly changed. Interestingly, even though in 2014, Fidesz won its second two-thirds national legislative supermajority, this was due to the new Electoral Code (2011) implemented by them — tailored to Fidesz's electoral needs (Ádám 2019). In fact, Fidesz vote count was lower than in 2006 when PM GYURCSÁNY's MSZP had defeated them,[59] but still translated into two-thirds of the seats in the parliament.

Therefore after 2014, Fidesz-linked actors focused heavily in gaining control in media companies, re-making their content output, amassing an overwhelming portfolio. After such tendencies, in the general elections of 2018, Fidesz achieved its third supermajority electoral landslide in the National Assembly with its highest vote count ever.

[58] The level of media pluralism is one of the lowest in the EU (Bognar et al. 2019), and according to evaluations from the Freedom House, Hungary's quality of democracy ranks the lowest being the only "partly free" country in the block. (Freedom House 2019)

[59] This is at fairly similar turnout levels (2006: 67,83%; 2014: 61.84%).

— CHAPTER SUMMARY —

After reviewing the main concepts through the lens of relationalism, the dissertation shifts its focus to the interrelationship between the party system and the media in post-communist Hungary. This is due to the limited development and influence of civil society in the country. The dissertation examines the post-communist period from 1990 to 2020, dividing it into three main phases based on the stages of party development:

1. *the tripartite system (1990–1998),*
2. *the two-bloc system (1998–2010), and*
3. *the dominant party system (after 2010).*

The chapter discovers that each period was governed by different media laws. The first media law came into effect in 1997, and the second in 2011. (Immediately after the transition to democracy, the country lacked comprehensive media legislation.) As a result, the periods of investigation will be adjusted to these critical junctures later on.

The literature review on the political economy of media in Hungary identifies a clear line of scholarship that attests to a clear trend: increasing political and business pressures on media outlets to influence their output thereby maximising political power and influence. Simply put, during the first two periods, there was a growing left-liberal dominance within a pluralistic media landscape. However, the right-wing Fidesz party, which continuously worked to expand its media network, not only surpassed this dominance but, after achieving a two-thirds constitutional supermajority in legislative elections in 2010, began pressuring and dismantling opposition and independent networks by various, concerted means, even within civil society.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH DESIGN

— CHAPTER OVERVIEW —

This chapter precises and operationalises the concepts introduced in the previous chapter. It consists of three main parts:

1. *the case selection,*
2. *the research question, and*
3. *the analytical methods.*

This dissertation is a single-country case study that focuses on Hungary, selected as a strategic case due to its key role in populism studies. It studies purposively selected sample of civil society organisations and media outlets despite limitations in data availability and generalizability. The aim is to select organisations that are influential, represent multiple segments of the political spectrum, and are diverse in their modes of operation. This purposive selection strategy is designed to identify multiple potential ways of the impact of the party system.

This dissertation aims to provide a relationalist political economic analysis of populism's impact in post-communist Hungary. It investigates how populism affects civil society and the media from 1990 to 2020, focusing particularly on the period from 2010 to 2020. The research question explores the influence of the party system on civil society and media — expecting to reveal trends such as populist capture of or pressure on civil society organisations as well as media outlets.

The dissertation utilises temporal social network analysis (tSNA) to reconstruct civil society media and mass media chief editors' professional connections based on their career histories. This analysis is supplemented by qualitative insights and cross-checked data to address the influence of populism on media structures and practices.

III.1. Case selection

III.1.a. Why post-communist Hungary?

While the research problem, the relationship between populism on the one hand, and civil society and the media system on the other is universal, this dissertation elects to provide an intensive single-case study. Hungary serves as the case study context not only to correspond to STARK and VEDRES's investigation — even though they also justify their choice:

> *"Looking to comparisons beyond post-socialist cases, when and where do political ties lead to polarisation of the economy (...) the Hungarian and Chilean cases, for example are likely to be instructive. There democracies emerged after communist and authoritarian rule, respectively, political cleavages are clearly structured, and party politics is a kind of national sport in each country. But despite sharp political differences, the Chilean economy, in contrast to the Hungarian economy, shows signs of immunity to political polarization."* (Stark and Vedres 2012, pp. 719–720)

The effects of post-authoritarianism are also briefly considered by SCHMITT-BECK:

> *"…the post-authoritarian societies of East Germany and Spain are characterized by a state of 'pre-alignment.' With democratization having taken place only in the recent past, parties in these countries did not have sufficient time to take root in society – arguably something that in some of the new democracies actually may never happen, as they 'leapfrogged' (…) from their authoritarian past directly into the age of 'postmodern' politics, bypassing the stage of mass politics with its strong mutual linkages between party organizations and social groups (…). As it seems the importance of political communication for electoral behaviour increases as the grip of political predispositions on electoral behaviour gets weaker, leading to more electoral mobility."* (Schmitt-Beck 2004, p. 316)

— thus, arguably, it is a widespread, global phenomenon; perhaps to be explained with global changes in information technology and media. But sticking to the central eastern European context, in his grand endeavour to investigate political economic networks among political and business elites, the US American scholar Roger SCHOENMAN reminds the readers of the unique significance of the region:

> *"The post-socialist countries offer an opportunity to examine the parallel development of a whole region in perhaps the closest approximation of a social science laboratory. All the post-socialist countries were affected by insider attempts to preserve the status quo of the early 1990s in the context of states undermined by the collapse of state socialism. Yet, after more than two decades, sharp differences in institutional development are apparent even in neighbouring countries."* (Schoenman 2014, p. 29)

Hungarian politics in itself is a case worth studying due to the remarkable evolution of its party system. Writing in 2006, political scientist ENYEDI Zsolt made the conclusion that Hungary *"exhibited a consolidated and concentrated party system."* (Enyedi 2006, p. 14) Indeed, according to (Körösényi, Tóth, and Török 2007) as well as (Horváth and Soós 2015) in the 90s, Hungary went through four stages of party system development. However, even though party politics in 2000s were about virtually two-bloc dynamics (between left-wing MSZP and liberal SZDSZ in one bloc, and conservative Fidesz and MDF as the major and junior parties, respectively, in the other bloc) — until this bipolar system broke down in 2010. Many social scientists evaluate this as a regime change or democratic backsliding (Greskovits 2015b) — contradicting expectations of international relations, democratic theory, and "transitology".

In 2010, PM ORBÁN's Fidesz party has achieved a landslide two-thirds supermajority in the national legislative elections — a feat they have managed to replicate three times in 2014, 2018, and 2022 as well while also showing remarkable electoral victories in European parliamentary elections and local elections[60] as well. Already in 2010, Fidesz re-wrote Hungary's constitution, changed basic laws (e.g. concerning the electoral system, judiciary, media), and virtually re-shaped the country's political economy. PM ORBÁN and his Fidesz party is virtually consensually seen as a populist; and based on the selectorate theory (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003) — stressing political leaders' most important instinct, the extension of remaining in power for as long as possible — , it can be seen as the most successful contemporary European case of it. Indeed, it is a less ubiquitous case of not only populism in power, but populist hold on power for more than a decade — without any major contestation to speak of. PM ORBÁN is, at the moment of writing, the longest-serving head of state or government in Hungarian history (since 1848) and in the European Union currently. European leaders rivalling PM ORBÁN's time in office (formerly, Chancellor MERKEL, or Presidents ERDOGAN and PUTIN) are either not labelled as populists or have had to face significant domestic[61] and international backlashes, sanctions, economic downturns, and even war as Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine (since 2022) attests.

The Fidesz party virtually alone[62] has been securing constitutional changes[63] and electoral supermajorities unlike any other European party or political movement while maintaining a stable, growing economy. On the level of the political system, the influential scholars who had coined the term competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2010) (describing hybrid regimes combining elements of democracy and autocracy) before PM ORBÁN's populist took form named ten years later Hungary the clearest example thereof. (Levitsky and Way 2020)

[60] Only the latest October 2019 local elections saw Fidesz waver by losing the capital Budapest's mayoral seat to a joint opposition candidate, KARÁCSONY Gergely Szilveszter as well as a few other bigger towns in the countryside. Overall, on the national level, Fidesz still secured landslide electoral victories.

[61] e.g. popular protests in Moscow and Istanbul — although there have been a few peaceful protests in Hungary, their scale and impact have been nowhere near as significant as those in Russia and Turkey.

[62] Officially, in coalition with the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP). However, KDNP barely fields candidates on their own, its existence as a parliamentary working group can be regarded as a technique to boost Fidesz in parliamentary work. See *footnote 53.*

[63] There have been constitutional changes (nowhere near the full reform of the constitution as it happened in Hungary in 2011) in Turkey by means of a popular referendum where a simple majority of the votes sufficed.

Therefore, the Hungarian party system merits close attention, and may hold important lessons for international political economy, democratisation theory, and populism studies. However, as a single-case study, the universal limits of generalisability apply. The uniqueness of Hungarian politics must be considered as a constraint as well.

Single-case studies are powerful tools for some purposes like explorative research — as in the case of the present dissertation —, they fall short in attaining other goals, naturally. This dissertation argues that Hungary, with its unique position as a key case of populism, offers valuable insights that can be universally applicable. Hungary's ability to sustain populist power over an extended period makes it an ideal subject for studying the strategic approach to populism, as well as for exploring the broader theoretical framework of political economy—an often underutilized perspective in populism studies. So, what this single-country case study of Hungary hope to achieve?

The Hungarian case provides a practical testing ground for examining the changes in civil society and media operating conditions. As these conditions evolve—whether deteriorating or improving—elsewhere, understanding their trajectory in Hungary under populism can offer critical insights. It allows researchers to ask, "Is this populism at work?" or to speculate on the potential impacts of rising populism on media and civil society in other contexts, leading to practical insights and solutions.

III.1.b. The case study method: explorative single-country case study

Hungary's experience can reinforce or challenge core ideas about populism, particularly concerning intermediation, mediating players, and their roles in constraining or resisting powerholders. This case contributes to the ongoing debate on the conceptualization of populism: is it merely rhetoric, or does it also encompass policy decisions and institution-building beyond ideological considerations? Additionally, it addresses the "travelling problem" critique, which suggests that strategic populism is only applicable in under-institutionalized environments outside Europe (Moffitt 2020, p. 21). Hungary's case may reveal how even more institutionalized political systems can turn populist, possibly due to populism's impact on civil society and media.

Beyond these issues, this single-case study demonstrates the potential to construct new theoretical foundations for the well-established discipline of populism studies. This dissertation aims to interrelate populism studies with relational sociology — a novel approach that could yield new insights for both theory and practice. Furthermore,

Hungary's case offers a similar opportunity to explore the intersection of selectorate theory, the concept of autocratisation, and relationalism. This exploratory attempt seeks to integrate these theoretical streams in a real-world setting using social network analysis methods, with the hope of producing fruitful results. The next section will lay the methodological groundwork to support this endeavour.

III.2. The research question

To provide a relationalist political economic account of the impact of populism in post-communist Hungary, it poses the following research question:

How has the party system under populism affected civil society and the media in post-communist Hungary?

As preceding chapters precise the terms utilised in this research question, there remains only one terminological precision needed to be made: the meaning of the qualifier "post-communist". Naturally, there are a number of different understandings of this term in political sciences. However, it is used throughout this research only to denote the larger timeframe of the enquiry, the years 1990–2020,[64] and its closer focus on actors and relationships between 2010 and 2020. It is meant to be a neutral adjective to denote this context. Adding to this, on 2 May 2020, the day of the 30th anniversary of convening the first freely elected Hungarian Parliament after the Soviet occupation and one-party state communism, the National Assembly adopted a political resolution "officially" naming the period between 1990 and 2012 "post-communism". (Magyar Közlöny 2020) The resolution was adopted solely by the votes of the governing supermajority of populist Fidesz. 2012 was selected as the end point of "post-communism" because on the 1 January that year, Hungary's Basic Law entered into force (*ibid.*) — written and adopted by Fidesz' governing supermajority. Disregarding this politically motivated terminology, this dissertation calls the entire three-decades-long era as post-communist and makes it its period of investigation.

Besides terminology, the research question also problematises the line of the inquiry. Asking a reverse question is also reasonable: it is perfectly logical and legitimate to assume

[64] Throughout the entire dissertation, the period of investigation between 1990 and 2020 means all the full years from 1 January 1990 to 31 December 2020. Only "decades" are used in a looser sense, usually denoting the distinct periods (1990–1997, 1998–2010, 2011–2020). However, these looser periods are meant to also denote the first year from 1 January until the end year, finishing on 31 December unless otherwise noted.

that civil society and the media have an impact on populism and the party system. Actually, strictly adhering to relationalist principles would not permit constructing such overarching categories of actors such as "civil society", "media", and "populists" to begin with; but for the sake of practical, empirical data collection and analysis, the sample selection (discussed later in this dissertation) addresses this issue. For investigating the reverse relationship, the effect of civil society and the media would be even more difficult to operationalise for two reasons. One, assuming a direct relationship, one needed to find direct participation of civil society and media actors *in* political organisations which qualify as populist in line with the understanding of this research. While this is not necessarily impossible even in Hungary, instances of such direct participation are certainly the exception rather than the norm. Two, investigating the indirect relationship would require the assessment of how civil society and media influence the electorate (either as participants in civil society organisations or consumers of media — who then act in their capacity of citizens voting for populist candidates and parties, abstaining, or voting for other candidates). Even if electoral data is sufficiently rich in Hungary since the 1990s; the same cannot be said about civil society and media either on the "input" side (detailed, transparent lists of membership and employment, activities, transactions, and financial reports), or the "output" side (civil society events databases, charity reports, media consumption statistics). The last example, the lack of media consumption data [65] is even more problematic as some media organisations look back to decades of operation, and they provide their content to vast multitudes.

Naturally, data availability is not the main reason behind the line of questioning. This dissertation relies on a theoretical and an empirical justification for it. Theoretically, relationalist principles prescribe a focus on human individuals as research subjects and

[65] This has been confirmed in personal communication with Hungarian media scholars and experts. A major reason for this is the financial value and importance of audience measurements to private media enterprises and their advertisers. Data about media consumption and media organisations' audience reach influence the advertising revenues of commercial television broadcasters, the largest media enterprises in Hungary. Therefore, this private business data is not openly, readily available. Whenever TV channels publish such statistics, they usually prefer to do so using different indicators which (e.g. specific demographic distributions, share of audiences at specific times during the day or other time frames, etc.) highlight their activities, audience reach ahead of their competitors, showcasing themselves in more flattering market positions over their competitors. Hence this data is not only difficult to compare due to different units of measurement, but also of somewhat unreliable quality.

This dissertation finds that it is a major shortcoming of our societies — in our understanding of ourselves, our socio-political situations — that we still do not possess richly detailed, open, transparent, easily and readily accessible data about what not only civil society and media organisations (their internal organisational and external financial backgrounds), but also firms and political organisations influence our daily discourses and to what extent despite some of the best (and worst) efforts to increase transparency.

units of observation — without, as much as possible, aggregating them into groups. Hence even if all, detailed media consumption data from 1990 onwards would be readily available, the research of the reverse relationship (how civil society and the media influence populism) would lose much of its relationalist character. Empirically, however, the relevance of the reverse relationship also comes into question as suggested in the previous paragraph. Namely, examples of how political actors and their motives carried out changes in the civil society and the media system have been numerous — while the reverse, even if important, only caused few noteworthy changes. In the 2010s, even somewhat less conscious media consumers themselves have noticed momentous changes in the Hungarian media (Hann et al. 2020), let alone more avid media consumers, audiences. Indeed, the large-scale changes (already reviewed in the contextual chapter of this dissertation) have given a strong impetus for this research to take place.

Corresponding to the novel, somewhat experimental (with regards to its epistemic foundations) as well as exploratory character of this dissertation, this research does not establish testable hypotheses. *"In some kinds of research, it is impossible or unnecessary to set out with hypotheses"* as (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Futing Liao 2004b) puts it — and this is expected to be the case in this dissertation. Complex, abstract concepts are at play that are traced to a unique set of individuals — who, in turn, are not selected for their representativeness, but rather for their roles a professional elite to create a balanced sample. While studying and analysing the interpersonal interaction network within this sample is can be used to test a theoretical understanding of strategic populism that would seek to reconfigure civil society and the media to connect with large number of followers (based on WEYLAND's definition), strict, exactly measurable hypotheses are difficult to posit. Forming precise hypotheses would also be difficult based on the argument that in Hungary's case, populism could flourish due to the "weakness" or "lack of alternatives" offered by civil society and media. Finding accurate, quantifiable measures appropriate to this research subject is also difficult because of the lack of similar studies in this field. This exploration should not suffer from a common issue of hypothesis testing that *"in many situations, the decision as to whether one should declare a hypothesis confirmed or falsified may be just a matter of a few percentage points' difference between attitudes or behaviours in survey findings."* (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Futing Liao 2004a)

The novelty of this work — and the formulation of the research question that propels it — should be seen as a virtue. This is because it is an attempt to put into practice relationalism

that has been suffering from the lack of its practical uses. Similarly, being a minority stream within populism studies, empirical studies using the strategic approach are relatively few and far in between. The specific case of Hungary — while an instructive one —, is also less often studied one. Even though detailed analyses do exist,[66] out of this relative multitude, few use the strategic populism conceptualisation, and, expectedly, even fewer apply methods that are amenable to relationalism like social network analysis (an important counter-example being a cross-country case study by (Schnyder et al. 2024)). The novelty of this research might bring about new possibilities.

The motivation of this research has been to uncover previously unconsidered or unseen relationships and phenomena. Using new perspectives and tools even on "old" problems has this potential — and once this happens, even theoretical considerations can spawn very practical interventions and solutions. By using a minority school of thought on populism and marrying it with other theories of political economy on a novel epistemological basis, the present dissertation's aim is not to create a strange mixture of ideas, but to chart a way to new insights that can inspire other researchers as well as practitioners to find better ways of working — increasing efficiencies and reducing redundancies whether in society, industry, their own workplaces and social settings, or private lives. On a grand scale, this can also be formulated as a sort of "populist" argument: using new ideas and tools can improve our societies by identifying and spotlighting "elite misbehaviour" — when the elected or selected do not represent their constituents, when they pursue their limited self-interest even against that of their constituents', let alone the common good. A seemingly rising, rather novel[67] challenge like populism calls for new perspectives on problems, new tools for solutions.

With all these considerations in mind, however, the research question and its context give rise to a set of assumptions and expectations regarding the results of the research. It expects to uncover two main phenomena or trends. One, showing also visually, thanks to the applied analytical methods — a populist capture and take-over of the Hungarian civil society and media within the network sample. This expectation is derived from both Hungarian and international academic literature. This assumption is supported by major

[66] See for example (Ádám 2018; 2019; A. Antal 2017; Csehi 2021; Paris 2022; T. Tóth 2020), or a highly intriguing political economic account (currently forthcoming): (Rogers 2024) — only to name a few.

[67] Although it may be noted that populist phenomena (depending on the definition of the term) have been traced back to diverse historical settings from the early 20th century all the way back to ancient Rome and Greece. See for example (Kenny 2023)

strands of Hungarian media studies (see authors like BAJOMI-LÁZÁR, BÁTORFY, URBÁN, etc.) and civil society studies (Kover 2015; Gerő et al. 2022).[68] Two, within international populism research, the claims that populism attempts institutional capture (Chesterley and Roberti 2018) that affect media and civil society. As to the former, the claim that media policy failures (Freedman 2018) create conditions that are amenable to ownership concentration (Schnyder et al. 2024)[69] in favour of populism creates a strong logical basis for this dissertation's assumption. Hence in this research, under the influence of the populist party system, there is an expectation of seeing a new network form that features individuals joining the sample at a later time, and being connected to fellow professionals who are related to populist actors or organisations. As to civil society, it is not only the theoretical aversion of populism (Osborne 2021) to independent actors intermediating between politics and private life, but also empirical evidence of attempts by populist power holders even in established democracies like Austria (Schnyder et al. 2024) that justifies the expectation. This dissertation might be able to capture the rise of an "uncivil society" (Ruzza 2009) (Ateş 2021; Ruzza 2020) under the influence of the populist party system. On the reverse of this argument, to counter-act this trend, the analysis may also show bursts of organisation by long-standing actors "resisting" populist take-over by collaborating.

These expectations are rather broadly cast — testable hypotheses would be difficult to establish based on them. The exact trends that this dissertation may see arise are also subject

[68] One might consider the eternal issue of normative bias, supposing that researchers belonging to these strands of literature all have left-wing attitudes. The present research, without further considering this issue in detail refuses this argument for three main reasons.

First, epistemically, the possibility of value-free research is severely limited. As long as value choices do not remain hidden in order to manipulate readers, this is considered natural here.

Second, and also related to the first argument is that according to researchers who, for example, show or assume a pro-Fidesz media dominance are also ready to acknowledge that prior to the 2010s, a left-wing media dominance existed. (See for example (Bajomi-Lázár 2015)) Scientific efforts to disprove the 2010s' pro-Fidesz media dominance have not been convincing (c.f. (Bátorfy 2018)). What is more, there are right-wing-affiliated public personalities who are willing to concede this (Kreft-Horváth 2022) — even a high-ranking official, Balázs ORBÁN who also serves as PM ORBÁN's political director [no family relationship between the two ORBÁNs] openly articulated the underlying strategy: *"Whoever controls the media of a country controls the mindset of that country"* (Barnóczki 2020). Hence the issue of right-wing, pro-Fidesz media dominance should not be considered controversial; even many Fidesz supporters see their side as dominant in media ownership and control according to multiple studies, as reported by (Unyatyinszki 2020) — although PM Orbán seems to remain fond on this idea, see (Orbán 2021).

Third, this research sees long-established lines of consecutive scholarship behind the referred schools of thought, increasing the reliability and credibility of these works. I am not aware of a consistent, well-founded stream of a right-leaning counter-school.

[69] This recent publication deserves a special mention for using social network analysis methods on the case study of Hungary between 2000 and 2020 that makes it one of the most similar studies to this present one.

to the sample itself. Hence the study turns to the case selection method and sample selection criteria to further precise the construction of the analysis.

III.3. Operationalisation

III.3.a. Sample selection

III.3.a: I. The organisational level: the most influential Hungarian civil society organisations and media outlets

To put the most important principles of this research effort into empirical action, a great number of limitations need to be put in place. The key concepts and the interrelationships to be studied among them — especially with the high standards required by the relationalist epistemic principles underlying this research — necessitate a vast amount of information and data.

Much of this data is, however, unfortunately impossible to gather for many reasons. The most acute problem is the lack of survival of reliable historical data: simply, too much time has passed to reconstruct many details of actors, events, and processes decades ago in the Hungarian civil society and the media. Archiving (even online archiving like that of the Wayback Machine) or otherwise preserving historical information — especially in a single, standardised, transparent manner that would also contain *relational* data — has not been part of civil society and media practices, or any organisation for that matter.

Moreover, while Hungary is a relatively small country, the possible range of information is massive due to a fairly large media sector (looking back decades of activity) and a great multitude of civil society organisations. Even if most of these groups and organisations in the two spheres were small, passive or only slightly active, a massive amount of data could be generated.

Hence this dissertation must limit its focus to only the influential parts of civil society and media — select a small, manageable sample whose members can be reasonably well observed. The aim is not to make the findings generalisable. Rather, it is to study the most significant, highly influential interrelationships — and analyse whether the impact of populism can be identified therein.

This necessitates the creation of a balanced sample rather than a representative one. This is not simply a practical consequence of data availability. Representativeness comes with its

own set of challenges and trade-offs even in the case of non-relational research (Kertzer and Renshon 2022); one of which is, of course, related to the sample size — a particular challenge for the present study due to data availability issues.[70] Representativeness is also of lesser importance for a piece of exploratory elite research applying social network analysis than for a descriptive or deductive multivariate large-N statistical analysis. Assembling a balanced sample, then, comes with its own set of criteria — with its particular challenges and due critique as well. Naturally, this comes with the "usual" sample selection bias problem. The effects of the party system under populism may be more understated or overstated in the sample population of this study than in other populations. However, it can be assumed that if populism impacts interrelationships among the most influential civil society groups and media organisations, due to its nature as a political strategy, the less relevant parts of the public sphere have been affected, too — although to determine the precise avenues and volume of effects on unstudied parts of the civil society and media required a separate research effort. Indeed, if this research detects impact, future research could determine whether it is limited to the "elite" of civil society and media, or, perhaps, it is even more pronounced among smaller, less significant organisations.

With these caveats in mind, the research aims to determine the range of the most influential, significant actors in the civil society and the media. The dissertation aims to put *political relevance* on the top of the agenda. Uncovering relations between actors who otherwise do not find interest in each other would be pointless — even though all things can become politicised, it is important to filter out media and civil society that do not deal with political subjects and are specialised in non-political affairs, for example, amateur sports associations, art journals, chess clubs, or sports broadcasters.

In the case of civil society, determining relevance and influence is relatively more difficult. Reducing this complex sphere of activities, functions, goals and purposes to certain aspects of organisations (NGOs) necessarily takes away important features of civil society, but for pragmatic reasons, it is necessary. To select the most influential organisations from all NGOs in Hungary, this research relies on the metric of *the amount of financial support received from the population* in the time period of the focused investigation, 2010–2020. While an imperfect metric, I argue that it is not only a convenient, but also pertinent, useful category of data. This is only partially due to the absence of structured datasets about

[70] In practical terms, each added research subject requires the (sometimes manual) re-calculation or re-assessment of the network on an N–1 scale, over the entire period of investigation, more than 30 full years.

membership or activities. There is a lack of consistent monitoring of the population's awareness of NGOs from academia, the state, or civil society. Three key surveys on this subject were conducted only after the 2010s (Political Capital 2020; 2021b; 2023). These hint at an improving tendency: even though only less than a third of Hungarians could name an NGO in 2020 active on the national level, and even fewer could name one that is active locally (Political Capital 2020) — this went up to almost 49% by 2022 (Political Capital 2023)). Nevertheless, these limited surveys cannot confirm a solid trend — and suggest that before 2020, NGOs' popular recognition were very low. Also, they show a contested view of civil society — with views divided especially on political civil society. In 2021, a third of Hungarians thought that NGOs should not concern themselves with politics (Political Capital 2021b, p. 10); and some of the most well-known "political" NGOs[71] were not regarded as "civil society" by about a half of respondents. In addition, across the three main surveys, it is not only the fact that charities and environmental organisations feature as the most well-known NGOs Hungary, but also the volatility of the recognition and awareness of political NGOs that discourage selecting them for this dissertation's analytical sample. As the subject of civil society organisations have become more politicised (see for example (Kákai and Bejma 2022)) in the period of investigation chiefly by Fidesz and the observation that *"...Hungarians support the integrative, charity role rather than the political function of civil society organisations"* (Mikecz 2020, p. 12), *the amount of financial support received from the population* has been chosen as the proxy for social influence. There is further basic logical support for this, too: as a rule of thumb, it is to be expected that "unpopular" or less active, less influential organisations are unlikely to gather high amounts donations. While those that are active, in touch with the general public, and influence more people can logically receive more donations. Hungary's relatively easy and well-known system of *income tax donations* further supports this logic.

In 1996, a law was adopted in Hungary according to which taxpayers can donate 1% of the personal income taxes to a civil society organisation and 1% to an established church, religious organisation.[72] The practice went through only a few minor changes, and now

[71] These are usually human rights organisations like the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (Társaság a Szabadságjogokért – TASZ), the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Magyar Helsinki Bizottság) — but even the Civil Union Forum Movement (Civil Összefogás Fórum – CÖF) can fall into this category. The latter qualifies as a government-organised non-governmental organisation (GONGO). (*See for example* (Kákai and Bejma 2022)) Establishing and maintaining GONGOs can be reasonably seen as a populist strategy.

[72] The practice is known as "the one percent of personal income tax" ["Személyi jövedelemadó 1%"] or even after its abbreviation, the "donation of the one percent of the personal income tax" ["SZJA 1% felajánlása"].

looks back to two and half decades of history. It has become a rather well-known "social institution" in the Hungarian tax code; at the time when annual personal income tax declarations are to be made in Hungary (usually in late spring), many NGOs organise — at times, even elaborate — campaigns and drives to solicit tax donations. It is relatively easy to donate, too — virtually "free" money which is either way deducted as personal income tax. Taxpayers need to fill out a form, less than a page long (for both the "civil" 1% and the "church" 1%), in which they need to declare the name of the sponsored organisation and its official short ID number. In recent years, these income tax 1% donations can be declared online, too, on the Hungarian National Tax Bureau's user-friendly website. For all these reasons, I argue that donating the 1% of someone's personal income tax to a civil society organisation is virtually the easiest way of participating in civil society — but, naturally, it is not synonymous with it or in itself, can hardly count as activism. But since many NGOs take this financial option seriously, too, *the amount of financial support received from the population* is a relatively good indicator of how organised, well-established and –managed, –supported, and how well-known an NGO is.

While the Hungarian tax authorities usually publish data online (Nemzeti Adó– és Vámhivatal (National Tax and Duties Office), 2003) about the annual amounts of tax donations, these databases are much less user-fruendly: in the period of the current investigation, there are whole years missing, and in some cases, the data is almost either unreadable or patchy. Yet, it is possible to construct a reliable image of trends in how much financial support NGOs obtain yearly. Generally, even though it is simple and rather well-known way to participate in the civil society, only a fraction of taxpayers donate 1% of their income tax which is usually distributed among hundreds of NGOs. Organisations with charitable causes feature on the top of the list of donations received. In the 2010s, well-known children hospital foundations, organisations to support people with serious illnesses, ambulance services, animal shelters rank the highest. The dissertation argues that these organisations cannot really be related to the main concept of this research, populism and the party system. Even though anything could be politicised, these organisations serve limited, non-political purposes which have fallen far away from politics at least in the time period investigated; even if some of the NGOs (or even state institutions referred here) are aimed at correcting state and public policy failures, like providing better healthcare, social and environmental protection, or education for specific social groups (e.g. school associations), health demographics (e.g. cancer patients).

Referring back to the selection criterion of *political relevance*, while it is not a precisely defined notion, it is a sufficiently applicable standard: after ranking NGOs on the basis of their annual amounts of tax donations received, the research looks for cues of significant, outspokenly national or local political activity, participation, or open dissemination of clearly political information. Within the many hundreds of overwhelmingly charitable, apolitical foundations, groups, and NGOs, a few organisations stand out. Beyond only three human rights, and religious-cultural foundations,[73] throughout the 2010s, it is consistently four *civil society media organisations* that feature prominently on the list:

- *Free Lane! Foundation [Szabad Sávot Alapítvány]*
  which supports the otherwise commercial Budapest radio station "Club Radio" *[Klubrádió]*;
- *Radio Maria Public Benefit Association [Mária Rádió Közhasznú Egyesület]*
  which operates nationally the volunteer religious media outlet "Radio Maria" *[Mária Rádió]*;
- *Forbidden Cultural Foundation [Tilos Kulturális Alapítvány]*
  operating the Budapest local civil society radio station "Forbidden Radio" *[Tilos Rádió];*
- *TransparentNet Foundation [Átlátszónet Alapítvány]*
  which supports "Transparent" *[Átlátszó],* a civil investigative journalism team and online news website which also co-operates with Asimov Foundation *[Asimov Alapítvány],*[74] an NGO which has received sizeable 1% tax donations especially in the first half of the 2010s.

The dissertation opts to focus on these organisations because taken together, they represent relatively well-known, noteworthy sample composed out of organisations working for different goals and with different ideological leanings and technologies.

Yet, they are compatible with and complement the other focus area, the media. Taken together, they provide a suitable baseline to which commercial mass media can be compared to — especially regarding the effect of the party system under populism. Even if they are well-known (but not exactly household names in Hungary), their reach is usually very limited — so they are expected to be less important for political and politically affiliated actors to interfere with their employment and content output decisions. At the

[73] "Hungarian Civil Liberties Union" (Társaság a Szabadságjogokért, TASZ), "Faith and Morals Foundation" (Hit és Erkölcs Alapítvány), "Christian UCB Media" (Keresztény UCB Média). Interestingly, Amnesty International or other, internationally well-known human rights organisations do not make the top of the lists.

[74] The Asimov Foundation also ranks among the top recipients of tax donations. The foundation says they are working to support *"…the free and efficient flow of information, community-based knowledge-building and knowledge-sharing"* in the Hungarian society. (Asimov Alapítvány (Asimov Foundation) 2021) In these efforts, they openly refer to Átlátszó.

same time, collaboration between mass media and civil society media may be expected to be more likely than other types of NGOs and mass media — hence a sample constructed this way may provide a better test of the hypothetical "resistance" against the impact of populism.

The idea of constructing a balanced sample also needs to take into account the diversity of forms of media (chiefly, whether its broadcast television, radio, online, etc.) and achieve a reasonable mix within the sample. Along these lines, to meaningfully compare civil society media and mass media regarding the impact of populism, the dissertation selects the most influential, relevant mass media outlets based on their audience sizes. While as already argued, such databases and statistics are not necessarily reliable, it is rather commonsensical to select the four most widely consumed mass media outlets — they are essentially household names in Hungary as some of the already cited primary and secondary sources suggest (c.f. (Vásárhelyi 1999a; Z. Antal and Scherer 2005; Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH) 2023b), etc.) While the sizes of their audiences have changed over the last decade, it is remarkable that there are also four mass media outlets which consistently reached the largest audiences (each approximately between one and two million people), the two first free access, nationally broadcasted commercial television stations and the two largest online news portals — all outlets launched at the end of the 1990s:

- *RTL Klub*
  commercial TV channel launched in 1997. Because of its diverse programming, the study focuses on the organisation of its main prime time news programme, "Newscast" *[Híradó]*.
- *TV2*
  commercial TV channel launched in 1997. Because of its diverse programming, the study focuses on the organisation of its main prime time news programme, "Facts" *[Tények]*.
- *Origo.hu*
  online news portal started in 1998;
- *Index.hu*
  online news portal started in 1999.

They all add different elements to the sample regarding their organisational and ideological backgrounds, types of media and technologies, and eventful histories in the past decades.[75]

[75] The sample, of course, can be criticised for being non-exhaustive, and important, influential mass media outlets across the political spectrum were not included in it, for example, 24.hu, HVG, 444, national public service media (TV and radio), HírTV, ATV. They were discarded in favour of mass media outlets that more consistently featured among the most widely consumed media in the country. For example, 24.hu, launched

Thus, taken together with the selected civil society media organisations, they provide a balanced, diverse elite study.

Media outlet's name	Organisation type	Media type
TV2	private	TV
RTL Klub	private	TV
Origo.hu	private	online
Index.hu	private	online
Tilos Rádió	civil society	radio
Mária Rádió	civil society	radio
Klubrádió	mixed (civil society-supported private organisation)	radio
Átlátszó	civil society	online

Figure 6: An overview of the sample of selected organisations

in 2010, had a lot smaller reach before its re-branding from Hír24 (News24) in the middle of the decade. Or, while HVG or the public broadcasters were active throughout the entire period of investigation, they, too, had been essentially dwarfed by the twin commercial TV broadcasters, TV2 and RTL Klub consistently. The same is essentially true for HírTV (News TV) or ATV, even though they play a special role in informing important (partisan) segments of the politically interested public (right– and left-wing, respectively, even though the latter's affiliation comes into question due to its owner's close proximity with a church whose ideology and organisation is often tightly linked with Fidesz, see for example the journalistic analysis of (Rényi 2018a). Even though some of the expectations reported by RÉNYI did not stand the test of time, the reported relationships therein remain accurate).

III.3.a: II. The individual level: chief editors' professional connections and interaction network

But the focusing and specification of the study cannot end here as the underlying epistemological framework demands a specific focus on human individuals and their interpersonal interactions. Ranging from the smallest volunteer organisation to the largest national TV broadcaster, multiple hundreds of people have participated and worked at the selected media outlets in the thirty years of post-communist period, and even in the period of the scrutiny, the 2010s. Hence, further limitations are applied in line with the above requirements: prominence and comparability. Here, several roles or functions could be argued to deserve the attention of the research. Founders, directors and CEOs, producers, volunteers, media managers, and journalists could all play an important role in comparison. This research pinpoints the specific role of the *editor-in-chief or chief editor* as the most significant, directly comparable, and relatively transparent unit of observation. Editors-in-chief are the most prominent journalists who are responsible for their outlets' contents as a whole — and are, most of the time, answerable to founders, owners, or CEOs — and business interests — who aim to make their media outlets profitable or at least financially sustainable. They are directly comparable because unlike a founder (often the most prominent member at NGOs), a leader, or a director, CEO (in business organisations), every media outlet in the sample had at least one person who can be identified as such or had a very similar role. (Special cases, circumstances, and exceptions are naturally, reported in the analysis section.) I argue that the roles are relatively transparent because for the most part it is straightforward to determine and trace who is the natural person, human individual who holds the position of chief editor of major media organisations (whether civil society or mass media) in Hungary — although over the course of this research, there were obvious pain points in this regard. For the selected news outlets, it is possible to determine with almost full certainty (with up to months precision) who the editors-in-chief of a media organisation or its main news programme was in the 2010s. The same could not be said about such important members of the organisations as owners, directors, producers — or individual journalists whose selection would definitely result in a large, numerous sample.

Name of the editor-in-chief	*Time in position (between 2010–2020)*	*Selected due to position at*
BODOKY Tamás	since 2011	Átlátszó
DUDÁS Gergely	2013–2017	Index
DULL Szabolcs	2019–2020	
MÉSZÁROS Zsófia	2011–2013	
SZOMBATHY Pál	2020	
TÓTH-SZENESI Attila	2017–2019	
UJ Péter	2000–2011	
PATAKI Gábor	since 2014	Klubrádió
VICSEK Ferenc	2010–2014	
PRONTVAI Vera	since 2016	Mária Rádió
GÁBOR László	since 2017 and 2015, respectively	Origo and TV2
GYÖRGY Bence	2016–2017 and 2010–2015, respectively	
GAZDA Albert	2011–2013	Origo
PÁLMAI L. Ákos	2014–2017	
SÁLING Gergő	2013–2014	
WEYER Balázs	2000–2011	
KOTROCZÓ Róbert	since 2001	RTL Klub
DÁVID Ferenc	since 2002	Tilos Rádió
AZURÁK Csaba	2015–2016	TV2
KŐHEGYI Anna	2016–2017	
TÓTH Tamás Antal	2017–2019	

Table 2: The overview of the selected editors-in-chief, the units of observation grouped by media outlets, alphabetized

To sum up the description of the sample selection and the units of observation: this dissertation analyses

- the interpersonal interactions and their networks
  - between 1 January 1990 and 31 December 2020 among
- the editors-in-chief
  - who held their positions between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2020
- of eight Hungarian media organisations

- out of which is four civil society media outlets selected on the basis of most financial support received from the population (personal income tax donations):
  - Átlátszó,
  - Mária Rádió,
  - Klubrádió, and
  - Tilos Rádió; and
- four largest mass media outlets based on their audience sizes:
  - Origo
  - Index
  - TV2
  - RTL Klub.

These interpersonal interaction network structures are studied and investigated for the effects of the party system under populism. But the question remains how to operationalise these interpersonal interaction networks.

Endless aspects of human life come with interpersonal interaction. Therefore, naturally, further restrictions need to be applied in focusing the research — corresponding to the same criteria already applied in the sample selection. It is logical to select the *professional, collegial interactions* among them in line with the aims of the research, assessing the impact of populism on civil society and the media. Observing such interactions is possible in great many ways, ranging from some very intensive participatory methods that may be highly subjective — to others can be more objectively reified into standardised data. This research aims to approach data collection as neutrally as possible, therefore, it elects to interrelate the selected editors-in-chief on the basis of *shared memberships in the same professional organisations* for at least a year. That is to say, the research assumes interpersonal interactions among two chief editors if they spent at least one year simultaneously as employees (regardless of their professional positions) at the same workplace (usually, media outlets) between 1990 and 2020. This methodological choice may also appear arbitrary. Obviously, this approach does not guarantee that the same workplace at the same time would mean real interactions; or that they would be "positive" interactions at all. On its reverse, not having the same workplace at the same time does not mean the lack of interactions, either. Nevertheless, it is a practical and realistic assumption amidst Hungarian media practices. Under the circumstances of long-standing polarisation in the Hungarian media system, working and belonging to the same outlet carries a certain degree of mutual understanding and professional (journalistic) as well as political similarities. Therefore, it is suitable for encapsulating professional interrelationships, dynamic behaviours and strategies, as well as traces of political effects.

Moreover, it is amenable to multiple sources of data collection for improved precision. As this research primarily relies on quantitative methods, it first reconstructs the career trajectories of each selected editor-in-chief. To do so, the research utilises information from

- the selected media outlets themselves as sources — as outlets often report on their personnel changes —;
- other online websites — always critically evaluating the validity of the information;
- as well as online search regarding the individual chief editors;
- the identified social media profiles editors-in-chief (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
- sometimes using individual outreach to confirm information.

These sources and the evidence they provide are always interrelated, and only reliable, cross-checked, hierarchical information is marked in the career trajectories. A professional organisation is only entered in chief editor's year-by-year records if there is evidence that for the most part of the year, he or she credibly worked at the organisation in question. (And when necessary, multiple organisations are marked in the same year under the same in an individual chief editor's record.)[76] Ultimately, the outcome is a sheet with each selected chief editor's name and the organisations they worked at year by year between 1990 and 2020.

Then, professional careers, trajectories are compared. If in the same year an organisation is featured multiple times under different editors-in-chief, those editors-in-chief are marked as dyads: having strong *chances* of interpersonal interactions for that year (and usually, longer — for as long as the same professional organisation simultaneously features under both actors' records). Based on the database of shared memberships, the dyads and "chains" of dyads, a network is formed among editors-in-chief. The time factor makes this a temporal network: the dynamic changes — establishment and dissolution of dyads, cliques ("sub-networks") within the network is studied using temporal social network analysis

[76] It also needs to be noted here that due to the manifold re-organisations and re-structuring of the public service media in post-communist Hungary, for practical reasons, all branches and channels (whether radio stations or frequencies (e.g. Magyar Rádió, Kossuth Rádió, Bartók Rádió, Petőfi Rádió), and TV channels (like MTV, M1, M2, Duna TV, etc. — the latter examples did not actually featured in the data)) are treated as one and the same under the title "public media" (Közmédia) regardless of the name and title of the outlet at the time. This may link together people who worked at rather disconnected departments and outlets, nevertheless, due to the state-led governance of the organisations, the basic assumption of a certain "value community" still holds to some extent.

(tSNA). The procedures for this are introduced in the next sub-section also touching upon how the influence of populism is treated and identified.

Furthermore, after providing this quantitative, software-based tSNA of the collegial networks among civil society media outlets' and mass media outlets' 2010–2020 chief editors over their careers in the post-communist era (1990–2020), the research re-contextualises the findings regarding the structural changes in the constructed network. For that re-contextualisation, beyond the scholarship already overviewed and referred to, naturally, multiple other sources are utilised. Most importantly, I have conducted dozens of qualitative interviews, background talks, as well as written correspondence and outreach. However, due to non-responses of key figures, inclusion of experts outside the studied sample network, and the difficulty of reconciliation of disparate information and circumstances, this research technique is not explicitly utilised in this research. Rather, I use only insights that could be confirmed from independent sources — carefully cross-examining media reports and, importantly, official data, e.g. on media ownership changes in the period from the company register database Opten. (Opten 2014) When insights from interviews or correspondence are used after all, they are clearly marked in the text.[77]

Lastly, a note needs to be added about potential errors in the data collection process. As in all human enterprises, it is entirely possible that incorrect information or mistakes have happened in the compiling the data of this research. It is all the more probable due to what I see as structural, systematic problems in the public sphere and its constitutive civil society and media segments: ownership, membership, volunteering and hiring practices, financial flows are either not transparent, or whenever reported and made available, they are not at all or badly communicated. (So these problems range from no data to too much, badly structured data — i.e. with full of character coding issues which renders databases illegible.) All too often such prominent professionals' as editors'-in-chief career is not available openly; at times, it is difficult to determine who occupy leadership positions in mass media. Nevertheless, this dissertation research, by utilising multiple sources of information and meticulously cross-checking them in a manner that can be almost likened, interestingly, to investigative journalism, has been able to provide a reliable dataset. The re-contextualisation of the analysis — in the chapter which follows it — is, once again, a

[77] It is an important learning point of this dissertation project's methodology that putting relationalist ideas into action — especially with regards to qualitative research techniques such as semi-structured interviews — necessitates a new approach to this old technique and even more careful preparation and reflection that this dissertation could not undertake in addition for reasons of coherence.

safeguard which serves to "double-check" the reliability of the collected data by comparing their analysis to other kinds of evidence on the same (or a very similar) issue: changes in the public sphere during populist governance.

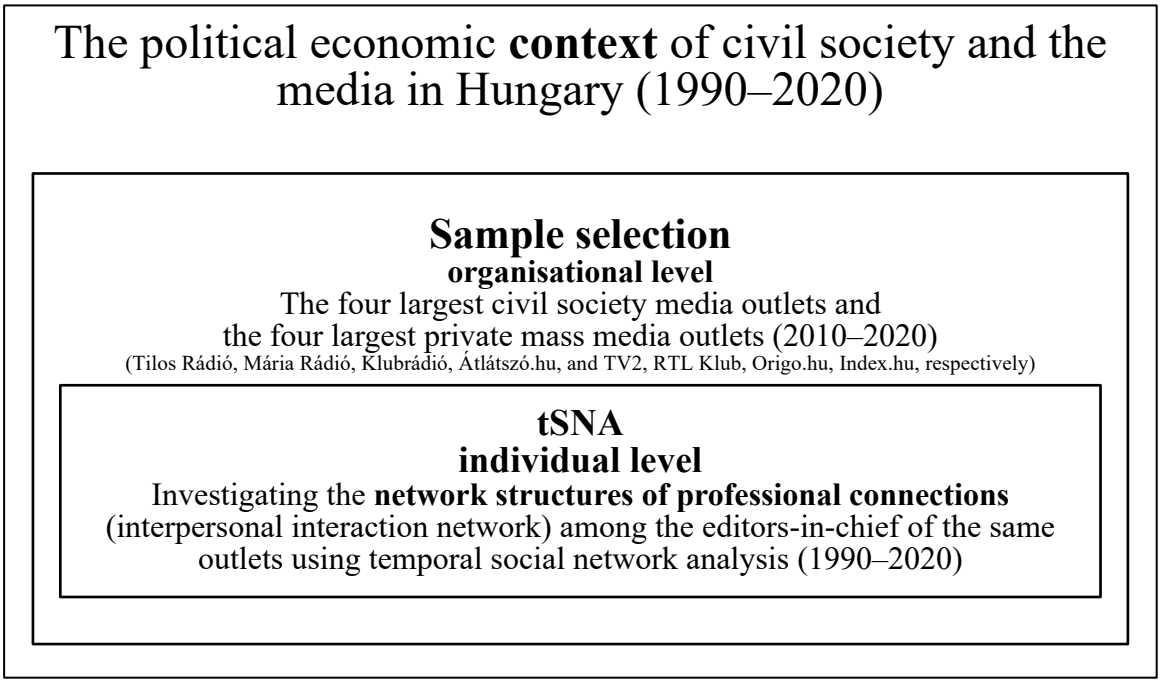

Figure 7: The logical scheme of the analysis and the applied methods

III.3.b. Analytical methods

Upon collecting data about professional, collegial interrelationships of among the selected individual editors-in-chief, software-based tSNA is utilised to treat the compiled dataset. Three packages of the free, open-source statistical software R — and, naturally, their manuals — are used for this purpose: the packages "sna" (Butts 2020), "tsna" (Bender-deMoll, Morris, and Moody 2021), and "ndtv" (Bender-deMoll and Morris 2021). Multiple methodological works have aided the selection of the appropriate methods, metrics and indicators as well as their application such as, amongst others, (Fuhse 2016; Mckether, Gluesing, and Riopelle 2009; Scott 2017; Tang et al. 2009; L. Vicsek, Király, and Kónya 2016), but the tutorial by (Brey 2018) deserves the highest praise. They allow for, essentially, two types of social networks to be constructed: one, *static* and two, a dynamic, *temporal* social network.

One, the "tsna" package enables the creation of the full-scale temporal network between 1990 and 2020. It serves to analyse the development of the network essentially in "real time", rather than creating arbitrary periodic snapshots. This is highlighted by the ability of the package to create an animated visual of the changes in the structure of the network

graph. This approach is not only more "visual" that some may find helpful. It can aid process tracing as understanding dynamic, longitudinal processes can uncover or amplify sequences that may remain unnoticed if one studies static networks only. Thanks to this ability of taking into account the temporal factor behind causality, one can better test common assumptions — in the case of this dissertation, tSNA can give us more insights into the measure and nature of civil society and media "dominance" by political actors across different periods of time (both purported and admitted by various political actors as well as journalists and academics as discussed in the literature review). This is because static SNA can mask separate, individual developments or processes by "lumping together" structural changes over a longer period of time. While this can serve its purpose (for example, logically speaking, some interactions take longer time or can become more meaningful in the long term rather than the short term), relationalism demands us to look for interactions and cause-effect relationships on the individual level first and foremost, and as much as possible.

III.3.b: I. Temporal social network analysis measurements

The animated, dynamic visual representation of the temporal social network development is accompanied by metrics and measurements that are different from that of static SNA. This dissertation uses three *temporal* social network analysis measurements:

- nominal edge *formation* count;
- nominal edge *dissolution* count; and
- network connectedness scores annually.

Nominal edge formation and dissolution counts are very simple metrics: they are simply the total number of how many interrelationships (edges or ties) are formed or dissolved, respectively, within a network over a certain period of time. This analysis will chart annual edge formation and dissolution counts.

Network *connectedness* is a more technical indicator. It is one of the most widely used measures of how cohesive, well-connected a given graph is — including also how much a network resembles archetypal hierarchy[78]. This measure returns a value on a scale of zero (lowest) and one (highest). Zero means that the network is not at all connected, all nodes

[78] See (Krackhardt 1994, pp. 93–96). Although the relaxation of the hierarchy condition was proposed by the author himself, too (see (Everett and Krackhardt 2012)), using the original metric has become a standard in social network analysis.

(actors) unconnected. One indicates that all nodes (actors) are linked — with one node (actor) appearing[79] "higher" in the hierarchy.

III.3.b: II. Static social network analysis measurements

Two, the "sna" package serves to construct and analyse simpler, *static* social networks.

Thanks to this, firstly, one static social network is created which encompasses the entire time period of the investigation (1990–2020) containing all the observed interrelationships among the selected editors-in-chief. This means that in this "overarching", complete social network, ties accumulate overtime: even if an interrelationship was established only for a short period of time in the early 1990s, it will stay on and "remain" in the network.

Then, secondly, to better account for these changes — the decomposition of ties, communities, and cliques —, the analysis splits the period of observation into three parts. These three parts cover the three periods of the party system development of post-communist Hungary: 1990–1997, 1998–2010, and 2011–2020 — differing just one year compared to the stages of party system development.[80] This is to adjust to changes in the media law whose major revisions entered into force in 1997 and 2011 as noted in the contextual part of the Literature review chapter. Thus periods include the first full years on the latest media law in force until a new one would be voted. Also, this avoids the issue of dividing years into non-equal parts based on the date of the election and the convocation of the first session of the National Assembly which usually happens in springtime.[81] These periods therefore correspond to the major political economic changes regarding media legal regulations — impacting both civil society media outlets and mass media outlets. (As the contextual chapter suggests, these changes are not unrelated to electoral periods and governmental terms, either, even if they do not precisely match.)

---

[79] More properly and formally:

> *"…in a digraph D, for each pair of points where one (P_i) can reach another (P_j), the second (P_j) cannot reach the first (P_i). For example, in a formal organizational chart, a high-level employee can 'reach' through the chain of command her subordinate's subordinate. If the formal organization is working properly, this lower-level employee cannot simultaneously 'reach' (i.e., cannot be the boss of a boss of) the higher-level employee".* (Krackhardt 1994, p. 97)

See also *Figure 14* for a visual representation on page 101.

[80] The periods of the party system development are the following: 1990–1998, 1998–2010, 2010–2020

[81] As noted previously, these periods begin on 1 January of the first year indicated and end on 31 December of the last year.

This "slicing" of the overarching social network, in practical terms, results in the construction of three separate static social networks. This means that ties in these separate static social networks do not accumulate throughout the entire post-communist (1990–2020) period — rather, only ties established in the same time periods are accounted for, separately. For example, if two chief editors only worked together in the early 1990s, their relationship will not be represented in the social network depicting the 2011–2020 period.

All constructed static networks, including

- the complete (1990–2020) social network,
- as well as the series of three split, roughly decade-long networks:
    - the 1990–1997,
    - the 1998–2010, and
    - 2011–2020 static periodical social networks

are analysed using the same methods and basic metrics. Descriptive indicators are applied on two levels: on the network level and on the individual level.

First, on the network level, all the networks are depicted and visually analysed. Regarding their overall structures and cohesion, the *connectedness* metric (the indicator used in tSNA) is only used in the case of the complete (1990–2020) social network.[82] Instead of *connectedness*, the measure *centralisation* is employed and compared across the static social networks in time. Essentially, the graph centralisation value is calculated based on how much a given network resembles to a maximally centralised graph (with a star or wheel structure) (Freeman 1978, p. 237).[83] The *centralisation* measure takes up values on a scale from 0 (not centralised) to 1 (fully centralised).

Then, the analysis turns to scrutinise individual-level metrics: the centralities of the actors making up the social networks to detect changes in behaviour and the evolution of the social network. Centrality measures pertain to actors in the network (node-level measures), they all capture their "importance" — that is, how central the individual positions of each editor-in-chief are in their collegial social network. This analysis uses basic SNA indicators, the measures of *degrees*, *stress centrality*, and *betweenness centrality* to assess and compare

[82] This is in order not to confuse tSNA and static social network analytical metrics. Otherwise, connectedness is a less interesting measure once the static social networks are visualised — that way, they can be intuitively assessed.

[83] *"The centralisation of a graph G for centrality measure C(v) is defined (…) the absolute deviation from the maximum of C on G."* (Butts 2020, p. 29) i.e. the measure relies on *"…the maximum possible sum of differences in point centrality for a graph…"* (Freeman 1978, p. 228).

actors' changing important cross time and social network configurations. All centrality values used in this analysis capture roughly the same phenomenon, but in slightly different manners — they are different "sides" of the same coin.

Degrees are the most intuitive, simplest measure. They indicate the number of ties (collegial interrelationships) of a selected node.

Stress centrality is a slightly more sophisticated method of measurement. The notion of *stress centrality* takes the number of the shortest paths between two nodes of the network. (Koschützki et al. 2005; Butts 2020) This index indicates the number of shortest paths each node, chief editor, is located in the given network. Therefore, the higher the number of the index, the more central a node's or individual's position — i.e. actors with higher *stress centralities* connect more people. If such nodes (the "busiest" points of connection) were removed from the network, its cohesion would decrease immensely.

The third value, *betweenness centrality* scores are also related to the notion of shortest paths and capture how much a node is in-between other nodes of the network; but it is calculated differently: the number of shortest paths on which the actor is present is moderated by the number of all existing shortest paths in the network. (Perez and Germon 2016) Hence *"conceptually, high-betweenness vertices lie on a large number of non-redundant shortest paths between other vertices; they can thus be thought of as 'bridges' or 'boundary spanners.'"* (Butts 2020, p. 15)

This short, non-technical overview of the three centrality values used in this analysis also suggests why *betweenness centrality* is used to rank the editors-in-chief centrality in the complete static social network. The notion of non-redundant shortest paths as key connectors within a community can highlight important structural actors — even more important ones than a structural, clique analysis. This latter structural analysis has, in fact, been also carried out, but is not reported in this analysis. This is because the groupings, cliques that the software analysis produces are — unsurprisingly — by far and large identical to the composition of the selected media outlets. (So, the software virtually recognised the selection criteria, and mostly grouped together the actors by their media outlets.) But *betweenness centrality* goes beyond this. It spotlights the individual actors who have been involved in multiple, differently, and diversely connected communities.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Epistemic foundation</td><td colspan="2">Relationalism</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Theories</td><td colspan="2">Actor-centric historical institutionalism (and elements of political economy of communication, selectorate theory)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Key concepts</td><td colspan="2">Populism, party system, civil society, media</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Research question</td><td colspan="2">How has the party system under populism affected civil society and the media in post-communist Hungary?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">Methods</td><td>Case study</td><td colspan="2">Explorative, single-country case study of Hungary, 1990–2020</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sampling strategy</td><td colspan="2">Purposive sampling
a balanced (political affiliation, type of organisation, etc.) sample of the most influential civil society organisations and mass media outlets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sample</td><td>Civil society

the four most influential, politically relevant CSOs (coincidentally, civil society media organisations):

Klubrádió, Tilos Rádió, Mária Rádió, Átlátszó.hu</td><td>Mass media

the four media outlets with the largest audience reach that covers most of the 1990–2020 period:

RTL Klub, TV2, Origo.hu, Index.hu</td></tr>
<tr><td>Operationalisation</td><td colspan="2">• Reconstructed career histories of the 21 chief editors of the selected organisations 2010–2020
• Network ties (professional connections) based on employment or membership at the same organisation for at least one calendar year
• Impact of populism: structural trends, external evidence about individual career decisions and organisational histories</td></tr>
<tr><td>Analytical methods</td><td colspan="2">Temporal social network analysis (tSNA) using R software, “sna”, “tsna”, and “ndtv” software packages
of the professional connections (based on the shared memberships)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Main measures</td><td>Network level – structural cohesion:

tSNA
• nominal edge formation count;
• nominal edge dissolution count
• connectedness

static SNA of periodical networks
• centralisation
• connectedness (only used for the analysis of the complete network, not for the static periodical networks)</td><td>Individual level – actors’ centralities:

static SNA of periodical networks
• degrees
• stress centrality
• betweenness centrality</td></tr>
</table>

Table 3: Overview of the applied research methods

These basic measurements have been selected in a manner commensurate with the objective of the dissertation. While a plethora of adequate and useful metrics exists in social network analysis, these basic ones are utilised here to keep the analysis parsimonious. It would be perfectly possible to use even more sophisticated indicators and metrics; however, the manner of data collection — focusing on binary interrelationships among editors-in-chief —, are not amenable for using more complex measures. Simply put, since simple data is collected, more complex analytical measurements would be superfluous; perhaps even misleading. Richer, more complex data — which would require either the existence of more detailed, relationally compiled databases or even more resourceful and costly data collection efforts[84] — would be necessary for the application of such measurements.

Beyond how the creations and dissolutions of interrelationships, collegial ties evolved and how they are analysed, the investigation of causality also needs to be discussed here. This dissertation research aims to primarily structural changes — and this is what the quantitative data collection and analysis offers. "Changes" can be only interpreted in a temporal dimension — hence the wider, three-decades long observation period which is divided into three meaningful time segments. However, attributing structural changes directly to political factors — the dominant party system under populism — is not possible without introducing qualitative data. This is the role of the literature review; the expert and professional outreach that I have conducted during this work; as well as the anecdotal, circumstantial evidence introduced from media reports, interviews, articles, and analyses. It is within this framework that the dissertation aims to one, provide a limited argument as well as two, suggest a broader, contextual explanation of the relationship among the party system under populism, civil society, and the media system. This is to avoid the "post hoc, ergo propter hoc" ("after this, therefore, because of this")-type of logical fallacy. The limited argument first demonstrates a correlation between the social network structures within civil society media and mass media on the one hand and the party system under populism on the other which is substantiated by critically engaging with the qualitative evidence offered; and the broader, contextual explanation re-inserts this argument into the

[84] Such data could, theoretically, complain not only more data on the individuals active at different organisations, but also their individual opinions, relationships, activities at various points in time. These would make it possible to created social networks with directed graphs on sympathies and antipathies; ego-centric networks of authority relationships, information flows, or social status (members of their communities ranking each other based on their perceptions of professionalism, likeability, etc.). Since such data collection is rather unusual in today's practice, highly complex and time-consuming, this dissertation research opted for the above-presented, much more straightforward design.

wider scholarship, checking for its compatibility and consistence with already published works, and existing political narratives. This is how I intend to increase the validity and accuracy of the methodology of this research, whose fact-based acceptance or rebuttal, as always, falls upon the reader of this work.

— CHAPTER SUMMARY —

This research is designed as an explorative case study. As such, after detailing the research question, it sets theoretical expectations rather than strictly testable hypotheses and chooses a purposive sampling strategy. The purposive sampling aims to include civil society and mass media organisations based on their influence and create a balanced sample among them politically so that they represent organisations with diverse political leanings. This is to both ensure the relevance of the research and facilitate the detection of the influences of the populist party system. A less diverse set of only certain kinds of organisations could logically contain only less diverse ways of influences. Arguing for practical and fitting indicators to assess civil society and media organisations, the dissertation selects four civil society media outlets and four mass media outlets that balance coherence with diversity: their roles are similar, but their backgrounds, modes of operation, types of technologies, etc.

In line with relationalist principles and the sample selection criteria, this chapter operationalises the unit of analysis as the editors-in-chief of the selected outlets under the dominant party system. It sets out to study these 21 individuals' interpersonal interactions operationalised as simultaneous employment at the same organisation for at least one calendar year between 1990 and 2020. The career histories of individual chief editors are reconstructed and analysed using temporal social network analysis aided by the "tsna" and "sna" software packages of the software R. These enable not only an animated, dynamic temporal network visualisation, but also quantitative analysis of overall network metrics regarding the coherence and the individual actors' centralities.

Studying trends within the selected chief editors' professional network in parallel to the development of the party system can help reveal the impacts of the party system under populism on this carefully selected, influential sample of civil society and the media in post-communist Hungary.

CHAPTER IV. ANALYSIS

— CHAPTER OVERVIEW —

This chapter carries out analysis in three main parts:

1. *Preliminary analysis: the brief description of the sample*
2. *Temporal social network analysis: dynamic changes within the network*
3. *Static social network analysis*

The first sub-chapter briefly describes the sample by giving a preliminary analysis comparing the individuals and their organisations to each other as well as to trends in Hungary's party system development.

Then, the analysis proceeds to report the results of the tSNA of the complete network on an annual basis, studying changes in its structure.

To uncover even more detailed findings, the analysis turns to static SNA in four parts: first, the complete social network (1990–2020), then the period networks of the three party system development stages (the tripartite party system (1990–1996); the two-block party system (1997–2010); and the dominant party system (2011–2020)). Each reports the network-level and individual-level indicators elaborated in the Research design section and contrasts these trends with the described changes in the party system's developments.

IV.1. Preliminary analysis: the brief description of the sample

Before describing the sample population, the selected editors-in-chief, it is worth reviewing, adding a few considerations to the civil society and mass media outlets they led in the period of observation. The table below aims to summarise the most important points of this discussion.

The organisational type, backgrounds were among the primary aspects in the sample selection. Aiming to choose only mass media and civil society media outlets, the research also opted to include an outlet with a "mixed" background, Klubrádió. As mentioned, the foundation supporting its operations consistently fulfilled the criteria for being selected; even though the radio station itself is a private, commercial enterprise currently owned by ARATÓ András, a businessman who used to have close ties to the left-liberal parties in the 2000s and openly criticises the Fidesz-led government.[85] The outlet went through a particularly interesting history in the past decades for which it deserves the inclusion in the

[85] See, for example, his opinion article (Arató 2021) published by Euronews to which the international spokesperson of the ORBÁN cabinet, KOVÁCS Zoltán replied (Z. Kovács 2021) in the same column in order to defend the decision of the Hungarian media authorities not to grant a terrestrial broadcasting licence anymore in late 2020 – early 2021, citing the legal non-compliance and financial instability of Klubrádió.

sample. This trajectory of the openly left-wing[86] radio station (which used to have programme hosts who were active, elected left-liberal politicians and some of their hosts became elected officials) largely mirrors the changes in the party system. Starting from a small broadcast operation specialised in traffic news in the late 1990s, the station had become a rather well-known public affairs, talk show radio station broadcasted nation-wide in the 2000s. After 2010, it had gradually lost its regional frequencies and became a radio which by the end of the decade identified itself as a "Budapest community radio".[87] By the end of the year 2020, Klubrádió had its terrestrial broadcasting licence and its frequency revoked by the Hungarian media authority. In early 2021, it ceased its terrestrial broadcasting operation and carries on as an online radio station solely.

Name of the outlet	***Organisation type***	***Media type***	***Ownership change in 2011–2020***	***Change in approach to journalism***	***Number of editors-in-chief***
TV2	private	TV	YES (2015)	YES	5
RTL Klub	private	TV	NO	NO	1
Origo.hu	private	online	YES (2014–2015)	YES	6
Index.hu	private	online	YES (multiple)	YES	6
Tilos Rádió	civil society	radio	NO	NO	1 included (concept n/a)
Mária Rádió	civil society	radio	NO	NO	1
Klubrádió	Mixed (civil society-supported private organisation)	radio	NO	NO	2
Átlátszó.hu	civil society	online	NO	NO	1

Table 4: An overview of the main characteristics of the selected media outlets

Besides the organisational type, the "media type" — the main form of technology which the selected outlets use in their operations: TV broadcast, radio broadcast, or online news site — can be rather easily determined, they are self-explanatory in all cases.[88] It is the *main*

[86] See, for example, the current editor-in-chief PATAKI's interview in Hungarian. (György 2019)

[87] Personal communication.

[88] In addition, a few experts and journalists I have communicated with called my attention to the — according to them — unique structure of Hungarian mass media market: internet news portals being standalone enterprises. In the western world, it is usual for other legacy mass media to have been an earlier adaptor of internet technology, so TV channels' or established newspapers' websites became online news media (like BBC's online news, The New York Times online, etc.). While this early trend has been certainly changing elsewhere, too, the Hungarian case is remarkable in this regard and this research design also captures the phenomenon.

form of operation that is used here, so it disregards whether the outlet uses other channels or forms of outreach (for example, a radio station's website or social media accounts) or whether the operation is affiliated with other media enterprises (e.g. the multiple channels that belong to the companies operating TV2 and RTL Klub). This were also a pointless distinction because as previously mentioned, the editors-in-chief who are units of observation were selected because they lead either all news and public affairs programming of their respective media outlets or the main news programmes (in the case of TV2 and RTL Klub, their most widely watched evening news programmes). Here, the civil society outlet, liberal Budapest community radio station Tilos Rádió is an outlier. The foundation operating their broadcast is, traditionally, since the 1990s, a very decentralised, self-organising community. Tilos never had a single editor-in-chief whose authority would centrally organise or determine its programming. To amend this problem, therefore, the research identified the programme which mostly pertains to general news and public affairs, titled 7térítő.[89] One of the longest-standing host of the programme and definitely the easiest to publicly identify[90] is DÁVID Ferenc — who was therefore picked to represent Tilos Rádió in the sample. Over the course of the data analysis, however, it becomes clear that other outlets' editors-in-chief had or have been active as hosts and contributors in Tilos Rádió's work, too, so the civil society media organisation is rather well-represented in the sample.

Determining "ownership change in 2011–2020", during the period of the party system under populism is not too difficult, either. The Hungarian company register (Nemzeti Cégtár 2020), Opten (Opten 2014), and various media reports serve as reliable sources for that. Additionally, while based on these and the scholarship, I am aware of the purported or proven political linkages behind such events, the dissertation research does not directly deal with tracing ownership relations and networks; in this table, it is only the fact of changing ownership that is recorded. It is an interesting finding, however, that whenever ownership change had happened in the 2010s, the editorial line was revamped, too, as reported in the column "Change in approach to journalism". This is, perhaps, a more subjective area, therefore it is worth exploring it. First, the "approach" to journalism —

[89] The title of the weekly news service of the broadcast is difficult to translate into English. The Hungarian pun plays on the meanings and forms of words like "seven" ("hét" which also means "week") which sounds similar to "faith" ("hit" in Hungarian) and "missionary, evangeliser" ("térítő"). Perhaps it can be interpreted as a nod to the ideologically driven character of news services, too. (Tilos Rádió 2021a)

[90] Owing to its 1990s underground, pirate radio past, many of Tilos Rádió's contributors, hosts use aliases (similar to those in internet sub-cultures, forum users) to identify themselves. Ferenc Dávid is referred to as „feco" (Hungarian nickname of Ferenc — in English: Frank) and „Melyik Feri" (also a reference to a commonly known Hungarian vulgar joke). (Tilos Rádió 2021b)

journalistic norms — aims to capture here an overall attitude of an outlet's editorial team towards the production of journalism and news. This is to avoid potentially contentious political labelling of news outlets that has also been subject to break-neck changes in the period of observation. But while originally not intended to be political, due to the specificities of the Hungarian media system (Sipos 2013), it could be most meaningfully distilled into pro-government and anti-government journalism at almost any given time in the past decades. Here — somewhat inspired by the concept of "militant" journalism by (Waisbord 2013) in the Latin American context —, I use the terms "critical" and "pro-government" journalism. The former denotes journalistic[91] work whose primary motives and objectives are not purely partisan (even if biased to certain extent). The (often proclaimed) aim of pro-government journalism is, however, first and foremost the representation of the political agenda, narrative, and goals of the governing party or parties of that time. To reliably determine the differences, long-term discourse analyses would be necessary which, for multiple reasons, fall outside of the remits of the current enterprise. However, based on the scholarly literature and everyday experiences of relatively conscious media consumption, many Hungarians themselves are adept at determining the political leanings of an outlet. (Hann et al. 2020) Therefore, the entries under the corresponding column are treated as self-evident. There are only two somewhat special cases that needs to be briefly touched upon here: the case of Mária Rádió and Index — especially since the second half of 2020.

Mária Rádió represents a special case because as a chiefly religious (roman catholic) radio station, it does not host political or even public affairs programmes, its programming focuses on questions of the Christian faith, catholic teaching, broadcasting prayers and masses, etc. However, three reasons justify why Mária Rádió is included in the selection. First, religion has been — and has become perhaps even more during the time of the party system under populism — a highly politicised issue in Hungarian society, with PM ORBÁN's Fidesz (and its satellite allied party, KDNP) taking almost exclusive issue ownership over conservative Christian thought being represented in Hungarian politics. As part of the global movement "The World Family of Radio Maria" with an indirect relationship with the catholic church, a good party–organisation relationship is definitely a

[91] Here, I would also like to avoid the terminology which distinguishes "journalism" and "propaganda" in the post-transition Hungarian media system. While I understand the arguments and motives, and tend to agree with them, I believe it does not facilitate research or public debate; and can lead astray a political economic analysis such as this one.

valuable segue for political actors to gaining support. Therefore, a catholic radio station does merit closer attention. Second, although the radio station itself looks back to a longer history, the foundation operating Mária Rádió in Hungary was set up only in 2008 by dr. SZABÓ Tamás who is its president ever since (T. Szabó 2013) — an MP and former minister in the first post-transition conservative cabinet led by PM ANTALL. He received a high state honour from Deputy PM and leader of KDNP SEMJÉN Zsolt (Laskovics 2020). SZABÓ got elected to parliament twice as a member of the late PM's Hungarian Democratic Forum [Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF] party, but in his second term, left it for a renegade party, the unsuccessful Hungarian Democratic People's Party [Magyar Demokrata Néppárt, MDNP]. (Országgyűlés 1996) To simplify the evolution of these parties: eventually both dissolved, and with the exception of the extreme far right, were absorbed by Fidesz. Hence due to the (politicised) values of the radio station as well as the person of the founder of the association supporting the broadcaster, Mária Rádió is an outlet of interest here. Third and last, even though its programmes do not directly deal with politics, there are further traces of political sympathies in the organisation's activity. The Budapest editorial room is headquartered in a real estate that was provided for the outlet by the Ministry of Defence[92] after 2010, and the website features quite a few logos of government agencies and initiatives because the NGO is their beneficiary. Furthermore, In April 2020, the incumbent PM ORBÁN gave an interview to the radio station. (Mária Rádió 2020) While not talking about public policies, the PM used the occasion to talk about his personal convictions and character; and himself mediatised the event by posting a video montage about it on his Facebook page (Orbán 2020) — and at the same time, promoting the outlet among his social media followers. So for all these reasons, the selected civil society media outlet's approach to journalism does not really match the overall framework of the research, as an important part of the intersection between media, civil society, and even politics and a church, it is a worthwhile part of the sample. While Mária Rádió is included therein, it is certainly not over-represented. As it is later shown, the channel's only qualifying chief editor is a rather distinct, isolated unit of analysis in this investigation.

As one of Hungary's leading online news portals, the inclusion of Index definitely need not be discussed; however, the changes in its editorial policies do. The history of Index's ownership (and its political relationships) as well as the composition of its journalistic and editorial team looks back to tumultuous decades. It features a company conglomerate,

[92] This is based on personal communication with journalists.

Wallis, famous for its links to the left-liberal parties (one of its former managers, BAJNAI Gordon had become PM with the support of the socialist party); former Fidesz party finance director SIMICSKA Lajos — widely characterised as an oligarch — who fell out with PM Orbán in 2015 and had subsequently left public life transferring his stakes to another oligarch SPÉDER Zoltán; a KDNP-affiliated businessman who, according to some sources, used to be involved politically on both sides of the political spectrum in the central Hungarian town of Kecskemét (Békeházy 2018); and lastly, from 2020, VASZILY Miklós. The latter — while started his career as a media manager at the then-markedly liberal Index — was a high-ranking decisionmaker at Origo present at the outlet's government-affiliated acquisition; and today, is the CEO of, beside several smaller markedly pro-government outlets, TV2 as well as owner of the right-wing Pesti TV. (HVG.hu 2021) With the exception of TÓTH-SZENESI Attila — who had stepped down as editor-in-chief to focus on other projects, but did not leave Index at the time (Index 2019) —, all the editors-in-chief in the sample (2010–2020) under these changing owners and managements cited external political impacts as the reasons for their resignations.[93] While it may be said that the *style of content* Index produced had changed overtime under different editors-in-chief,[94] its *approach to journalism* as understood above did not: it remained a liberal outlet, markedly critical towards the government and politics in general. The dismissal of DULL, however, marked a turning point — indeed, he was the first chief editor who had to leave Index because he was fired; the rest of his predecessors and even SZOMBATHY resigned from their posts "in mutual agreement" with the employer. The turning point came about due the new owner VASZILY obtaining not only the publishing parent company Indamédia, but slightly later, also the foundation which employed all Index journalists and had been previously formally independent from Indamédia (Rényi 2018b). Protesting against DULL's dismissal, almost the entire journalist staff, about 90 people, quit Index. But more importantly, the newly appointed SZOMBATHY — while also defending a critical approach to politics and the government — sought to implement a "balanced" style of political journalism. In his conception, this meant a team that is internally pluralistic, composed of both left-wing and right-wing journalists (Nagy J. 2020) — but ended with his resignation, also due to

[93] See, in chronological order, their interviews: UJ Péter (Tóth S. T. 2020b), MÉSZÁROS Zsófia (Bellai 2017), DUDÁS Gergely (Borbás 2020), DULL Szabolcs (Babos 2020), SZOMBATHY Pál (Nagy J. 2020).
Their career decisions to take up or leave their roles also created fair amounts of conflicts and sympathies among them (see for example the conflict between the former colleagues, editors-in-chief UJ and DUDÁS, see for example (Szalay 2018)).

[94] This is based on personal communication with journalists.

politically motivated influencing attempts. (*ibid.*) Since then, while Index still publishes articles on topics which may be interpreted inconveniently interpreted with regards to the ruling populist coalition, its approach became much more measured. Additionally, in 2021, the pro-government Central European Press and Media Foundation[95] [Közép-Európai Sajtó és Média Alapítvány, KESMA] has been found[96] to quickly re-publish an article with almost the same text as Index in a topic that is inconvenient for the opposition parties — one would be hard-pressed to find an example for such an occasion earlier. Even more noticeably, in my perception, the most important trend in Index's content policy seems to be tabloidisation: highlighting news on sports, celebrities, and general interest articles much more often than before, de-prioritising politics and public affairs news. For all these reasons, Index is marked with a "yes" under the column "Change in approach to journalism".

After reviewing all these findings, the qualifying units of observation, the editors-in-chief of the selected outlets between 2010 and 2020 needs to be more closely scrutinised before subjecting their interrelationships to social network analysis.

Altogether, 21 individual chief editors qualified to be selected for social network analysis. (See the overview of the selected individuals in *Table 2* on page 71) Interestingly, all but three individuals are female (except for MÉSZÁROS Zsófia (formerly Index), KŐHEGYI Anna (TV2 Tények), and PRONTVAI Vera (Mária Rádió). While the research does not collect non-public personal data, it appears that the overwhelming majority of the individuals making up the sample are middle-age Hungarian intellectuals, usually with higher education degrees (a few having obtained or are in the process of obtaining academic titles, PhDs — almost always at Hungarian universities. A notable exception is WEYER Balázs, who holds such a degree in Musicology from a British university). But this is not the only factor that reduces the diversity of the sample despite including diverse civil society outlets and mass media outlets. In fact, it is the manifold changes in personnel at mass media outlets: while only five editors-in-chief from civil society outlets qualified in the period of scrutiny, mass media outlets had sixteen consecutive leading officers in the comparable position. It needs to be mentioned that since at TV2, the post of chief editor seems to have been discontinued in 2019 and merged with that of the news director

[95] See page 48 and the corresponding discussion of KESMA.

[96] Compare (Csekő 2021) to rival Origo's (Origo 2021a) and "militantly" pro-government 888's (888.hu 2021) articles published within only a few hours.

[hírigazgató],[97] the number of mass media chief editors is even missing at least one more professional responsible for content creation. (On a comparable note, the uniqueness of civil society outlets Mária Rádió and Tilos Rádió also merits a reminder as explained earlier.)

But the reason for this imbalance between civil society outlets and mass media outlets — as already suggested in the case of Index —, can be traced back to political factors through the peculiar pattern of ownership change; subsequent change in the person of the chief editor; the composition of the journalistic team of an outlet; and change in the approach to journalism, journalistic norms, and content produced. This dissertation suggests that this observed pattern is more prevalent among mass media organisations due to their larger audience sizes. Populism as a political strategy aims to ensure mass support — which is the best achieved (indeed, only possible) through capturing the most important flows, channels of social information, through the producers of mass media. Adding to this extra-group comparison of mass media and civil society media, the intra-group comparison between RTL Klub and the rest of the outlets is also insightful. While RTL Klub — the only still foreign-owned outlet in the sample at the time of the writing — also experienced regulatory, governmental pressure in the 2010s,[98] its ownership structure did not change significantly in the decade, the editor-in-chief of its main news programme, KOTROCZÓ Róbert has been in his position since 2001. While it could be reasonably argued that the public affairs programming of RTL Klub has declined over the past decade,[99] its approach to journalism has not changed fundamentally; and the editor-in-chief does also, at times, criticise government influence in the Hungarian media system. (Szalay 2017) Lastly, the fact that there are two persons (GÁBOR László and GYÖRGY Bence) who held the position of the chief editor at multiple outlets which happen to be the same ones — and that they have worked together extensively previously, too — at Origo and TV2 which went through similar ownership changes and editorial policy changes (both involving the already

[97] Since 2016, the position is held by KÖKÉNY-SZALAI Vivien, former editor-in-chief of the weekly tabloid magazine Story. The news director has been known about her pro-government sympathies and relationships which she lately demonstrated by attending the 2021 Fidesz party congress. (Kökény-Szalai 2021)

[98] See for example the "Lex RTL", a advertisement tax reform which was tailored to hit RTL Klub, but not its competitors. (Index 2014) After a lengthy conflict, the extra taxation was dropped.

[99] e.g. a popular liberal talk show, Heti Hetes ("Weekly Seven", where seven, usually well-known, liberal intellectuals, celebrities had discussed weekly news, public affairs, and general interest stories following a German TV format) was discontinued as well as Országház ("Parliament"), a weekly political portrait and report show. The public affairs programming of RTL Klub today (the shows XXI. Század ("21st Century") and Házon Kívül ("Out of Home" or "Outdoor")) is broadcasted outside of prime time, and concern themselves less with party politics.

mentioned media owner-turned manager, VASZILY Miklós) shows that there is indeed considerable external influencing, co-ordinating which impacts the both civil society and mass media elites. To further study the internal dynamics of and trace the effects of the party system under populism on the media elite included in the sample, this investigation turns to employing social network analysis methods.

IV.2. Temporal social network analysis: dynamic changes within the network

As a first step in the quantitative analytical treatment of the compiled data set, this research presents one of the most sophisticated — as well as powerful — applied quantitative, technical method: the visual analysis of the temporal network. First, the entire temporal social network is visualised as automated snapshots of equal-length "slices" in the evolution of the interrelationships among the selected editors-in-chief.

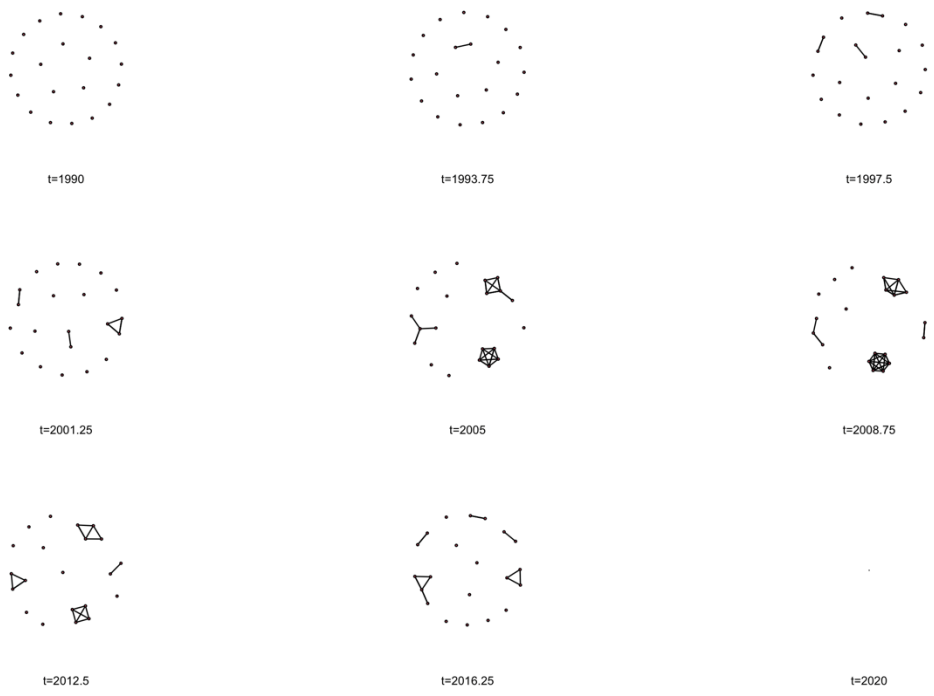

Figure 8:
The temporal evolution of the ties within the social network

The software automatically divided the three decades of observations into nine snapshots — each showing a snapshot representing the status of collaborative ties among the actors every 3.75 years. A few steps in this analytical treatment are not truly useful in the framework of this enquiry, but the general trend which underlies the whole analysis already

shows. It is easy to see that the first and the last slice in *Figure 6* do not actually show meaningful relationships (and the last one not even the actors, the units of analysis). This is because in the first year of the observation, 1990 there is indeed no record of the selected editors-in-chief working at the same outlet. In fact, there are only two "active" chief editors featured in the dataset: VICSEK Ferenc and UJ Péter — meaning that the research could only identify meaningful work history in their cases in that year, the rest of the actors were either inactive, still in school, or of unknown professional status in 1990. (Indeed, VICSEK (in his 70s) and UJ (in his early 50s) do belong to the more experienced, senior members of the sample.) As for the last slice, the year 2020, the software simply does not register the actors and their relationships, even if they remain active and there does exist a handful of collaborative interrelationships among them. However, the point of this exercise is much more to identify decipherable, consistent trends regarding the structure of the network. It is rather obvious to recognise that while there are separate "communities" in the network throughout the entire period observation, these cliques, sub-networks get more connected, denser in the first half of the period (around 2008), and then their cohesion declines.

This research also provides a continuous, web browser-based interactive animation (in .html format) to confirm this major finding. But due to the limits in the format of this dissertation, rather, this cannot be presented here. To substitute for this shortcoming, the research offers a different way of visualising the evolution of the collegial social network among the editors-in-chief: based on the periods determined in the contextual chapter, as separated by changes in the overarching Hungarian media regulatory frameworks (the entry into force of the 1996 and 2010 Media Laws — both in the following calendar years). This way, three separate snapshots are created, each showing active interrelationships at the concrete end year of the period — 1997, 2010, and 2020 (the final year of observation), respectively.

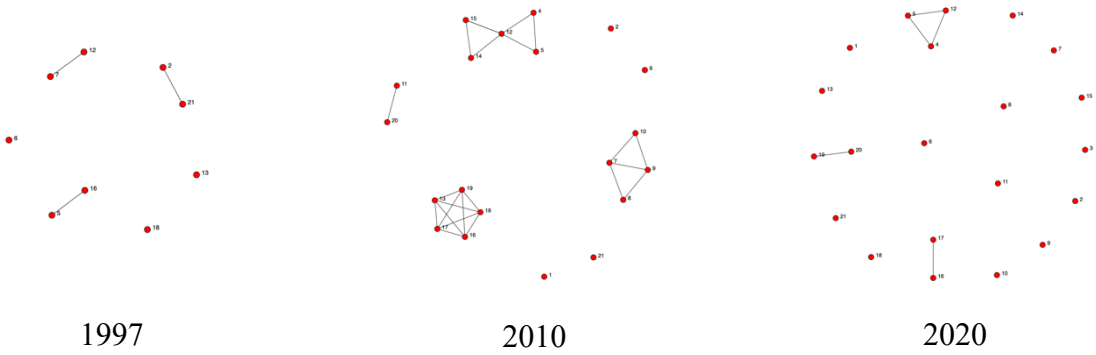

Figure 9:
The depictions of the interrelationships in the endyears of each separate period

This visualisation is only slightly different. *Figure 7* also shows the same dynamics of the network cohesiveness peaking in the second time period with several different groupings, (cliques, sub-networks). The only dissimilarities beyond the timing of the snapshots are the display of the nodes representing the actors, the selected editors-in-chief. In this version, they only appear (together with their assigned ID numbers) if their records show professional activity. So, if a chief editor was still inactive — for example, due to university student status or because of their workplace is unknown at the time — during the year in question, their node does not appear in the visualisation. This is why overtime, there are more actors displayed in the three snapshots: all editors-in-chief were regarded as still active in 2020, but with different dates of entry into the professional (media and civil society) world.

Is it possible to quantitatively confirm this observation regarding growing cohesiveness 1990–2010, and the ensuing dissolution of the network? The selected R packages have the functions to quantify and plot both the establishment and dissolution of interrelationships among editors-in-chief (more formally: edges among nodes). Hence, two graphs are created — each showing the number of interrelationships either formed or dissolved year by year.

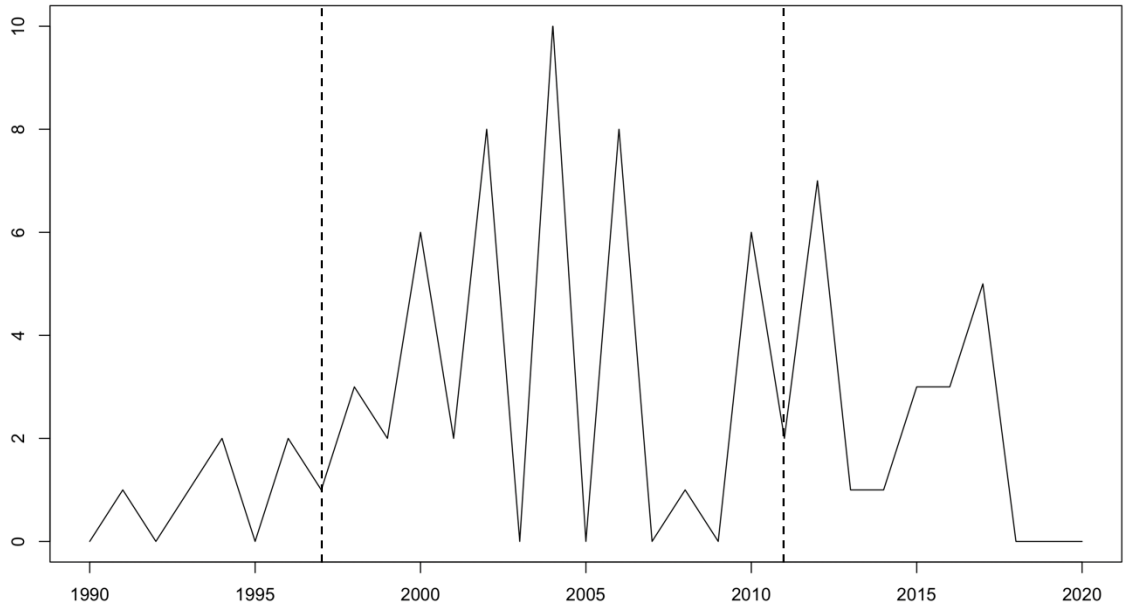

Figure 10:
Tie (edge, interrelationship) formation counts in the temporal social network by year (between 1990 and 2020). Vertical axis: number of ties formed; horizontal axis: year.

It is noteworthy to study the formations of interrelationships first within the pre-selected timeframes as shown in *Figure 8*. The difference between the first period (before the first, 1996 media law) and the second period are (between the 1996 media law and the 2010

media law) are staggering. In almost every year of the second period more interrelationships were formed than in any year of the first period. But even the third period (the time of populist governance and after the 2010 media law) shows a relative decline. There are two spikes in 2012 and following 2015 — but the curve steadily flatlines after that with zero working relationships formed within the network.

But for the full picture, one also needs to take into account the number of dissolved interrelationships, too. Here, the plot depicted in *Figure 9* also appears to confirm the suggestion regarding the overall network's cohesiveness peaking in the second time period.

While compared to the first period, the second one shows the first significant peaks around 2001 and in 2009–2010. As always, these may be due to many different reasons and effects. But methodologically, it needs to be mentioned that the figure accounts for accumulating interrelationships — which means that if there are only a few interrelationships established,

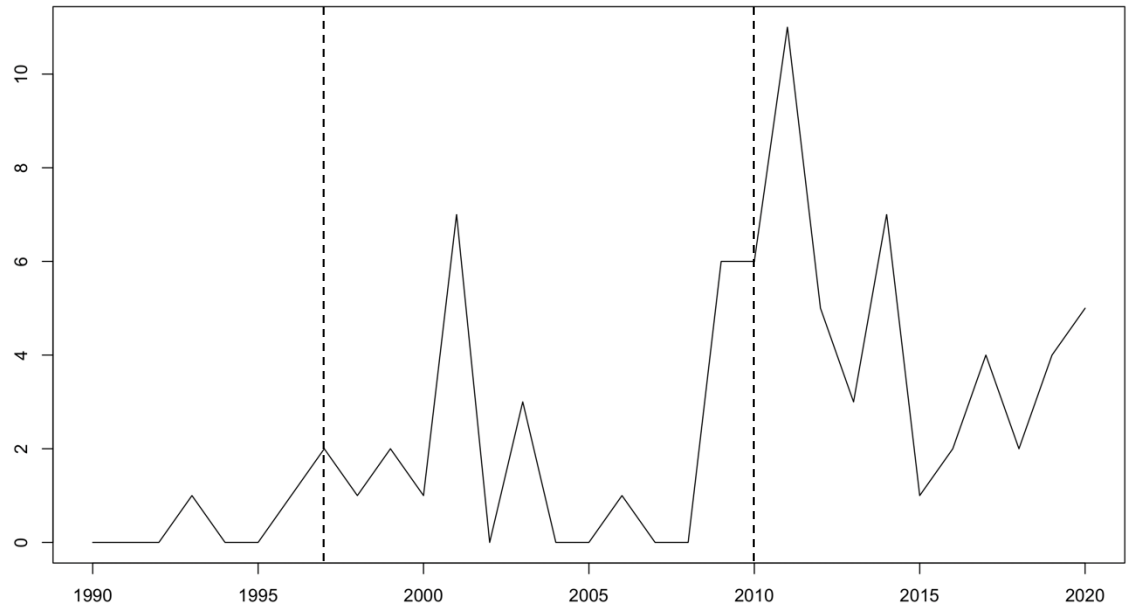

Figure 11:
Tie (edge, interrelationship) dissolution counts in the temporal social network by year (1990 – 2020). Vertical axis: number of ties dissolved; horizontal axis: year.

only a few can be dissolved. So, in order to have a larger number of interrelationships ceased, there needs to be a preceding time period of steady accumulation of ties. Regardless, the third time period still stands out in the number of ties dissolved. While the previously mentioned peaks around 2001 and 2009–2010 may be easily explained with global economic trends (the dotcom bubble and the 2008 global financial crisis and its aftermath), the "worst" year of the dissolutions, 2011 and the high levels of dissolution of

ties throughout the rest of the 2010s — which only have increased in recent years — conspicuously coincides with the time of the party system under populism.

Additionally, the quantitative analysis of the connectedness of the social network overtime also confirms this trend. Connectedness is a network-level metric which essentially measures how much a given network resembles the hierarchy archetype[100] — with its score ranging from zero to one. R computes these scores on an annual basis — as shown in the case of the current research in *Table 5*. With its connectedness values ranging from zero to 0.214, the collegial social network of the selected editors-in-chief has never been anywhere close to being a hierarchical organisation.

[100] See (Krackhardt 1994, pp. 93–96). Although the relaxation of these conditions has been proposed by the author himself, too (see (Everett and Krackhardt 2012)), using the original metric has become a standard in social network analysis.

1991	0.16666
1992	0.16666
1993	0.13333
1994	0.14286
1995	0.10714286
1996	0.21428571
1997	0.08333333
1998	0.09090909
1999	0.07575758
2000	0.1025641

2001	0.06410256
2002	0.18095238
2003	0.12380952
2004	0.18333333
2005	0.18333333
2006	0.18300654
2007	0.18300654
2008	0.16959064
2009	0.14035088
2010	0.14210526

2011	0.12631579
2012	0.10526316
2013	0.07368421
2014	0.04285714
2015	0.05238095
2016	0.06666667
2017	0.07619048
2018	0.07619048
2019	0.05238095
2020	0.02380952

Table 5:
Annual connectedness values (marked on a grey scale: the higher the values, the darker their background colours are)

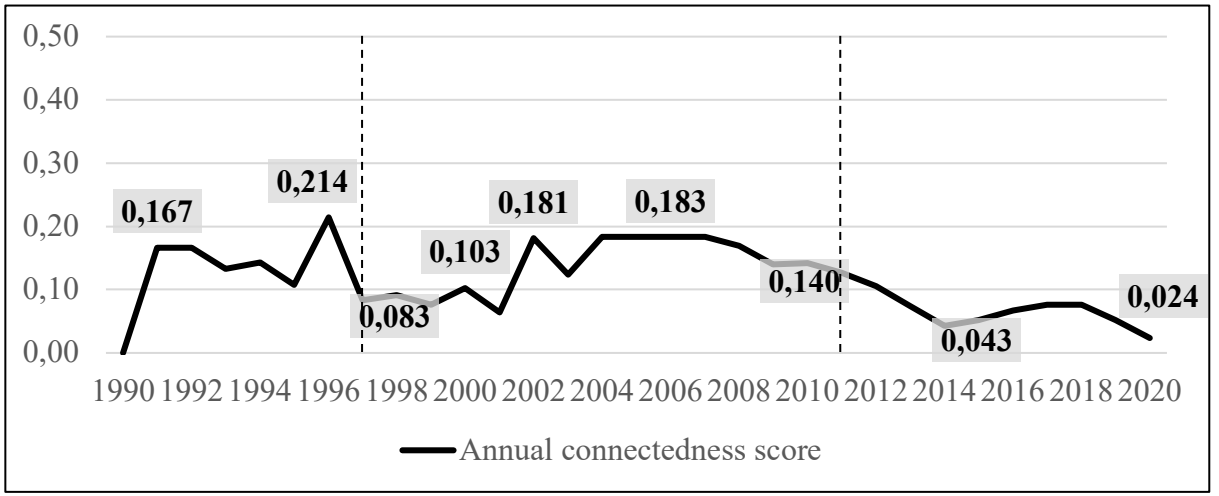

Figure 12: The annual connectedness values of the temporal social network throughout the period 1990–2020

Displaying these values on a traditional line plot on *Figure 10*, the image conveys a similar impression. Interestingly, the connectedness of the social network peaks in 1996. This may be due to smaller number of active editors-in-chief back then: most of the chief editors selected in this sample were not yet professionally engaged in the mid-1990s (or there is no data about their activities), so a relatively smaller number of collegial interrelationships among them could result in a higher overall connectedness in the first period. In the second period, the connectedness values plateau at the relatively high value of 0.183 in the years 2004–2007 to which they never returned. The third period, in comparison, is a period of almost constant decreasing of connectedness, declining to almost zero in 2020.

The interpretation of these results, derived from the nature of the connectedness measure, could even be positive. Since it relates to the notion of hierarchy, one could even see these developments as moving from a "more" hierarchical media elite structure towards a "freer" one. At this point, however, two caveats need to be made. One, as already mentioned, connectedness values — related to the cohesion of the social network — stayed very low throughout the entire observation period. Therefore, reading a hierarchical media elite structure into the results would be a misleading overstatement. Two, far from comprehensive, this dataset represents only 21 — although highly influential — chief editors, therefore the conclusion needs to pertain to their interrelationships. Hence what the rising–falling tendency of their connectedness really represents is that these individuals (mostly representing mass media chief editors who displayed critical attitudes[101]) stopped working together by the end of the 2010s.

Hence the combination of the quantitative analysis of connectedness as well as the preceding visual analysis (as well as the first two graphs, *Figures 6 and 7* depicting the evolution of the social network among chief editors) all point towards the same result. They find a curious dynamic of growing cohesiveness of the social network before 2010, and a subsequent, relatively quick demise thereof during the time of the party system under populism. But to analyse the data in more detail and evaluate the fundamental hypothesis of this endeavour, the dissertation delves more into the quantitative analysis of the same network — but this time, converted into a series of static networks.

IV.3. Static social network analysis

"Converting" a temporal social network into a static one virtually means disregarding the sequence of events in time and treating all interrelationships contained in the dataset (and represented by

[101] See the already referenced (Beck, Bíró Nagy, and Róna 2011) about media behaviours in the final years of the second period, 2006–2010.

graphs) as simultaneous. In the context of this dissertation research, this means that the interrelationships are treated as having happened at some point in the period of observation, 1990 and 2020, for at least one year — regardless of whether they lasted longer than that, and if so, how much. To gain deeper insight into the research subject, after quantitatively analysing the entire post-communist period, this static social network analysis also divides the three decades of post-communism into three distinct periods as previous chapters and sections did. Thus, all (together with the complete network, four) corresponding sub-sections first offer a visualisation of the static social network in question. Subsequently, the sub-sections offer the same metric of cohesiveness, i.e. connectedness, followed by the analysis of centrality in each static social network. Then, three centrality measures are introduced — in order:

- degrees;
- stress centrality; and
- betweenness centrality.

Centrality measures pertain to actors in the network (node-level measures), they all capture their "importance" — that is, how central the individual positions of each editor-in-chief are in their collegial social network. In each corresponding sub-section, the four static social networks' actors' centrality score rankings are offered. The chapter following the analysis, "Interpreting the results and their limitations" then compares, summarises, and evaluates the hypotheses based on the results presented here.

IV.3.a. The analysis of the complete social network (1990–2020)

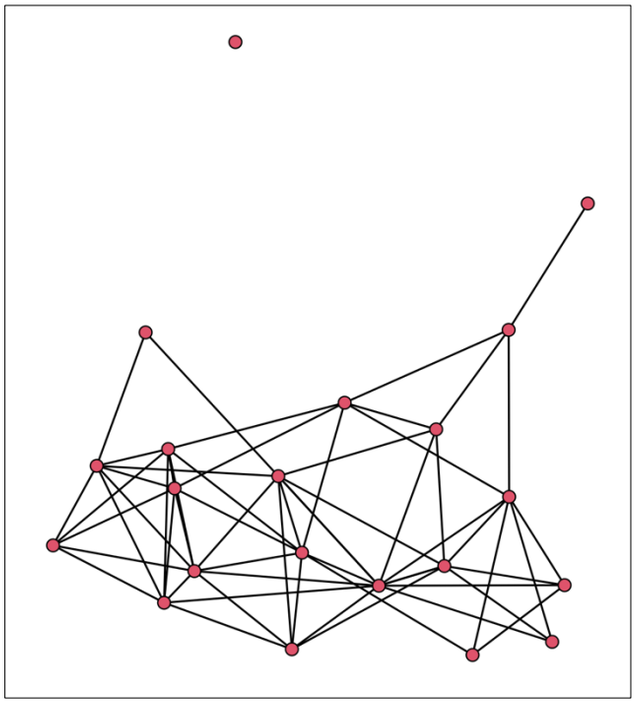

Figure 13: All interrelationships throughout the entire period of observation, 1990–2020 among the selected editors-in-chief as a static social network

The visualisation of the complete static social network presents a certain element of surprise. After having stated that the annual connectedness values of the temporal social network throughout the entire period of observation are very low,[102] the resulting image shows a rather densely connected graph. Indeed, the connectedness value of the complete static network of collegial interrelationships registers at a very high value: 0.905. Two reasons can explain this — at the first glance — somewhat contradictory, unexpected result.

The first one is basically related to the nature of network. The latter, under the conditions of the present research, relatively overstates the "weight" of short-term (even one year long) interrelationships. Nevertheless, the visualisation does represent the "strength of weak ties" well — to paraphrase one of the most-cited works of research in the discipline of social network analysis (Granovetter 1973). It shows that indeed, the selected, highly influential subset of the Hungarian media elite does know each other and have worked together at least temporarily at some point in the past three decades — almost regardless of whether the selected editor-in-chief worked at a civil society media outlet or a mass media outlet. However, there is a discernible structural difference among them: with the exception of BODOKY Tamás (the founder and editor-in-chief of Átlátszó), the rest of the civil society outlets' chief editors are only sparsely connected to the rest of the network — with PRONTVAI Vera being the only actor in the network isolated from everyone else.[103]

[102] Between 0 and 0.214 on a scale of 0 to 1, see *Table 5* and the corresponding *Figure 12*.

[103] The quantitative measures listed in *Table 7* on page 102 also support this observation.

Indeed, the peripherical position of civil society editors-in-chief — chiefly, in the case of PATAKI Gábor, editor-in-chief at Klubrádió — is the second, almost "accidental" reason for the very high connectedness score. To recall, the quantitative measurement of connectedness takes into account the similarity of a given network to the idealtype or archetype of a hierarchy,[104] too. To paraphrase the meaning of "hierarchy" in the present context of the research, since there is one actor, PATAKI Gábor, who is connected through one tie, collegial interrelationship to another actor (his predecessor in the same position, VICSEK Ferenc) who, in turn, is also connected to the rest of the network through a few ties, the network "accidentally" appears to be similar to a relatively efficient organisational outtree, chart (as elaborated in (Krackhardt 1994)). But in reality, PATAKI cannot be nominated as an influential, powerful, or central figure in the complete static network.

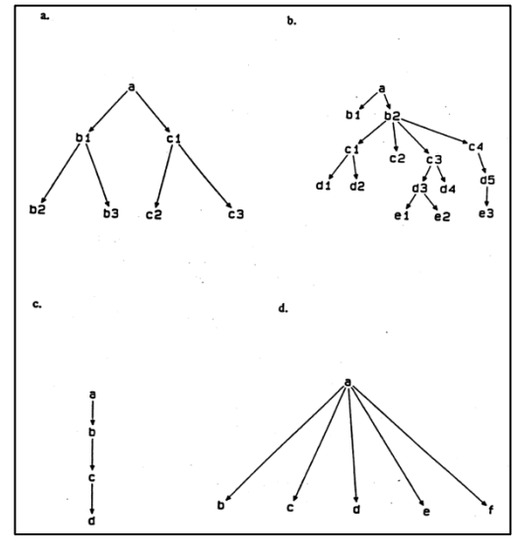

Figure 14:
Four examples of outtrees (Figure 5.2 in Krackhardt 1994: p. 94) representing perfect hierarchical systems. The accidental similarity of the studied network to such graphs is one of the reasons why the connectedness score of the complete static network is high

To study the individual positions of editors-in-chief, the analysis turns to the fundamental centrality scores and reports the results of each actor in the complete static network.

[104] See *footnote 100* and the related discussion as well as (Krackhardt 1994).

Ranking	Name	Degrees	Stress centrality score	Betweenness centrality score
1	PÁLMAI L. Ákos	12	214	64.699392000
2	WEYER Balázs	9	118	44.224007000
3	SZOMBATHY Pál	6	98	39.013484000
4	VICSEK Ferenc	4	76	36.566667000
5	DULL Szabolcs	8	104	34.368455000
6	AZURÁK Csaba	7	76	32.960458000
7	GAZDA Albert	9	84	18.434241000
8	KOTROCZÓ Róbert	5	56	17.969332000
9	UJ Péter	7	56	15.133394000
10	BODOKY Tamás	7	30	15.043860000
11	DUDÁS Gergely	7	44	13.096825000
12	GYÖRGY Bence	8	46	12.226768000
13	TÓTH-SZENESI Attila	7	44	12.125397000
14	SÁLING Gergő	6	28	3.921053000
15	KŐHEGYI Anna	4	10	2.700000000
16	TÓTH Tamás Antal	3	8	1.516667000
17	PRONTVAI Vera	0	0	0.000000000
	PATAKI Gábor	1	0	0.000000000
	DÁVID Ferenc	2	0	0.000000000
	GÁBOR László	3	0	0.000000000
	MÉSZÁROS Zsófi	5	0	0.000000000

Table 6:
Centrality values of the selected editors-in-chief in the complete static social network (1990–2020), coloured from white (lowest) to dark grey (highest) and ranked according to their betweenness centrality scores from highest to lowest.

Indeed, PATAKI is among the lowest-scoring actors in the complete static social network according to centrality values. But overall, the analysis of the dataset shows a highly interesting "top list".

To better understand what these values imply, I briefly refer back to "Chapter 2: Research design" to remind readers about how they are calculated. All centrality values used in this analysis capture about the same phenomenon.

- Degrees simply indicate the nominal number of ties of an editor-in-chief has (i.e. how many other chief editors a selected actor has worked with for at least a year).
- Stress centrality takes the number of the shortest paths between two nodes of the network. (Koschützki et al. 2005; Butts 2020) Actors with higher stress centralities connect more people: the higher the value, the more central a chief editor is. This also means that if such chief editors were removed from the network, structural cohesion would decrease immensely.

- Betweenness centrality scores are also related to the notion of shortest paths. They also capture how much a node is in-between other nodes of the network. But the method of calculation differs. The number of shortest paths on which the actor is present is moderated by the number of all existing shortest paths in the network, showcasing their roles as (potential) "bridges" or "boundary" spanners among different parts, communities of the network. (Perez and Germon 2016; Butts 2020)

Betweenness centrality is used to rank the editors-in-chief centrality in the complete static social network, this is to highlight important structural actors. (Clique analysis could also play a similar role — however, in the present case, the software analysis somewhat unsurprisingly grouped actors almost identically to the composition of their media outlets.) Betweenness centrality spotlights individual actors who have been involved in multiple, differently, and diversely connected communities.

It is worth focusing on the bottom five and top five of the ranked list. Out of the five lowest-ranked editors-in-chief — all with a zero betweenness score, but a handful of actual collegial ties to the rest of the network —, the fact that civil society media journalists do not play a central role in the Hungarian media, seems rather clear. But this should not be outright interpreted as they are unimportant in the network — also due to the manifold limits of this dissertation research's methodology. Quite the opposite: that civil society can be influential, a civil society chief editor, BODOKY himself attests by giving an example in an interview to an online "portrait interview" series podcast (Tóth S. T. 2018):

> *"…we started using the word oligarch, perhaps around 2012, and many still had held that uncalled for — saying 'that's Russia, there are no oligarchs here, there are businesspeople here', and today it is completely usual in the Hungarian press that these types of businesspeople (who got rich using the money of the state and then give favours to the politicians who favoured them), can be called oligarchs."* (Tóth S. T. 2020a, from 10:00)[105]

Indeed, the low rankings of civil society chief editors regarding their centralities in the complete static network also stems from the selection of applied methods. Of course, the specific brand of social network analysis used in this research is blind to such qualitative data and the social

[105] The author's own translation from the original Hungarian included below:

> *„…Mi kezdtünk el oligarcházni (...) 2012-ben talán, és ezt még sokan visszatetszőnek tartották, hogy »az Oroszország, itt nincsenek oligarchák, és itt üzletemberek vannak«, és ma már ez teljesen bevett a magyar sajtóban, hogy ezeket a típusú (az állam pénzén meggazdagodott) üzletembereket – akik utána besegítenek azoknak a politikusoknak, akik őket helyzetbe hozták –, ezeket lehet oligarchának nevezni."* (*ibid.*)

phenomena they represent. Rather, it obviously favours and puts the emphasis on actors with diverse backgrounds, multiple career changes — a certain volatility in the professional trajectories of the selected editors-in-chief. So what the low rankings of most civil society chief editors, in this regard, reflects, is their stable, long-term approaches to their professional organisations — albeit with presumably lower societal significance also due to the low audience reaches of their respective outlets. Moreover, it needs to be added to the analysis of the role of civil society that two other civil society media outlets' editors-in-chief, the previously cited BODOKY Tamás and VICSEK Ferenc actually achieve remarkably high centrality scores (ranked number ten and four, respectively). Their career trajectories, however, give another insight into the role of civil society media. Interestingly, both of them had had a prominent career in mass media before joining civil society at almost the same time, in the early years after the beginning of populist governance in Hungary (2011 and 2010, respectively). Both openly critical of the populist government, in the background of their reasons for changing their realm of activity from mass media to civil society media, there are strong traces of external, political and business influences[106] — even though VICSEK remained active in mass media, too, during his time at Klubrádió also hosting and joining television programmes at the channel ATV. But beyond their likely motives, their almost simultaneous career moves also suggest that civil society media may be interpreted a "survival strategy". Indeed, by 2020, the few surviving collegial interrelationships in the temporal network are either links from fully civil society media collaborations (around Tilos Rádió, namely, BODOKY, DÁVID, and WEYER) or the result of creating a new media outlet registered as business organisations, but financed mostly from donations, crowdfunding (namely, UJ's 444 together with MÉSZÁROS, and Telex with DULL and TÓTH-SZENESI) — a form of distinctively civil society action.

[106] The journalist reporting about VICSEK's dismissal cites both the 2008 global financial crisis as well as the Fidesz-led government's hostile policies towards Klubrádió as a reason for the financial hardship of the outlet — which also led to internal conflicts. (Bednárik 2014) The source is the then-leading left-wing (socialist party-affiliated) daily newspaper Népszabadság ("People's Freedom") which was famously taken over and shut down by Fidesz-linked business interests.

Besides a photo reporter's contemporary blog entry (Völgyi 2011), Bodoky personally says that external political and economic meddling with editorial independence had led to the final conflict that resulted in his resignation from Index:

> *"This conflict had been a long time coming. So, I think that I founded a not-for-profit organisation and we have been doing Átlátszó the way we have been because* I have encountered this multiple times, for real, during my career that 'do not write about this, do not write about that, this guy advertises here, that guy is the owner, that is their buddy'... so this was also a similar type of conflict.*"*— (Tóth S. T. 2020a, from 38:50), emphasis added, the translation is mine from the original Hungarian as quoted below.
>
> *„Érlelődött már korábban ez a konfliktus. Tehát én azt gondolom, hogy azért alapítottam utána non-profitot és azért így próbáljuk csinálni az Átlátszót, ahogy, mert* én többször belefutottam ebbe, tényleg, a működésem során, hogy »erről ne írjál, arról ne írjál, ez hirdet, az tulajdonos, az haver«... tehát ez is egy ilyen típusú konfliktus volt.*"*

Nevertheless, going beyond the role of civil society in the studied elite media social network, it is even more important to analyse the most central actors. Besides the aforementioned VICSEK, the second most central journalist, WEYER Balázs is also an active member of civil society media at Tilos Rádió — but has been selected to the sample due to his long-term work as chief editor at Origo. His "dual" role is one of the reasons why he is ranked number two. But he has also worked as chief editor at a political programme ("Parliament" [Országház]) at the national commercial TV channel RTL Klub from the late 1990s, in certain years simultaneously with being the editor-in-chief of Origo. If this research measured influence in terms of audience reach of each selected journalist (which would be difficult for many reasons also touched upon in the Research design chapter), WEYER would probably be a good candidate for a top position, too. Working at Magyar Narancs, RTL Klub, Origo, and advising civil society-based investigative journalism media outlet Direkt36, WEYER could also be nominated as exemplifying the career trajectory of government critical media in post-socialist Hungary. After becoming such a central figure in the Hungarian media elite, following the take-over of Origo by Fidesz-linked business actors,[107] beyond advising Direkt36, he has been rather withdrawn from mass media since the mid-2010s. He penned an important study for a media policy proposal (Weyer 2017), but I am not aware whether this would have significantly influenced any political actor or party's views or policies on the matter. DULL Szabolcs, the fifth most central chief editor (selected due to his position at Index 2019–2020), similarly to the previously mentioned individual journalists, has experienced several instances of external — chiefly, political — pressures despite his relatively young age. Shortly after his most famous (Hann et al. 2020) and recent dismissal from Index, he stated:

> *"And this has been the umpteenth editorial breakdown in my life. I worked at the Chronicle of Radio Kossuth and Origo as well. So, I have seen a lot of editorial changes, transformations, explosions, but this has never disillusioned me, but reinforced me in my belief that this is an important challenge: being a journalist, informing readers without external influence, independently, due to the best of our knowledge."* (Babos 2020)[108]

His predecessor as editor-of chief was SZOMBATHY Pál — a long-time journalist since the 1990s when he hosted a political TV programme at the Hungarian public television (then enjoying a

[107] See for example (Origo 2017a; Rényi 2016).

[108] The translation is my own from the original Hungarian:

> *"És ez már a sokadik szerkesztőségi összeomlás volt az életemben. Dolgoztam a Kossuth Rádió Krónikájánál és az Origónál is. Tehát láttam már jó pár szerkesztőségi váltást, átalakítást, szétrobbanást, de ez sosem ábrándított ki, hanem még inkább megerősített abban, hogy ez egy fontos kihívás: külső befolyástól mentesen, függetlenül, a legjobb tudásunk szerint újságot írni, tájékoztatni az olvasókat."* (Babos 2020)

monopolistic market position), reaching millions of viewers. Following political and business pressures, he also resigned his office of the editor-in-chief at a smaller, liberal newspaper in the early 2000s and switched to TV sports journalism, and media management at Index in the second half of the 2010s. After DULL's dismissal, he took up the challenge to re-organise Index representing a non-partisan approach to journalism in his conception, but only remained in his position for months, leaving it also due to political pressures.[109] (Nagy J. 2020) In 2020–2021, he did not seem to join another media outlet yet. Due to his varied, diverse background, he scores high in this dissertation research, but it is difficult to identify SZOMBATHY as a highly influential actor with a distinct strategy. His interest ranging from sports to political philosophy, he pursued a practical, opportunistic agenda which seems to have eventually backfired with his dismissal from Index where he could not stay on for the already cited political influencing of his outlet. Interestingly and finally, the most central actor in the complete static social network turns out to be PÁLMAI L. Ákos. Not a very well-known figure publicly, he — alongside with GÁBOR László — worked at Origo and TV2 as editor-in-chief after starting his career at RTL Klub. But while GÁBOR László with whom they have alternated in this position at both TV2 and Origo and who maintains a rather secretive, low profile (actually so little open-source data is available about his career, that he has been scored among the least central chief editors in the sample), PÁLMAI has become almost infamous for his role in the take-overs and transformations of both outlets — from critical journalism to pro-government, militant[110] journalism (Waisbord 2013) which he justified with *"changing consumer habits"*. (Mátrai 2014)

---

[109] Citing a non-disclosure agreement, Szombathy metaphorically speaks about political influence at Index:

> *„...formally, I quit following a mutual agreement. (...) Indeed, in the zoo without cages, the owner could have influenced the content, even whom I hire and whom I release. On 23 November, [then-vice editor] SZTANKÓCZY and I went to a meeting with the owners. In the office of [the owner] VASZILY, my predecessor Ákos STARCZ was already waiting, and we were told that everything had already been formally handled. Shortly after this, two enforcers appeared in front of the office, and just to be safe, two other on the courtyard. (...) And VASZILY shouted at us saying that we could not leave until we have not signed everything."* ((Nagy J. 2020) — the translation is my own from the original Hungarian as follows)
>
> *„...formailag közös megegyezéssel távoztam. (...) Való igaz, hogy a rácsmentes állatkertben a tulajdonos már beleszólhatott volna a tartalomba, meg abba is, hogy kiket veszek fel, kiket küldök el. (...) November 23-án SZTANKÓCZYVAL egyeztetésre mentünk a tulajdonosokhoz. VASZILY irodájában már ott várt az utódom, STARCZ Ákos is, és közölték, hogy már mindent lepapíroztak. Majd kisvártatva megjelent két verőember az iroda előtt, meg a biztonság kedvéért másik kettő az udvaron (...) VASZILY meg ordítva közölte, hogy innen addig el nem mehetünk, míg mindent alá nem írtunk."* (*ibid.*)

[110] Often labelled as propaganda outlets, since 2014–2015, both Origo and TV2 have a distinct, undeniably pro-government tone. This dissertation does not engage in discourse analysis, but to cite anecdotal evidence supporting this observation, TV2's publicly recognised journalists did openly advocate for voting for PM ORBÁN's Fidesz party in 2018 (VOKS.news 2020) in a rather long, prime time programme. I believe this is unprecedented in the almost three decades of commercial television in Hungary — but can be likened to the concept of "militant" journalism as developed by the cited WAISBORD.

This overview of the least and most central figures in the Hungarian media elite covers some of the most important aspects of the findings of this research. But in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the temporal evolution of the network structures (including centralities of actors) — still utilising static network analysis —, the dissertation further analyses the three separate periods (divided by the successive iterations of the Media Law of Hungary), following the same structure as in the present sub-section.

IV.3.b. The analysis of the static social network during the tripartite party system (1990–1996)

The aggregate network of elite mass and civil society media editors-in-chief in the first period is remarkable because it is so different from the full social network over the entire period of observation. It only features seven actors: two of them with only one connection to other members of the network, and the other five editors-in-chief with only two connections each. The actors are arranged into two distinctive cliques. The three-member, triangle-like group is formed from editors-in-chief who worked at the Hungarian public service media outlets at the time. This is no wonder as state media, enjoyed a monopolistic position in television and radio broadcasting. Hence virtually the only way to start a quality career in electronic media in early 1990s Hungary was to work at the Hungarian Television (Magyar Televízió, MTV) or Hungarian Radio (Magyar Rádió, MR). The chain-like clique consisting of four members is more heterogenous. They usually worked for several different media outlets (WEYER Balázs being involved in three: Sunday News (Vasárnapi Hírek), Hungarian Orange (Magyar Narancs), and Tilos Rádió in 1996), so it is due to these double– and triple-memberships that their network does not take a closed shape, but essentially, a line. It is the liberal weekly Magyar Narancs and the Index-predecessor Internetto (originally spelled as iNteRNeTTo) — which started out as a regular multimedia CD-ROM release in the early 1990s and then moved to the internet as Hungary's major (and effectively, only) webportal at the time (Bodoky 2000) — that link together the editors-in-chief of this group.

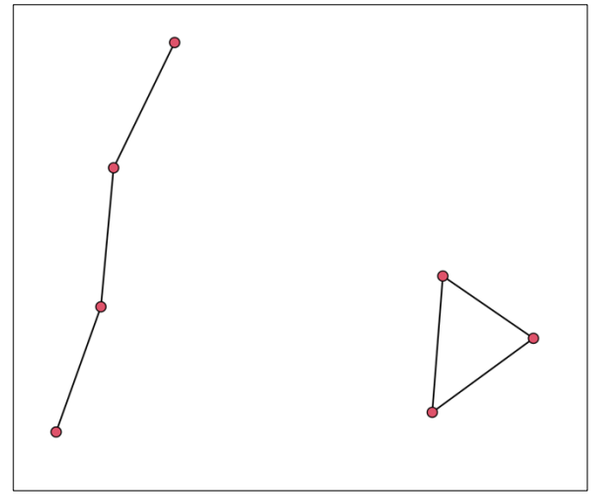

Figure 15: The aggregate social network of the selected editors-in-chief between 1990 and 1996

While in the case of such a small network, quantitative analysis does not serve with too many practical insights, it is worth reporting the key results.

The centralisation value of the aggregate network is 0.667. This is a rather high value which simply stems from the mathematical properties of the graph.[111] While this centralisation measure differs considerably from connectedness, it partially explains why connectedness peaks at 0.214 in 1996 in the dynamic temporal network analysis of the entire network between 1990 and 2020. (*See Figure 10*). The limited size and relatively high connectivity would not be surpassed later in time with growth of the network. Additionally, while the editors-in-chief do not score differently on the degrees value, the stress centrality and betweenness values highlight BODOKY and WEYER as they play a bridging role towards fellow Magyar Narancs journalists GAZDA and UJ. Interestingly, and most likely coincidentally, they are the ones who would be involved with civil society media, too — WEYER already in this period by joining Tilos Rádió, while according to publicly traceable data, BODOKY only joins in 2010 and establishes the NGO online investigative news portal Átlátszó the next year).

Assigned ID number	Name	Degrees	Stress centrality	Betweenness centrality
5	BODOKY Tamás	2	2	2
12	WEYER Balázs	2	2	2
2	VICSEK Ferenc	2	0	0
6	KOTROCZÓ Róbert	2	0	0
13	GAZDA Albert	2	0	0
16	UJ Péter	1	0	0
21	SZOMBATHY Pál	1	0	0

Table 7: Centrality values of the selected editors-in-chief in the aggregate static social network of the first period (1990–1996), ranked according to their betweenness centrality scores from highest to lowest.

So, while this first period does not seem to offer with too many insights quantitatively, there are a few points which needs to be underlined here. As the entire dissertation focuses on an elite segment of Hungarian journalists who served as editors-in-chief between 2010 and 2020, it suggests that they are a new generation of journalists. Out of the 21 actors, only there is only data about seven of them being professionally active — and they already form a network (even if a disjoint one), underscoring the "small world" of Hungarian (especially elite) media. So while (Vásárhelyi 1999b) identifies the phenomenon of "surviving" communist media elites in the 1990s as one of the reasons

[111] On a scale from 0 to 1 (Butts 2020) also quoting (Freeman 1978). This is because of the way the R software package calculates the values (*see more* in Section III.3.c. Analytical methods). In case of a rather well-connected, but few-member network, this measure is bound to be high — indeed, it would not be too difficult to rearrange the analysed network to more closely resemble a star with one central node connecting to all the rest of the nodes, a perfectly centralised graph.

for the left-wing media dominance of the pre-2010 Hungarian media, these highly influential elite journalists definitely do not belong to those. In fact, the most senior member of the sample, VICSEK Ferenc was born in the 1950s — so still relatively young, in his forties in this period. So, the overwhelming majority of the selected editors-in-chief were socialised well after the transition from one-party state socialism to democratic market economy. Moreover, this subset of editors-in-chief who were already active in the 1990s worked at media outlets with rather obvious left-wing and liberal ideologies. Even if we count the public service media as an organisation whose political orientation changed with the change of governments — which would be an oversimplification —, Magyar Narancs (at the time considered as then-liberal Fidesz party weekly)[112], Népszabadság[113] (where UJ Péter started his career), and also Index-precursor Internetto were far on the spectrum from right-wing positions. Also the public broadcaster-affiliated journalists still profess views that are distinctly critical towards the Fidesz government (KOTROCZÓ (Szalay 2017) and VICSEK (see for example (F. Vicsek 2020)) or liberal (SZOMBATHY (Nagy J. 2020)[114]). So altogether, it is perhaps the most important insight of the first period (1990–1996) that as the social network of the selected elite civil society and mass media outlets' chief editors start to take shape, their political attitudes are recognisably left-liberal.

[112] The media outlet openly admits its history of being direct connection to Fidesz as an "alternative-radical" party. Moreover, they also clearly state their worldview:

> *"According to the paper's* mission statement*, the weekly is committed to values of representative democracy and market economy based on free competition and private property, and it informs its highly qualified readers according to these values in a unique voice about the defining events of political and cultural public life. It is committed to liberalism; it values individual liberties and the norms of the rule of law more than anything."* (Magyar Narancs 2011) — Emphasis in the original. The author's own translation based on the original Hungarian as quoted:
>
> *"A lap* mission statementje *szerint a képviseleti demokrácia és a szabad versenyes, magántulajdonon alapuló piacgazdaság értékei iránt elkötelezett hetilap, amely magasan kvalifikált olvasóit ezen értékek szerint, egyedi hangnemben tájékoztatja a politikai és kulturális közélet meghatározó eseményeiről. Elkötelezettsége liberális; az egyéni szabadságjogok és a jogállami normák érvényesülését mindennél többre becsüli."*

[113] As described previously, Népszabadság had a direct MSZP ownership stake throughout its existence after the transition.

[114] SZOMBATHY's political self-identification as an "old-fashioned liberal" [„régivágású liberális"] (*ibid.*) might substantially differ from the opposition and/or liberal mainstream in Hungary which may partially explain his role in the ultimate dismantling of the Index journalistic staff in the second half of 2022. (Mátyás 2022b) It is perhaps closer to being a "centrist" or a "conservative-liberal" mindset.

IV.3.c. The analysis of the static social network analysis during the two-block party system (1997–2010)

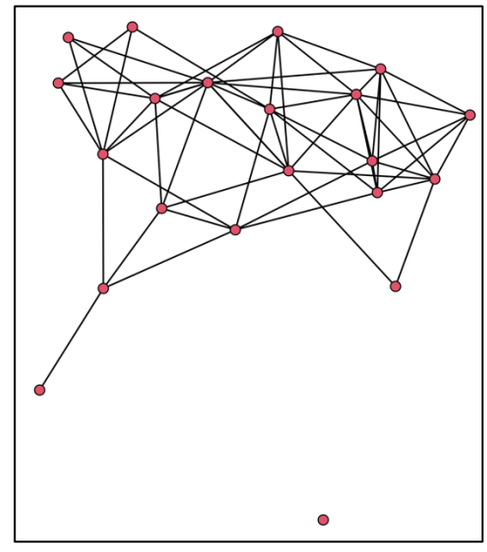

Figure 16:
The aggregate social network of the selected editors-in-chief between 1997 and 2010

The graph displaying the professional relationships among chief editors in the second period, between 1997 and 2010 stands in stark contrast with the that of the first period, being almost fully connected. Indeed, if the reader does not find any difference between this period's social network and that of the complete static network of the entire period of observation (1990–2020) (*compare it with Figure 11*), that is not a mistake: the two graphs are exactly the same. This, in itself, is an important, major finding. It implies that irrespective of what relationships had been formed in the previous or the next period, there is not a single one that did not exist between 1997 and 2010 at least for a year. The complete collaborative social network among the selected individuals were formed in this period — ties constituted in the other two periods are only redundant ones, that already existed in the presently analysed period.

While one may argue that the inclusion of the year 1997 in this period could partially explain this phenomenon, the data shows otherwise. To begin with, the small, seven-members strong network cannot possibly give a one strong, single reason for this effect discovered here. But to check the effect of the demarcation year, let us turn to the career data. 1997 was the first full year after the entry into force of post-communist Hungary's first Media Law of 1996, and the first two commercial television channels available nationwide, TV2 and RTL Klub went on-air only in October 1997 (on the fourth and on the seventh, respectively). It is a known phenomenon[115] that these new commercial mass television stations recruited professionals from the public service media outlets — being the only source of experienced media workers and journalists. So, 1997 could distort the network by introducing ties as new ones — actually surviving from the first period's public service media co-working relationships. This is only true in the two working relationships of KOTROCZÓ Róbert who never worked at the same outlet again as VICSEK and SZOMBATHY. But the two latter ones represent an exception as they later worked at the public

[115] See besides the contemporary analysis of (Vásárhelyi 1999b) the anecdotal evidence from the recollections of Kotroczó in 2020 (Tóth O. 2020).

service media again and at the smaller (ideologically markedly left-wing[116]) commercial television channel ATV as well. The rest of the pre-1997 network all re-constituted their collegial ties at different media outlets, usually at the Internetto-successor leading online news portal, Index, and in the case of BODOKY and WEYER, civil society radio station Tilos Rádió. This dynamic of re-establishing relationships at different media outlets is also an important finding, it is a thoroughly social network phenomenon that structures the progress of interpersonal relationships — either reinforcing or counterbalancing institutional changes. It demonstrates (by foreshadowing that in the third, post-2010 period no new working relationships would be established) that the "small world" of the Hungarian civil society and mass media elite is predominantly organised on the basis of a more lasting community principle, rather than a constantly changing, meritocratic-institutional one. Also, logically speaking, this finding suggests that the third period can only show either the very same or a sparser network in the 2010s — the latter suggesting that this community had become more fractured, broke down. This suggestion will be evaluated in the next sub-section, for now, let us turn to the qualitative properties of the network in the second period vis-à-vis the first one.

The centralisation value of this network goes down significantly to 0.347. Such a development could be expected with the introduction of more nodes into the network. This low value shows that regarding the main focus of this research, co-membership and collegial working relationships, no significant centralisation effort is to be found in this period. Rather, it is a distributed network which proves to be well-connected overall (as explained in sub-section IV.3.a "The analysis of the complete social network (1990–2020)") with only a single isolate and quite a few central individuals with many working ties to others.

It is worth further discussing the centrality scores of the individual editors-in-chief — even if the order or ranking of the selected journalists in this second period is the very same as in the case of the complete network (1990–2020) (consult *Table 7*). The only difference are the nominal values

[116] While the TV channel ATV can be accessed nation-wide in different service providers' packages, it is not included in the terrestrial broadcast available for free. The channel has got a strong public affairs profile. For more than a decade, it is owned by the Pentecostal, neo-protestant evangelical church called the "Faith Church" (or, perhaps more literally, "The Congregation of Faith") [Hit Gyülekezete] — and recently, the majority ownership stake was acquired by the church's religious and worldly leader, NÉMETH Sándor. This put NÉMETH him and his family in an even firmer position of control. (See for example (Mázsár 2020)) ATV's programmes still have a markedly critical view about the government. However, a personal connection privately revealed to me a certain "glass ceiling" about how far government critique can go at the TV station; and it is well known that the regularly and frequently televised religious services of the Faith Church often touch upon heavily pro-government subjects and messages as the church — after a long period of fraught relationship with the Fidesz party — has finally become a strong supporter of it. (See (Rényi 2018a; Tóth-Biró 2022) as well as (Török 2011b) whose presentation is also available in a video format online (Török 2011a).)

of the stress centrality and betweenness centrality. That is because the shorter period of observation decreases these values — or, rather, the same (at least) one-year-long ties over a longer, three-decades period become more valuable. It is important to point out that the individuals whose positionalities are analysed have been selected due to their chief editor positions in the 2010s — so not in the currently analysed period of 1997–2010, but the next one —, thus only a few of them held this highest journalistic office then: namely, UJ Péter, KOTROCZÓ Róbert, and WEYER Balázs.[117] It is only the latter who ranks highly on the list — having been chief editor of Origo, working at RTL Klub, and Tilos Rádió during this period —; KOTROCZÓ only made the seventh position, while UJ is not even featured in the top ten. So, job titles are not the reason why this analysis highlights some individuals over the others. Rather, it is their connections to other well-connected individuals; and as it has been argued in this sub-section, with this period being the formative beginning of this elite community, it is the varied nature of ties that boost a journalist's position. Indeed, PÁLMAI and SZOMBATHY (ranked number one and three, respectively) both worked at three or more outlets in this period. With many more — in fact, all of the selected chief editors who were not active before 1997 — becoming active in this period and joining the network, their diverse relationships with the newcomers elevate their standings.

[117] Here, however, a caveat needs to be added regarding Tilos Rádió due to its unique community-based, non-hierarchical editorial structure as noted in previous sections. Because of this phenomenon, the positionalities of their journalists are somewhat discounted.

Assigned ID number	Name	Degrees	Stress centrality	Betweenness centrality
15	PÁLMAI L. Ákos	12	86	31.507143
12	WEYER Balázs	9	51	21.084921
21	SZOMBATHY Pál	6	49	19.110317
2	VICSEK Ferenc	4	38	18.361111
20	DULL Szabolcs	8	50	16.835714
9	AZURÁK Csaba	7	38	16.630159
6	KOTROCZÓ Róbert	5	28	10.559524
13	GAZDA Albert	9	39	9.890476
7	GYÖRGY Bence	8	23	6.848413
5	BODOKY Tamás	7	15	6.80119
18	DUDÁS Gergely	7	22	6.652381
19	TÓTH-SZENESI Attila	7	22	6.652381
16	UJ Péter	7	25	6.579762
14	SÁLING Gergő	6	14	2.054762
11	TÓTH Tamás Antal	3	4	1.233333
10	KŐHEGYI Anna	4	5	1.198413
1	PRONTVAI Vera	0	0	0
3	PATAKI Gábor	1	0	0
4	DÁVID Ferenc	2	0	0
8	GÁBOR László	3	0	0
17	MÉSZÁROS Zsófi	5	0	0

Table 8:
Centrality values of the selected editors-in-chief of the aggregate static social network of the second period (1997–2010), coloured from white (lowest) to dark grey (highest) and ranked according to their betweenness centrality scores from highest to lowest.

IV.3.d. The analysis of the static social network during the dominant party system (2011–2020)

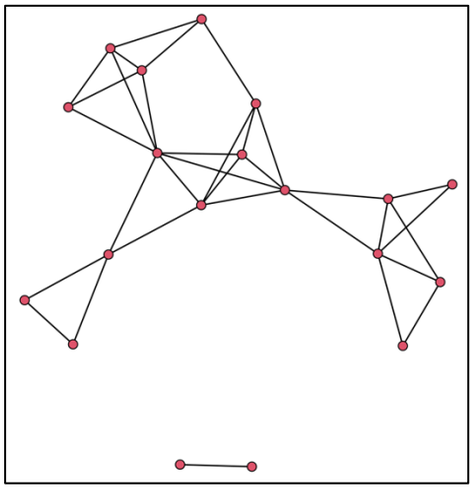

Figure 17:
The aggregate social network of the selected editors-in-chief between 1997 and 2010

Nevertheless, it is only in comparison with the final, third period that the formative years of the network become meaningful. Indeed, as one could anticipate after learning the results of the second period, the visualisation of the network in the third period, in the 2010s, yields a much sparser network. It even shows the signs of fracturing with a dyad (consisting of Klub Rádió chief editors PATAKI and VICSEK) being disconnected from the rest of this network in this decade. What is more, RTL Klub news programme editor-in-chief KOTROCZÓ also detaches from the network as an isolate, even though thus far only Mária Rádió editor-in-chief PRONTVAI Vera was the only isolate (they are not displayed in this graph). The centralisation value of this period's static network is 0.219 — an even lower value than the previous decade's centralisation score. While this fracturing and isolation most likely contributes to the decrease of this value, it cannot be solely explained by that. A more connected, more "wired" central network component could have even boosted the centralisation score. Therefore, the diminishing centralisation value also implies the decay of this network.

As mentioned, this outcome can be predicted knowing the results of the dynamic and static social network analysis of the complete network as well as the partial static networks of earlier decades. However, a reminder needs to be made here: this investigated period is actually the one when most of the members of the network assume their paramount positions as editors-in-chief. One could argue that with most of them moving to a higher position, the chances of individuals working together as equals would diminish. There are examples that support this argument, but also quite a few that contradicts it. Logically speaking, there is no reason why journalists should stop collaborating when they move up or down in the workplace hierarchy — the example of TV2 chief editors show this. In this decade, usually, whether a TV2 journalist assumed the role of editor-in-chief or a lower position, they continued working at the outlet. Their community more or less rotated in the same role. However, TV2 seems to be more of an exception, rather than the rule. A stronger trend is the discontinuation of working relationships, especially after stepping down from the highest journalistic position — usually because editors-in-chief themselves leave their outlets altogether. Many of them who rank high in centrality values in this period (e.g. GAZDA, DUDÁS,

AZURÁK) even left journalism as a profession temporarily or permanently. The fact that this is the period of the party system under populism can be reasonably assumed to play an explanatory role in this curious, remarkable trend.

Assigned ID number	Name	Degrees	Stress centrality	Betweenness centrality
13	GAZDA Albert	6	100	55.53
20	DULL Szabolcs	7	75	46.1
15	PÁLMAI L. Ákos	5	54	28
18	DUDÁS Gergely	4	48	26
10	KŐHEGYI Anna	5	35	15.03
19	TÓTH-SZENESI Attila	4	31	12.5
9	AZURÁK Csaba	4	13	9
7	GYÖRGY Bence	3	4	2.4
14	SÁLING Gergő	4	6	2.2
16	UJ Péter	4	6	2.2
17	MÉSZÁROS Zsófia	4	2	0.53
21	SZOMBATHY Pál	3	1	0.5
8	GÁBOR László	3	0	0
12	WEYER Balázs	2	0	0
11	TÓTH Tamás Antal	2	0	0
5	BODOKY Tamás	2	0	0
4	DÁVID Ferenc	2	0	0
2	VICSEK Ferenc	1	0	0
3	PATAKI Gábor	1	0	0
6	KOTROCZÓ Róbert	0	0	0
1	PRONTVAI Vera	0	0	0

Table 9:
Centrality values of the selected editors-in-chief of the aggregate static social network of the second period (1997–2010), coloured from white (lowest) to dark grey (highest) and ranked according to their betweenness centrality scores from highest to lowest.

The analysis of the centrality positions of the selected individuals can add to this argument. PÁLMAI — who, as mentioned, has acquired a questionable reputation (see for example (Tamás 2014) or (Mátrai 2014)) in independent or opposition media due to his more or less direct role in the transformation of Origo and TV2 to pro-Fidesz mouthpieces[118] — while dropped in the ranking,

[118] The term "mouthpiece" can be regarded as well-founded without more elaborate stylistic or discourse analyses not only due to the prima facie quality and terminologies of the outlets' output, but also due to direct, repeated endorsement of TV2 of PM ORBÁN's politics during general elections campaigns in 2018 and later, in 2022. (See (TV2 2018) and

still features high among his peers due to his relatively numerous connections to other well-connected individuals. In the top slots, GAZDA and DULL both worked at Origo and Index — and both of them did personally make claims to political intervention behind their stepping down and dismissals, respectively, from media outlets also when they held the seat of the chief editor. They are joined by former Index editor-in-chief DUDÁS and TÓTH-SZENESI. The former is personally on the record (Borbás 2020) citing Fidesz-inspired political economic intervention as a reason for his decision to resign. The latter, while did not make such a public statement, expressed his solidarity with his successor Dull at the time of his dismissal by leaving Index together with almost 90 of his colleagues — and later re-joined his peers at Telex (Szalay 2020)[119] which was launched as a successor to the "original" Index editorial and journalistic team.

The only counterpoints to this phenomenon among the most central journalists in the network are the aforementioned TV2 chief-editors KŐHEGYI, AZURÁK, GYÖRGY, and to a lesser extent, GÁBOR and TÓTH Tamás Antal. With the exception of the rather apolitical AZURÁK — almost a household name in Hungary because he used to be a very public face of the TV channel as a presenter and newscaster —, there is little openly available information about their political stances. The exception to his is GÁBOR and TÓTH Tamás Antal. Besides being rather secretive (narancs.hu 2018) about his professional and personal background, there is public evidence about GÁBOR's warm relationship with PM ORBÁN — having reportedly participated in a highly selective annual social event for Fidesz intellectuals (*ibid.*), and rarely publishing pieces other than favourable interviews with the PM (see for example (Gábor 2018b)) and bashing cultural elites critical of the government (Gábor 2018a). TÓTH does not feature high in the ranking — but that is also due to the lack of open sources available about his professional activities. So, his profile is also worth briefly mentioning. According to pieces published in independent and opposition media, he participated in the post-2010 Fidesz take-over of the public broadcasting services, and after his similar role at TV2 (Varga 2019), his name has appeared in the impressum of the V4 News Agency (V4NA) (Szalay 2019), a London-based international news organisation owned by a subsidiary of the pro-government KESMA holding. (Borbás 2019)

So, besides these network development trends bearing the highly probable mark of the impact of the party system under populism, it is the decreasing centralities of chief editors who featured

(TV2 2022), respectively.) These endorsements and also the blatant style of political journalism, in an earlier period in the history of post-communist Hungarian media, were not usual before.

[119] After the period of investigation, in August 2022, Tóth-Szenesi left Telex and joined 444.hu under editor-in-chief Uj. (HVG.hu 2022b)

relatively high in the previous period: WEYER, SZOMBATHY, or VICSEK. That makes sense because in basically one shape or another, all have discontinued their involvement in civil society or mass commercial media. After leaving Origo, WEYER advised the establishment of Direkt36, a small investigative media outlet — in a large part financed from tax donations and international NGOs' and funds' support (Direkt36 2015). Direkt36 was founded by his fellow Origo journalists who left the outlet upon its pro-Fidesz take-over (including the last editor-in-chief before the pro-government take-over, SÁLING). Besides his advisory, however, WEYER has retired from journalism — while there are signs that he is still active at Tilos Rádió, most of his professional activities can be linked to the (pop and world) music industry. SZOMBATHY, while active during the entire 2010s he remained on the side lines of public affairs journalism. For most of the decade, we worked as a sports reporter at the television channel Digi Sport. In the latter years of the decade, he joined the corporate management of Index's publishing house through his high school friend, BODOLAI László — ergo did not work as a journalist at the outlet, and in an interview, he maintained that the business management of the Index was strongly separated from, and worked independently of the journalists (24.hu 2020; Kerner 2021). Following his brief, dubious role as editor-in-chief of Index in 2020, he once again returned to the side lines of public affairs.[120] VICSEK Ferenc, being the oldest among the selected individuals, after his departure from Klubrádió following his resignation as chief editor, did not join another media outlet, remained mostly outside established civil society and mass media (except, for example, serving as the vice-president of the left-liberal affiliated professional organisation, National Alliance of Hungarian Journalists [Magyar Újságírók Országos Szövetsége, MÚOSZ]). He only occasionally offers public life commentary at smaller outlets.

These developments actually show a large-scale change in the network, essentially a replacement of the "older", pre-2010 elite: formerly high-ranking actors lose significance in terms of their centrality values. Many of the previously influential actors leave civil society media and mass media altogether. So those who remain in this profession, logically, do so with reduced number of ties to other former colleagues. While this research design cannot account for newly formed ties to other journalists who had not belonged to the network of the selected individuals, studying trends and developments in Hungarian public affairs media suggests that their networks did not expand. Moreover, even if previously existing professional relationships uphold — and, theoretically, new

[120] In late 2021, he created a Facebook page called "Outsider" (in English) offering short public life commentary together with his colleague during his short time as Index chief editor, SZTANKÓCZY András. At the time of the writing, the page has less than 600 followers.

journalists join the network at "lower", non-editorial level —, they usually do so at media outlets whose reach is far lower. Surviving (and perhaps, new) relationships only subsist at less popular civil society media outlets or newly founded mass media outlets. The consequence of this is, in return, decreasing social significance of the selected individuals. This is because these civil society media outlets — in the context of the present study, most importantly, Tilos Rádió plays that role of an outlet of "last resort" —obviously have smaller audiences. Or newly founded mass media outlets like Telex at the time of writing have not caught up to their predecessors' (in this case, Index) audience reach. To briefly summarise the analysis regarding the above observed pattern: the 2010s is a time of disintegration and decay of the studied network, as well as decreasing significance of individual editors-in-chief who gained prominence before 2010.

— CHAPTER SUMMARY —

This chapter carries out analysis in three main parts.

First, the description and preliminary analysis detects significant influence of political affiliations on media ownership and editorial policies on the selected, influential civil society media and mass media outlets in Hungary. Several key outlets, underwent significant ownership changes between 2011 and 2020, often leading to shifts in editorial direction.

Second, the tSNA reveals the main trends within the evolution of the structure of the social network. The annual visualisation shows distinct sub-networks that become slightly denser and more connected. During this period under the two-block party system, connectedness increased, peaking in the mid-2000s. Tie formations were most prevalent in this period. However, the network began to fragment during the 2010s, with tie dissolutions peaking in 2011 — coinciding with the rise of Hungary's dominant populist party system.

Third, Static SNA first leaves us with the impression of overall high connectedness especially to tSNA results. However, some of it is due to structural similarities to a hierarchical outtree. The network appears to have lacked a true centralisation and organisation. Civil society journalists were generally more peripheral (with a few exceptions like BODOKY and WEYER), however, we can discover important journalistic strategies that were empowered by civil society.

Period-specific static SNA provides further insights: from 1990 to 1996, the network was small and appears to be centralized only because of the very few active participants. This also suggests that most of the post-communist media elite cannot be seen as a direct "inheritance" from communist times. Between 1997 and 2010, the network expanded and stabilized, with most professional connections forming during this time, leading to a cohesive structure organized more by community ties than by institutional hierarchies, suggesting somewhat lower political pressures. However, the 2011–2020 period saw a sharp decline in centralization and network fracturing under Hungary's dominant populist party system. This era was marked by media captures and an elite replacement. Individual strategies needed to adapt — some joined civil society or independent outlets, some aligned with populist actors.

CHAPTER V. INTERPRETING THE RESULTS AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

— CHAPTER OVERVIEW —

This chapter discusses the analytical findings in more detail, also returning it into the context of academic literature. To delimit the significance and potential interpretations thereof, it also discusses the limits of the research.

Accordingly, the chapter is structured into two main parts, each further divided.

First, an interpretation of the results is given within the closer context of the dissertation, post-communist Hungary's political economy. Then, in the section "I.1.a. Re-contextualisation and evaluation of the results", a broader interpretation is given within the context of international empirical and conceptual literature.

Second, the Limitations sub-chapter reviews three key limitations of this work, each with its own sections: limitations regarding

- *data availability;*
- *sample selection and data collection methods; and*
- *the applied analytical method.*

V.1. The interpretation of the results: the social network dynamics of independent, opposition media and the role of civil society during the party system under populism

This dissertation argues that two major phenomena that explain the transformation of the political economy of the Hungarian civil society and mass media under populist governance in the 2010s.

The first phenomenon is intrinsic to the studied elite civil society and media network. The empirical analysis highlights it rather clearly: it is the demise of an "old guard" of civil society media and mass media. The dissertation shows that, amidst the evident political and political economic pressures from the Fidesz-led government, the opposition and independent media network failed to unify in a meaningful way. Instead, their collegial relationships fractured. Many individuals retired or left the media sector. And while new outlets were occasionally established to replace those taken over by pro-government actors, these new ventures proved only relatively successful. They were ultimately incapable of pushing back against or counterbalancing Fidesz's onslaught within Hungary's media system.

Civil society can be seen as a refuge — a "survival strategy" to preserve journalistic independence in the face of strong political pressure. The existence of Átlátszó — and, to a smaller extent, other civil society media outlets like Direkt36, Partizán, or Mérce, etc. — provide the most direct

examples of this. Journalists whose outlet were "taken over" by pro-Fidesz actors retreated to civil society media outlets to continue their journalism without pro-government interference. However, their chances of mounting effective resistance against these trends have always been low due civil society's lack of resources — especially in the face of a well-organised *populist strategy* applied by pro-Fidesz actors. The fate of Klubrádió — which lost its terrestrial broadcasting licence and shut down its non-online service in 2021 (Szalay 2021b) — exemplifies the real-life limits of (unco-ordinated, solitary) resistance against government actors.[121]

At the same time, the growing use of crowdfunding (or "support campaigns" [támogatási kampányok]) by Hungarian independent and opposition mass media outlets (in addition to the tax donations received — an inclusion criteria) can be regarded as a civil society strategy that has become part of Hungarian mass media's repertoire. (Even though these practices are not far removed from usual business models like paywalls and subscriptions — some of these outlets have indeed introduced such models in the 2020s.) Moreover, civil society media and the professional interrelationships therein, have boosted several chief editors' standing among their peers as this dissertation's analysis indicates. This is not a merely a "statistic". In real life, a central position consisting of both civil society roles and mass media roles could theoretically translate to real-world opportunities to create more efficient organisations — and potentially mount resistance. Most notably, the centrality of WEYER Balázs who simultaneously worked at several commercial mass media and Tilos Rádió, also leading other professional organisational efforts like advising Direkt36, demonstrates this potential. However, his activities do not seem to cross into political organisation, strategy — the policy proposals penned by him (Weyer 2017) remain in the realm of the theoretical.

What is more remarkable, however, is not the limited effectiveness of the civil society modes of organisation against *populist strategy*, but the shared failure of independent and opposition civil society media and commercial mass media to unite against political economic encroachment on their independence. As the dissertation's empirical analysis demonstrates, the 2010s were about fragmentation of the civil society and mass media elites' networks — rather than building resistance, a common organisation of any kinds, or a social movement. It is not difficult to observe that whenever media outlets were forced to react to political and business interferences (either directly or through, for example, ownership change and organisational re-structuring), their

[121] Tilos Rádió had also been threatened by a similar fate: it's broadcasting licence had not been prolonged, therefore, the radio had to re-apply for the frequency. (HVG.hu 2022) Even if it was the only applicant, for a few weeks in September 2022, it lost its terrestrial frequency for a few weeks — but was ultimately declared the winner and reinstated. (Mészáros 2022)

reaction almost always was un-coordinated.[122] Even when journalists facing political and business pressure managed to act more concertedly, these actions almost always led to organisational splits. Usually, these concerted actions led to the establishment of a rival, "more authentic" media organisation as an alternative to a media outlet that went through pro-government capture. This resulted in at least two competing outlets that laid claim to essentially the same — but this time divided — audience.[123]

This fragmentation occured in an environment where, nominally, the number of independent and opposition media outlets increased, especially online.[124] Thus it cannot be argued that the "diversity" or pluralism of Hungarian media diminished — a fact which also PM ORBÁN has emphasised in countering critics.[125] However, these dynamics essentially resulted in the fragmentation of the independent and opposition audiences as well, with ostensible political, electoral consequences. So, altogether, it is striking that opposition and independent civil society media or commercial mass media did not, and have not been co-ordinating against a common

[122] This shows signs of slight, but powerful changes with Index's transformation in 2020 — at the very end of the studied era, rather late compared to the start of Fidesz' long-standing populist strategy to gain media dominance. Approximately 90 journalists and content production employees resigned simultaneously from Index upon the perception of political and business interference — and most of them went on to establish a competing news portal, Telex. (Index 2020)

[123] Such an example could be taken again from the case of Index. In the early 2010s, UJ Péter left the outlet to start 444 to be free from ownership and political interference (while Index still exists as an outlet under the ownership of the well-known Fidesz-linked media entrepreneur, VASZILY Miklós; and Telex spun off of it in 2020). But similarly, the investigative website Direkt36 was also established by journalists who had left Origo after a pro-Fidesz take-over. Recent experience and research shows that more often than not, audiences of outlets that were taken over were not aware of the changes — and even receptive at times of changed messaging and journalistic practices. (Polyák, Urbán, and Szávai 2022)

[124] Mérce ["Measure"], Új Egyenlőség ["New Equality"], EzALényeg ["ThisIsThePoint"], Hírklikk ["News Click"], Hírhugó ["Hugo News"], Nyugati Fény ["Western Light"], Partizán ["Partisan"], etc. are all examples of this, most of them were established in the 2010s. These outlets are all active online — because of the lower costs of entering the market and because the licencing and broadcasting rights of television and radio broadcasters would have to be earned from the state under populist governments. Likewise, the newspaper or magazine format (in which there remains only a few serious contesters critical of the government — with multiple restrictions and low reach of audiences) could not fit the opposition media either, due to the ever-decreasing revenues they generate. For this reason, this segment of the media market, too, is heavily dominated by pro-government outlets which receive subsidies and ad revenues from the state and state-owned enterprises.

[125] This argument had been deemed important enough for the Prime Minister to produce and distribute a video on his personal Facebook page (Orbán 2021) featuring himself buying a large number of issues of government-critical newspapers at a newsstand saying:

> *"I have been thinking (...) that I should have a look at (...) how many newspapers there are that criticise or reproach the government, and I will buy some of them, and I will show how many of them there are. (...) The freedom of the press must be in a wretched state that there are only this many that reproach me."* (*ibid.*) (The author's own translation from the original Hungarian as shown below. The last sentence is uttered with clear sarcasm as the PM showcases a handful of independent and oppositional daily or weekly newspapers.)
>
> *["Gondoltam, (...) megnézem, (...) hogy milyen kormányt kritizáló vagy gyalázó újságok vannak, és vásárolok belőlük, és megmutatom, hogy mennyi van. (...) Nyomorúságos állapotban van a sajtószabadság, hogy csak ennyi helyen gyaláznak."]*

challenge or threat neither by establishing joint professional, interest representation, or even business organisations, nor initiatives for stronger co-operation.[126] This lack of collaboration stands in stark contrast to the successful efforts by Fidesz to build a concentrated network organisation. This includes not only a monolithic media conglomerate and other communicational organisations,[127] but also a strong, at times centralised linkages also to private and state enterprises, religious organisations, foundations, local organisations, sports associations, cultural institutions, and more.

So instead of increasing co-ordination and collaboration, this dissertation's results capture the decline of the independent and opposition networks in the face of the challenge of populism.

What could explain the lack of collaboration among independent and opposition civil society media and mass media organisations and their members? This question, in itself, is a worthy question for further research as the present dissertation's methods offer only provide limited insights. There are obvious limits to collaboration imposed by the international context and the national social and political economic circumstances. Briefly, in the global context marked by rapid info-communicational innovation and intense competition among journalistic organisations, social media, and the entertainment industry in general, the shrinking segment of the Hungarian media industry struggles to compete. Resources are scarce to begin with, and the pro-government media's advantages make the competition even more uneven. All of this is taking place in a very small market, further limiting opportunities for expansion and innovation. Additionally, the legal, state, and political structures skew the odds even more.

At the same time, there are also certain self-imposed limits within the independent and opposition media. The very definition of "independent" media — whether civil society media or mass media — involves a commitment to maintaining a critical attitude towards all political actors, which inherently discourages collaboration with other independent or opposition outlets. Media outlets not directly affiliated with political parties intend to maintain a critical attitude towards all political

[126] Just as (Orbán 2021) is hinting at, there are actually a large number of opposition or independent media outlets — even if the PM's PR stunt and argument is aimed at showing the nominal number of outlets, and not the actual reach or financial opportunities of independent and opposition media. Nevertheless, it is true that many of the competing independent and opposition media outlets have developed capabilities (e.g. highly developed websites, podcasting, photo and video production capabilities, printing, etc.) in parallel to their print businesses. There could probably be many options to collaborate and work together at least on an issue-by-issue basis if not permanently, but very few of these potential co-operations actually materialise.

[127] See the short description of the Central European Press and Media Foundation [Közép-Európai Sajtó– és Médiaalapítvány, KESMA] on page 48. Ownership and controlling stakes of pro-government actors in Hungarian media goes even further than this media conglomerate whose portfolio spans more than hundred media outlets from the national mass media level to local media products. (See for example (Bátorfy 2020; Bátorfy and Urbán 2020))

actor. For these outlets, direct affiliations with other, politically affiliated actors *could* undermine their credibility in the eyes of their audiences[128, 129] — although this is only an assumption that may merit deeper examination. Even for media outlets with clear political or ideological affiliations, the fragmented and antagonistic nature of the opposition party structure, combined with a lack of resources (especially compared to Fidesz), makes collaboration even less likely.

Furthermore, micro-social, interpersonal reasons contribute to the lack of collaboration: personal animosities among journalists. Reasons for this may be numerous and difficult to explain, but there is ample evidence that the personal relationships of former colleagues have deteriorated significantly over the past decades. Perhaps the most emblematic case is the fallout between UJ and DUDÁS (both included in the sample) in which the former, still-active chief editor not only questioned the latter's professionalism, but also accused him of *"betraying"* him during a period of political pressure while he was the editor-in-chief of Index — leading to his resignation from that position. (Szalay 2018) Legal disputes have also arisen from internal conflicts within journalistic staff, such as those at the Politics Can Be Different [Lehet Más a Politika, LMP] party-linked outlet, Instant [Azonnali].[130] Several sources who are familiar with the internal affairs of civil society media outlets and mass commercial media outlets also attest that not only camaraderie, but also clique-like hatred can run high among independent and opposition media journalists.[131]

Another media source, Response Online [Válasz Online] suggests that Hungarian business elites — among the very few media owners that are not affiliated with Fidesz or even have opposition sympathies — play a certain "double game". For instance, former socialist MP PUCH László is

---

[128] See for example Telex's justification for not carrying any political campaign ads during the 2022 general elections in Hungary:

> *"It is a common characteristic of political ads that they are one-sided, flamboyant, simplifying, partisan, and — let us put it this way — they only show a small portion of reality, if they are not outright distort it. So they have the exact characteristics that are far removed from content appearing on Telex."* ((Dull 2022) — The author's own translation from the original Hungarian as follows.)
>
> *["A politikai hirdetések közös jellemzője, hogy egyoldalúak, harsányak, leegyszerűsítőek, nem pártatlanok, és – mondjuk úgy – a valóságnak csak egy kicsiny részét mutatják meg, ha épp nem csúsztatnak. Vagyis pont azokat a jellemzőket hordozzák, amelyek távol állnak a Telexen megjelent tartalmaktól."* (*ibid.*)*]*

The validity of this argumentation is not evaluated here. Even if it is striving to preserve the perception of its intellectual or political independence, Telex is often treated as "opposition" media (receiving even demeaning labels) by the pro-government media.

[129] See, for instance, (Juhász V. 2022)

[130] See a series of articles by the media observer outlet Media1 about the scandal at now-defunct Instant [Azonnali]: (Kasza 2021; Szalay 2021a; 2022a)

[131] Personal communication. Phrases like these journalists could *"drown each other in a spoon of water"* [a Hungarian expression conveying bitter animosity, usually over petty conflicts — the original phrase is: *"megfojtanák egymást egy kanál vízben"*] and *"crocodile tears"* [implying schadenfreude and hypocritical sorrow, *"krokodilkönnyek"*] were shed over the misfortune of an outlet by their fellow journalists at a rival independent or opposition media organisation are colourful further pieces of evidence.

alleged to have leveraged or sold his media holdings to Fidesz-linked actors in exchange for lucrative business opportunities. (Bódis 2019) This dissertation therefore adds the aspect of the internal "self-inflicted wounds" to the potential reasons for the demise of independent and opposition civil society media and mass media network. Besides the inability to collaborate — even if practically possible, as demonstrated by joint Polish media activism initiative during the "Media Without Choice" [Media bez wyboru] campaign in the face of political pressure (Easton 2021a) — there is evidence for a certain level of sheer unwillingness to co-operate for better outreach and to organise a united front political purposes, resisting populist political economic strategy and encroachment on their organisations.

The second phenomenon explaining the outcome of the analytical results is not inherent to the studied network sample — but is a logical consequence of it. Internally, the sample reveals a certain "turnover" of individuals. Particularly at larger mass media outlets like Index and TV2, patterns show that a journalist might be promoted to editor-in-chief and then step down, continuing to work at the same organisation. But this is not a common individual career trajectory: many of individuals almost always left their media organisations altogether eventually (for one reason or another like AZURÁK Csaba or TÓTH-SZENESI Attila). This hints at essentially what the sample and the analysis have not and cannot capture: developments outside the network. With many chief editors and journalists leaving their posts, their professional interrelationships dissolving, the question logically arises: what succeeds the demise of the network? The description of the first phenomenon, the dissolution of the network already touches upon this point when discussing the lack of co-ordination vis-à-vis populist strategy deployed by Fidesz-linked actors. This will be further substantiated in the next sub-chapter.

However, in this sub-chapter, it is important to briefly consider the relational mechanism of the decline of the opposition and independent civil society media and mass media network, and how it has been transformed. This is what the analysis could not capture due to the logic of the purposive sample selection. This phenomenon effectively is an elite change, a "great replacement" of the post-communist Hungarian media elite — as previously mentioned, predominantly of left-liberal worldviews, usually subscribing to a "professional" media ethics (*see* for example (Waisbord 2013)). As many of these former chief editors and journalists left the largest Hungarian (especially mass media) outlets and found new workplaces in civil society media outlets or even outside of the media industry; and yet neither of the media organisations were shut down or discontinued, it is a logical consequence that the job positions have been filled with other individuals, these former editors-in-chief and journalists have been replaced by their former media organisations.

Who took up their jobs? Without directly researching this question, this dissertation can rely on two sets of evidence: everyday observations of the media landscape and anecdotal evidence from the media research and media worker communities. As to the former, there are observations that multiple interpersonal mechanisms were in play when replacing the former media elite. These may be intertwined, not mutually exclusive processes as phenomena.

The first is the non-replacement coupled with switching sides. As suggested by this study, several individuals could be suspected to have switched sides. Most famously or infamously, PÁLMAI L. Ákos — who, after a lower-profile career at markedly left-liberal mass media outlets, took part in the transformations of Origo and TV2 to pro-government mouthpieces as either chief editor or a leading employee —; and GÁBOR László and GYÖRGY Bence who are not highlighted by the analysis of network centralities due to relatively scarce information about their career backgrounds. However, there are sources (Rényi 2017) that suggest that they ran careers similar to that of PÁLMAI L. Ákos — actually being colleagues with him: joining the same left-liberal organisations, than taking up leading roles at other, transformed outlets. This side-switching strategy of political media survival can be seen as a counterpoint to the civil society strategy of journalists.

The second is the promotion of formerly lower-ranking journalists to higher positions, and, sometimes, the recruitment of journalists from other media organisations. While this strategy parallels the actions described in the previous paragraphs, it does not necessarily involve switching "camps" or altering the political orientation of a journalist's content. There are instances where media organizations, after transitioning from independent or opposition-aligned outlets to pro-government entities, actively sought to employ journalists with prior right-wing or pro-government affiliations. A notable example is the appointment of TÓTH Tamás Antal as chief editor at TV2's evening news programme (Varga 2019) after a career at the public broadcaster; with some reportedly questioning his professionalism and expertise, together his fitness due to his previous purportedly illegal dealings. (*ibid.*) Similarly, when SZOMBATHY Pál took up the role of chief editor at Index following the resignation of the entire journalistic staff, he also admittedly tapped and hired right-wing journalists, too (Kreatív Online 2020) — although, he claimed, for different reasons.[132] Even the reverse of this has happened. When the previously pro-government daily Hungarian Nation's [Magyar Nemzet] owner, the former oligarch SIMICSKA Lajos fell out with his

[132] In his interview after his formal resignation from his post as editor-in-chief of Index under VASZILY Miklós' ownership, SZOMBATHY suggested that he was following the principle of internal pluralism and diversity — adding, later during the interview, that his considerations were *"naïve"* amidst the political economic circumstances of not only Index, but Hungarian media. (The interview is available in Hungarian language: (Nagy J. 2020). See also the author's analysis of the case (Mátyás 2022b).)

long-time friend, PM ORBÁN, he switched the editorial line to be critical of the government. This was the period when GAZDA Albert also joined the otherwise right-wing newspaper.

The third interpersonal mechanism is onboarding formerly unknown or even early-career, young people with little to no prior experience in the media. This strategy was primarily employed by outlets that were not included in the sample for this dissertation, largely because newly established, less professional outlets lacked the resources to hire more experienced professionals. Instead, they invested in training new, young professionals. This strategy could not appear in the present analysis because such newly-trained individuals were almost impossible to make the select list — and position — of editor-in-chief at a major civil society media or mass commercial media outlet. Also, the chances of such individuals working together with the selected editors-in-chief is also very low. Indeed, these people do not and cannot really know each other professionally[133] amidst the highly polarised media landscape of contemporary Hungary.

This overview summarizes the primarily extra-network relational and interpersonal dynamics that contributed to the decline of independent and opposition civil society media and mass media networks, as well as their "succession" by predominantly pro-government journalists and media organisations. However, the significant influence of the populist government's and pro-government actors' behaviour has largely been untouched, aside for brief references. That is because as the sample selection bias and the following analysis has shown, these only appear as external effects on the studied network. However, this topic is a well-understood, deeply analysed one by Hungarian media scholars — and its underlying political economic drivers are well-researched internationally, too. Therefore, in the next sub-chapter, the dissertation will compare these findings with previous academic research and literature, evaluating the contribution of this dissertation to the broader discipline.

V.1.a. Re-contextualisation and evaluation of the results

While the initial expectation of this dissertation research has been to chart and assess the extent of the Fidesz-led pro-government network-building in civil society media and mass media, its analysis shows a different image. Namely, instead of the expansion of the pro-government network, it shows

[133] In one personal communication of the author with a journalist of a selected media outlet, the journalist acknowledged that journalists working in *"non-pro-government media"* usually know each other very well — even giving testimony of having multiple friendships and collegial relationships at other — to a certain extent, rival — outlets. But this journalist also said that there were essentially no relationships with pro-government media, even using the phrase that the situation is like if the two sides or "camps" (i.e., the pro-government journalists and the opposition as well as independent journalists) *"lived in two separate countries"*.

the implosion and fragmentation of the independent and opposition civil society media and mass media network under external political economic pressure as well as due to "self-inflicted wounds". While this has not been the original intention of the research design, it actually adds more value to the academic literature for multiple reasons.

Even if the dissertation research only analyses one level and aspect of the subject — the collegial, interpersonal network of select editors-in-chief — instead of many other possible levels (other journalists, media managers, media owners, distributors, audiences, etc.) and aspects (joint or cross-ownership stakes in media, media companies' financial flows, qualitative or quantitative analysis of contextual references or even hyperlinks in media content and output (G. Szabó 2018), etc.), there already exists quite a few studies on these issues. (e.g. (Matuszewski and Szabó 2019)) assesses the extent of political media "camps" on Twitter in Hungary (Bátorfy and Urbán 2020); meticulously analyses the role of the Fidesz government funding in the media transformation; or (Bátorfy 2020) charts the impact of politically linked ownership changes on the transformed Hungarian media landscape. They all suggest that Fidesz has managed to create a massive, dominant presence in the media. But contrastingly, neither of them really taps into parallel events and processes in the already existing opposition and independent civil society organisations and mass media organisations as this dissertation does. Hence the present research can be evaluated as reinforcing, but also adding to and extending the previous academic literature on the political economy of post-communist Hungarian civil society and media.

The dissertation contributes to the understanding of many issues from an individual level of analysis point of view ranging from social narratives, journalistic norms and professionalisation, the issues of mis– or disinformation and fake news all the way to systemic processes and phenomena globally. This is because when analysing these issues, it is usually the systematic, "macro" factors that researchers take into account such as pre-existing historical conditions, social and state institutions, market conditions, etc. This dissertation demonstrates that decisions of individuals which would appear mundane, such as career choices, can have highly significant meanings and consequences. These, when analysed or used as an indicator, complement a vast body of literature on the political economic drivers of the transformation of social communication. More specifically, in the case study context, it underpins the research on the transformation of the Hungarian media system (e.g. (Bajomi-Lázár 2020; Bátorfy 2017a; Polyák 2015)), its Fidesz-led government centralisation and capture. Hence this dissertation adds one more level of analysis to the connection between the Hungarian media scholarship on the one hand, and (Guriev and

Treisman 2015; 2019) informational autocracy recently taken up by (Krekó 2022) as well as (Levitsky and Way 2020) competitive authoritarianism on the other.

This research also provides a novel theoretical-methodological attempt. The ontology of relationalism has definitely not been utilised frequently in empirical research — especially in Hungary, but also internationally. Moreover, social network analysis (with the above exceptions of, for example, (G. Szabó 2018; G. Szabó and Bene 2016; Matuszewski and Szabó 2019)) which does not really apply an interpersonal interactionist, social interrelationships lens)) has also not been widely used to analyse the present research subject. The theoretical-methodological argument of the dissertation that — also based on the definition of social movements — it should be more commonly used. This is also because Hungary's dominant party system and the competitive authoritarian regime it has constituted can be accurately seen as led by Fidesz as a social movement party organisation. And as this dissertation argues, this Fidesz-centred network has been formed and cemented to the detriment of a competent counter-movement carrying left-wing and liberal values which — at least in civil society and media — has essentially contracted and fallen apart. The suggestion that this phenomenon is not solely limited to the analysed organisations and individuals deserves a deeper consideration — because it may also have a significant theoretical consequence regarding the connection among individual–organisational behaviour and populism.

This dissertation suggests that the concept of social movements can make this theoretical link. It delineates a certain set of interactions among the members of the population — be it called civil society, public sphere or their organised sub-sets (NGOs, CSOs, etc.) from neighbourhood associations or churches to lobby groups —, as well as media actors, and political actors:

> *"…networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities."* (Diani 1992, p. 1)

This formularisation not only uses terminology favourable to SNA, but is also in line with relational principles as the title of the book "Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action" (Diani and McAdam 2003) and its frequent references to Mustafa EMIRBAYER's works suggest. Furthermore, together with the influential social scientist Donatella DELLA PORTA, they point out that the concepts of civil society and social movements converge on issues like facilitation of social participation, specific organisational structures and strategies, etc. (della Porta and Diani 2011)

> *"Social movements are actually just one possible mode of co-ordination of collective action within civil society. Their peculiarity lies in the coupling of dense interorganizational networks and collective identities that transcend the boundaries of any specific organization and encompass much broader collectivities (...). A good deal of collective action in civil society may also take the form of instrumental coalitions, in which collaboration neither relies on, nor generates larger identities. At other times, collective action is promoted by networks of like-minded people concerned with a specific issue or a broader cause (think, for example, of communities of practice or epistemic communities), rather than by organizations alone. Finally, collective action may take place within specific organizations without stimulating the growth of broader networks and identities."* (*ibid.*, p. 69)

Throughout the entire period of investigation, Fidesz has managed to build a massive socio-political and socio-economic network: a social movement using populist strategy. From a small, liberal student organisation opposed to one-party socialism, it has become a party that according to polls by the opposition-affiliated research institute "Policy Solutions", a slight simple majority of Hungarians think that it is impossible to peacefully remove from power.[134] Fidesz has achieved this also through a thorough, meticulous populist social movement strategy: shifting and aligning its policies, sharing resources with organisations that could help their electoral goals, partnering, building, and maintaining . It can be validly seen, according to (T. R. Metz 2015; R. Metz and Várnagy 2021) and others, as a social movement party or a special form of it, having created strong interpersonal, ideological, and inter-institutional ties with sports, cultural, educational, religious, and civil society[135] organisations. Fidesz has been leveraging its dominance in local governments, too, through many channels. One of the most important has been the introduction of the public works programme [közmunkaprogram], many low-income families' livelihood is now tied to the breadwinner's personal relationship to local government leaders. This is estimated to increase Fidesz support in the Hungarian countryside up to two-digit percentage points. (Mares and Young 2019) Thanks to a combination of these, Fidesz can regularly hold mass demonstrations that are,

---

[134] See (Bíró-Nagy and Laki 2020, 77) and the following quote from a recent poll:

> *"According to our poll which had been made one month after the 2022 general elections, 50% of Hungarians agree with the statement that Fidesz cannot be removed from power democratically anymore, while those who think that it is still possible (38%) are twelve percentage points fewer."* (Bíró-Nagy, Szászi, and Varga 2020, p. 14)(The author's own translation from the original Hungarian as cited below.)
>
> *„A 2022-es választások után egy hónappal készült felmérésünk szerint a magyarok 50 százaléka ért egyet azzal az állítással, hogy a Fideszt már nem lehet leváltani demokratikus úton, míg 12 százalékponttal vannak kevesebben (38%) azok, akik szerint ez még lehetséges"* (*ibid.*)

[135] See, for instance, the scholarship produced by (Greskovits 2017b; Wittenberg and Greskovits 2016; Greskovits 2020).

in turn, broadcasted thanks to its massive pro-government media network centralised in, but not limited to, KESMA.

The flipside of Fidesz's successful mass social movement building effort is the crumbling of other political parties' interpersonal, ideological, and inter-institutional networks. Even larger, traditional opposition parties like MSZP, LMP, or DK and Momentum struggle to maintain even party offices and local party organisations outside the capital Budapest — making Fidesz virtually the only party with effective nation-wide representation. The opposition parties' alliance efforts to counterbalance this dominance have not been entailing major resource-sharing efforts — especially not efficient ones: they were fraught with personal and organisational rivalries, ill-considered plans, and actions. (Panyi et al. 2022)

As this dissertation shows, since the long period of the "left-liberal media dominance" [balliberális médiafölény] in the 1990s and 2000s, civil society and media networks conducive to their socio-political communication have been in drastic decay. They have lost the overwhelming majority of their trade union organisational ties (Girndt 2013), too, which in the early 1990s still played a considerable role in the left-wing coalition which commanded a two-thirds constitutional majority in the Parliament. (Angelusz and Tardos 2005b; 2005a) Anti-government protest events or demonstrations about issues unfavourable about the government — after only a handful of instances in the 2010s and very recently in 2022 with questionable outcomes — were rather sporadic. Even traditional political elite conferences, meetings and events have been discontinued in the 2010s, while Fidesz has managed to increase its high-profile elite meetings.[136] With their fraying ties to each other,[137] civil society, education and research, and the traditionally sparse church connections, opposition parties are virtually limited to operating somewhat effectively only in the capital city and a handful of larger towns in Hungary.

This dissertation therefore highlights an important element of Fidesz's electoral successes: its superior organisation based on populist strategy — focusing on the organisation of communication and the resources necessary to it — vis-à-vis the political organisation of its opposition. This is important to emphasise because leading mainstream works in the study of post-communist

[136] While Fidesz has been increasing the number of such events (see for example the meetings at Kötcse, in Tusványos (in Transylvania, Romania), or lately, the Tranzit Fesztivál in Tihany or the government-linked educational institution MCC's summer festival in Esztergom), the opposition has discontinued their summer meeting in Balatonszárszó (see for example: (Farkasházy 2020)). These events also served the thematisation of the news cycle during the rather slow, off-season summers; they represent a good opportunity to take initiative in the public discourse.

[137] The unease and competition among them are rather well displayed by, amongst other instances, the statements of the opposition PM candidate MÁRKI-ZAY's suggesting a degree of co-optation of the Hungarian opposition by Fidesz, see for example (Mediaworks Hírcentrum 2022).

Hungary's political economy, for example (Scheiring 2020) and (Scheiring and Szombati 2020) when explaining the success of Fidesz and the inabilities of the opposition usually point to socio-economic policies and macro factors. To name a few:

- the generally unfavourable global economic conditions at the time of the social-liberal governance (the second half of the 2000s) versus the generally favourable global economic climate during the NER (especially in the second half of the 2010s);
- the different brands of neoliberal socio-economic policymaking (the social-liberal parties' progressive, internationalist motivations vs. Fidesz's traditionalist paternalistic, protectivist national neoliberalism) and
- their effects on the political camps' electoral bases (the social-liberal coalitions' policies had alienated important strata of the Hungarian society, and nudged them to identify with Fidesz's socio-economic ideology) and redistributive consequences.

This dissertation does not dismiss these arguments and finds all these considerations valuable insight into electoral, and ultimately political economic dynamics in Hungary in the 2010s. However, it argues that they are not to be understood in only themselves — even more bluntly, they are only secondary to the main findings of this dissertation: the shrinking space of opposition political opportunity structure in the face of Fidesz's expanding political organisational network. The logical consequence of this is that even if the opposition managed to unite effectively in the political, electoral arena (which it did for all intents and purposes after the period of investigation, in the general elections of 2022), it still would have meagre chances to successfully wage electoral campaigns due to its inferior organisational capabilities and resources against Fidesz's overwhelming, dominant influence over Hungarian society, the electorate. So even if the opposition found the "perfect" value proposition, socio-economic policies for a broad cross-section of the Hungarian electorate, it would not be able to communicate these efficiently and credibly. This is an important point to recognise because mainstream political economic wisdom can portray electoral competition as a contest between proposed socio-economic policy agendas. While this may hold true to some extent under certain conditions, this research suggests that it depends on the political opportunity structures of the competing political actors as shaped by their organisational relations, especially in mass political communication.

Recognising this has further consequences regarding political strategy. While, of course, political manifestos, ideologies, and agendas remain an important factor, they are relegated to a secondary role — vis-à-vis party organisations, structures, and relations to other organisations (especially in media), but also to wider society. Without an efficient, effective organisation and an extensive web

of positive relationships, chances of electoral success for a certain political actor are very limited. In the context of post-communist Hungarian politics, this conveys two takeaways for the Hungarian opposition, one positive and one negative. Positively, while conventional wisdom of the study of political economy highlights elements that are mostly beyond the control of political parties and actors (e.g. global economic conditions and the achievements or mistakes of past socio-economic policymaking), the re-structuring of political organisations and their relationships to other institutions, organisations, and groups of society is always an imminent possibility. The negative takeaway of this is, however, that such action is so long overdue in today's Hungary. The opposition's political organisations and relationship structures are so much behind of Fidesz — especially in terms of capabilities and resources that could be mobilised — that without a meticulous, consistently implemented long-term reform strategy, it is unlikely to achieve a level on par with the mass social movement organisation led by Fidesz.

All these organisational, social movement aspects of political power dynamics are important to reflect upon because of the phenomenon's potential role in the understanding, definition, and evaluation of the concept of populism. As discussed in the literature review, there are three major approaches to populism: discursive-stylistic, ideational-ideological, and political strategic. It is usually the first two major schools of thought that inspires most political science and political economic research. Indeed, the discursive-stylistic or ideational-ideological elements contribute to our understanding of populist politics very well,[138] but on the basis of this dissertation, it can be

[138] This dissertation only rarely touches upon these aspects as its theoretical-methodological focus lies elsewhere. But there is a wealth of scholarship (see for example, (M. Szabó 2003), (Kim 2021), (Csehi and Zgut 2021)) about the ideological or discursive-stylistic factors of populism in Hungary. However, it is worth adding to the analysis of civil society media and mass media relations to politics from a discursive-stylistic notion that both sides have developed curious, trademark expressions, phrases, and harsh, often offensive styles. Without detailed analysis, one of the most important features can be reasonably argued to be the mutual dismissal of each other between pro-government actors and opposition and/or independent actors, denying the other side's legitimacy on many grounds.

Non-government civil society media and mass media often labels pro-government journalists and outlets "propaganda media" and uses phrases like *"trolls"*, *"butler media"* (or *"servant media"*) [*"lakájmédia"*] or *"paid scribblers"* [*"bértollnok"*]. Mocking media outlets' names are also prevalent in lower-quality media products, for example the heavily pro-government Pesti Srácok ["Lads of Pest"] which is named after the young, working-class anti-Soviet freedom fighters of the 1956 revolution is often referred to as, with a vulgar pun, *"Prostitute Lads"* ["Prosti Srácok"] — see (Tóth R. 2018) as an example.

Pro-government media uses lines and words often originating from government politicians — or is later echoed by them. One such leading term is *"Soros media"* named after the globally vilified (e.g. (Plenta 2020) or (Steinberger 2018)) wealthy liberal Hungarian–American financier George Soros. For example, heavily pro-government online outlet 888.hu which belongs to KESMA — and its name is already a play on Uj Péter's liberal online outlet 444 — uses the phrase in its header *"We are the opposition to Soros"* [*"Mi vagyunk Soros ellenzéke"*]. In turn, 444 and sometimes Telex and other media are often merely referred to as *"Soros blogs"* (Origo 2021b) or see the tag with the same title on the website of 888.hu). Independent journalists are often mocked with the difficult-to-translate expression *"explainerman"* [*"megmondóember"*] who convey opinionated reports from a position of (false) authority. More often, they are described using the portmanteau-like word *"independent-objective"* [*"függetlenobjektív"* or *"független-*

suggested that they miss a very important point: organisational strategy — an essential component of any enterprise, especially one that brings about meaningful, massive social change such as Fidesz has in post-communist Hungary. Contrastingly, the political strategic strand is critiqued (Rueda 2020) as a less substantiated and theoretically, methodologically less specified branch of populism research. Besides (Weyland 2021) authoritative response, this dissertation has aimed to contribute to the notion that populism can be fruitfully seen as a political strategy if one takes into account the organisational, relational aspect of politics both theoretically and methodologically. Taking post-communist Hungary, justifiably the most successful case of populist electoral success and in the European Union and a globally significant instance thereof as its subject, the present research verifies (Weyland 2001; 2017) definition of populism as a political strategy — with the only correction that it cannot be deemed as "unmediated", as, logically speaking, any kind of mass politics in the modern era. Essentially, this dissertation sees populism as a political strategy which seeks to build mass political support *while simultaneously* aiming to undermine competing political organisations or movements.

This approach can also qualify the debate (see e.g. (Abts and Rummens 2007) and (Pasquino 2008)) whether populism is a democratic phenomenon — political strategy — or an anti-democratic one. The logic of this enquiry suggests that if populism is applied against an established, monopolistic authoritarian political organisation or movements such as a one-party state socialist regime with the aim of introducing democratic pluralism, then populism can be deemed as a democratic political strategy. However, if it goes beyond challenging and breaking up an exclusory authoritarian political formation and not to introduce electoral, political competition, but to create a different centralised, monopolistic political organisation; or the strategy is aimed against political organisations under an otherwise pluralistic political system, then populism can be deemed as an autocratic political strategy.

The journey of Fidesz from a liberal, anti-communist student organisation — through solidifying its "central forcefield" [centrális erőtér] in the Hungarian right-wing, splitting up, merging, and integrating conservative party formations (Oltay 2012) amidst changing electoral fortunes in the 1990s and 2000s — to becoming the dominant party in the 2010s clearly indicates the latter: the conscious and sustained application of authoritarian populist political strategy. This dissertation contributes to the understanding of how Fidesz's populist social movement strategy has managed to fundamentally re-shape post-communist Hungary's political economy and society by

objektív"] — also in hyphenated form — to ridicule their unaffiliated status which pro-government outlets see as unsupported and discredited by supposed inherent or manifest left-liberal bias. (Kovács Attila 2022)

demonstrating the working of the strategy in civil society and media. But beyond that, using populist social movement strategy, Fidesz has established a virtual hegemony (an often used and analysed concept vis-à-vis populism) over a wide range of aspects of Hungary's society, economy, and of course, politics — which, by 2022, appears to be remarkably stable. Even facing a united opposition at the polls following the global COVID–19 pandemic and public health crisis, its financial consequences, as well as the tragic war in neighbouring Ukraine with its massive economic fallout and inflationary pressures, Fidesz has managed to increase its vote count and share, winning its fourth in a row two-thirds parliamentary majority, making ORBÁN Viktor the longest-serving prime minister ever in Hungarian history.

V.2. Limitations

All research — especially in social science — entails making both conscious and unconscious decisions regarding research design, the selection and emphasising of certain facts of reality over others. So, too, has the present research focused on a certain set of facts, data, and logical relationships over other possible sets of reality. It can be validly criticised for its choices despite the underlying logic; and several different variations of the analysis is conceivable on the basis of, for example, different sample selection strategies.

This naturally limits the scope and validity of the present study in certain meaningful ways.

As this research collected data pertaining to career histories of a select individuals, it cannot be fully generalised to the whole population right away. This is true even if the research design intended to make sure that the sample and the data collected about the sample is as meaningful and significant as possible.

Moreover, findings suggest that the data analysis is able to provide robust conclusions that both fit the expectations of the academic literature on the subject as well as expand on it — providing a somewhat novel perspective on the studied research problem, the impact of the party system under populism.

Hence before summarising the findings and results in the next sub-chapter, the current sub-chapter intends to recount and consider the three major limitations of the research design: data availability; sample selection and data collection methods; and the applied analytical method.

V.2.a. The issue of transparency and the resulting problems of data availability

First, the overall data availability regarding the political economy of civil society and media in post-communist Hungary is rather poor. Openly available, easy-to-access, carefully validated, curated, comprehensive, and complete databases regarding civil society participation, media output and production, or media distribution and consumption do not exist. This is the case on all levels from the local to the national.

This is due to multiple factors. For example, the high commercial and even political value of media consumption data [139] that incentivises exclusivity. The lack of resources for statistical data collection which can also be technologically and organisationally, resource-wise demanding, given the rapidly changing info-communicational environment in which social communication takes place. But even if such statistical databases existed about the organisational or company level, it would be highly unlikely that it would be so rich in details that it contained *relational* data regarding individuals working participating in civil society and media. For such databases to exist, not only massive institutional, organisational, or research resources were necessary, but also a different analytical mindset, a *relational* one: emphasising the role of social interactions in data collection and analysis over *mainstream* statistical analysis of pre-conceived collectivities (such as institutions, NGOs, or media outlets, or groups of participants and consumers based on real or perceived similarities — e.g. age, location, income levels, religion, education, etc.).

But to consider the more practical context of the research rather than the abstract: the readily available scholarship and data while often highly valuable, are only very partial to one purpose or the other. In the case of civil society, the author of this dissertation has no knowledge of an extensive database regarding civil society organisation's activities, resources, or membership. Naturally, there have been multiple scholarly attempts at assessing and analysing civil society in post-communist Hungary from multiple perspectives — even utilising social network analysis methods, see for example (Gerő and Susánszky 2014). However, such attempts, too, most of the

[139] Personal communications. Both a civil society media practitioner and a media scholar have argued that data is of real value to both companies and political actors. Economically and financially, it is not only mass media who compete for advertising revenues. Therefore, understanding and measuring the audience size, composition, and outreach of media outlets translates into advertisement prices of TV commercials, newspaper ads, and website ad banners. Indeed, companies that collect audience data like, for example, Nielsen provide their services to large media outlets confidentially — thus not available for independent researchers — for high fees.

Likewise, it has been argued that under the Orbán regime, the Hungarian media authorities have centralised data collection activities, providing data and information to all eligible media outlets about their activities. But a civil society outlet's participant personally shared their doubts about the validity of the official data. They suggested that it is in the government's interest to officially misrepresent the impact of media outlets which are critical governments on society. This concern, however, needs to be treated with caution as the source did not provide empirical evidence for their assertions.

time rely on ad-hoc data collection efforts in part or whole — such as opinion polls or events data collection (such as demonstrations, meetings, or rallies (Greskovits 2020)), their results are often difficult to verify and almost impossible to replicate. Ultimately, these pieces of civil society scholarship often conclude on a note ascribing a rather low significance to NGOs or the sphere in general — besides the already cited (M. Szabó 2008), see for example a recent poll finding that 55% of Hungarians could not name a single NGO in their country.[140] (Political Capital 2021a, p. 4)

In the case of the media, perhaps the most complete database on media consumption is provided by the private organisation Hungarian Distribution Control Organisation (MATESZ) [Magyar Terjesztés-Ellenőrző Szövetség (MATESZ)] which has been successfully auditing print media organisations' sales data since 1993. (MATESZ 1993) However, there are multiple press reports about print media organisations discontinuing their MATESZ-led audits, thereby obfuscating knowledge about their real social impact.[141] This is often linked to politically motivated interventions.[142] Moreover, print media — while influential in the early 1990s — has consistently been losing its significance in social communications in Hungary as also MATESZ's database shows (Mátyás 2020) in favour of electronic media.

The technology behind online media promises more transparency. However, accessing sophisticated, comparable data about website traffic also requires high technical skills and knowledge, and retrieving records from earlier years may also be virtually impossible. Not even

---

[140] Earlier polls have found even lower rates of civil society recognition in Hungary, suggesting that there exists an upward trend, however, throughout the studied post-communist period, it has been very low:

> *"People's impressions about civil organisations continues to be uncertain. 55 percent of them cannot name a specific organisation, more than a quarter of them do not hold existing associations, foundations to be of civil nature. However, compared to the poll from two years ago, the ratio of those who could name a specific organisation has grown."* (Political Capital 2021a, p. 4)
>
> *[„Az emberek civil szervezetekről alkotott képe továbbra is bizonytalan. 55 százalékuk nem tud konkrét szervezetet megnevezni, több mint egynegyedük létező egyesületeket, alapítványokat nem tart civilnek. Ugyanakkor a két évvel korábbi felméréshez képest nőtt azoknak az aránya, akik meg tudtak nevezni konkrét szervezetet."* (*ibid.*)*]*

[141] Átlátszó's Bátorfy reported in 2017 (Bátorfy 2017b) that

> *"Unsurprisingly, neither of the pro-government dailies (Local [Lokál], Hungarian Newspaper [Magyar Hírlap], Hungarian Times [Magyar Idők], Ripost, World Economy [Világgazdaság]) lets itself audited, and unfortunately, with the exception of Local [Lokál], these data [about their sales and circulation] have been removed even from their public listing prices."* (The author's own translation from the original Hungarian as follows)
>
> *„Nem meglepő módon a kormányközeli napilapok (Lokál, Magyar Hírlap, Magyar Idők, Ripost, Világgazdaság) egyike sem auditáltatja magát, és sajnos a Lokál kivételével még a nyilvános médiaajánlataikból is kikerültek ezek az adatok."* (*ibid.*)

See also (Szalay 2022b) as an example.

[142] This is a trend that is similar to the one described in *footnote 139*.

techniques like utilising web archiving services such as the Wayback Machine or Google's page caches, discontinued in 2024 (Porter 2024) can be of help.

Assessing the impact of television and radio broadcasts, as referred to earlier,[143] is also difficult due to the private, technologically complicated, and commercially highly valuable nature of these data.

To summarise data availability regarding the media: for both structural and theoretical reasons, it has also been impossible for this research to turn to an already established, ready-made database.

Following these observations on data availability, another, more general social problem needs to be mentioned: organisational transparency in media, civil society, and politics. This root cause must be briefly mentioned not only as an overarching problem impacting democratic societies, but also as a segue to the next limitation of the present research, the issues of sample selection and data collection methods.

Many political science and related research efforts use the assumption of a fully (or at least sufficiently) informed electorate implicitly. This is one of the major underlying concerns which the present research aimed to tackle, substituting this faulty assumption for a media-led public and individual opinion-formation model. Simply put: the research contends that the opinions that are present in the electorate are partial and originate in the media (as well as in civil society, or more broadly, an individual's social interaction networks) — rather than in people's own perceptions. Individuals' own perceptions are tainted by the information they consume. It is for this simplified reason that the civil society and mass commercial media are the main subject of this research — with the intent not to reduce them to "organisations" or "companies", rather than the individuals they consist of.

However, it has been a massive challenge of this research to actually identify the individuals to be traced and researched. Once again, databases containing media employees (even as high-ranked ones as editors-in-chief) do not exist; publicly available lists of chief editors are often fragmented and incomplete; and even if the individuals in question are traceable, sometimes their job functions are not entirely comparable (e.g. news editor, editor-in-chief, news director, etc.). But more gravely, these individuals' biographies are very difficult to find — in fact, as noted in the analysis, a few of them are so difficult to identify and trace that their career paths could not be reconstructed in their entirety, thereby slightly skewing the results.

[143] See *footnote 139*.

The argument here is that if a researcher dedicated to this subject like myself has a hard time identifying some of the most important individuals who influence social communication on a daily basis, how could ordinary members of the public — the electorate — confidently trust the sources of their political information? This problem is not simply a research and social sciences issue; it is a grave contemporary problem of democracy — which may have been only further obfuscated by the spread of social media. It is an argument that may be familiar to those who have come across literature about disinformation or misinformation, fake news, and social media in general. There are, of course several proposals and policy papers intended to tackle the issue (among them, the author of this dissertation, too — see for example (Mátyás 2022a)), but change will surely require time, technological improvement, and a cultural shift. This cultural shift, this author argues, should rely on *relationalist* thought. Sadly, charting a way forward in this manner is far beyond the scope of the present enterprise.

V.2.b. Problems of sample selection and data collection methods

The lack of available data naturally had an impact on the research design. Making up for the absence of well-maintained databases — i.e. gathering relational data about civil society media and commercial mass media — for a single individual researcher would have been unfeasible.

Therefore, a smaller subset, a sample has been selected. Selection criteria — regardless of how transparent and reasonable — always produce a certain bias. In an effort to ensure socio-political significance, this research opted to study the elite of Hungary's media. Naturally, other individuals playing important could have been selected into the sample, such as media managers and media owners; based on other types of ties among them (such as financial flows, non-professional relationships, respect or dislike nominations, etc.). However, openly available or feasibly attainable information about them is scarce — while editors-in-chief are "more public" figures whose career are easier to reliably trace.

On the one hand, as noted in the methodological chapter, the sample selected out of some of the most prominent media outlets' editors-in-chief actually produced a certain political balance among the media outlets: a relatively equal representation of outlets with left– and right-wing inter-institutional, interpersonal connections or ideology. On the other hand, this did not produce an internal balance (within the sample of individuals) among civil society media outlets and mass media outlets. It could be argued that this is a shortcoming of the research design. Nevertheless, it also reflects an aspect of the social reality: civil society media is much less impactful than commercial mass media by nature. So, correcting for this imbalance in the sample could have been

interpreted as distorting the socio-political significance of the studied sample. But even if civil society plays a subdued role in post-communist Hungary, this research identified a special role for civil society media.

One of the selected civil society media outlets, Tilos Rádió's internal structure has added to this issue. Tilos Rádió's organisation, internal social network, and interpersonal relationships defy structural expectations. It is a loosely organised outlet, based on familiarity, even friendship among its participants — the output of the outlet is therefore often experimental, entertaining for the sake of the producers' entertainment, ad-hoc, much less strict and conventional than other professional organisations' content. This also means that there are much fewer formal roles in the organisation. Most notably, there is no single editor-in-chief. Therefore, the research identified DÁVID Ferenc as the content creator falling closest to that role in a sense that in the period of observation, he was the central figure of the most current affairs-related Tilos Rádió programme, 7térítő.[144] Other selection criteria could have been applied, too, but not without compromising the rest of the sample. Moreover, despite the deep socio-political changes taking place in Hungary, Tilos Rádió has remained rather resilient and stable in the time period, which the selection of a single participant represents fairly.

It is not only Tilos Rádió, however, in whose case certain compromises regarding sample selection had to be made. Sometime after the apparent pro-Fidesz take-over of TV2 the position of the chief editor of the main evening news programme, Facts [Tények] was discontinued by the newly joined director of news, KÖKÉNY-SZALAI Vivien. While she created a powerful position and has had a strong impact on the content of TV2's news programme, in order to keep the uniformity and comparability among editors-in-chief, she was not included in the sample. The last chief editor of the programme to be called as such was KŐHEGYI Anna, and as vice-director of news TÓTH Tamás Antal was widely named as her successor (TV2 2016; Origo 2017b), he was still included in the sample until his tenure ended in 2019 also to by far and large cover the period of observation. As there was neither a direct successor named following TÓTH's departure from Tények, nor the position of the editor-in-chief restored, no other person from TV2 was included in the sample analysed in the dissertation.

With the exception of these two instances, the inclusion and non-inclusion of certain editors-in-chief was rather straightforward when publicly available information permitted the tracing of

[144] See *footnote 90*.

outlet's internal working relationships. What decreases the social significance of the research is, however, the omission of a crucial form of media: online social media.

This was a conscious choice given the time frame of the study and the entirely new logic of the genre. Regarding the time frame, online social media only appeared in the 2010s — so their analysis would have left the pre-internet era of post-communist Hungary uncovered. Moreover, they — most importantly by the end of the decade, Facebook and to a smaller extent, Instagram — have gained prominence in the second half of the decade which would have further shortened the time frame of the analysis.

Even more importantly, the omission of social media can be justified by its special media logic. For example, a large proportion of social media content can still be traced back to traditional civil society media and mass media outlets' output. These organisations are present on social media, have their own profiles, followings and audiences — so the social significance their editors-in-chief still remains, only to be modified by the algorithms employed by social media. Additionally, if we disregard "traditional" media organisations' content on social media and focus on solely (or mainly) social media-led information flows, the logic of this research cannot be applied anymore. This is due to the aforementioned (untransparent) algorithmic logics and sometimes anonymous nature of certain social media profiles', sites', and groups' creators. Simply put, the algorithms of the most popular social media, Facebook and Instagram are most often trade secrets and studying them would require a very different skillset and methodology. Moreover, knowing the actual individuals behind some of the most important Facebook and Instagram profiles, pages, and groups is more or less impossible for independent researchers. The EU-wide regulatory changes (such as the Digital Services Act) may still change this, but it will surely require time before social media becomes more transparent.

Furthermore, several media reports attest that following the build-up of a massive pro-government institutional network (Tóth-Biró and Bálint 2021) — often referred to as civil society organisations, therefore deserving the label GONGOs (government-organised non-government organisations) — , the network's members and representatives received vast amounts of funding[145] (such as the 30-year-old political scientist DEÁK Dániel, see: (Presinszky 2022)) to promote the government agenda on several social media platforms from Facebook and Instagram to TikTok. (This also includes high amounts of political advertising — another factor that merits deeper attention outside

[145] According to the online economic news portal, G7's analysis, Hungary is the third among 40 analysed countries in terms of money spent on political ads on Facebook. (Bucsky 2022)

the framework of this research.) This network of media organisations, personalities (often (self-)referred to as experts or journalists)[146], and influencers[147] usually affiliated with the GONGO media organisation Megafon [Megaphone or Loudspeaker] prove to be effective in pushing pro-Fidesz messages in unison. Pro-Fidesz meme sites and groups only add to the effectiveness of this network. While some opposition social media has also expanded in the recent years, its resources are much more limited, and there is little evidence that they would promote messages in the same effective, unison manner. To summarise this brief argument about the socio-political network dynamics in Hungarian social media: one can discover an eerily similar trend in political communication on social media platforms on a much shorter time span. This does not only suggest that the phenomenon analysed by this dissertation may be seen as a strategy that can be applied across different types of media as well as social, geographical, cultural settings. It also suggests that including social media in the sample of this analysis — while could have contributed to the scope of the dissertation — would have been slightly redundant. Indeed, other types of media (most importantly, billboards in public spaces) could have also been added to the subject, but that, once again, would have reduced the parsimony of the research design in favour of enlarging the scope of the analysis.

V.2.c. The limits of the applied analytical method

While it has been an implicit aim of the dissertation to empirically demonstrate the added value of relationalist thought to social science methodology and research, at this point, it needs to be emphasised that the analysis of the data collected by this research must not be over-interpreted. The nature and breadth of the data collected — individual's career histories limited to contemporary memberships in the same professional organisations — is, of course, just one of the many aspects of the rich social reality that needs to be grasped by a social science research. Many more aspects could have been added the breadth of data to cover relational factors such as

- additional individuals or memberships;
- hierarchical relations (capturing the differences in status among individuals);
- ratings or weights of relationships by favourability (capturing positive or negative emotions, relationships).

[146] This phenomenon may match the concept of "militant journalism" by (Waisbord 2013).

[147] To name a few, RÁKAY Philip, TROMBITÁS Kristóf, DEÁK Dániel, DÉRI Stefi, or TÓTH Bettina. TÓTH, however, went through a remarkable career change recently (Bozzay 2022) going as far as appearing as a "social media expert" on the left-leaning ATV whose owners, in fact, are widely regarded to be affiliated with Fidesz. See more on ATV's positionality within opposition-affiliated media in *footnote 116*.

Moreover, additional research methods could also have enriched the data collected, for example, interview techniques or statistical data collection could have added to not only the quantity, but the quality and the interpretation of data.

However, such additions would not only have had its benefits, but also its costs. Much more time and resources would have been needed to process the thus enlarged amount of data — which may have already contained more errors, too. Real-world limitations abounded, too: as already mentioned, the lack of historical databases precluded data collection about the past, and unwilling interview subjects and the lack of input from important participants of the network would have skewed the analysis of qualitative data.[148]

Additionally, these types of limitations also precluded the investigation of an important theoretical relationship, too: the causal relationship between media consumption and electoral behaviour overtime. The author believes that this would have been a very valuable addition to Hungarian political economic research because while the transformation of the Hungarian media is a well-researched and understood subject, its role in actual electoral outcomes is much less acknowledged. For example, the opposition party Momentum-linked think tank 21 Kutatóközpont [21 Research Centre] in its policy research paper, while acknowledges the media factor in the support for Fidesz, it dismisses the idea that media consumption would play a *leading* role in people's decisions to vote for Fidesz. Instead, the political economic trope of economic voting's primacy is emphasised. (Róna et al. 2020)

While this dissertation is not aimed at refuting this idea (and therefore, cannot do so), it would like to call the attention to the fact that the role of economic voting must have weakened among the reasons for the continued electoral support for Fidesz following the hardships brought about the COVID–19 pandemic and the following inflationary pressures — worsened by the economic impact of the illegal and barbaric war waged by Putin's Russian Federation against neighbouring Ukraine in 2022.[149] Moreover, literature on agenda-setting should also be much better incorporated

[148] See *footnote 77* and the corresponding paragraph regarding the application of interview techniques.

[149] Of course, it could be argued that PM ORBÁN's Fidesz-led government responded well to the manifold crises and their economic impacts by increasing welfare spending. However, this would be an underappreciation of the fact that earlier, Hungarian electorate has punished incumbent parties much more for similar (if not smaller) declines in living standards — while the support for Fidesz has not only grown, but it reached historic heights in the 2022 general elections.

Once again, this dissertation cannot provide empirical arguments against the economic voting thesis, but can suggest a mechanism to be confirmed by future research: communicational attribution — and in a much more classic manner, agenda-setting. Based on the results of this analysis, it seems to be highly likely that a dominance in media and political communication shapes the electorate's perception about not only economic matters, but also the relevance of the national economy's performance when voting for candidates and parties.

into Hungarian political economic research to add to the understanding of contemporary social phenomena in the country. This is especially the case because relationship between media consumption and electoral behaviour has been successfully confirmed to a great extent in various global settings from the United States (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007), the United Kingdom (Gavin 2018), various European countries (Schmitt-Beck 2004; Barone, D'Acunto, and Narciso 2015), or Russia (Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya 2011) by researchers of political economy of media and political communication.

Altogether, while it needs to be acknowledged that the dissertation could have been enriched by additional data collection techniques and the corresponding analytical methods, its parsimony can also be interpreted as a virtue. This is because combining a relatively simple idea with the novel, somewhat less tested empirical analytical method of social network analysis, it managed to show a comprehensive result — also confirming the usefulness of the underlying theory, relationalism and the analytical method itself. Hence the dissertation hopes that it will serve as an inspiration for future relationalist research and research using social network analysis methodologies.

— CHAPTER SUMMARY —

This chapter highlights the main analytical findings of this dissertation research and their interpretation. Mainly, it describes the sample exemplifying the demise of an "old guard" of independent and opposition civil society media and mass media elite amidst the evident populist political economic pressures on them. Amidst these challenges, their network failed to unify — instead, the network fractured and lost cohesion. Civil society, while an important lifeline and survival strategy, could not contribute to meaningful unification and resistance. These trends suggest a "great replacement" of this "old guard" elite with a pro-government one — and the discussion considers its mechanisms briefly.

Comparing these findings with the wider empirical and conceptual literature, this dissertation deems it fitting to apply a social movement definition and perspective on the key populist case of Hungary. It sees it justified that Fidesz built a strong, coherent, centralised, and well-coherent social movement party organisation — while the opposition fractured and lost many of its connections to other organisations or society at large. This view has an important impact on the strategic definition of populism; and the chapter briefly considers social movement-based explanations of electoral success — not only in populist contexts.

Limitations for these findings and interpretations, of course, abound. The three main challenges that limit the work revolve around a lack of suitable data, the inevitable biases of using a non-probability sampling method, and the strict focus on just one aspect of reality, year-long professional connections among chief editors. The chapter makes a few proposals on how these challenges could be tackled by future research to assess the validity of the findings of the present dissertation.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

VI.1. Research summary

Three decades after the *annus mirabilis*, Hungary has travelled a remarkable political economic trajectory. The country has experienced autocratisation (Levitsky and Way 2020; Krekó 2022), its economic convergence to the European Union is fraught with questions of social development, and its population is dissatisfied with the level of public services[150] which lags behind that of western Europe. Yet, the country is a key example of populism, with PM Orbán serving as the European Union's longest-serving head of state or government in the European Union and the longest-serving prime minister in Hungarian history. This dissertation aimed to contribute to the understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Pro-democratic civil society has been viewed as a pivotal player in democratisation and stood as a safeguard against undemocratic forces. Indeed, it played a significant role in the democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary (Ekiert and Kubik 1998). Media, a primary conduit of political information and an important intermediary, is expected to also intervene in the relationship between political leadership and the electorate. Therefore, the failure to effectively counter or challenge populism in Hungary under Orbán in the 2010s presents a noteworthy theoretical problem. Thus, this dissertation research seeks to understand the following question:

How has the party system under populism affected civil society and the media in post-communist Hungary?

This study tackles this question on the basis of a novel, experimental, and explorative theoretical and methodological framework. It is rooted in relationalism as its epistemological foundation,, which focuses on interpersonal interactions and avoiding the reification of entities by examining the causal dynamics in personal relationships. This approach is further informed by actor-centred historical institutionalism, drawing from insights in the political economy of communication, selectorate theory, and autocratization studies (e.g., Waldner and Lust 2018; Guriev and Treisman 2019). With this foundation, the dissertation selects a less mainstream conceptualisation of

[150] See for example about healthcare (Ipsos 2024). Social action including rare teacher strikes and civil disobedience regarding the state of education in 2022–2023 also indicate widespread, desperate dissatisfaction with government policies.

populism, the strategic approach as its key concept alongside with relationalist understandings of civil society and the media. Corresponding to this framework, the dissertation employs a unique methodological approach positioned as an exploratory case study. It expected to show the formation of populist hegemony and Fidesz's strategy of building a broad social movement through temporal social network analysis (tSNA). To carry out this investigation, the study purposively selected a sample of 21 leaders from key organizations that have held significant influence over Hungary's civil society and media landscape from 2010 to 2020. The 21 chief editors' shared employers and affiliations were meticulously collected from 1990 to 2020. tSNA is then utilized to analyze the structure of their network, with a focus on coherence and, on the individual level, the editors'-in-chief centralities.

VI.2. Summary of the findings

VI.2.a. Case study analysis

VI.2.a: I. Findings of the temporal SNA of the complete network (1990–2020)

The dynamic temporal analysis of social networks provides insight into the evolving structure of the studied network sample. Initially, separate “communities” or sub-networks existed throughout the observed period.

These became denser and more connected during the first half of the period, with more editors-in-chief becoming professionally active and forming collegial ties. However, the overall connectedness of the network fluctuated constantly. It only reached a very low annual connectedness value, never approaching the level of a dense, centralised, or hierarchical organisation. The peak in connectedness occurred in 1996, possibly due to the smaller number of active editors-in-chief at that time, resulting in relatively fewer but more interconnected actors.

In the 2000s, during the two-block party system, the connectedness stabilised at a relatively high value, particularly between 2004 and 2007. However, in the 2010s, there was a constant decline in connectedness, with it approaching zero by 2020. Furthermore, the highest number of tie formations were observed in the 2000s, whereas the highest number of tie dissolutions occurred in 2011, with a high annual dissolution counts throughout the rest of the decade. These trends run in parallel with the period of the dominant party system under populism.

VI.2.a: II. Findings of the static SNA

The static social network analysis provides "snapshots" of the network. The complete social network (1990–2020) reveals a very high level of connectedness. Compared to the annual connectedness scores of the temporal social network analysis, it is somewhat misleading as it overstates the "weight" of short-term interrelationships. It is also partly an artifact of the network's (potentially accidental) structure, which resembles an efficient outtree — no other signs of a centralised, hierarchically organised network can be found by other analytical techniques or in other (external) sources. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that the analysed Hungarian media elite is a relatively small and interconnected group — but there are structural differences between actors. Individual-level analysis underscores the more peripheral role of civil society journalists within the broader Hungarian media network. Only a few civil society actors, such as BODOKY Tamás of Átlátszó, are more deeply integrated into the media elite. At the same time, WEYER Balázs' profile was boosted by his "double participation" in both mass media and civil society media.

Indeed, by participating in both "spheres" and being involved in civil society journalistic efforts like Tilos Rádió, Direkt36, and Átlátszó, they exemplified the bridging roles between different parts of the network. These individuals also employed important "civil society strategies" in response to populist pressures. This included sourcing alternative financial means through crowdfunding, forming neutral meeting grounds, and developing modes of "survival" amid growing political pressures.

Additionally, the highest-ranked chief editors, including SZOMBATHY, VICSEK, DULL, and WEYER, all experienced organizational takeovers during this period. Many of them became vocal critics of these changes. However, there is one exception to this observation — PÁLMAI L. Ákos, who was ranked number one by the centrality analysis of the complete network. Accused by his colleagues of "collaborating" with Fidesz-affiliated interests during media captures (see for example (Tamás 2014)), his behaviour may actually reflect a "side-switching" strategy rather than a commitment to civil society or resistance against populist political and economic pressures.

The period-specific analyses reveal important insights that further enhance these overarching findings. In the first period of the network (1990–1996), there was a high level of centralisation due to the small number of connected members. Out of the 21 individuals studied, only seven were active during this period. Contrary to right-wing political claims that surviving communist journalist elites dominated the media in post-communist Hungary, this analysis indicates that the

majority of the sampled individuals were socialised after the transition to democracy. This suggests the emergence of a new generation of journalists.

The period between 1997 and 2010 was a formative one for the analysed civil society media and mass media elite sample. During this time, the network expanded as most of the studied actors became active in this period. This led to a more distributed structure. In fact, the full network structure was formed during this period: regardless of relationships formed before or after this time frame, every professional connection existed for at least one year during the two-block party system. Relationships from this period sometimes re-emerged in later years, indicating a more cohesive and stable network. The organization of the network during this period seemed to be based more on lasting community ties than on institutional positions or hierarchies. This suggests that there may have been lower external pressures on their organisations during this time.

In contrast, the final period of analysis, which took place during the dominant party system under populism (2011–2020), witnessed a significant decline in centralisation and the fragmentation of the network. Some editors-in-chief even left journalism (some of them temporarily). Others, like KOTROCZÓ of RTL, remained influential but became detached from other members. The analysis may suggest a "great replacement" of media elites — with the captured media outlets appointing leaders who have no history of collaboration with previous leaders (of usually left-wing and liberal) world views. Overall, it appears to be rather clear that political pressures exerted a significant influence on the network. Individual strategies, such as joining civil society or even side-switching, further attest to this.

VI.2.a: III. Summary of the analysis

The main finding of this dissertation is that the expectation that the analysis would reveal increasing network centralisation led by Fidesz-affiliated actors in Hungarian media within the studied sample is not met. Instead, the analysis finds a disintegration within the independent and opposition-aligned civil society media and mass media elite network sample.

This outcome can be partially attributed to the selection strategy employed in the study, which prioritized balance of political affiliation among the studied outlets at the organizational level instead of the individual level — as observed in the late 2010s. Hence it could not take into account the political leanings of their editors-in-chief prior to the capture of some of these organisations. As a result, the sample disproportionately includes individuals with independent or opposition leanings, while fewer Fidesz-affiliated actors are included. Among these individuals, the decline of professional connections are shown.

Consequently, rather than demonstrating a centralised media landscape, the analysis points to fragmentation and a weakening of collegial ties among those with opposition-affiliated or independent leanings.

This, in itself, however, is a valuable finding that shifts perspectives on Hungarian populism in a novel way. Indeed, the original expectation to find growing centralisation within Hungarian civil society and media was drawn from a well-established scholarship. The failure of the independent and opposition-affiliated actors to counter or resist populist strategy in Hungary is much less often discussed, researched, and understood.

VI.2.b. Theoretical implications

What do these findings imply regarding the theory of populism?

While the findings of this dissertation do not definitively confirm or refute previous evidence, conclusions, or hypotheses about populism (or even Hungarian populism), they align with the existing literature. The findings contribute to our understanding of populism as a social movement model or strategy:

> *"…to seize control over civil society the government applies sector-specific strategies, ranging from exclusion to co-optation. State strategies, in turn, spark different responses from civil society organisations."* (Gerő et al. 2022, p. 16)

The intent to build a centrally controlled, cohesive pro-government media ecosystem on the one hand, while sustaining a fragmented, incoherent independent and opposition-affiliated media landscape follows the same logic. Indeed, this dissertation argues that this view of populism as a strategy can help us understand two additional puzzling phenomena in the Hungarian political economy of communications. First, media outlets whose editorial policies do not align with the government, but are owned by pro-government actors (see for instance (Bódis 2022) , which have also been recently referred to as "grey-zone"[151] media (Polyák, Urbán, and Szávai 2022)). Second, while this dissertation also subscribes to the importance of media effects on electoral outcomes, there appears to be a disparity between Hungary's highly centralised media landscape, the accessibility and consumption of independent and opposition media by large segments of the

[151] In their brief description:

> *"Grey-zone media are not yet pro-government but depend on the government/the state."* (Polyák, Urbán, and Szávai 2022, p. 137)

electorate[152] on the one hand, versus, and the relatively diffuse electoral results of the different political blocks on the other.

The key to understanding these phenomena could lie in the informational uniformity and mutual reinforcement of communicative elements of the Fidesz-led social movement, as opposed to the disparate, un-coordinated, and relatively cacophonous nature of independent and opposition actors' communications.

In the former case, Fidesz' extensive social movement network may be able to invest even in media outlets without seeking to change their editorial policies, but rather monitoring and exerting control through less direct and obvious, more subtle ways.[153] This could potentially allow the party to manipulate the opposition's internal affairs, foster constant divisions, and impede efforts to counter pro-government narratives in a unified manner, among other tactics. It should be noted that this is purely a theoretical possibility, this dissertation did not concern itself with uncovering such trends; it is up to future research to decide if these are valid hypotheses. The present dissertation research has only identified a few actors who could have played a crucial role in the capture of media outlets. More direct evidence would be necessary to verify this and, furthermore, to confirm the validity of the "populist control of independent and opposition media" hypothesis.

In the second case, the populist strategy also necessitates a constant conflict between a unified, centralised social movement consisting of diverse organisations and actors, such as the leading political party, civil society organizations, media outlets, local administrations, and business interests, etc.) and a disparate, diverging opposition that lacks extensive, effective linkages to society, such as local representatives, civil society groups, efficiently organised media, or supporting businesses. Fidesz has not only dominated civil society and the media organisationally, but it can also convey messages and narratives in a unified way through various channels, including local media, billboards, party representatives, events, civil groups, volunteers, national broadcast media, online news, and social media outlets, etc. This unified messaging is almost impossible for opposition parties to achieve. This dissertation supports media scholar POLYÁK Gábor's view that

[152] Briefly put, the impact of the pro-Fidesz media dominance is often discounted due to survey results (see for example (Róna et al. 2020) or (Zubor 2022) that show that independent and opposition news outlets also reach voters, it is a relatively small segment of society that gets their informations from exclusively pro-government sources (Polyák, Urbán, and Szávai 2022).

[153] "Soft censorship" techniques (like impeding access to public information, fostering self-censorship, burying stories, threatening with legal action — strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)) are only some of the well-documented techniques, even in the Hungarian context, to exercise such "covert" influence. See for example (Máriás et al. 2019) and (Guriev and Treisman 2015; 2019).

> *"[t]he messages of the government and its media empire come together as a unified whole. The opposition has no comparable weapon. [The public broadcaster] MTVA and KESMA should not be compared to RTL or Telex, but rather to something like the [opposition party] DK-affiliated Nyugati Fény ["Light from the West"] blog. Both are party media, but one operates with billions in public funds and can reach millions of people."* (Zubor 2022)[154]

This research supports the notion of "communicational control" (that does not consist of agenda-setting, but also narrative dominance thanks to superior organisation) as a decisive factor that this dissertation seeks to also support; but a more thorough scientific assessment of this factor and its impact on electoral behaviour is still necessary, especially in contexts outside of Hungary.

However, going beyond the case of Hungary, this dissertation demonstrates the merits of the strategic conception of populism. It shows that populism is neither "too strict" nor "too loose" (Moffitt 2020, p. 20) as critics suggest. The strategic conception of populism is indeed operationalisable, thanks to relationalist principles and methodologies, particularly tSNA, and it can be meaningful in institutionalized contexts outside of Latin America, Africa, or Asia. Hence it holds massive potential for researching and understanding populism's rise in established democracies as well. Additionally, it is not *"[l]imited by its necessary focus on the leader"* (Moffitt 2020, p. 27), , either, as this dissertation's research design has sought to demonstrate. This research also contributes to understanding the rise and success of populism as a strategy by showing theoretically that a weak, unorganised civil society and fragmented media landscape can favour its surge — also because unopposed, any political strategy or actor can attain power more easily. This contributes to a potentially stronger and more pertinent school of thought regarding political behaviour by making populism a timeless category of political organisation. Therefore, populism as a political strategy can be used in historical contexts such as ancient Greece and Rome and in non-European cultural contexts as well. This highlights one counterexample to populism, pluralist strategies. Exemplary leaders such as the legendary Cincinnatus or George Washington, who embody republican virtues, serve as good examples that challenge the current "divide and conquer" tactics. Further study should be conducted on attempts to create pluralist political systems. These perspectives are always necessary and important as they help us understand how to build better social structures and prevent the rise of hateful and pro-war coalitions.

---

[154] In the original Hungarian:

> *„A kormány és a befolyása alatt álló médiabirodalom üzenetei egy egységes egésszé állnak össze. Ehhez fogható fegyvere nincs az ellenzéknek. Az MTVA-val és a KESMA-val nem is az RTL-t és a Telexet, hanem mondjuk a DK-s Nyugati Fény blogot lehet párhuzamba állítani. Mindkettő pártmédia, csak az egyik közpénz-milliárdokból működik, és többmillió embert tud elérni."* (Zubor 2022)

VI.3. A normative assessment of the findings and their context

Upon summarising the findings of this dissertation, logically, the question arises: is Hungary's described situation desirable? If independent and opposition civil society media and mass media could not unite to resist populist political strategy — should they? This also harkens back to questions posed in the introduction: is the isolation and separation of these two functions beneficial for populism? Can cooperation or coordination between them reduce populist influence?

These are normative questions that I intended to minimise throughout the study to maintain as much objectivity as possible. However, as an eternal issue in our field, personal values and judgements cannot be completely excluded from social science research. To address this, and in adherence to the principle of transparency, I intend to clarify my views on these questions. For I believe that this section does not detract from the value of my scientific work; rather, it provides an honest account of my values or biases, instead of attempting to conceal them. Hence this section — and this section only — takes the form of a short essay, intended to add context to my analytical results, and not to alter them.

I believe that the populist strategy employed by PM ORBÁN's Fidesz party in post-communist Hungary took place in an already pluralistic setting. This setting might have faulty or sub-optimal, it was nevertheless characterised by pluralistic electoral competition that was, by far and large, fair. Fidesz did not make competition fairer — quite the opposite.

I believe that there may be limited, but justifiable reasons for employing populist strategy in building a social movement in an already pluralistic political system. However, in today's Hungary, it is clear that Fidesz had not only sought to unify the right-wing and improve its interest representation, but went much further than that in order to maximise its own, exclusive power and reduce other political groups and communities to prevent them to compete fairly. Thus, in today's Hungary, electoral competition only appears pluralistic, free, but it is unfair (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2022), due to the structural constraints imposed by Fidesz. (This dissertation only touched on a few of the most significant constraints.) Populism was used in a profoundly anti-democratic way, to create a dominant party system — a situation that is far from desirable.

I believe that however flawed democratic politics may appear, it comes with basic, essential characteristics — like fostering an attitude that favours fact-based debates about policies; chance for popular sovereignty to give rise to rapid change, when necessary; acknowledgement and protections for individual liberties even if the contents of these may be up for debate; etc. These

basic tenets are threatened in Hungary today. This stifles economic growth and social development, innovation, public service improvements (education, healthcare, infrastructure, administration, etc.), social mobility and fairness, to name just a few critical issues.

Should independent and opposition civil society media and mass media could not unite to resist? My answer is a resounding yes. Temporarily, until the restoration of pluralism, this must be done. While this is theoretically debatable and is practically challenging, I find attempts to do so necessary. As noted in Section V.1., independent civil society and media can be reasonably wary of affiliating with highly charged political causes or actors. It is "unnatural", I admit — and under pluralistic democratic systems, undesirable, even. Also, one might argue that a potential anti-populist "united front" is just the extention of the same "us vs. them" divisive, polarising logic of populism.[155] I reckon, acknowledge this. However, I believe that efforts to do this are justifiable with scholarship and political logic — to which this dissertation has also contributed.

As to political affiliation of independent and civil society: these organisations are already subjected to an "us vs. them" logic. Not being a part of the social movement Fidesz has created exposes them to risks as it is. (For example, in 2010, Hungarian civil society organisations to aid refugees could not foresee that after 2015, they might be targeted based on political logic. In the same vein, unaffiliated civil society and media organisations may not anticipate future political conflicts in which they might get caught up in.)

As to resistance and organisation of a counter-movement, I refer to a quote included in the Literature review by WALDNER and LUST:

> *"…without a large prodemocratic coalition, efficaciously organized and with access to political institutions, democracy remains imperilled — with backsliding as one possible and even likely outcome — informs a great deal of the work we have surveyed. We close this article with the contention that this approach is the most fruitful way forward as well."* (Waldner and Lust 2018, p. 18)

I fully subscribe to this view as relationalism also supports this thinking. There are no automatisms in politics. Effective interest representation requires an efficiently organized community of actors. Checks and balances do not work automatically; the law itself must be enforced — ultimately by human actors, on human actors. The same logic applies here.

[155] However, among scholars of populism of many stripes, populism against populism is actually a favoured strategy. Famously, Chantal MOUFFE argued "For a Left Populism" (Mouffe 2018).

The necessity should be evident and clear also based on this dissertation. Fidesz has built its own social movement; but what makes this truly problematical is its oversized power, a hegemony that (pro-)actively, relentlessly stifles opposition and critique using populism. Fidesz' level of power concentration in Hungary has exceeded the limits of what two-party democratic systems could justify.

Without an efficient opposition (including at least one political party as well as civil society and media organisations), Fidesz could maximise its power, capturing the state and vast parts of the economy.[156] Its autocratic hegemony leaves no chance for a divided opposition and independent actors to compete with a real chance of winning. As I regard this level of concentration of power anti-democratic and autocratic, I hold acquiescing to and accepting Fidesz' dominance for whatever reason — whether for the sake of organizational "independence" or non-affiliation — short-sighted and also anti-democratic. Thus, briefly, I believe that the isolation and separation of civil society and media under these circumstances plays into the hands of populists. Co-operation or co-ordination, however, could reduce their power.

How exactly to achieve this, of course, is a more difficult question. I believe that in terms of outcomes, the desired state of the Hungarian party system's development should resemble the past thirty years but in reverse: starting off with the current predominant party system, moving towards a two-bloc system (and potentially, ultimately a tripartite or more pluralistic one — even though, under the right circumstances, I hold a two-bloc system more democratic already). To this end, a united political opposition is indispensable.[157] One might point out that this strategy already proved to be a failure in the 2022 general elections. This is only partially true: in 2022 and before — as this dissertation also suggests — a united opposition was not backed up by a social movement consisting of media, civil society or even trade unions, churches and religious organisations, cultural institutions and artists, etc.

---

[156] I currently see few limits on Fidesz' political economic power in Hungary. Most importantly, it is foreign business interests and the European Union that can hold the Hungarian government in check regarding certain issues and to an extent. This is because the maintenance of a baseline of rule of law and an appearance of a plural, competitive political system in the country is necessary to keep foreign economic and political actors engaged with Hungary. This can be a win-win scenario: foreign business interests can earn profits while providing employment and economic output for the Hungarian economy — legitimising the Fidesz-run government.

[157] An important reason for this is the election law adopted by Fidesz. Of course, a more thorough consideration of the literature about this question is necessary. In my view, simply put: the election law, by requiring only relative majorities, essentially prescribes a two-party system. One of Fidesz' many instruments to maintain power has been a divided opposition that could not compete with its mindset inherited from a more plural system (to recall: the previous elections featured more mandates for proportional party lists and two rounds of elections for individual constitutencies). In 2022, for example, Fidesz won 87 seats from local consitutencies (vs. the opposition's 19 seats) while 48 seats from proportional party lists (vs. the opposition's 38 seats).

Building such social movement, I believe, is the solution that can counter Fidesz' populism and power excess. (This may be considered "fighting populism with populism." I would agree with this argument. As I posited earlier, populism can be a legitimate, democratic strategy if it aims to restore and improve pluralism, democracy, and the rule of law in a centralised setting.) International examples of constraining populists in power or ousting them exist not only in two-party systems, but also in more plural political systems such as Poland or Israel — although these are imperfect comparisons since the populists in these countries have not achieved a similarly high level of power concentration as Fidesz. Hungarian opposition needs to study and understand their examples — both countries' cases feature strong social movements, naturally.[158] "Best practices" can come from elsewhere, too, and be informed purely by theory.

Before briefly giving my recommendation for media and civil society informed by theory, however, I must clarify that I logically consider creating a counter-movement a temporary solution until Fidesz's power is limited to a level where pluralism can be considered restored and safeguarded. This is, in essence, a democratic and constitutional regime change; and consist of building new, fairer, stronger institutions free of conflicts of interest. The goal is not to replace Fidesz' hegemony with another one — not even necessarily replace Fidesz, although it is even more difficult to imaging Fidesz relinquishing power without losing at least one election. The aim of the social movement is to restore pluralism to make way for other actors' interest representation, too, without any one group — network — dominating the political system of Hungary alone.[159] We must prevent political networks from using power to their own advantages solely as well as to diminish other actors.

My brief practical policy recommendation for civil society and media is, of course, the reverse of what observe in my dissertation: increasing collaboration and co-operation among themselves as well as a united opposition or its strongest force. (This is easier said than done, and this strategy carries many risks, which I recognize.) But without such co-operation, in the face of Fidesz' massive, centralised social movement, a divided, weak opposition without strong linkages to and backing from civil society and media cannot hope to compete effectively.

As suggested in the dissertation, there are many redundancies in this segment of Hungarian media, resources are not distributed efficiently — many compete, and many struggle in certain areas (especially regarding capabilities: e.g. video creation, radio and television broadcasting, print

[158] *See* for example the already cited "Media bez wyboru" [Media without choice] campaign in Poland (Easton 2021b), or Israels active civil society forcing PM NETANYAHU to pause his judicial reforms before 7 October 2023 (Raffi 2023).
[159] This is, naturally, also against the Basic Law.

publication, investigative long-form journalism, advertising revenues, podcasting, online streaming, event organisation, etc.). Some initiatives (like giving opportunities for civil society in media regularly like the Helsinki Blog in 444, the "Civilian on the Pitch" ["Civil a Pályán"] programme of ATV, or Tilos Rádió's programming practice) already exist, but improving this situation would be an important first step and trust-building exercise.

Even more crucial is, however, collaborating with a credible, united opposition or the leading opposition party temporarily for the attainment of the goals. This collaboration must entail supporting that party or coalition's agenda until it attains the power to realise the social movement's goal: restoring and safeguarding pluralism. This does not mean unprincipled propaganda, but it does involve favouritism[160] — to temporarily counterbalance pro-government media and its organisations. This must be strictly followed and meticulously executed also via a public agreement, compromise, or a charter to which these organisations openly subscribe. This social movement must be led by a civil society or media professional who, in the event of opposition electoral victory, would be responsible for executing the programme of the social movement, designing a new, pluralistic institutional setting for the entirety of the Hungarian civil society and the media system. In exchange for its support, the political leader of the opposition should be bound to respect this common programme for Hungarian civil society and the media as long as the aims of the social movement are realised. Hard deadlines and legal, contractual conditions would need to be set in advance to safeguard this momentous social movement. Red lines must be drawn well in advance — but with an undemocratic, hegemonic pro-government social movement's competition in mind.

Obviously, this strategy entails the potential for a vast plethora of foreseeable and unforeseeable conflicts, misgivings, potential for abuse, and failure. The inherent risks are clear — and so is the risk of retribution in case of failure. Fidesz could very well create smear campaigns, launch legal or regulatory actions, impose financial fines, etc. against participants. They can do this at any time currently. Participants must be brave and support each other in deep solidarity without forgetting that this both well within their democratic rights and for a national cause.

[160] I anticipate that this would be objectionable for journalists who subscribe to a kind of ethical neutrality or non-affiliation, of course. Besides the temporary nature of this social movement or alliance and "the greater good" (which is always a slippery slope), a legal or contractual provision should empower media outlets and civil society organisations to resume their usual practices upon the expiry of the "deal" without retributions. That means that, if a civil society organisation did not protest against an opposition policy or scandal, they can freely do so after the restoration of pluralism. If a media outlet left unflattering news unreported, they can do so once the "agreement" would be fulfilled or expired.

A perfect political and media system does not exist. Politics is a field of constant conflicts. But there some systems incentivise better ways conflict management, resolving, and producing better outcomes from these conflicts. I believe that this course of action would lead to a better political system in Hungary.

There are, however, numerous political economic "lessons" for civil society and media and beyond. I have already cited a paper of mine (Mátyás 2022a) on these issues, so here, I am only mentioning a few, key themes. In this day and age, where we must respond to unprecedented changes in info-communicational technology, we need to be strategic about the future of civil society, media, and democracy itself. New challenges require new ways of thinking going well beyond our comfort zones. We must double down on truth and seeking consensual ways of getting to it. This means reinforcing education in favour of digital skills and communication — rather than focusing on ancient, antiquated methods and body of knowledge. We must reinforce trust in trustworthy information providers and interest groups by fostering transparency and implementing stronger legal protections for independent professionals. We must tackle conflicts of interest more resolutely than ever before. Control over information and fairness cannot be left only to those who can afford them — we need to protect political economic systems from concentrations of power. I believe that this dissertation is an embryonic effort to take a step towards these goals.

VI.4. Outlook

The manifold limitations of this dissertation research, as discussed in "Chapter III. Research design" and "V.2.c. The limits of the applied analytical method", can also serve as inspiration for taking this line of intellectual query further — or even challenge the findings of this work. Improved data collection and analysis can provide more insights into important details or change the context. This conclusion demonstrates that a different sample selection strategy could yield different (though not necessarily contradictory) insights. It would be beneficial to go beyond studying only 1-year working relationships; and instead scrutinise institutional hierarchies, resource flows, ownership relations, etc. in a more granular, detailed manner. Comparisons, both internal (regarding the Hungarian right-wing) and international comparative case studies, would be crucial in supporting or disproving the theses of this dissertation. Additionally, as relationalism emphasises the co-production of knowledge, it would be desirable to implement the idea of allowing research subjects to reflect on analytical results in the future, despite practical constraints preventing its inclusion in this dissertation.

Furthermore, this research has also touched on trends and phenomena that require further corroboration and verification. For example, explaining the lack of collaboration among independent and opposition civil society and mass media, evaluating their role under populist regimes, or developing a grand theory on the purported nexus between electoral behaviour and the structural configurations of the political economy of communication would all be valuable and important areas of study.

Our ever-evolving communication technologies and the societies these produce need wisdom and good governance — hence we constantly need to keep learning more and seek better understanding of ourselves and each other.

LIST OF REFERENCES

24.hu. 2020. ‘Bodolai: Nem voltak komolyan vehető behatási kísérletek’. 24.hu. *24.hu* (blog). 27 July 2020. https://24.hu/belfold/2020/07/27/index-bodolai-laszlo-dull-szabolcs-gerenyi-gabor-interju-atv/.

888.hu. 2021. ‘Kiderült, ki lehet az Anonymus által küldött videó egyik szereplője’. 888.hu. 888.hu. 8 November 2021. https://888.hu/gazemberek/kiderult-ki-lehet-az-anonymus-altal-kuldott-video-egyik-szereploje-4339587/.

Aalberg, Toril, Frank Esser, Carsten Reinemann, Jesper Strömbäck, and Claes de Vreese, eds. 2017a. *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge Research in Communication Studies 1. London New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

———. 2017b. ‘Populist Political Communication: Toward a Model of Its Causes, Forms, and Effects’. In *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge Research in Communication Studies 1. London New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Abts, Koen, and Stefan Rummens. 2007. ‘Populism versus Democracy’. *Political Studies* 55 (2): 405–24. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00657.x.

Ádám, Zoltán. 2018. ‘What Is Populism? An Institutional Economics Approach with Reference to Hungary’. In *Varieties of Transition*, 83–98. Budapest: Corvinus University of Budapest. http://unipub.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/3744/1/Varieties_of_Transition_CUB_2018p83.pdf.

———. 2019. ‘Explaining Orbán: A Political Transaction Cost Theory of Authoritarian Populism’. *Problems of Post-Communism* 66 (6): 385–401. https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2019.1643249.

Albertazzi, Daniele, and Sean Mueller. 2013. ‘Populism and Liberal Democracy: Populists in Government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland’. *Government and Opposition* 48 (3): 343–71. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2013.12.

Angelusz, Róbert, and Róbert Tardos, eds. 2005a. ‘A Választói Tömbök Rejtett Hálózata’. In *Törések, Hálók, Hidak: Választói Magatartás És Politikai Tagolódás Magyarországon*, 65–160. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

———, eds. 2005b. *Törések, Hálók, Hidak: Választói Magatartás És Politikai Tagolódás Magyarországon*. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

anonymous Member of Parliament. 2002. ‘A médiatörvény sebei’. Válasz. 2002. http://valasz.hu/itthon/a-mediatorveny-sebei-4579.

Antal, Attila. 2017. ‘The Political Theories, Preconditions and Dangers of the Governing Populism in Hungary’. *Politologický Časopis - Czech Journal of Political Science*, no. 1 (February). https://doi.org/10.5817/PC2017-1-5.

Antal, Zsolt, and Zsolt Scherer. 2005. ‘Médiapiaci körkép. A monopóliumok kora’. In *Magyar médiahelyzet*, edited by Zsolt Antal and Tibor Gazsó. Budapest: Századvég K. 145–191.

Arató, András. 2021. ‘Hungary Is Becoming a Semi-Dictatorship as the EU Watches Idly | View’. Euronews. 10 May 2021. https://www.euronews.com/2021/05/10/hungary-is-becoming-a-semi-dictatorship-as-the-eu-watches-idly-view.

Asimov Alapítvány (Asimov Foundation). 2021. ‘Asimov Alapítvány’. 2021. https://asimov-foundation.org/.

Ateş, Altınordu. 2021. ‘Uncivil Populism in Power’. In *Populism in the Civil Sphere*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Peter Kivisto, and Giuseppe Sciortino, 74–95. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Babos Attila. 2020. ‘Dull Szabolcs: „Sokszor végigpörgettem magamban, lehetett volna-e másképp"’. Szabad Pécs. 20 November 2020. https://szabadpecs.hu/2020/11/dull-szabolcs-sokszor-vegigporgettem-magamban-lehetett-volna-e-maskepp/.

Bajomi-Lázár, Péter. 2001. *A Magyarországi Médiaháború*. Membrán Könyvek 9. Budapest: Új Mandátum.

———. 2013. ‘The Party Colonisation of the Media: The Case of Hungary’. *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 27 (1): 69–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325412465085.

———. 2015. ‘Political Actors and the Colonization of the Media’. In *Media and Politics in New Democracies: Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, First edition, 73–84. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———, ed. 2017. *Media in Third-Wave Democracies: Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective*. Paris Budapest: L’Harmattan.

———. 2020. *A patrónusi-kliensi médiarendszer: Magyarország 2010-2018*. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó.

Baker, Gideon. 2002. *Civil Society and Democratic Theory Alternative Voices*. London: Routledge. http://www.myilibrary.com?id=5330.

Bárány, Anzelm. 1998. ‘Volt egyszer egy sajtószabadság. Média és politika 1987–1997’. In *Janus-arcú rendszerváltozás*, edited by Mária Schmidt and László Tóth Gy. Janus-arcú rendszerváltozás 1. Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó.

Barnóczki, Brigitta. 2020. ‘Orbán Balázs: Aki uralja egy ország médiáját, az uralja annak az országnak a gondolkodását’. Telex. Telex. 24 August 2020. https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/01/25/orban-balazs-mcc-media-konferencia.

Barone, Guglielmo, Francesco D’Acunto, and Gaia Narciso. 2015. ‘Telecracy: Testing for Channels of Persuasion’. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 7 (2): 30–60. https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.20130318.

Bátorfy, Attila. 2017a. ‘Az állam foglyul ejtésétől a piac fogvatartásáig. Orbán Viktor és a kormány médiamodellje 2014 után’. *Médiakutató* 18 (1-2.): 7–30. http://epa.oszk.hu/03000/03056/00065/pdf/EPA03056_mediakutato_2017_tavasz-nyar_007-030.pdf .

———. 2017b. ‘Kilenc grafikon a kormánymédia túlsúlyáról - így érvényesül a sokszínű tájékoztatás elve Magyarországon | atlatszo.hu’. Átlátszó. *Átlátszó* (blog). 22 November 2017. https://atlatszo.hu/kozpenz/2017/11/22/kilenc-grafikon-a-kormanymedia-tulsulyarol-igy-ervenyesul-a-sokszinu-tajekoztatas-elve-magyarorszagon/.

———. 2018. ‘Tele van csúsztatással a Nézőpont Intézet elemzése a balliberális médiatúlsúlyról’. *Átlátszó blog* (blog). 4 December 2018. https://blog.atlatszo.hu/2018/12/a-nezopont-intezet-elemzese-a-balliberalis-mediatulsulyrol-tele-van-csusztatassal/.

———. 2020. ‘A magyar média elmúlt tíz éve – The past ten years of the Hungarian media’. Átló. Átló. 2020. https://atlo.team/media2020/.

Bátorfy, Attila, and Ágnes Urbán. 2020. ‘State Advertising as an Instrument of Transformation of the Media Market in Hungary’. *East European Politics* 36 (1): 44–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2019.1662398.

Bayer, Judit. 2011. ‘Az Új Médiatörvény Sajtószabadságot Korlátozó Rendelkezései’. *Médiakutató*. https://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2011_01_tavasz/02_uj_mediatorveny.

———. 2017. ‘Media Pluralism in Third-Wave Democracies. The Potential of European Legislation to Improve Media Freedom and Pluralism’. In *Media in Third-Wave Democracies: Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, 13–19. Paris & Budapest.

Beck, László, András Bíró Nagy, and Dániel Róna, eds. 2011. ‘Szabadesésben. Az MSZP 2006–2010 közötti népszerűségvesztésének politikai napirendi magyarázatai’. In *Új képlet: a 2010-es választások Magyarországon*. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

Bednárik Imre. 2014. ‘Vicsek Ferenc távozik a Klubrádiótól’. NOL.hu. 7 March 2014. http://nol.hu/belfold/vicsek-ferenc-tavozik-a-klubradiotol-1449005.

Beem, Christopher, and Jean Bethke Elshtain. 1999. *The Necessity of Politics: Reclaiming American Public Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Békeházy Ince. 2018. ‘Korábban a szocikkal is bizniszelt a KDNP-s médiavállalkozó, aki beszállt a CEMP-csoportba | atlatszo.hu’. Átlátszó. *Átlátszó* (blog). 21 September 2018. https://atlatszo.hu/kozugy/2018/09/21/korabban-a-szocikkal-is-bizniszelt-a-kdnp-s-mediavallalkozo-aki-beszallt-a-cemp-csoportba/.

Bellai, László. 2017. ‘„Aki az Index címlapjára felkerül, nem akar soha többé lejönni onnan” – Interjú Mészáros Zsófival’. *Médiatörténet.hu* (blog). 13 June 2017. https://www.mediatortenet.hu/2017/10/02/aki-az-index-cimlapjara-felkerul-nem-akar-soha-tobbe-lejonni-onnan-interju-meszaros-zsofival/.

Benczes, István. 2016. ‘From Goulash Communism to Goulash Populism: The Unwanted Legacy of Hungarian Reform Socialism’. *Post-Communist Economies* 28 (2): 146–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/14631377.2015.1124557.

Bender-deMoll, Skye, and Martina Morris. 2021. ‘Ndtv: Network Dynamic Temporal Visualizations’. https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=ndtv.

Bender-deMoll, Skye, Martina Morris, and James Moody. 2021. ‘Tsna: Tools for Temporal Social Network Analysis’. https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=tsna.

Bene, Marton. 2018. ‘Post Shared, Vote Shared: Investigating the Link Between Facebook Performance and Electoral Success During the Hungarian General Election Campaign of 2014’. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 95 (2): 363–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018763309.

Bene, Márton, and Dániel Somodi. 2018. ‘„Mintha lenne saját médiánk...” A kis pártok és a közösségi média’. *Médiakutató* XIX (2): 7–20. https://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2018_02_nyar/01_mintha_lenne_sajat_mediank.pdf.

Bene, Márton, and Gabriella Szabó. 2021. ‘Discovered and Undiscovered Fields of Digital Politics: Mapping Online Political Communication and Online News Media Literature in Hungary’. *Intersections* 7 (1): 1–21. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v7i1.868.

Bíró-Nagy, András, and Gergely Laki. 2020. ‘Orbán 10. Az elmúlt évtized a magyar társadalom szemével’. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung – Policy Solutions. https://www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/Orban10_final.pdf.

Bíró-Nagy, András, Áron Szászi, and Attila Varga. 2020. ‘Széttartó világok. Polarizáció a magyar társadalomban a 2022-es választások után’. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung – Policy Solutions. https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/19344.pdf.

Boda, Zsolt, and András Körösényi, eds. 2012. *Van Irány? Trendek a Magyar Politikában*. Budapest: MTATKPTI : Ú.M.K.

Bódis András. 2019. ‘A NER idegenlégiósai, avagy „balliberális” üzletemberek a Fidesz-holdudvarban’. Válasz Online. Válasz Online. 30 April 2019. https://www.valaszonline.hu/2019/04/30/a-ner-idegenlegiosai-avagy-balliberalis-uzletemberek-a-fidesz-holdudvarban/.

———. 2022. ‘Már „ellenzéki” médiacsoportja is van a NER-nek – ezzel együtt a sajtó kétharmadát kontrollálják’. Válasz Online. Válasz Online. 8 February 2022. https://www.valaszonline.hu/2022/02/08/kormanyparti-ellenzeki-fuggetlen-media-merleg-tobbseg/.

Bodoky Tamás. 2000. ‘Az Internetto-Index-sztori: A haladás előőrse’. Magyar Narancs. Magyarnarancs.hu. 2000. https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/az_internetto-index-sztori_a_haladas_eloorse-62088.

Bognar, Eva, Attila Batorfy, Marius Dragomir, European University Institute, and Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. 2019. *Monitoring Media Pluralism in Europe: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor 2017 in the European Union, FYROM, Serbia & Turkey : Country Report : Hungary.* http://publications.europa.eu/publication/manifestation_identifier/PUB_QM0418502ENN.

Borbás Barna. 2019. ‘Megtaláltuk Habony Árpádot: Londonban épít nemzetközi hírügynökséget’. Válasz Online. Válasz Online. 9 April 2019. https://www.valaszonline.hu/2019/04/09/v4na-habony-london-nemzetkozi-hirugynokseg/.

———. 2020. ‘„Azt már nem tudtam vállalni” – vendégünk Dudás Gergely volt Index-főszerkesztő’. Válasz Online. *Válasz Online* (blog). 30 July 2020. https://www.valaszonline.hu/2020/07/30/index-foszerkeszto-felmondas-dudas-gergely-podcast/.

Bozóki, András, and Dániel Hegedűs. 2018. ‘An Externally Constrained Hybrid Regime: Hungary in the European Union’. *Democratization* 25 (7): 1173–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1455664.

Bozzay, Balázs. 2022. ‘Az influenszer, aki otthagyta a Fidelitast: Inkább kilépek, mint hogy csendben maradjak’. Telex. Telex. 12 December 2022. https://telex.hu/belfold/2022/12/12/fidelitas-influenszer-kilepes-toth-bettina-megafon-csend-tiktok-fidesz-1.

Brey, Alex. 2018. ‘Temporal Network Analysis with R’. *Programming Historian*, November. https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/temporal-network-analysis-with-r.

Bruszt, László. 2015. ‘Regional Normalization and National Deviations: EU Integration and Transformations in Europe’s Eastern Periphery’. *Global Policy* 6 (June):38–45. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12226.

Bucsky Péter. 2022. ‘Párját ritkítja a magyar politikai propaganda intenzitása’. G7. *G7* (blog). 30 January 2022. https://g7.hu/kozelet/20220130/parjat-ritkitja-a-magyar-politikai-propaganda-intenzitasa/.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow. 2003. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, United Kingdom: MIT Press.

Burkitt, Ian, ed. 2018. ‘Relational Agency’. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66005-9.

Bustikova, Lenka. 2019. *Extreme Reactions: Radical Right Mobilization in Eastern Europe*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108697248.

Büthe, Tim. 2016a. ‘Historical Institutionalism and Institutional Development in the EU’. In *Historical Institutionalism and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Rixen, Lora Anne Viola, and Michael Zürn, 37–67. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198779629.003.0002.

———. 2016b. *Supranationalism*. Edited by Orfeo Fioretos, Tulia G. Falleti, and Adam Sheingate. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199662814.013.29.

Butts, Carter T. 2020. ‘Package “Sna”’. https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/sna/sna.pdf.

Chesterley, Nicholas, and Paolo Roberti. 2018. ‘Populism and Institutional Capture’. *European Journal of Political Economy* 53 (July):1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2017.06.004.

Cohen, Jean L., and Andrew Arato. 1999. *Civil Society and Political Theory*. 1. Aufl. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Cohen, Roger. 2018. ‘Opinion | It’s Time to Depopularize “Populist”’. *The New York Times*, 14 July 2018, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/13/opinion/populism-language-meaning.html.

Crossley, Nick. 2011. *Towards Relational Sociology*. 1. publ. International Library of Sociology. London: Routledge.

———. 2016. ‘Social Networks and Relational Sociology’. In *Handbook of Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by Seth Abrutyn, 167–83. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32250-6_9.

Cseh, Gabriella, and Miklós Sükösd. 2001. ‘A Törvény Ereje. A Médiatörvény Értékelése Felé’. Médiakutató. 2001. https://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2001_01_tavasz/06_a_torveny_ereje.

Csehi, Robert. 2021. *The Politics of Populism in Hungary*. 1st ed. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003035862.

Csehi, Robert, and Edit Zgut. 2021. ‘“We Won’t Let Brussels Dictate Us”: Eurosceptic Populism in Hungary and Poland’. *European Politics and Society* 22 (1): 53–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2020.1717064.

Csekő Imre. 2021. ‘Ő lehet az Anonymus által küldött videó egyik szereplője’. 8 November 2021. https://index.hu/belfold/2021/11/08/-en-kifizettem-a-zsoltit-/.

Csizmadia, Ervin. 2021. ‘Jelenkortörténeti és történeti perspektíva’. In *Uralkodó párt: a Fidesz nemzetközi és hazai történeti összehasonlításban*, edited by Júlia Lakatos, Zoltán Novák,

Ádám Paár, and Gergely Rajnai, 201–30. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó: Méltányosság Politikaelemző Központ.

Dalton, Russell J., and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. 2007a. *Citizens and Political Behavior*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270125.003.0001.

Dalton, Russell J., and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds. 2007b. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford Handbooks of Political Science. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Daniel, Johnnie. 2012. *Sampling Essentials: Practical Guidelines for Making Sampling Choices*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452272047.

DellaVigna, S., and E. Kaplan. 2007. 'The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting'. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122 (3): 1187–1234. https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.122.3.1187.

Dépelteau, François, ed. 2018. 'Relational Thinking in Sociology: Relevance, Concurrence and Dissonance'. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*, 3–33. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66005-9.

Dépelteau, François, and Christopher John Powell, eds. 2013. *Applying Relational Sociology: Relations, Networks, and Society*. 1. ed. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Diani, Mario. 1992. 'The Concept of Social Movement'. *The Sociological Review* 40 (1): 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1992.tb02943.x.

Diani, Mario, and Doug McAdam, eds. 2003. *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*. Comparative Politics. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Direkt36. 2015. 'Rólunk'. Direkt36. *Direkt36* (blog). 2015. https://www.direkt36.hu/kik-vagyunk/.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Nachdr. Boston: Addison Wesley.

Dull Szabolcs. 2022. 'Nem közlünk politikai hirdetéseket a Telexen'. Telex. Telex. 28 January 2022. https://telex.hu/kozlemeny/2022/01/28/nem-kozlunk-politikai-hirdeteseket-a-telexen.

Dumitrescu, Delia, and Anthony Mughan. 2010. 'Mass Media and Democratic Politics'. In *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective*, edited by Kevin T. Leicht and J. Craig Jenkins, 477–91. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research. New York: Springer.

Easton, Adam. 2021a. 'Polish Blackout Protest in Private Media over Tax Plan'. *BBC News*, 10 February 2021, sec. Europe. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56007942.

———. 2021b. 'Polish Blackout Protest in Private Media over Tax Plan'. BBC News. BBC News. 10 February 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56007942.

Eberly, Don E., ed. 2000. *The Essential Civil Society Reader: Classic Essays in the American Civil Society Debate*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Edwards, Michael. 2014. *Civil Society*. 3. ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ehrenberg, John. 1999. *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. New York, NY: New York Univ. Press.

Enikolopov, Ruben, Maria Petrova, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. 2011. 'Media and Political Persuasion: Evidence from Russia'. *American Economic Review* 101 (7): 3253–85. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.101.7.3253.

Enyedi, Zsolt. 2006. 'A befagyott felszín és ami alatta van. A 2006-os választás és a magyar pártrendszer'. In *Parlamenti Választás 2006: Elemzések És Adatok*, 1–18. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

Enyedi, Zsolt, Andrea Szabó, and Róbert Tardos, eds. 2011. *Új képlet: a 2010-es választások Magyarországon*. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

Enyedi, Zsolt, and Gábor Tóka. 2007. 'The Only Game in Town: Party Politics in Hungary'. In *Party Politics in New Democracies*, edited by Paul Webb and Stephen White, 1st ed., 147–78. Oxford University PressOxford. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199289653.003.0006.

Erdélyi, Péter, Péter Magyari, and Gergő Plankó. 2014. 'A Telekom Már Tavaly Átengedte Az Origót a Kormánynak'. 444.hu. 5 June 2014. http://444.hu/2014/06/05/a-telekom-mar-tavaly-atengedte-az-origot-a-kormanynak.

Erikson, Emily, ed. 2018. 'Relationalism and Social Networks'. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*, 271–87. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66005-9.

Esser, Frank, and Jesper Strömbäck, eds. 2014. *Mediatization of Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137275844.

European Parliament. 2018. 'Audiovisual and Media Policy – Fact Sheets on the European Union by the European Parliament'. Fact Sheets on the European Union: Audiovisual and Media Policy. 2018. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/138/audiovisual-and-media-policy.

Everett, Martin G., and David Krackhardt. 2012. 'A Second Look at Krackhardt's Graph Theoretical Dimensions of Informal Organizations'. *Social Networks* 34 (2): 159–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2011.10.006.

Fabry, Adam. 2019. *The Political Economy of Hungary: From State Capitalism to Authoritarian Neoliberalism*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-10594-5.

Farkasházy Tivadar. 2020. 'Szép nagy Farkasházy–Ungár-vita kerekedett Szárszó felemlegetéséből'. Válasz Online. Válasz Online. 8 May 2020. https://www.valaszonline.hu/2020/05/08/farkashazy-balatonszarszo-ungar-valasz/.

Fenichel Pitkin, Hanna. 1987. 'Rethinking Reification'. *Theory and Society* 16 (2): 263–93. https://www.jstor.org/stable/657354.

Fish, Kenneth. 2013. 'Relational Sociology and Historical Materialism: Three Conversation Starters'. In *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology: Ontological and Theoretical Issues*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Freedman, Des. 2018. 'Populism and Media Policy Failure'. *European Journal of Communication* 33 (6): 604–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118790156.

Freedom House. 2019. 'Hungary'. Freedom in the World 2019. 30 January 2019. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/hungary.

Freeman, Linton C. 1978. ‘Centrality in Social Networks Conceptual Clarification’. *Social Networks* 1 (3): 215–39. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-8733(78)90021-7.

Fricz, Tamás. 1999. ‘Kétpártrendszer vagy két fő pártrendszer Magyarországon? A politikai tagolódás iránya az 1998-as választásokat követően’. In *Magyarország politikai évkönyve 1999*, 70–78. Magyarország politikai évkönyve. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

Független Médiaközpont. 2020. ‘Torzítások a közmédiában’. *Független Médiaközpont* (blog). 10 December 2020. https://cij.hu/hu/torzitasok-a-kozmediaban/.

Fuhse, Jan. 2016. *Soziale Netzwerke: Konzepte Und Forschungsmethoden*. Konstanz: UTB.

Fukuyama, Francis. 2020. ‘30 Years of World Politics: What Has Changed?’ *Journal of Democracy* 31 (1): 11–21. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2020.0001.

Gábor László. 2018a. ‘Így próbáld nagy művészként elfogadtatni az ellenzéki aktivistádat’. 888.hu. *888.hu* (blog). 6 September 2018. https://888.hu/piszkostizenketto/igy-probald-nagy-muveszkent-elfogadtatni-az-ellenzeki-aktivistadat-4154700/.

———. 2018b. ‘Kétszer Fidesz, csak ez a biztos’. Origo. https://www.origo.hu/. 8 April 2018. https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20180407-ketszer-fidesz-csak-ez-a-biztos-interju-orban-viktorral.html.

Galambos, Márton. 2008. ‘A Német Kiadók És a Magyarországi Újságírás (Médiakutató)’. *Médiakutató*. https://mediakutato.hu/cikk/2008_04_tel/03_nemet_kiadok_magyarorszagon.

Gálik, Mihály. 2004a. ‘A Médiatulajdon Hatása a Média Függetlenségére És Pluralizmusára Magyarországon (Médiakutató)’. *Médiakutató*. https://mediakutato.hu/cikk/2004_03_osz/05_mediatulajdon.

———. 2004b. ‘Hungary’. In *Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*, edited by Mirovni inštitut, 192–2019. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Peace Institute, Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies.

Gavin, Neil T. 2018. ‘Media Definitely Do Matter: Brexit, Immigration, Climate Change and Beyond’. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20 (4): 827–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148118799260.

Gerő, Márton, Anna Fejős, Szabina Kerényi, and Dorottya Szikra. 2022. ‘From Exclusion to Co-Optation: Political Opportunity Structures and Civil Society Responses in De-Democratising Hungary’. *Politics and Governance* 11 (1). https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v11i1.5883.

Gerő, Márton, and Pál Susánszky. 2014. ‘Plurális szerkezet, homogén állampolgári kultúra?’ In *Közép-Európa a 21. század küszöbén: regionális identitás és civil társadalom: konferenciakötet*, edited by Gábor Lagzi, 157–84. Veszprém: Pannon Egyetem, Modern Filológiai és Társadalomtudományi Kar Társadalomtudományok és Nemzetközi Tanulmányok Intézet.

Gidron, Noam, and Bart Bonikowski. 2013. ‘Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda’. *Weatherhead Center Working Paper Series*, Weatherhead Center Working Paper Series, 13 (4): 1–38. https://wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/gidron_bonikowski_populismlitreview_2013.pdf.

Girndt Rainer. 2013. ‘Magyarország szakszervezetei mozgásban’. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. http://fesbp.hu/common/pdf/Nachrichten_aus_Ungarn_juli_2013_Rainer_Girndt_HU.pdf.

Gitlin, Todd. 2003. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. ‘The Strength of Weak Ties’. *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (6): 1360–80. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2776392.

Greskovits, Béla. 2015a. ‘Capitalist Diversity and the Media’. In *Media and Politics in New Democracies: Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, First edition, 59–70. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2015b. ‘The Hollowing and Backsliding of Democracy in East Central Europe’. *Global Policy* 6 (June):28–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12225.

———. 2017a. ‘Rebuilding the Hungarian Right Through Civil Organization and Contention: The Civic Circles Movement’. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3009623.

———. 2017b. ‘Rebuilding the Hungarian Right through Civil Organization and Contention : The Civic Circles Movement’. *Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute* RSCAS 2017/37:1–31. https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/47245/RSCAS_2017_37.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

———. 2020. ‘Rebuilding the Hungarian Right through Conquering Civil Society: The Civic Circles Movement’. *East European Politics*, January, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1718657.

Guriev, Sergei, and Daniel Treisman. 2015. ‘How Modern Dictators Survive: Cooptation, Censorship, Propaganda, and Repression’. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2571905.

———. 2019. ‘Informational Autocrats’. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33 (4): 100–127. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.4.100.

György, Zsombor. 2019. ‘Klubrádió: Nincs Ok a Majréra’. Magyar Hang. Magyar Hang. 20 September 2019. https://hang.hu/belfold/klubradio-nincs-ok-a-majrera-107316.

Hall, John A., ed. 1996. *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*. Reprinted. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Communication, Society, and Politics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hann Endre, Megyeri Klára, Polyák Gábor, and Urbán Ágnes. 2020. ‘Megfertőzött médiarendszer. A politikai tájékozódás forrásai Magyarországon 2020’, November, 55. https://www.fes-budapest.org/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumente/pdf-dateien/Mertek_hirfogyasztasi_szokasok.pdf.

Hawkins, Kirk A. 2009. ‘Is Chávez Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective’. *Comparative Political Studies* 42 (8): 1040–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331721.

Heath, Anthony. 2007. *Perspectives on Electoral Behavior*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270125.003.0032.

Heinrich, V Finn. 2010. ‘What Makes Civil Society Strong? An Innovative Approach to Conceptualising, Measuring and Analysing the Strength of Civil Society in 43 Countries’. Hagen: Fernuniversitaet Hagen. https://d-nb.info/1000903842/34.

Hepp, Andreas. 2020. *Deep Mediatization*. Key Ideas in Media and Cultural Studies. London ; New York: Routledge.

Horváth, Attila, and Gábor Soós. 2015. ‘Pártok És Pártrendszer’. In *A Magyar Politikai Rendszer – Negyedszázad Után*, edited by András Körösényi, 249–78. Budapest: Osiris-MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont Politikatudományi Intézet.

Huckfeldt, R. Robert, and John D. Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*. Cambridge Studies in Political Psychology and Public Opinion. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Huckfeldt, Robert. 2007. *Information, Persuasion, and Political Communication Networks*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270125.003.0006.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. 1. paperback print. The Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series 4. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press.

HVG.hu. 2021. ‘Vaszily Miklós megvette Mészáros Lőrinc volt feleségének tévés cégét’. hvg.hu. 16 November 2021. https://hvg.hu/kkv/20211116_vaszily_miklos_ozone_tv_life_tv_eladas_kelemen_beatrix.

———. 2022a. ‘Nem hosszabbítják meg a Tilos Rádió engedélyét, mert a Médiatanács szerint sokat hibázott’. hvg.hu. 14 April 2022. https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20220414_Nem_hosszabbitjak_meg_a_Tilos_Radio_engedelyet_mert_a_Mediatanacs_szerint_sokat_hibazott.

———. 2022b. ‘Távozik a Telextől Tóth-Szenesi Attila’. hvg.hu. 29 August 2022. https://hvg.hu/itthon/20220829_TSZA_valtas_444_Telex.

Index. 2014. ‘Módosítják a reklámadót: mégis fizethet az RTL’. Index.hu. Index.hu. 30 June 2014. http://index.hu/gazdasag/2014/06/30/modositjak_a_reklamadot_megis_fizethet_az_rtl/.

———. 2019. ‘Új főszerkesztő az Index.hu élén’. 11 December 2019. https://index.hu/szolgalati-kozlemeny/2019/12/11/uj_foszerkeszto_az_index.hu_elen/.

———. 2020. ‘Távozik az Index szerkesztőségének vezetése és szinte minden munkatárs’. Index.hu. 24 July 2020. https://index.hu/szolgalati-kozlemeny/2020/07/24/index_lapvezetes_tavozas_dull_szabolcs_munk_veronika_toth_szenesi_attila_haasz_janos_bodolai_laszlo/.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. 2016. ‘Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash’. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2818659.

Ipsos. 2024. ‘What Worries the World – July 2024’. Survey. What Worries the World Survey. Ipsos. https://www.ipsos.com/en/what-worries-world.

Jansen, Robert S. 2011. ‘Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism’. *Sociological Theory* 29 (2): 75–96. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2011.01388.x.

Juhász, Gábor. 1999. ‘Kampánypénz-Kanyarok, ’98’. In *Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve 1999*, 219–27. Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

Juhász Vanessza. 2022. ‘Az ellenzéknek a független médiával való viszonyát is át kell gondolnia, ha legközelebb választást akar nyerni « Mérce’. Mérce. Mérce. 22 May 2022. https://merce.hu/2022/05/22/az-ellenzeknek-a-fuggetlen-mediaval-valo-viszonyat-is-at-kell-gondolnia-ha-legkozelebb-valasztast-akar-nyerni/.

Kákai, László, and Agnieszka Bejma. 2022. ‘Legal and Practical Conditions of the Functioning of the Civil Society Organizations in Hungary and Poland’. *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 13 (Special issue): 120–40. https://doi.org/10.47743/ejes-2022-SI07.

Kasza János. 2021. ‘Lelki terrort emleget az Azonnali távozó vezető belpolitikai újságírója’. Media1. Media1. 29 October 2021. https://media1.hu/2021/10/29/lelki-terrort-emleget-az-azonnali-tavozo-vezeto-belpolitikai-ujsagiroja/.

Keane, John. 1998. *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press.

Kenny, Paul. 2023. *Why Populism?: Political Strategy from Ancient Greece to the Present*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009275262.

Kerner Zsolt. 2021. ‘Bodolai: Nekem össze volt készítve egy repülőgép, hogy ha valami gond van, el tudjak menni Bécsbe’. 24.hu. *24.hu* (blog). 12 February 2021. https://24.hu/kozelet/2021/02/12/bodolai-partizan-index-interju/.

Kertzer, Joshua D., and Jonathan Renshon. 2022. ‘Experiments and Surveys on Political Elites’. *Annual Review of Political Science* 25 (1): 529–50. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051120-013649.

Kim, Seongcheol. 2021. ‘… Because the Homeland Cannot Be in Opposition: Analysing the Discourses of Fidesz and Law and Justice (PiS) from Opposition to Power’. *East European Politics* 37 (2): 332–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1791094.

Kocka, Jürgen. 2004. ‘Zivilgesellschaft in historischer Perspektive’. In *Zivilgesellschaft als Geschichte*, edited by Ralph Jessen, Sven Reichardt, and Ansgar Klein, 29–42. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-80962-9_2.

Kökény-Szalai, Vivien. 2021. ‘Instagram Post: „Fidesz kongresszus #I❤️Magyarország #fidesz #hungary“’. Instagram. Instagram. 14 November 2021. https://www.instagram.com/p/CWQyWgUocX5/.

Kollega Tarsoly, István, ed. 2000. *Magyarország a XX. században*. Szekszárd: Babits Kiadó.

Kopecký, Petr. 2003. ‘Civil Society, Uncivil Society and Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe’. In *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe*, edited by Cas Mudde and Petr Kopecký, 17. Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy 1. London: Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203988787-1/1-civil-society-uncivil-society-contentious-politics-post-communist-europe-petr-kopeck%C3%BD.

———. 2008. *Political Parties and the State in Post-Communist Europe*. London; New York: Routledge.

Körösényi, András, ed. 2015. *A Magyar Politikai Rendszer – Negyedszázad Után*. Budapest: Osiris-MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont Politikatudományi Intézet.

Körösényi, András, Csaba Tóth, and Gábor Török. 2007. *A magyar politikai rendszer*. 3., Átd. kiadás. Osiris tankönyvek. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.

Koschützki, Dirk, Katharina Anna Lehmann, Leon Peeters, Stefan Richter, Dagmar Tenfelde-Podehl, and Oliver Zlotowski. 2005. 'Centrality Indices'. In *Network Analysis*, edited by Ulrik Brandes and Thomas Erlebach, 3418:16–61. Lecture Notes in Computer Science. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-31955-9_3.

Kovács, András. 2019. 'Orbán Viktor: Magyarország a Kereszténydemokrácia És Nem a Liberalizmus Talaján Áll'. Origo.Hu. 2019. https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20190929-orban-viktor-fidesz-kongresszus.html.

Kovács Attila. 2022. 'Putyin asztala, avagy amikor atomjaira hullik a „független-objektív" narratíva'. PestiSrácok. *PestiSrácok* (blog). 19 February 2022. https://pestisracok.hu/in-asztala-avagy-amikor-atomjaira-hullik-a-fuggetlen-objektiv-narrativa/.

Kovács, Zoltán. 2021. 'Hungary Is Not a Semi-Dictatorship, Klubrádió Didn't Comply | View'. Euronews. 11 May 2021. https://www.euronews.com/2021/05/11/hungary-is-not-a-semi-dictatorship-klubradio-didn-t-comply-with-the-rules-view.

Kover, Agnes. 2015. 'Captured by State and Church: Concerns about Civil Society in Democratic Hungary'. *Nonprofit Policy Forum* 6 (2): 187–212. https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2014-0010.

Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (KSH). 2023. 'Internethasználók Aránya [a 16–74 Éves Népesség Százalékában]'. 2023. https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ikt/hu/ikt0029.html.

Krackhardt, David. 1994. 'Graph Theoretical Dimensions of Informal Organizations'. In *Computational Organization Theory*, edited by Kathleen M Carley and Michael J Prietula, 89–111. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kreatív Online. 2020. 'Balogh Ákos Gergely újra az Indexnél'. Kreatív Online. Kreatív Online. 14 December 2020. https://kreativ.hu/cikk/balogh_akos_gergely_ujra_az_indexnel.

Kreft-Horváth, Márk. 2022. 'Mostanra sikerült megteremteni a médiaegyensúlyt Magyarországon'. Magyar Nemzet. Magyar Nemzet. 27 January 2022. https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2022/01/mostanra-sikerult-megteremteni-a-mediaegyensulyt-magyarorszagon.

Krekó, Péter. 2022. 'The Birth of an Illiberal Informational Autocracy in Europe: A Case Study on Hungary'. *Journal of Illiberalism Studies* 2 (1): 55–72. https://doi.org/10.53483/WCJW3538.

Krekó, Péter, and Zsolt Enyedi. 2018. 'Orbán's Laboratory of Illiberalism'. *Journal of Democracy* 29 (3): 39–51. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0043.

Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2013. 'Introduction'. In *Democracy in the Age of Globalization and Mediatization*, 1–19. Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kriesi, Hanspeter, Sandra Lavenex, Frank Esser, Jörg Matthes, Marc Bühlmann, and Daniel Bochsler. 2013. *Democracy in the Age of Globalization and Mediatization*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137299871.

Krzyżanowski, Michał, and Per Ledin. 2017. 'Uncivility on the Web: Populism in/and the Borderline Discourses of Exclusion'. *Journal of Language and Politics*, August, 566–81. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17028.krz.

Kubik, Jan. 2005. ‘How to Study Civil Society: The State of the Art and What to Do Next’. *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 19 (1): 105–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325404272556.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Laskovics, Márió. 2020. ‘Magyar Érdemrend Középkeresztet Kapott Szabó Tamás’. VEOL - Veszprém Megyei Hírportál. VEOL - Veszprém Megyei Hírportál. 31 October 2020. https://www.veol.hu/helyi-eletstilus/2020/10/magyar-erdemrend-kozepkeresztet-kapott-szabo-tamas.

Leifeld, Philip. 2016. *Discourse Network Analysis*. Edited by Jennifer Nicoll Victor, Alexander H. Montgomery, and Mark Lubell. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190228217.013.25.

Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. 2020. ‘The New Competitive Authoritarianism’. *Journal of Democracy* 31 (1): 51–65. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2020.0004.

Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511781353.

Lewis-Beck, Michael, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao. 2004a. ‘Hypothesis’. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: Sage Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589.

———. 2004b. ‘Research Question’. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: Sage Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589.

Lomax, Bill. 1997. ‘The Strange Death of “Civil Society” in Post-communist Hungary’. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 13 (1): 41–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523279708415331.

Loveless, Matthew. 2008. ‘Media Dependency: Mass Media as Sources of Information in the Democratizing Countries of Central and Eastern Europe’. *Democratization* 15 (1): 162–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701770030.

Lührmann, Anna, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2019. ‘A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here: What Is New about It?’ *Democratization* 26 (7): 1095–1113. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029.

Lundby, Knut. 2014. *Mediatization of Communication*. Edited by Knut Lundby. Handbooks of Communication Science 21. Berlin ; Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Magyar, Bálint. 2016. *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary*. Budapest: CEU Press, in association with Noran Libro.

Magyar Közlöny. 2018. ‘229/2018. (XII. 5.) Korm. Rendelet a Közép-Európai Sajtó És Média Alapítvány Által Az ECHO HUNGÁRIA TV Televíziózási, Kommunikációs És Szolgáltató Zártkörű Részvénytársaság, a Magyar Idők Kiadó Korlátolt Felelősségű Társaság, a New Wave Media Group Kommunikációs És Szolgáltató Korlátolt Felelősségű Társaság, Valamint Az OPUS PRESS Zártkörűen Működő Részvénytársaság Megszerzésének Nemzetstratégiai Jelentőségűvé Minősítéséről - Hatályos Jogszabályok

Gyűjteménye’. 5 December 2018. https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1800229.KOR.

———. 2020. ‘Az Országgyűlés 1/2020. (V. 2.) OGY Politikai Nyilatkozata Magyarország Népképviseleti Rendszerének Harminc Évvel Ezelőtti Visszaállításáról’. 2 May 2020. https://magyarkozlony.hu/dokumentumok/3b1bb93259a9e629b5f36e449223dfda776dbec8/letoltes.

Magyar Narancs. 2011. ‘Az Újság Maga’. Magyar Narancs. Magyar Narancs. 14 November 2011. https://magyarnarancs.hu/rolunk/az-ujsag-maga-77331.

Magyar Nemzet. 2002. ‘„Egy a tábor, egy a zászló”’. Magyar Nemzet. Magyar Nemzet. 29 August 2002. https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum-archivum/2002/08/egy-a-tabor-egy-a-zaszlo-1.

Mares, Isabela, and Lauren E. Young. 2019. *Conditionality and Coercion: Electoral Clientelism in Eastern Europe*. First Edition. Oxford Studies in Democratization. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Mária Rádió. 2020. ‘Orbán Viktor a Mária Rádióban’. Mária Rádió. Mária Rádió. 20 April 2020. https://www.mariaradio.hu/cikk/5030/Orban_Viktor_a_Maria_Radioban.

Máriás, Leonárd, Zsófia Nagy, Gábor Polyák, Petra Szávai, and Ágnes Urbán. 2019. *Központosított Médiarendszer. Lágy Cenzúra 2018*. Edited by Ágnes Urbán. Vol. 17. Mérték füzetek. Budapest: Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely. https://mertek.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/MertekFuzetek17.pdf.

MATESZ. 1993. ‘Magyar Terjesztés-Ellenőrző Szövetség - Matesz’. About. Magyar Terjesztés-Ellenőrző Szövetség - Matesz. 1993. https://matesz.hu/oldalak/matesz/magyar-terjesztes-ellenorzo-szovetseg.

Mátrai Viktor. 2014. ‘Megváltozott médiagyártási szokások’. Mandiner. mandiner.hu. 3 June 2014. https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20140603_matrai_viktor_megvaltozott_mediagyartasi_szokasok.

Matuszewski, Paweł, and Gabriella Szabó. 2019. ‘Are Echo Chambers Based on Partisanship? Twitter and Political Polarity in Poland and Hungary’. *Social Media + Society* 5 (2): 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119837671.

———. 2023. ‘The Role of Hyperactive Twitter Accounts in the Diffusion of Political Information’. *Policy Studies*, July, 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2023.2237911.

Mátyás, Máté. 2020. ‘The Institutional Economics Approach to Populism: Precising the Theoretical–Methodological Framework’. In *Contemporary Global Challenges in Geopolitics, Security Policy and World Economy*, edited by Zsuzsanna Szerényi, Erzsébet Kaponyi, and István Benczes, 251–82. Budapest: Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem. https://www.uni-corvinus.hu/alfresco/dokumentumtar/download/?id=1d4c4d99-338b-44fc-b2d4-8366e6a82869;1.3.

———. 2022a. ‘Lessons from the Backlash: Towards a More Equitable European Public Sphere. A Policy Proposal: Theoretical Foundations of the Proposal’. *Der Donauraum* 62 (1): 11–30. https://doi.org/10.7767/dedo.2022.62.1.11.

———. 2022b. ‘Professional, Ethical Conflict or a Power Grab?: The Case Study of Index during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic’. In *Global Pandemics and Media Ethics*, Chapter 6. Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003306603-

8/professional-ethical-conflict-power-grab-m%C3%A1t%C3%A9-m%C3%A1ty%C3%A1s.

Mázsár Tamás. 2020. ‘Magyar Hang: a Hit Gyülekezete vagyona volt, Németh Sándoré lett, a lelkész megszerezte az ATV-t’. 24.hu. *24.hu* (blog). 22 May 2020. https://24.hu/belfold/2020/05/22/magyar-hang-a-hit-gyulekezete-vagyona-volt-nemeth-sandore-lett-a-lelkesz-megszerezte-az-atv-t/.

Mazzoleni, Gianpietro. 2003. ‘The Media and the Growth of Neo-Populism in Contemporary Democracies’. In *The Media and Neo-Populism. A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*, 1–21. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

Mazzoleni, Gianpietro, Julianne Stewart, and Bruce Horsfield, eds. 2003. *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*. Praeger Series in Political Communication. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

McConnell, Scott. 2019. ‘Hungary Shows the West the Path to Survival’. The American Conservative. 2019. https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/hungary-shows-the-west-the-path-to-survival/.

McFarlane, Craig. 2013. ‘Relational Sociology, Theoretical Inhumanism, and the Problem of the Nonhuman’. In *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology: Ontological and Theoretical Issues*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mckether, Willie L., Julia C. Gluesing, and Kenneth Riopelle. 2009. ‘From Interviews to Social Network Analysis: An Approach for Revealing Social Networks Embedded in Narrative Data’. *Field Methods* 21 (2): 154–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X08329697.

Mediaworks Hírcentrum. 2022. ‘Márki-Zay: Lett volna elég áruló az ellenzékben - videó’. Origo. https://www.origo.hu/. 24 May 2022. https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20220524-markizay-lett-volna-eleg-arulo-az-ellenzekben-video.html.

Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely. 2019a. ‘Fidesz-Friendly Media Dominate Everywhere’. *Mérték* (blog). 2 May 2019. https://mertek.atlatszo.hu/fidesz-friendly-media-dominate-everywhere/.

———. 2019b. ‘Mindent beborít a Fidesz-közeli média’. Mérték. 25 April 2019. https://mertek.eu/2019/04/25/mindent-beborit-a-fidesz-kozeli-media/.

Mészáros, Juli. 2022. ‘Megnyerte a frekvenciapályázatot a Tilos Rádió’. 444.hu. 444.hu. 22 September 2022. https://444.hu/2022/09/22/megnyerte-a-frekvenciapalyazatot-a-tilos-radio.

Metz, Rudolf, and Réka Várnagy. 2021. ‘“Mass,” “Movement,” “Personal,” or “Cartel” Party? Fidesz’s Hybrid Organisational Strategy’. *Politics and Governance* 9 (4): 317–28. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4416.

Metz, Tamás Rudolf. 2015. ‘Movement Entrepreneurship of an Incumbent Party. The Story of the Hungarian Incumbent Party Fidesz and the Civil Cooperation Forum’. *Intersections* 1 (3). https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v1i3.41.

Mikecz, Dániel. 2020. ‘Civil Society as a Counterbalance to Democratic Backlash? The Civil Society Master Frame and Discursive Opportunities of Politically Active Civil Organizations in Hungary’. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 28 (1): 45–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/25739638.2020.1812940.

Moffitt, Benjamin. 2020. *Populism*. Key Concepts in Political Theory. Medford, Massachusetts: Polity Press.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2018. *For a Left Populism*. London New York: Verso.

Mouzelis, Nicos. 1985. 'On the Concept of Populism: Populist and Clientelist Modes of Incorporation in Semiperipheral Polities'. *Politics & Society* 14 (3): 329–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/003232928501400303.

Mudde, Cas. 2004. 'The Populist Zeitgeist'. *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 542–63. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x.

Müller, Lisa. 2014. *Comparing Mass Media in Established Democracies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137391384.

Munk Veronika. 2017. 'Bayer Zsolt haláláról beszélt, felmentették egyetemi intézetvezetői posztjáról (– available in Hungarian: He Talked about the Death of BAYER Zsolt, Got Dismissed from his Position as Director of a University Institute (translation by the author))'. Index.hu. 19 October 2017. http://index.hu/belfold/2017/10/19/bayer_zsolt_halalarol_beszelt_felmentettek_egyetemi_intezetvezetoi_posztjarol/.

Murányi, András. 2017. *A Népszabadság kivégzése: az utolsó főszerkesztő vallomása*. Budapest: Corvina.

Nagy József. 2020. 'Szombathy Pál: Megjelent két verőember az iroda előtt, a biztonság kedvéért másik kettő az udvaron, pedig akkor még nem is tudtuk, mire jó az ereszcsatorna'. 24.hu. 24.hu. 21 December 2020. https://24.hu/belfold/2020/12/21/szombathy-pal-index-interju/.

Nagy, Krisztina. 2016. 'Frekvenciaosztogatás. A Médiatanács frekvenciapályáztatási gyakorlata 2010–2015'. *Médiakutató* XVI (3–4): 125–36.

narancs.hu. 2018. 'Itt van: előjött a fényre az Origo rejtőzködő, Bödőcs Tibort kritizáló főszerkesztője'. Magyarnarancs.hu. 10 September 2018. https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/itt-van-elojott-a-fenyre-az-origo-rejtozkodo-bodocs-tibort-kritizalo-foszerkesztoje-113513.

Nemzeti Adó– és Vámhivatal (National Tax and Duties Office). 2003. 'Kiutalásban Részesült Civil Kedvezményezettek'. Nemzeti Adó– és Vámhivatal (National Tax and Duties Office). Nemzeti Adó– És Vámhivatal (National Tax and Duties Office). 2017 2003. https://nav.gov.hu/nav/archiv/szja1_1/kimutatasok_elszamolasok/Kiutalasban_reszesult_civil.

Nemzeti Cégtár. 2020. 'Nemzeti Cégtár'. Nemzeti Cégtár. 2020. https://www.nemzeticegtar.hu/nemzeticegtar/.

Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH). 2021. 'Internetes közönségmérési adatok (2020. IV. negyedév)'. NMHH. *NMHH Kutatások* (blog). 25 February 2021. https://nmhh.hu/cikk/218350/Internetes_kozonsegmeresi_adatok_2020_IV_negyedev.

———. 2023a. 'Kronosz és kairosz küzdelme, avagy a tévénézési szokások változása az elmúlt huszonöt évben'. *NMHH Kutatások* (blog). 2 October 2023. https://nmhh.hu/cikk/242197/Kronosz_es_kairosz_kuzdelme_avagy_a_tevenezesi_szokasok_valtozasa_az_elmult_huszonot_evben.

———. 2023b. 'Médiapiaci jelentés 2023'. Budapest: Nemzeti Média– és Hírközlési Hatóság (NMHH). https://nmhh.hu/dokumentum/242931/mediapiaci_jelentes_2023.pdf.

New Wave Media Group. n.d. 'New Wave Media Group Kft.' Accessed 13 August 2019. http://nwmgroup.hu/.

Oltay, Edith. 2012. *Fidesz and the Reinvention of the Hungarian Center-Right*. Budapest: Századvég Kiadó.

Opten. 2014. 'Cégtár alapszolgáltatás'. OPTEN Kft. 14 March 2014. https://www.opten.hu/ceginformacios-szolgaltatasok/cegtar-alap.

Orbán, Viktor. 2020. 'Negyvenegyedik Nap. Mária Rádió // Day Forty-One. Mária Radio — Facebook Watch'. Facebook. Facebook. 21 April 2020. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=596790844378980&external_log_id=83f55a2e-2b52-49d0-ba92-8f61a67e57fd&q=orb%C3%A1n%20viktor%20m%C3%A1ria%20r%C3%A1di%C3%B3.

———. 2021. 'Megtaláltam Az "Elveszett" Sajtószabadságot! // I've Found the "Lost" Press Freedom!' Facebook. Facebook. 7 July 2021. https://www.facebook.com/watch/.

Origo. 2017a. 'A Magyar Stratégiai Zrt. vette meg a New Wave Media Group-ot'. https://www.origo.hu/. 2017. https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20170628-matolcsy-adam-new-wave-megvetel.html.

———. 2017b. 'Változások a TV2 hírműsorainál'. Origo. https://www.origo.hu/. 2 January 2017. https://www.origo.hu/teve/20170102-valtozasok-jonnek-a-tv2-hirmusorainal.html.

———. 2021a. 'Ő lehet az Anonymus által küldött videó egyik szereplője'. Origo. https://www.origo.hu/. 8 November 2021. https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20211108-o-lehet-az-anonymus-altal-kuldott-video-egyi-kfoszereploje.html.

———. 2021b. 'Rákay Philip elárulta, hogyan működik a Gyurcsány-Márki-Zay-féle baloldal - videó'. Origo. Origo. 26 November 2021. https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20211126-rakay-philip-elarulta-hogyan-mukodik-a-gyurcsanymarkizayfele-baloldal.html.

Országgyűlés. 1996. 'Dr. Szabó Tamás'. Parlament.hu. Parlament.Hu. 1996. https://www.parlament.hu/kepviselo/elet/s254.htm.

———. 2010. 'Az Országgyűlés 1/2010. (VI. 16.) OGY politikai nyilatkozata a Nemzeti Együttműködésről'. https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/d/56/00000/politikai_nyilatkozat.pdf.

Osborne, Thomas. 2021. 'Civil Society, Populism and Liberalism'. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 34 (2): 175–90. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-020-09377-1.

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. 2022. 'Hungary's Parliamentary Elections Well-Run and Offered Distinct Alternatives but Undermined by Absence of Level Playing Field, International Observers Say'. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe. 4 April 2022. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-65086871.

Ostiguy, Pierre. 2017. 'Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.001.0001.

Paál, Vince, ed. 2013. *A Magyarországi Médiaháború Története: Média És Politika, 1989-2010*. Budapest: Complex.

Panyi Szabolcs, Pethő András, Szabó András, Matyasovszki Fanni, and Szőke Dániel. 2022. 'Ilyen volt belülről az ellenzéki kampány összeomlása'. Direkt36. *Direkt36* (blog). 17

May 2022. https://www.direkt36.hu/ilyen-volt-belulrol-az-ellenzeki-kampany-osszeomlasa/.

Pappas, Takis S. 2014. 'Populist Democracies: Post-Authoritarian Greece and Post-Communist Hungary'. *Government and Opposition* 49 (01): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2013.21.

Paris, Roland. 2022. 'European Populism and the Return of "Illiberal Sovereignty": A Case-Study of Hungary'. *International Affairs* 98 (2): 529–47. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiac004.

Pasquino, Gianfranco. 2008. 'Populism and Democracy'. In *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, edited by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, 15–29. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230592100_2.

Perez, Charles, and Rony Germon. 2016. 'Graph Creation and Analysis for Linking Actors: Application to Social Data'. In *Automating Open Source Intelligence*, 103–29. Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-802916-9.00007-5.

Pérez-Díaz, Víctor M. 1998. *The Return of Civil Society: The Emergence of Democratic Spain*. Nachdr. Cambridge, Mass. London: Harvard University Press.

Pető, Andrea. 2017. 'Hungary's Illiberal Polypore State'. *European Politics and Society Newsletter* 21:18–21. https://www.academia.edu/31916049/_Hungary_s_Illiberal_Polypore_State_in_European_Politics_and_Society_Newsletter_21._Winter_2017_18-21.

Plenta, Peter. 2020. 'Conspiracy Theories as a Political Instrument: Utilization of Anti-Soros Narratives in Central Europe'. *Contemporary Politics* 26 (5): 512–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2020.1781332.

Political Capital. 2003. 'Új kuratóriumi elnökség a Magyar Televízióban'. Political Capital. 2003. https://politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?article_id=977.

———. 2020. 'Civil szervezetek társadalmi megítélése. Kutatási jelentés'. Survey. Budapest: Political Capital. https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/civil_szervezetek_tarsadalmi_megitelese_kutatasi_jelentes_20200220.pdf.

———. 2021a. 'Civil szervezetek társadalmi megítélése'. Research Report. Civil szervezetek társadalmi megítélése. Budapest: Political Capital.

———. 2021b. 'Civil szervezetek társadalmi megítélése. Kutatási jelentés'. Survey. Budapest: Political Capital. https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/pc_civilizacio_civil_szervezetek_tarsadalmi_megitelese_kutatasi_jelentes_2021.pdf.

———. 2023. 'Civil szervezetek társadalmi megítélése. Kutatási jelentés'. Survey. Budapest: Political Capital. https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/pc_civilizacio_civil_szervezetek_tarsadalmi_megitelese_kutatasi_jelentes_2023.pdf.

Polyák, Gábor. 2012. 'Médiaszabályozás és gazdasági mozgástér'. Médiakutató. 2012. https://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2012_03_osz/03_mediaszabalyozas_gazdasagi_mozgaster/.

———. 2015. ‘The Hungarian Media System. Stopping Short or Re-Transformation?’ *Südosteuropa* 2 (63): 272–318. https://www.academia.edu/20098858/The_Hungarian_media_system_stop_short_or_re-transformation.

Polyák, Gábor, Ágnes Urbán, and Petra Szávai. 2022. ‘Information Patterns and News Bubbles in Hungary’. *Media and Communication* 10 (3): 133–45. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i3.5373.

Porta, Donatella della, and Mario Diani. 2011. ‘Social Movements’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, 68–79. New York: Oxford University Press.

Porter, John. 2024. ‘Google Search’s Cache Links Are Officially Being Retired’. The Verge. The Verge. 2 February 2024. https://www.theverge.com/2024/2/2/24058985/google-search-cache-feature-discontinued.

Presinszky Judit. 2022. ‘A házipolitológus Deák Dániel büszke arra, hogy a Megafon százmillióval toldotta meg a Facebook-posztjait’. Telex. Telex. 4 January 2022. https://telex.hu/zacc/2022/01/04/megafon-hirdetes-facebook-koltes-penz-deak-daniel.

Raffi, Berg. 2023. ‘Israel Judicial Reform Explained: What Is the Crisis About?’ BBC News. BBC News. 11 September 2023. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-65086871.

‘Reification’. 2018. Encyclopaedia. Britannica.com. 2018. https://www.britannica.com/art/reification.

Rényi, Pál Dániel. 2016. ‘Az Állami Felügyelet Alatt Álló MKB Adott Pénzt Az Origo Megvásárlására’. 444. 18 February 2016. http://444.hu/2016/02/18/az-allami-felugyelet-alatt-allo-mkb-adott-penzt-az-origo-megvasarlasara.

———. 2017. ‘Ez nem újságírás, ez politikai nehézfegyverzet’. 444. 444. 18 May 2017. https://444.hu/tldr/2017/05/18/fideszmedia.

———. 2018a. ‘A baloldal fellegvára volt, most bulvártévét csinálnak belőle a Fidesznek’. 444. 10 January 2018. https://444.hu/tldr/2018/01/10/a-baloldal-fellegvara-volt-most-bulvartevet-csinalnak-belole-a-fidesznek.

———. 2018b. ‘Az Index még szabad, de nagyon kiszolgáltatott helyzetbe hozták’. 444. 444. 18 September 2018. https://444.hu/2018/09/18/az-index-meg-szabad-de-nagyon-kiszolgaltatott-helyzetbe-hoztak.

Rico, Guillem, Marc Guinjoan, and Eva Anduiza. 2017. ‘The Emotional Underpinnings of Populism: How Anger and Fear Affect Populist Attitudes’. *Swiss Political Science Review* 23 (4): 444–61. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12261.

Rodrik, Dani. 2018. ‘Populism and the Economics of Globalization’. *Journal of International Business Policy* 1 (1–2): 12–33. https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-018-0001-4.

Rogers, Samuel. 2024. *The Political Economy of Hungarian Authoritarian Populism: Capitalists without the Right Kind of Capital*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.

Roginsky, Sandrine, and Sally Shortall. 2009. ‘Civil Society as a Contested Field of Meanings’. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 29 (9/10): 473–87. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443330910986261.

Róna, Dániel. 2016. *Jobbik-Jelenség: A Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom Térnyerésének Okai*. Budapest: Könyv & Kávé.

Róna Dániel, Galgóczi Eszter, Pétervári Judit, Szeitl Bianka, and Túry Márton. 2020. 'A Fidesz-titok. Gazdasági szavazás Magyarországon'. https://21kutatokozpont.hu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Fidesz_titok_21_Kutat%C3%B3k%C3%B6zpont_tanulm%C3%A1ny.pdf.

Rovó Attila. 2019. 'Orbán és a média? Dehát már húsz éve megmondta!' 21 January 2019. https://index.hu/belfold/2019/01/21/orban99_sajto_kozteve_fidesz_media/.

Rueda, Daniel. 2020. 'Is Populism a Political Strategy? A Critique of an Enduring Approach'. *Political Studies* N/A (N/A): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720962355.

Ruzza, Carlo. 2009. 'Populism and Euroscepticism: Towards Uncivil Society?' *Policy and Society* 28 (1): 87–98. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polsoc.2009.02.007.

———. 2020. 'Civil Society Between Populism and Anti-Populism'. In *Nostalgia and Hope: Intersections between Politics of Culture, Welfare, and Migration in Europe*, edited by Ov Cristian Norocel, Anders Hellström, and Martin Bak Jørgensen, 221–35. IMISCOE Research Series. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41694-2_14.

Scharpf, Fritz Wilhelm. 1997. *Games Real Actors Play: Actor-Centered Institutionalism in Policy Research*. Theoretical Lenses on Public Policy. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press.

Scheiring, Gábor. 2020. *The Retreat of Liberal Democracy: Authoritarian Capitalism and the Accumulative State in Hungary*. Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Scheiring, Gábor, and Kristóf Szombati. 2020. 'From Neoliberal Disembedding to Authoritarian Re-Embedding: The Making of Illiberal Hegemony in Hungary'. *International Sociology* 35 (6): 721–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580920930591.

Schmitt-Beck, Rüdiger. 2004. 'The Impact of Mass Media and Personal Conversations on Voting'. In *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*, edited by Frank Esser and Barbara Pfetsch, 293–322. Communication, Society, and Politics. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Schnyder, Gerhard, Marlene Radl, Fanni Toth, Melek Kucukuzun, Tjaša Turnšek, Burçe Çelik, and Mojca Pajnik. 2024. 'Theorizing and Mapping Media Ownership Networks in Authoritarian-Populist Contexts: A Comparative Analysis of Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Turkey'. *Media, Culture & Society* 46 (1): 38–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231179366.

Schoenman, Roger. 2014. *Networks and Institutions in Europe's Emerging Markets*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scott, John, ed. 2017. *Social Network Analysis*. 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Semetko, Holli A. 2007. *Political Communication*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270125.003.0007.

Sipos, Balázs. 2010. *Média És Demokrácia Magyarországon: A Politikai Média Jelenkortörténete*. 20 Év Után. Budapest: Napvilág.

———. 2013. 'Bias, Partisanship, Journalistic Norms and Ethical Problems in the Contemporary Hungarian Political Media'. *Central European Journal of Communication* 1 (10): 89–104. https://cejc.ptks.pl/attachments/Bias-partisanship-journalistic-norms-and-ethical-problems-in-the-contemporary-Hungarian-political-media_2018-05-16_12-57-23.pdf.

Školkay, Andrej, and Mária Ondruchová-Hong. 2012. 'Slovakia: Reinventing Media Policy Without a Practical Perspective'. In *Understanding Media Policies*, edited by Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, 182–97. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137035288_12.

Sombatpoonsiri, Janjira. 2018. 'Rethinking Civil Resistance in the Face of Rightwing Populism: A Theoretical Inquiry'. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 13 (3): 7–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2018.1496028.

Soós, Gábor. 2012. 'Kétblokkrendszer Magyarországon'. In *Van irány? trendek a magyar politikában*, edited by Zsolt Boda and András Körösényi, 14–41. Budapest: MTATKPTI : Ú.M.K.

Stark, David, and Balazs Vedres. 2012. 'Political Holes in the Economy: The Business Network of Partisan Firms in Hungary'. *American Sociological Review* 77 (5): 700–722. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412453921.

Steinberger, Michael. 2018. 'George Soros Bet Big on Liberal Democracy. Now He Fears He Is Losing.' *The New York Times*, 17 July 2018, sec. Magazine. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/magazine/george-soros-democrat-open-society.html.

Stengel, Frank A., David B. MacDonald, and Dirk Nabers, eds. 2019. *Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter- and Transnational Dimensions*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04621-7.

Stetka, Vaclav. 2012. 'From Multinationals to Business Tycoons: Media Ownership and Journalistic Autonomy in Central and Eastern Europe'. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 17 (4): 433–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161212452449.

Štetka, Václav. 2015. 'The Rise of Oligarchs as Media Owners'. In *Media and Politics in New Democracies: Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, First edition, 85–98. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Szabó, Gabriella. 2018. 'Médiahálózatok 2018-ban. Az online portálok centrumai és perifériái Magyarországon'. In *Várakozások és valóságok - Parlamenti választás 2018*, 385–404. Napvilág Kiadó.

Szabó, Gabriella, and Márton Bene. 2016. 'Interaction Networks of the Hungarian Media'. In *Media in Process: Transformation and Democratic Transition*, 1st ed. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315594491.

Szabó, Máté. 2003. 'A „nép" és az „elit" populista szembeállítása, mint mobilizációs keretértelmezés (frame) Magyarországon 1989 elõtt és után'. *Politikatudományi Szemle* 12 (4): 143–66. http://real.mtak.hu/112705/1/2003_4_szabom.pdf.

———. 2008. 'Erős Vagy Gyenge a Civil Társadalom Magyarországon?' In *Civil És Nonprofit Szervezetek Szerepe a Gazdaságban*, 7–11. Budapest: Általános Vállalkozási Főiskola. http://epa.oszk.hu/02000/02051/00011/pdf/EPA02051_Tudomanyos_Kozlemenyek_21_005-010.pdf.

Szabó, Tamás. 2013. 'A Mária Rádió Története'. Mária Rádió. Mária Rádió. 6 January 2013. https://www.mariaradio.hu/cikk/2378/A_Maria_Radio_tortenete.

Szalay Dániel. 2017. 'Kotroczó: "Belelépünk a kutyagumiba és nem mondjuk ki, hogy büdös van!"' 24.hu. *24.hu* (blog). 9 May 2017. http://24.hu/media/2017/05/09/kotroczo-belelepunk-a-kutyagumiba-es-nem-mondjuk-ki-hogy-budos-van/.

———. 2018. ‘Uj Péter: Dudás Gergely elárult, hozzáértése pedig megkérdőjelezhető’. 24.hu. *24.hu* (blog). 31 January 2018. https://24.hu/media/2018/01/31/uj-peter-dudas-gergely-elarult-hozzaertese-pedig-megkerdojelezheto/.

———. 2019. ‘Habony Árpád és az Orbán-közeli médiaholding új londoni tartalomgyárában bukkant fel a TV2 volt hírigazgató-helyettese’. Media1. Media1. 24 April 2019. https://media1.hu/2019/04/24/v4na-elofizetes-toth-tamas-antal-tv2-hirigazgato-helyettes-habony-arpad/.

———. 2020. ‘Becsatlakozott a Telexhez a Dull Szabolcs előtti Index-főszerkesztő’. Media1. Media1. 2 December 2020. https://media1.hu/2020/12/02/telex-toth-szenesi-attila-ex-index-foszerkeszto/.

———. 2021a. ‘Bírálják az Azonnali alapító-főszerkesztői a lap leendő főszerkesztőjét’. Media1. Media1. 22 October 2021. https://media1.hu/2021/10/22/biraljak-az-azonnali-alapito-foszerkesztoi-a-lap-leendo-foszerkesztojet/.

———. 2021b. ‘Lekapcsolták a Klubrádió FM-adóját, sistereg az FM 92,9, így némult el az adás (videóval)’. Media1. 14 February 2021. https://media1.hu/2021/02/15/lekapcsoltak-a-klubradiot-az-fm-radiozasbol-sistereg-az-fm-929/.

———. 2022a. ‘Első fokon pert nyert az Azonnali a volt főszerkesztője, Bukovics Martin ellen’. Media1. Media1. 11 March 2022. https://media1.hu/2022/03/11/azonnali-munkaugyi-per-itelet-bukovics-martin-elbocsatott-foszerkeszto/.

———. 2022b. ‘Nem mérik többé a 168 Óra példányszámát – Milkovics Pál vezérigazgatót kérdeztük az okokról’. Media1. Media1. 21 March 2022. https://media1.hu/2022/03/21/nem-merik-tobbe-a-168-ora-peldanyszamat-milkovics-pal-vezerigazgatot-kerdeztuk-az-okokrol/.

Tamás Bence Gáspár. 2014. ‘Origo Zrt.: A megváltozott médiafogyasztási szokások miatt van szükség új főszerkesztőre’. 444.hu. 444. 3 June 2014. https://444.hu/2014/06/03/origo-zrt-a-megvaltozott-mediafogyasztasi-szokasok-miatt-van-szukseg-uj-foszerkesztore.

Tang, John, Mirco Musolesi, Cecilia Mascolo, and Vito Latora. 2009. ‘Temporal Distance Metrics for Social Network Analysis’. In *Proceedings of the 2nd ACM Workshop on Online Social Networks - WOSN ’09*, 31. Barcelona, Spain: ACM Press. https://doi.org/10.1145/1592665.1592674.

The Economist Intelligence Unit. 2015. ‘Democracy Index 2015: Democracy in an Age of Anxiety’. The Economist. https://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/EIU-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf.

Tilos Rádió. 2021a. ‘7térítő’. Tilos Rádió. Tilos Rádió. 2021. https://tilos.hu/show/7terito/archive/2021/4.

———. 2021b. ‘Melyik Feri’. Tilos Rádió. Tilos Rádió. 2021. https://tilos.hu/author/feco.

Tóka, Gábor, and Marina Popescu. 2002. ‘Befolyásolja-e a Szavazókat a Magyar Televízió Kormánypárti Propagandája? (Médiakutató)’. Médiakutató. Médiakutató. 2002. https://mediakutato.hu/cikk/2002_01_tavasz/02_kormanyparti_propaganda/.

Törnberg, Petter. 2018. ‘Echo Chambers and Viral Misinformation: Modeling Fake News as Complex Contagion’. Edited by Chris T. Bauch. *PLOS ONE* 13 (9): e0203958. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0203958.

Török, Péter. 2011a. ‘12 Dr. Török Péter: Reflexiók a magyar állam és egyházak kapcsolatára (1990–2011)’. Presented at the Egyházügyi, Vallásszabadsági Tudományos Konferencia, Budapest, November 21. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMxN17bMZks.

———. 2011b. ‘Reflexiók a magyar állam és egyházak kapcsolatára (1990-2011)’. In *Reflexiók a magyar állam és egyházak kapcsolatára (1990-2011)*. Budapest. http://forrasmedia.hu/vallasszabadsag/konferencia/eloadasok/Torok%20Peter.pdf.

Tóth, Csaba. 2001. ‘A magyar pártrendszer fejlődésének fő iránya’. *Politikatudományi Szemle* 10 (3): 81–104. https://epa.oszk.hu/02500/02565/00034/pdf/EPA02565_poltud_szemle_2001_3_081-104.pdf.

Tóth Olivér. 2020. ‘Kotroczó Róbert: „A televíziózással szerelembe lehetett esni”’. Médiapiac. *Médiapiac* (blog). 28 September 2020. https://mediapiac.com/mediapiac/kotroczo-robert-a-televiziozassal-szerelembe-lehetett-esni/114561/.

Tóth R. Tamás. 2018. ‘Úgy tűnik, nem véletlenül csúfolják egyre többen Prosti Srácoknak a kormánypárti propagandagyárat’. Zsúrpubi. Zsúrpubi. 2 August 2018. https://zsurpubi.hu/cikk/5669-ugy-tunik-nem-veletlenul-csufoljak-egyre-tobben-prosti-sracoknak-a-kormanyparti-propagandagyarat/.

Tóth Szabolcs Töhötöm. 2018. ‘Az élet, meg minden – A portréinterjú podcast’. Az élet, meg minden. Az élet, meg minden. 2018. https://azeletmegminden.hu/.

———. 2020a. ‘Bodoky Tamás – Jachtok, oligarchák, repülők és az Átlátszó története’. Az élet, meg minden. Az élet, meg minden. 17 January 2020. https://azeletmegminden.hu/024-bodoky-tamas-podcast/.

———. 2020b. ‘Uj Péter – A pont az i-n: az Index és a 444 története’. Az élet, meg minden. 26 August 2020. https://azeletmegminden.hu/030-uj-peter-podcast/.

Tóth, Tamás. 2020. ‘Target the Enemy: Explicit and Implicit Populism in the Rhetoric of the Hungarian Right’. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 28 (3): 366–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2020.1757415.

Tóth-Biró Marianna. 2022. ‘Újévi beszédben buzdított a Fidesz támogatására Németh Sándor, a Hit Gyülekezete vezetője, az ATV tulajdonosa’. Telex. Telex. 4 January 2022. https://telex.hu/valasztas-2022/2022/01/04/ujevi-beszedben-buzditott-a-fidesz-tamogatasara-nemeth-sandor-a-hit-gyulekezete-vezetoje-az-atv-tulajdonosa.

Tóth-Biró Marianna, and Bálint Kata. 2021. ‘Közpénzből éheznek az elismerésre: így vándorolnak a milliárdok a kormány kedvenc szakértőihez’. Telex. Telex. 25 November 2021. https://telex.hu/belfold/2021/11/25/kozpenz-milliardok-a-kormany-szakertoire-alapjogokert-kozpont-batthyany-lajos-alapitvany.

Trappel, Josef. 2008. ‘The Austrian Media Landscape’. In *European Media Governance: National and Regional Dimensions*, by Georgios Terzis, 63–73. Bristol, UK; Chicago: Intellect. http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=329921.

TV2. 2016. ‘Ilyen lesz a megújult Tények’. TV2. TV2. 2 May 2016. https://tv2play.hu/mokka/ilyen-lesz-a-megujult-tenyek.

———. 2018. ‘Én ezért szavazok Orbán Viktorra (2018-as választások, TV2)’. YouTube. YouTube. 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYQo5-TjnBY.

———. 2022. ‘Magyarország Választ 2022’. TV2.hu. Magyarország Választ 2022. 28 March 2022. https://tenyek.hu/video/magyarorszag-valaszt-2022.

Unyatyinszki György. 2020. ‘Média: egy mítosszal kevesebb’. Népszava. Népszava. 24 August 2020. https://nepszava.hu/3089178_media-egy-mitosszal-kevesebb.

———. 2021. ‘A magyarok szerint nincs jogállam’. Népszava. Népszava. 7 January 2021. https://nepszava.hu/3105159_a-magyarok-szerint-nincs-jogallam.

Urbán, Ágnes. 2004. ‘Urbán Ágnes: A Magyarországi Televíziós Piac Stabilizálódása (Médiakutató)’. *Médiakutató*. https://mediakutato.hu/cikk/2004_01_tavasz/05_magyarorszagi_televizios.

———. 2016. ‘Recent Changes in Media Ownership’. Budapest: Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely. https://mertek.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/mertek_media_owners2016.pdf.

Urbán, Ágnes, Gábor Polyák, and Zsófia Szász. 2017. ‘Hungary: Media Transformation Derailed’. In *Media in Third-Wave Democracies: Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, 13–19. Paris & Budapest.

Varga Attila. 2019. ‘Távozott a TV2 botrányos előéletű hírigazgató-helyettese’. Index.hu. Index.hu. 6 March 2019. https://index.hu/kultur/media/2019/03/06/tavozott_a_tv2_botranyos_eloeletu_hirigazgato-helyettese/.

Vásárhelyi, Mária. 1999a. ‘Médiapiaci Körkép – Médiapiaci Kórkép’. In *Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve 1999*. Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Közhasznú Alapítvány.

———. 1999b. *Újságírók, Sajtómunkások, Napszámosok*. Membrán Könyvek 5. Budapest: Új Mandátum.

Vicsek, Ferenc. 2020. ‘Tájékoztatás Kontra Tájékozottság. A Politikaipropaganda-Indikátor Pilot Projekt’. *Médiakutató* 21 (2): 89–103. https://mediakutato.hu/cikk/2020_02_nyar/06_tajekoztatas_kontra_tajekozottsag.pdf.

Vicsek, Lilla, Gábor Király, and Hanna Kónya. 2016. ‘Networks in the Social Sciences’. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 7 (2). https://doi.org/10.14267/CJSSP.2016.02.04.

VOKS.news, dir. 2020. *Én Ezért Szavazok Orbán Viktorra (2018-as Választások, TV2)*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYQo5-TjnBY.

Völgyi, Attila. 2011. ‘Lemondott Uj Péter, Az Index Főszerkesztője’. Völgyi Attila fotóriporter blogja. Völgyi Attila Fotóriporter Blogja. 6 September 2011. https://blog.volgyiattila.hu/2011/09/06/lemondott-uj-peter-az-index-foszerkesztoje/.

Waisbord, Silvio. 2011. ‘Between Support and Confrontation: Civic Society, Media Reform, and Populism in Latin America’. *Communication, Culture & Critique* 4 (1): 97–117. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2010.01095.x.

———. 2013. *Reinventing Professionalism: Journalism and News in Global Perspective*. Key Concepts in Journalism. Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity.

Waldner, David, and Ellen Lust. 2018. ‘Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding’. *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (1): 93–113. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050517-114628.

Walzer, Michael. 1997. ‘The Idea of Civil Society’. *Kettering Review*, no. Winter 1997, 8.

Weyer, Balázs. 2017. ‘Hogyan Mentsük Meg a Sajtót, Hogy Az Megmenthessen Minket?’ In *Hegymenet: Társadalmi És Politikai Kihívások Magyarországon*, edited by András Jakab and László Urbán, 361–78. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.

Weyland, Kurt. 2001. ‘Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics’. *Comparative Politics* 34 (1): 1. https://doi.org/10.2307/422412.

———. 2017. ‘Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.001.0001.

———. 2021. ‘Populism as a Political Strategy: An Approach’s Enduring — and Increasing — Advantages’. *Political Studies* 69 (2): 185–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211002669.

Wittenberg, Jason, and Béla Greskovits. 2016. ‘Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation in Hungary in the 1990s and 2000s’. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296333343_Civil_Society_and_Democratic_Consolidation_in_Hungary_in_the_1990s_and_2000s.

Zielonka, Jan, ed. 2015. *Media and Politics in New Democracies: Europe in a Comparative Perspective*. First edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zubor, Zalán. 2022. ‘Nem azért nyert a Fidesz, mert csak az ő médiája jut el az emberekhez – a kormánypárti médiafölény igazi arca’. Átlátszó. Átlátszó. 17 May 2022. https://atlatszo.hu/kozugy/2022/05/17/nem-azert-nyert-a-fidesz-mert-csak-az-o-mediaja-jut-el-az-emberekhez-a-kormanyparti-mediafoleny-igazi-arca/.