

SOME GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS OF HUNGARIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS – 1990–2002

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Introduction

For the new democracies from East-Central-Europe the free elections represented the feeling of freedom. They gave the legitimacy of governments marked out the leader parties of the political system and measured the electoral basis of them. As a geographer, I was less interested about the major legal and philosophical aspects of the results of general elections in Hungary, however more about the spatial consequences and changes of them. We could recognize quite clear the regional differences in the rate of presence in different period, to identify the most active and passive areas, as well. There were consequent behaviours in the party-preferences, too, particularly in the regional inequalities of conservative, liberal, or social-democrat sympathies.

There are some special aspects of the post-transitional (after 1989) general elections in Hungary. Firstly, there were no interim elections between 1990–2002 independently the changing party-basis of the winning coalition, a death of the Prime Minister (Mr. József Antall in 1993), or the stability of the majority of the winners (in 2002 the social-liberal coalition had only 5 mandate majority, but it does not involved any problems in the legislation process or governance). Secondly, the speed and deepness of the change in the party-system were quite moderate in this period. There were radical changes in the basis of the parties, but before 2002 the system was – more, or less – stable. The new actors of the political field born from certain wings of the “first-generation” parties that dominated the transformation period (1989–1990). And last, but not least, the Hungarian party-system became (after the general elections in 2002) a very simple system, dominated by two major parties (from the conservative and the social-democrat pole) and it is quite similar to the two-party-systems in some Western democracies. In this time, there are no challenger parties to weaken this duopolistic system, while the politically active people’s need is clear for other political parties, too.

The two major parties formed themselves into people’s party rather than electoral parties in the last 3–5 years. They have nationwide structures: groups of activists, media background, economic supporters, international connections, and specialists in all fields of interest. The smaller parties are unable to compete with them, because they have no sources to built up such rival systems, so they have to

concentrate on some politically important themes, topics to get the minimal level of electoral support to exist inside the House of Parliament.

The political career became a profession. The major part of former leaders of the democratic opposition in the 1970s, 1980s left the active political career, the smaller group form itself a specialist of a certain field. The new generation of the politicians made themselves ready for this kind of career after the secondary school, or at least the diploma.

The structure of the paper concentrate on the next major points:

- 1) The legal background of elections (delegation system, limitation, the role of first and second round of elections, co-operation of parties)
- 2) The actors: party system of Hungary (conservative parties, social democrats, liberal pole, radical groups) traditional and new elements and their role, changing programs and practise of parties
- 3) The past and present of general elections: participation, differences between elections and the two rounds of a same election, forming coalitions among parties before the elections and/or between the two rounds (locally or countrywide)
- 4) Some geographical aspects of elections: differences in participation (West-East slope – except Budapest), the changing importance of the second rounds; spatial stability and shifts in party preferences (“blue-collar” regions, “citoyen” traditions and agrarian countryside).
- 5) And try to summarize a few concluding remarks: about some aspects of a needed reform in election system.

The legal background of elections

Delegation system is a mixture of two (three) types of elections. The parties who take place in the Parliament have three sources for delegate representatives. There are 176 individual districts (close to each other by size) for direct voting, regional lists (by counties) for delegates of parties, and above all national list of parties (together 210 places). There are rigorous methods for calculate the number of delegates minimising the lost votes and make the system more balanced. If one party lose most of the individual districts, but got a lot of votes in the election it would be many delegates in the Parliament from the compensation lists. This system prefers the winning party and the second largest (if it is strong enough) and helping to create working coalitions after the elections. Thanks to this difficult system, Hungarian governments filled out their cyclical period since 1990.

Limitation has important role to select the parties set on foot in the general elections. Firstly it was 4% of the valid votes, but after 1994 it grew up to 5%. It

resulted, that after the transformation there was no more than six parties in the Parliament in a political cycle.

Hungarian general elections have two rounds. In the *first round* the voters got two pages, one for the party lists and the second for choosing the individual candidate. In the first round the number of votes for the parties became clean, and in some districts would be winner as individual. The level of validity in the first round is 50%+1 of voters, and the winner should get the majority of valid votes. (If the level of validity was too high, at the of second round there will be an extra voting for that districts.) That's why there is no winner in the majority of individual districts in the first round. If a candidate gets 15% or more of the valid votes, there is a possibility to continue his/her campaign between the two rounds. In the 1990s, there were three candidates in the second round by individual districts more often (sometimes four), but in 2002 most of these districts has only two candidates (one is social democrat, or liberal, the other is conservative). In the *second round* of elections voters got only one paper with the name of candidates. The limit of validity is lower, 25%+1 of voters, and the winner will be that candidate who gets 50%+1 of valid votes. After the first round we can see the assistance of the parties seeing the number of votes on regional party-lists, and we have some information about the assistance of individual candidates in the districts. But we get no information about the major part of winners in the districts and the distribution of mandates of compensation list.

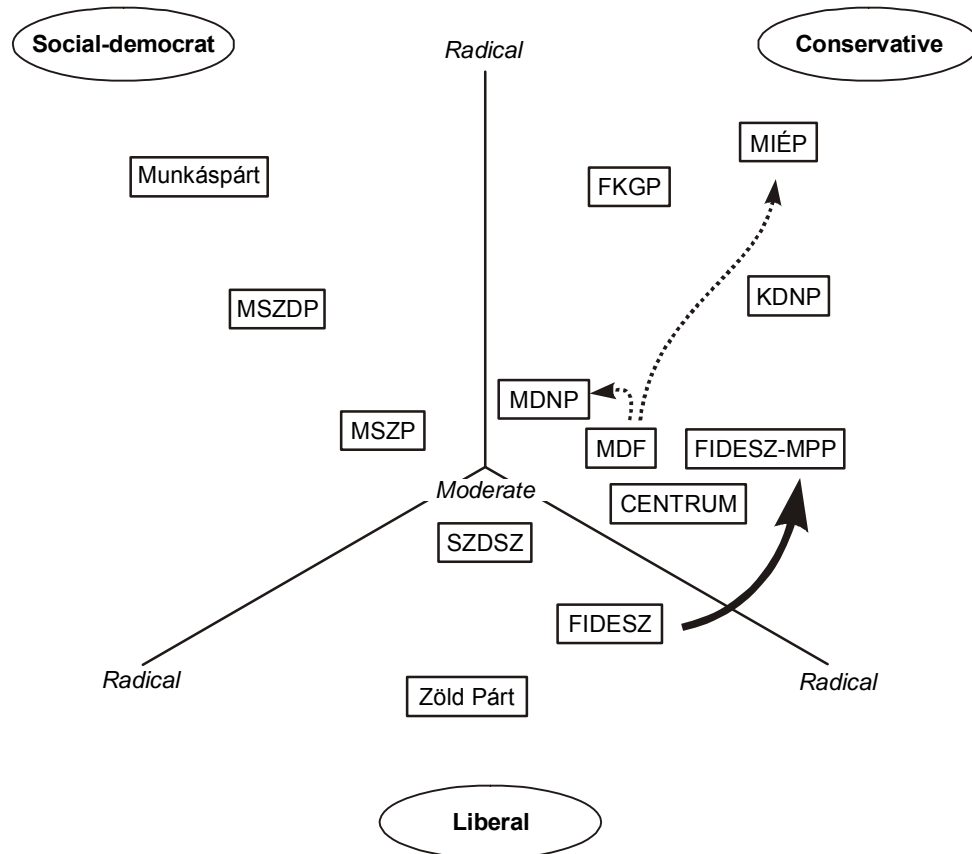
Except the 1990 general elections we can see different types of *co-operation of parties*. The most general form of co-operation is the withdrawal from someone's candidate and marking the favoured party of person, asking their voters to go and vote in the second round. All greater parties have some smaller allied parties who have minimal chance to become a party over 5%, but in some districts they have so many voters, so they are able to upset the winner. In a special case, two (or more) parties could make a deal about general withdrawal in most of individual districts to defeat their concurrent(s). The second phase, if the two (or more) parties have common candidates in one (or more) districts before the first round. In the third type there are not just common individual candidates, but common party-lists, as well. And last the fourth type is associate of parties for one or more general elections, such as CDU/CSU in Germany.

The actors – Changing party system of Hungary

- 1) *Conservative parties*: MDF – Forum of Hungarian Democrats, KDNP – Christian Democrats, FKGK – Small-holders (Farmers) Party, MDNP – National Democrats, Centrum, FIDESZ–MPP – Young Democrats-Party of Hungarian Civilians (former liberal) (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1

The structure of the political field and its actors in Hungary, 1990–2002



Key: Munkáspárt – Worker’s Party (former orthodox wing of the Communist Party); MSZP – Hungarian Socialist Party (reformer and technocrat wings of the former Communist Party); MSZDP – Hungarian Social-Democratic Party; SZDSZ – Free-Democratic Party; Zöld Párt – Green Party; FIDESZ – Young Democratic Party; FIDESZ–MPP – Young Democrats–Hungarian People’s Party (after 1996); MDF – Forum of Hungarian Democrats; MIÉP – Party of Hungarian Life and Justice (radical wing of MDF, founded in 1993); MDNP – Hungarian Democratic and People’s Party (former technocrats of MDF, founded in 1996) KDNP: Christian Democratic People’s Party; FKGP – Independent Party of Small-holders Centrum: Party of the Centre (electoral party-coalition founded in 2000).

Source: edited by the author.

- 2) *Social-democrats*: MSZP – Socialist Party, MSZDP – Social Democrats (*Figure 1*).
- 3) *Liberal pole*: SZDSZ – Free Democrats, FIDESZ (now conservative) (*Figure 1*).
- 4) *Radical groups*: MIÉP – Party of Hungarian Justice and Live (right wing), MP – Workers Party (left wing), MZP – Hungarian Green Party (eco-party) (*Figure 1*).

A certain group of Hungarian parties has got historical roots, so we can call them *traditional actors*. On the conservative pole KDNP and FKGP has more than 80 years history and they had a traditional class of voters, as well, especially in 1990, after the transition period. But till the end of the 1990s these parties loose their supporters because they have no answers for the new challenges in the 21st century. FKGP recruited its voters from the agrarian regions, but they role in the conservative governments (1990–94, 1998–2002) was so unsuccessful, that the whole party had been eliminated in the last elections. The KDNP had important connections with the Roman-catholic church, but this base was not hard enough for successful act in the 1998 general elections. On the left side, the MP is the successor party of the Communist Party of Hungary (MSZMP), and its base rooted in the elder generation, the losers of the transition period. The renewed Socialist Party (MSZP) formed itself a modern social-democrat formation, and (almost) the only representative of left side. MSZDP is the oldest party, was founded in 1890, but its history doesn't help them to get into the Parliament after 1990. Now its role is minimal on the left side.

The *new actors group* is recruited that formations founded around 1989. In the first phase there were two poles of new actors: MDF – based on the intellectual class in the shadow under the socialist period, and SZDSZ – recruited mostly from the intelligentsia of the capital city opposite the communist party in the 1970s and 1980s.

While MDF became a moderate conservative party after the first general elections in 1990, the radical wing founded a new party, called MIÉP (it has Parliamentary panel between 1998–2002). The technocrats of MDF created the new party of MDNP, but it has only episode in the history of elections. In 2002 MDF is a small conservative party in the shadow of FIDESZ–MPP. SZDSZ and its liberal direction resulted a rather great representation in the first two Parliaments, but after a coalition with the Socialist Party the majority of the liberal party's supporters leaved the party and joined to FIDESZ–MPP.

Now SZDSZ is in a governmental position with MSZP again, but its role is more important, because SZDSZ give the majority of the government. FIDESZ was called the “youth session of Free-Democrats” before the first election, and behave as a liberal party. After 1993, the leaders of FIDESZ recognised, that liberal

pole is too small for winning a general election, and saw the missing integration in the right side. As a transformed party (from liberal to conservative) FIDESZ became the magnet pole of conservative parties between 1993 and 1998. This reorganised conservative pole (with FIDESZ as a leading force) was able to win the general elections in 1998. Other newly founded formations, such as Green Party, or Centrum (and the other ones) are too weak to “jump up” the limit of representation in the Parliament, but their existence show, that Hungarian society has serious antipathy against two-party system.

The *programs and practise* of parties seemed very changeable in the 1990s. On the conservative pole MDF began its way as a party with a moderate program a “humanised capitalism”, and, in some cases a party with a “third way” program (neither socialist, nor capitalist) goes back to the peasant writers utopian dream about “Hungary – a country of gardens”. Under the period of transition became clear that the only choice for Hungary is capitalism, based on democracy, private ownership and state founded on the rule of law. This mainstream eroded the act of “collecting party” of MDF, firstly the nationalist, radical group, and after loosing the general elections the technocrats leaved the party and formed their own movements (MIÉP and MDNP). The roots of MDF went back to the conservative era between the two World Wars, and the short democratic period between 1945–48. Nowadays, MDF is in a transformation period, forming out a modern, European conservative party, similar West European ones, but trough this transformation period, the party loosed the leader position of the right wing, it goes to FIDESZ.

Young Democrats began their political life with a radically critical point of view, it was normal in the case of a “generation party”. They criticised the former socialist system, but the new conservative government, too, because of its impotence solving the problems of transformation period. After the return of socialists (1994), the leaders of the party changed their profile radically. They leaved the liberal pole and joined to the conservative forces and became the main organisers of a closer co-operation among the right wing parties. It belonged to a crisis inside the FIDESZ, the liberal wing of the party leaved it (someone joined to SZDSZ, the others leaved the political field). As a real alternative of the social-liberal government the coalition of conservative parties won the 1998 elections. Its program based on the European and Nord-Atlantic access, but with a harder national rhetoric background. Nowadays FIDESZ wants to be the only representative of national history, the values of citizenship, the Hungarian minorities all over the World and the ethic of religious man. They organised circle of clients around the party, preferred them in the decisions of state investments sometimes against of effectiveness). They became more “old fashioned” as MDF, else if they 20–30 years younger than the representatives of the other party. FIDESZ had an aggressive style in political life, it let them seen very strong and self-confident, and the number of their voters increased. But, in parallel, this style (with a higher rate of cor-

ruption) was not acceptable for a large number of voters, so the polarisation of political field became sharper in the last four years.

On the socialist pole, MSZP was in a “political carotene” between 1990–1992. This period turned the party into a technocrat style, they criticised the new government and pointed out the mistakes of Ministries. This style and the living nostalgia after the socialist period, particularly employment, moderate differences among living style etc. resulted a great triumph in the 1994 elections. They inherited a country in a very bad position, that’s why the party had to turn into managing the crisis, instead of making a social-democratic program. This program resulted a deep crisis in society, but after a two years period it became the basis of an increasing economy, with more resources for solving social problems. MSZP began to move into a social democrat way in the last year of they cycle, but it was not enough, they lose the 1998 elections. In an opposition, the party had serious inner crisis, they were unable to communicate with the people, and they had no answers against the FIDESZ’s aggressive style. After a long hesitation, MSZP’s leaders solved the inner crisis, and try to point at the mistakes and contradictions of the government’s policy. MSZP transformed itself a social-democrat party, with a high sensitivity of social problems, with responsibility of EU access. This reform resulted the new governmental period after 2002. At the beginning of the new period, the social-liberal government formed out a social package, called “100 days program” and they performed it (it is unique after the elections!), so the popularity of the party was increased radically.

The only liberal party – SZDSZ – had/has a special way of development in its program. Before the first general elections 1990, SZDSZ initiated a referendum about election of the President of Hungary in 1989. It has special importance, because at that time the reform-socialist Imre Pozsgay was the most popular politician, and in a direct election (with a high legitimacy) he has the greatest chance to be the first President. SZDSZ had an alternative point of view, about indirect election (by the Parliament) and it has won. At that time SZDSZ represented a political party forcing a radical turn from socialism into a liberal democracy. In 1990 and in 1994 SZDSZ had the second largest fraction in the Parliament, but in different position. Between 1990–1994 they were the main opposition party of the conservative government, but were able to create the legal background of new democracy (MDF-SZDSZ pact, in 1990). After 1994, SZDSZ became a part of new social-liberal government, as a balance power of socialists. This four years period eroded the theoretical basis of SZDSZ’s program; the co-operation with the post-communist party became the majority of its voters estranged from the party. The liberal-technocrat policy of SZDSZ made the party much smaller (6–7%), closer to the representation of the West European liberal parties. The continues disputes among the leading ideologists of SZDSZ make hard to transform the movement into a

modern liberal party, but after several changes in the top of the SZDSZ the process has almost finished.

There are two other actors we have to concentrate on: the MP (Workers Party) with its nostalgic program “Under János Kádár (former leader of the “goulash-communism”) everything was better”, and MIÉP with its nationalist, radical program. The last one is more dangerous, because the majority of the people are loser (or not winner) of the transformation period (about two-third of the population) and this groups are very sensitive such a negative program. MIÉP’s program based on the criticism of other parties, a sharpen anti-liberal, anti-communist propaganda and defending the “small ones”, the Hungarian nation, the minorities outside Hungary.

Results of the general elections in 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002

Participation, differences between elections and the two rounds of a same election

Table 1

Participation rate in general elections (number of valid votes)

Year	First round		Second round	
	Electors (th.)	%	Electors (th.)	%
1990 candidates	4959	65.42	3410	45.44
1990 parties	4911	62.91		
1994 candidates	5480	68.92	4189	55.12
1994 parties	5716	71.88		
1998 candidates	4468	56.26	4510	57.01
1998 parties	4484	56.38		
2002 candidates	5686	70.53	4424	73.51
2002 parties	5718	71.03		

Source: own calculation.

The rate of participation showed a great oscillation among different elections. It was a negative result, that in 1990 only two-third of voters legitimated the new government and parties. The wide gap between the participation between the two rounds resulted the success of the conservative parties, which were in leader position after the first round in the most of districts. In 1994 election was a “protest” against the crisis, and the incompetence of the MDF-led coalition. There was a certain gap between participation in the first and second round, similar to 1990, but the reason was different. In 1994, after the first round people saw, that conservative parties loosed the elections and MSZP would be the winner, so there was no more

motivation to go and vote again. In the last two cases the situation was different. The participation in the second round was higher than in the first one. In 1998 the lower rate of voting came from the “no campaign” of the social-liberal government. They suggest, there is no alternative against them (that was a great fault!). As people saw – after the first round – that the new conservative coalition, led by FIDESZ is able to win the elections the rate of activity increased in the right wing. In parallel, in the socialist pole, a high number of voters became passive, because after the first round MSZP was the leader force. In 2002 the situation was just the same, except the rate of participation was rather high in the first round (over 70%), but it became higher in the second. The leader of the first round was MSZP, and the newly activated voters strengthen the right side, but “there were not many enough” (Viktor Orbán, former Prime Minister) to change the result. In 2002, the voters of the social and liberal pole were active enough in the second round, to make their parties win.

These elections were mainly “protest voting”. Firstly against the communist period, after against the incompetence, in 1998 against the restriction policy and last time against the corruption and building client-system. Of course there were lots of positive elements of the campaigns, but the crucial points of the elections were always negative. In the first three cases, every time a new party, a new coalition got a chance to lead the country. 2002 was the first election, when a “traditional” coalition had an opportunity to repeat.

Forming coalitions among parties before the elections and/or between the two rounds (locally or countrywide)

Table 2/1

Result of parties in general elections, 1990

Party	Party list	Individual candidates	Compensation list	Together	% of representatives
MDF	40	114	10	164	42.49
FKGP	16	11	17	44	11.40
KDNP	10	3	10	21	5.44
SZDSZ	34	37	23	94	24.35
FIDESZ	8	2	12	22	5.70
MSZP	14	1	18	33	8.55
others		8		8	2.07
First two parties				258	66.84

Table 2/2

Result of parties in general elections, 1994

Party	Party list	Individual candidates	Compensation list	Together	% of representatives
MDF		5		38	9.84
FKGP		1		26	6.74
KDNP		3		22	5.70
SZDSZ		16		69	17.88
FIDESZ		0		20	5.18
MSZP		147		209	54.15
others		2		2	0.52
First two parties				278	72.03

Table 2/3

Result of parties in general elections, 1998

Party	Party list	Individual candidates	Compensation list	Together	% of representatives
FIDESZ	48	90	10	148	38.34
MDF	0	17	0	17	4.40
FKGP	22	12	14	48	12.44
MIÉP	3	0	11	14	3.63
SZDSZ	5	2	17	24	6.22
MSZP	50	54	30	134	34.72
others	0	1	0	0	0.25
First two parties				282	73.06

Table 2/4

Result of parties in general elections, 2002

Party	Party list	Individual candidates	Compensation list	Together	% of representatives
FIDESZ–MDF	67	95	26	188	48.70
(MDF)				24	6.22
(FIDESZ)				164	42.49
SZDSZ	4	3	13	20	5.18
MSZP	69	78	31	178	46.11
First two parties				342	88.60

Source: own calculation.

The Hungarian election-system prefers stabile coalitions for governing the country, instead of proportionality, which system mirroring the real promotion rate of parties. That's why the final results of general elections – except the last one – made an opportunity forming out stabile coalitions. In the last case (2002) the majority of the social-liberal coalition is only 5 representatives against the conservative pole. In 1994, when MSZP has absolute majority in the Parliament, the coalition with liberals showed, that the communist era is over, the coalition partner and the opposition had extra rights to examine the functioning of government and controlling it.

Changing structure of parties

If we take a closer look at the proportion of votes at party lists, we will see a fundamental trend we call it “way a two-plus-two party system”.

In 1990 the structure of the Parliament was three poles. There were two strong parties (MDF and SZDSZ) one was the leader force of the first free-elected government and the other became the greatest actor of opposition. Two medium-sized parties have important role (FKGP and MSZP), and two small parties represented special stratum of the society (roman-catholic – KDNP, and young generation – FIDESZ). If we take a closer look at the whole structure of the valid votes, we can see a more balanced three-pole structure: the conservative wing had a relative majority with 44%, the liberal parties got 32% and the social-democrats 20%. There is a great gap between the real rates of countenance and a representation in the new Parliament (59, 30, 9 percent). In this election 8 candidates got place in the Parlia-

ment who had no connections with the above mentioned parties, their number were decreasing election to election, and in 2002 no one without a party base can get a mandate in spite of his/her personal qualities.

Table 3

Proportion of votes at party lists (percent of valid votes)

Party	1990	1994	1998	2002
MDF	24.73	11.74	3.12	<i>(just with FIDESZ)</i>
SZDSZ	21.39	19.74	7.88	5.56
FKGP	11.73	8.82	13.78	(0.74)
MSZP	10.89	32.99	32.25	42.03
FIDESZ	8.95	7.02	28.18	41.11
				<i>(with MDF)</i>
KDNP	6.46	7.03	(1.52)	(0.53)
MIÉP	–	(1.69)	5.55	(4.36)
Parties in the Parliament	84.15	87.34	90.76	88.70
First two parties	46.12	52.73	60.43	83.14
<i>(Rate of representation)</i>	<i>66.84</i>	<i>72.03</i>	<i>73.06</i>	<i>88.60</i>
<i>(Differentiation in percent)</i>	<i>20.72</i>	<i>19.30</i>	<i>12.63</i>	<i>5.46</i>

Source: own calculation.

It was unique, that the group of parties inside the Parliament had not been changed between 1990 and 1994. When social pole got about 40% of all valid votes, the liberal pole decreased to 22% and conservatives got only 35%, but they representation in the Parliament took only 27%, because of the lack of co-operation. That resulted the absolute majority of MSZP.

In 1998 a new actor came into the Parliament, MIÉP, the former nationalist and radical wing of MDF, and this was the time of great change in structure of parties. Christian democrats leave the Parliament; MDF was able to create a fraction only with the help of FIDESZ (if we see only the party list results, MDF had to move out of Parliament, too) in individual districts. SZDSZ and the liberal pole weakened, and, in parallel, the populist agrarian party FKGP became the third largest fraction, in a crucial position, they were the “king-makers”. There was a deal among the other parties in the Parliament, that MIÉP and its nationalist and sometimes racist rhetoric and program was not European, so the party was “in quarantine” for four years, after the elections, in spite of their own actions to support conservative side and the government. In the last two years (2000–2002) there were some attempts to form out a new, conservative party, or coalition, with a moderate, technocrat program, while FIDESZ moved towards the right wing and

leave the political centre empty. These attempts were unsuccessful thanks to the mistrustful of the leaders of these smaller parties and the actions of the FIDESZ to save this hegemony in the right.

In the last elections it seemed clear, that the party structure of the new Parliament would be more simply than ever before. On the right side the joint list of FIDESZ–MDF has just the chance to jump up the 5% limit, on the left MSZP save its dominancy, too, and SZDSZ, the only liberal party seemed as a certain actor of the new Parliament. There were only two questions: How much is the real number of MIÉP's voters? Would it be enough to jump up the limit or not? And the other: What would be the role of agrarian party (FKGP) after the elections? It seemed more or less clear, that MP and the new formation of Centrum would be out of the new Parliament, and they have no chance in individual districts, as well. The answers were: the agrarian party will have no role in the Parliament, thanks to the chaos after their four years period in the agrarian sector; and MIÉP's voters were not enough, thanks to the high rate of activity in the first round. After the elections the party structure of the Parliament became quite simple, 2+2, that means two "great" forces in the left and right side, with one-one "satellite" parties. In this case time to discuss a reform of delegation system and elections, because most of the voters do not prefer a two-party system instead of the monopolistic party under the communist era.

Geographical aspects of elections

Regional differences in participation

The rate of participation shows slight regional differences in the general elections. The group of more active and rather passive counties is quite stable, independently the overall rates of participation. We could see a clear west-east slope, except Budapest, at every time (*Figure 2–3*).

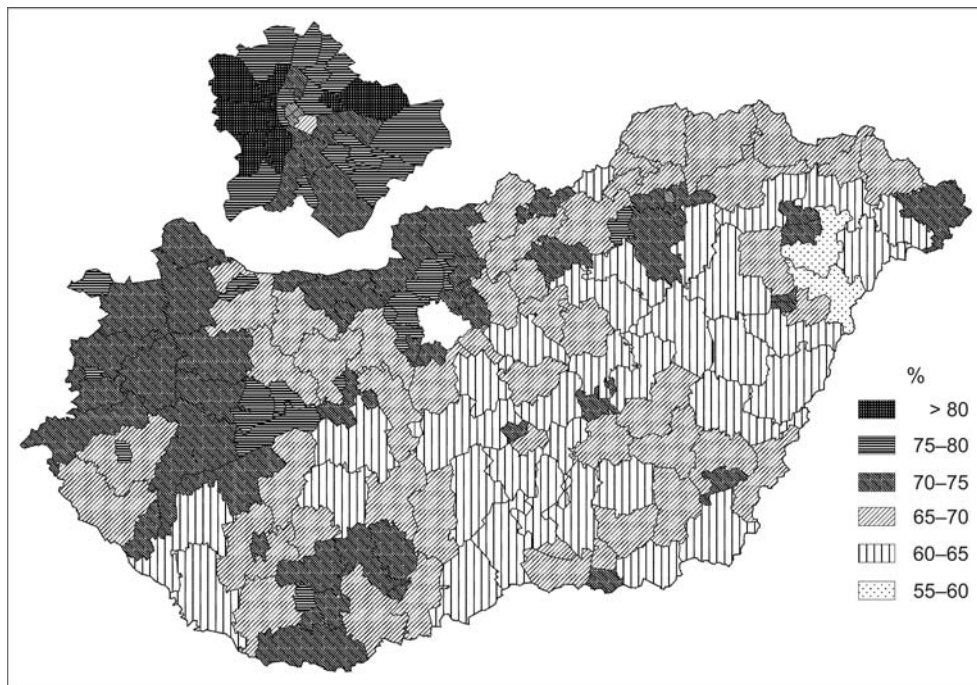
In 1990 the capital city and the western counties (along the Hungarian-Austrian border) were the active ones and the less actives lay in the Great Plain region. The absolute difference between the most and less active county (without Budapest) was 23.1%.

Till 1994 this gap, between the most and least active counties decreased to 12.7%, but the group of active and passive countries were quite stable. While the overall activity rate increased more than 12%, there were two counties (Vas, Győr-Moson-Sopron) when a small rate decrease was registered, however this activity rates were the highest among counties. There were no movements in activity rate comparing the two rounds of the elections, independently the overall change of activity.

The overall activity rate in 1998 was dramatically decreased comparing to 1994. This process and the changing gap between the most and less active counties (into 14.8%) resulted, that there were unsuccessful party lists in two counties (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Hajdú-Bihar) in the first round of election. While the group of actives was stable, a new actor became the most passive in the second round (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok). In the second round the rate of activity was increasing in the majority of counties (except the capital city), and the movement was the largest in the above-mentioned unsuccessful counties (+6 and +9%). So the gap between the active and passive counties decreased significantly between the two rounds.

Figure 2

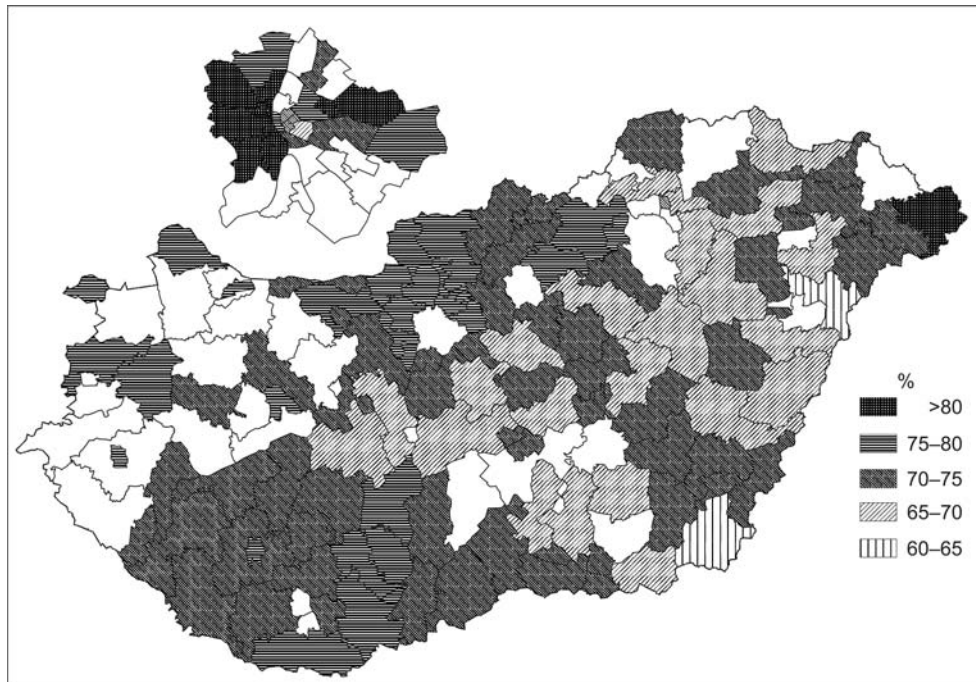
2002. 1st round – Participation



Source: edited by the author.

Figure 3

2002. 2nd round – Participation



Source: edited by the author.

In 2002 the record rate in participation implied a moderate gap between the most and less active counties (Vas and Bács-Kiskun) in was weaker than 10% (first time after the transition). Budapest was more active, than the counties – as usual – but the difference was less than 3%. The activity rates of this election were higher than ever before in the whole country (actually in 1994), but while the maximum was increase only with 0.6%, the minimum increased more than 4%. There were 8 counties (with the capital city 9) over 70%, and none under 65. The results of the second round we cannot compare with the first ones, because in 45 of 176 individual districts the election was valid and successful, too, that's why there were no need for second round in them. So we have take a closer look at activity rates in district level. In the first round the absolute maximum could be measured in Budapest, when 9 districts had 80% or higher activity rate, and only 1 under 70%. (In Budapest there are 32 districts, altogether.) In the countryside Baranya county gave the maximum, and Hajdú-Bihar the minimum. The differences between the maximum and minimum activity level were almost 20% in the capital city and 21%

in the countryside, but on overall level it went up to 28%. There were 15 districts in the countryside over 75% (none was over 80%), and only two were under 60%. The increasing activity level in the second round decreased the spatial differences inside Hungary. While the maximum activity level of Budapest decreased with 0.3%, and minimum increased up to 0.9% (there were 21 districts in the second round), there were more radical changes in the countryside. The level of maximum went up to 2.7%, so there was 1 district in the countryside with above 80% activity level. The number of district with over 75% increased from 15, to 28, while the whole number of districts decreased from 144, to 110. There were no districts under 60%, and only 2 between 60–65% (one in Békés county and the other is in Hajdú-Bihar). The level of minimal activity grew up to 5.6% in the second round, compare to the first. So the difference between the most and least active districts decreased in Budapest (–1.2%), in the countryside (–2.9%) and in the whole county (–5.9%), as well (*Figure 2–3*).

In the practise of Hungarian general elections we can say, that higher activity rate in the whole country decreases the spatial inequalities in participation among counties, between the capital city and countryside and among the districts, as well. However, we can recognize the active and passive counties and districts and this spatial structure seems to be quite stable, the emerging activity level moderates the regional differences effectively. This spatial structure in the level of participation may result a different level legitimacy, as well, but in Hungary it has no sign in the political field. (Maybe it has higher interest in that electoral system, which based on only, or mainly on individual districts.)

Spatial stability and shifts in party preferences

(“blue-collar” regions, “citoyen” traditions, agrarian countryside):

If we take a closer look at spatial preferences of certain parties we could see some stable regional basis of them, but there is a wide range of mobility in party preferences at the same time. Moving towards the last general elections, the rate of stability is emerging and mobility became weaker.

MDF was the main representative of the right wing in the first election, in 1990. The best results of the party were concentrate on the South Great Plain, Central Transdanubia, the capital city and its agglomeration zone. The “black holes” of MDF preference concentrated on the South and West Transdanubia. If we see the strongest poles of the party preferences in the case of MDF’s coalition partners (FKGP and KDNP), we could see that Great Plain as a whole, South Transdanubia (FKGP), and Northern Hungary (except Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county) (KDNP) were the secondary basis of the right wing parties. The liberal pole (SZDSZ and FIDESZ) had strong positions in the West and Central Transdanubian region, and

in Budapest, but had some weaknesses particularly in the Great Plain, and some peripheral (Somogy) and industrial (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén) counties. The only left wing party MSZP had better results in the industrial regions, in the capital city and in some counties without strong rival party.

The situation was dramatically changed in 1994. The social democrats won the elections and their basis seemed rather strong countrywide, except the West-Transdanubian region (with Veszprém county) and the South Great Plain. The only liberal party SZDSZ had good results in the Transdanubian region and the capital city, and the "black holes" were concentrate on the eastern side of the country (except Somogy). The conservative parties lost a lot of voters in this four years period but the spatial preferences were not changed dramatically except MDF. This party lost the two-third of the capital city and its whole agglomeration zone, weakened the positions in the Transdanubian region, but got some new poles in the east (Bács-Kiskun and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg).

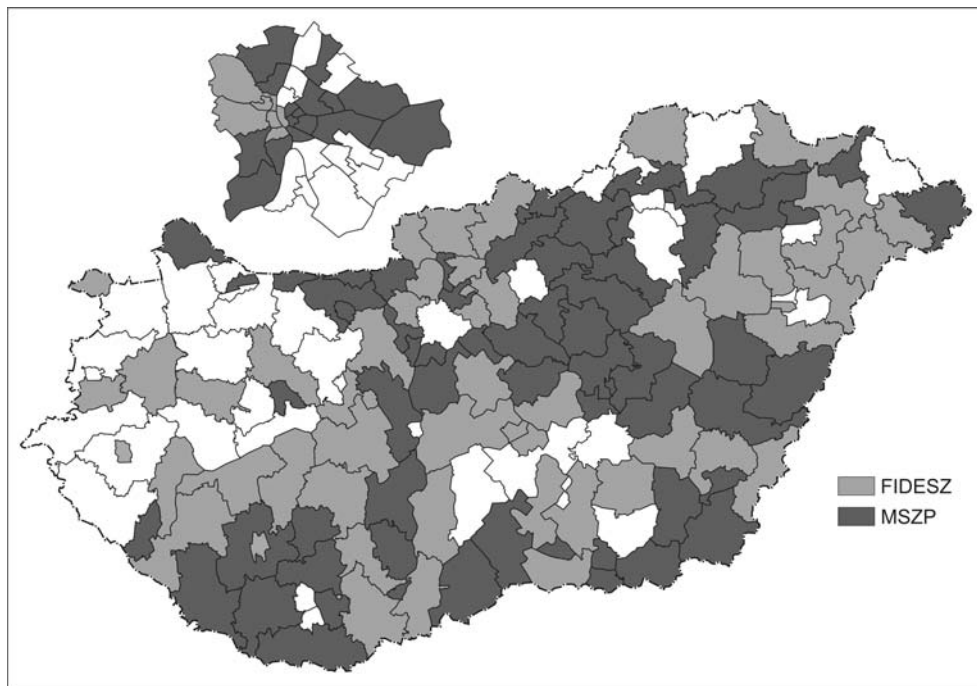
In 1998, when the FIDESZ led conservative coalition won the general elections the spatial party preferences became clearer than before. FIDESZ had strong basis in the West and Central Transdanubia (except Komárom-Esztergom county) and in some counties with Christian-democrat traditions (Tolna, Csongrád). Its coalition partner FKGP had relative good results in the whole Great Plain and Pest county and some Transdanubian regions with harder agrarian traditions (Zala, Somogy). The main weak points of their spatial preference map were lay on the industrial regions and the capital city, Budapest. As FIDESZ integrated the right wing of KDNP, called MKDSZ (Association of Christian-Democrats) this party became the successor of its better positions in the counties with Christian-democrat traditions. The great loser of the elections was MSZP. Its positions were weakening in the whole West-Transdanubia and in the South Great Plain, as well. The main basis of the party became more characteristic, the industrial face counties in Transdanubia and in Northern Hungary, the capital city and some counties in the Great Plain with agrar-socialist traditions (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok and Békés) The only liberal party SZDSZ loosed the two-third of its supporters, so its spatial basis shrieked dramatically. Except Budapest and the agglomeration zone, there were only smaller regions, districts when SZDSZ were successful, thanks to the quality of the individual candidates.

In 2002, when the results of general elections were as tight as never before, the spatial preferences of parties had not changed dramatically, comparing to 1998. MSZP, the winner party was not able to extend its preference zone, but tightened its disadvantageous zone in some cases, especially in the Great Plain and Central and South Transdanubia (*Figure 4*). FIDESZ-MDF joint list won 12 counties in the last elections, but was unable to weaken MSZP's positions in its primary preference zone. While the agrarian party FKGP and the radical nationalist MIÉP went out of the Parliament, their voters moved to FIDESZ (and not MDF) stabilizing its

preference zone particularly in the Great Plain and South Transdanubia. The only result for the conservative parties was the success in Hajdú-Bihar County, which was in a transition position between the two main preference zones (*Figure 4*). SZDSZ stabilised its positions in Budapest and Pest County, but its preferences in the countryside became weaker comparing to 1998 (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4

2002. Leading parties after the 1st round



Source: edited by the author.

Some smaller parties, as MIÉP and Centrum found their main preference basis in and around the capital city, and in the last case in some counties when the “emblematic figures” of the party led the party lists (Somogy, Csongrád, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg). MP had and has special preference region. It concentrates on the main industrial areas of the country, but mainly in the loser counties of the transformation period. Seeing the voters of MP we can say, that this protest attitude of the leaders and voters of the party is never enough for participating in the Parliament forming a fraction.

If we see the results of individual districts and the spatial structure of party preferences (the results of party lists) we could recognise a strong correlation between the two structures. This correlation became stronger moving towards the present days. In the first elections sometimes and somewhere we could find examples of successful campaign of individual candidates, or the “emblematic figures” of parties in the main preference zone of different parties, these samples became more sporadic in 1998 and 2002. It means, that the “face of individual candidates” loses its importance and the role of party and party-program became more stressed. The practice of joint lists of parties, or forming coalitions between the two rounds, and withdrawals from candidature and labelling the preferred candidate, or more often parties made the Hungarian election system more simple. The voters prefer the greater parties, which have chance to jump up the 5% limit, and candidates belong to these parties. In this case the citizen had an opportunity to give his/her two valid and usable votes for the preferred party, else if one or two votes could get lost.

Concluding remarks

The results of the elections in Hungary resulted a rather simple party structure, with only “traditional” actors in the Parliament and with a quite stable spatial party-preferences. The techniques of co-operation among parties, forming coalitions between the two rounds, withdrawals and marking preferred parties are calculable quite well. The decreasing role of personal quality of candidates and emerging importance of parties should make this situation stable for a longer term.

After the general elections in 2002, a team of professionals began to discuss about the reform of Hungarian election system. The main elements of the planned reforms are:

- 1) Eliminating the second round of the elections.
- 2) Reduction the number of representatives in the Parliament.
- 3) Shorten the campaign period.
- 4) Increasing the amount of money for the campaign in the individual districts in parallel with a strictly monitoring system checking the money spending.

There are some questions about the new planned system, far from a compromise:

- 1) One or bi-cameral legislature would be the better (on the second case, who will be the representatives in which delegation system, in the second house: chambers, trade-unions, representatives of the civil society, Churches, ethnic minorities etc.)

- 2) Preferring individual districts, or party lists (the first one results a greater legitimacy for representatives in certain districts, the other one is closer to an proportionate system), or keeping the existing mixed system.
- 3) How to join the election reform with the administrative reform (forming the new structure of small-regions).

We are unable to see the results of this plan in these days, not only for the discussion among the professionals, but also for the disagreement among political parties. The legal background of election system is in the Constitution of Republic of Hungary and in special basic laws, so the change of these statutes need a two-third majority in the Parliament. We have to see, that the two great parties (MSZP and FIDESZ) has the power to block the whole reform system if their interests seem to be damage. However, the above-mentioned reform is sure to happen accessing to the enlarging Europe.

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