The role of agency in cleavage formation

ZSOLT ENYEDI

Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

Abstract. Through the analysis of Hungarian politics, this article demonstrates how parties become embedded in the social, cognitive and emotive structures of societies. The role of agency in cleavage formation is addressed, with a special emphasis on the mechanism through which political parties structure their environments. Next to the popularization of conflict perceptions and the consolidation of camp identities, the development of a more elaborate and segmented organizational structure is identified as an integral part of the process of cleavage formation. Such a structure enables parties to forge coalitions among previously separate social groupings and combine group interests into packages large enough to overcome institutional thresholds of power. The findings indicate that parties are potentially able to cross cleavage lines, re-structure relations within the party system and create new associations between party preferences, socio-structural categories and attitudes. Furthermore, parties seem to be able to alter the relationships between psychologically rooted attitudes and social categories. The study also shows, however, that deep-seated socio-cultural divides limit the power of agency even in new democracies.

Introduction

In recent decades, cleavage politics has been repeatedly reported to be dead in Western Europe (see, e.g., Dalton et al. 1984; Franklin 1992). In North America, models other than the Rokkanian cleavage model have always been seen as more appropriate for describing mass political behavior. The post-Communist world is characterized by contradictory tendencies such as the re-emergence of ethnic conflicts, creating remarkably impermeable political borders between groups of voters, on the one hand, and high-scale electoral volatility, on the other. However, the overall picture, whichever region we look at, suggests that conflicts between organized groups with distinct socio-structural profiles and elaborate self-identity are rather exceptions than the rule. At the same time, the search for deep structures behind the voting behavior of citizens and behind the alliance-building strategies of politicians is a central concern of political science. Party system change, unexpected electoral results or the weakness of known social categories in influencing political behavior are not evidence for the absence of such structures.

This article investigates the formation of cleavages. Cleavage politics is understood as a pattern of political competition embedded in the cognitive, emotive or social structures of the citizenry as opposed to one determined by day-to-day issues, evaluations of government performance or personalities. This is a looser definition than the one advanced by Bartolini and Mair (1990: 212–220), who argue that a cleavage conflict presupposes social closure produced by the combination and coincidence of socio-structural categories, group identity, political attitudes and organization. That definition, further sharpened by Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995: 494), has a number of advantages over others, but it seems to be too demanding for the contemporary empirical universe. In addition to using a more relaxed definition, this article argues for an approach that gives more weight to agency than is currently the case in mainstream research.

The case for a voluntaristic approach

Taking the Rokkanian framework as a point of departure, most cleavage analyses focus on the extent to which party systems reflect social divisions. Even those who acknowledge the importance of the politicization of structural divides eventually resort to the examination of correlations between party preferences and various socio-demographic or attitudinal variables (see Lane & Ersson 1994; Dalton 1998; Rae & Taylor 1970; Knutsen & Scarbrough 1995). The process through which these 'background variables' become connected to party preferences is often neglected. Alternatively, the process is assumed to be bottom-up and, consequently, the 'cleavage model' is often used synonymously with the 'sociological model' of mass politics. Such analyses are valuable, but the original Rokkanian conceptualization allows for different, more agency-centered approaches. One can find calls for more elitist and voluntaristic approaches in the works of a number of theoreticians (Sartori 1969; Di Palma 1973; Zuckerman 1975), but it is relatively rare that empirical researchers pursue this perspective (but see Kitschelt 1994, 1995; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Przeworski & Sprague 1986).

While in Lipset and Rokkan's framework political oppositions are underpinned by well-defined socio-structural characteristics, the actual development of cleavages is shown to be centered on actors and norms. The religious cleavage, for example, typically studied by relating denominational affiliations or levels of religiosity to party preferences, has its roots in the conflict between church leadership and head(s) of state(s) over authority and values. The behavior of the (Catholic) church shaped not only the religious, but also the urban-rural and working-class *bourgeoisie* cleavages. One of the most impor-

tant issues for European political development was whether the church had the political ambition and influence to facilitate the development of a non-socialist working-class subculture. If it did, then the subculture and the strong Christian party built on it hindered the development of a bipolar pattern of competition.

In Rokkan's work the available organizational resources, electoral strategies, costs and payoffs of possible coalitions, and traumatic historical events decide which social divisions appear as political and party alternatives. No doubt, for example, that tensions between center and periphery, clerical establishment and dissenters, and conservatives and liberals had great relevance in nineteenth-century Britain. Yet, the outcome was not a six-party system, but a two-party system. The Rokkanian (Rokkan 1999; Lipset and Rokkan 1967) explanation for this outcome lies in identifying institutional thresholds, commonalities between the cleavage lines, and the actions of political entrepreneurs who forged coalitions across clusters of interests. Consequently, the behavior of the institutional actors determines the final configuration of cleavages, and the pattern of political conflicts cannot be predicted from our knowledge of social structure.

Even those who acknowledge the importance of political entrepreneurs and the mobilization strategies followed by them often end up emphasizing the structuralist side of Rokkan's and Lipset's argument. In Stefano Bartolini's (2000: 13) model, for example, the 'generation of oppositions due to the differences of interest' and the 'crystallization of opposition lines into conflicts' precedes the 'emergence of alliances of political entrepreneurs engaged in mobilizing support'. Yet, as the above given examples show, the 'crystallization of opposition lines' is initiated by political actors. Therefore, the analysis of cleavage formation must begin with the strategic calculations of the political actors and not with the distribution of the preferences in the society. This is even more so since the interpretative frameworks of the political elites decisively influence whether differences of interests are perceived as social conflicts. Given the above arguments, the often used expression 'cleavage translation' is somewhat misleading. Cleavages would not exist without elites conceptualizing the conflict situation.

Even a voluntaristic, top-down approach needs to go beyond a narrow focus on the strategic choices or discourse of political entrepreneurs in order to remain related to the cleavage *problematique*. It requires a systematic attempt to link elite behavior to socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics of the electorate, treating the appeal of the parties as point of departure. In this approach, parties are perceived as political actors combining interests, values, cultural milieus and social networks.

Parties as combiners

In their attempt to mold the political landscape, parties face institutional and social constraints and adjust their appeal accordingly, but they also invent, facilitate and destroy political identities, underplay social divisions and shift group boundaries. The clusters of pre-political life-experiences and dispositions present both opportunities and constraints for politicians. They can mobilize these structural and attitudinal differences, but they can also identify symbols that unite various groups by tapping what is common in them. The potential room for maneuver is considerable since individual interests and values can be combined with other values/interests in a large number of ways. The combinatory work of politicians is constrained essentially by two factors: the already existing structural and attitudinal packages, and the threshold for power in the political system concerned. The second factor motivates politicians to facilitate collective identities that cover groups that are large enough to achieve majority power or at least to secure a presence in the legislature. This constraint follows from perceiving politics as a game of strategic coordination (Cox 1997).

Summing up, the overall cleavage structure of a political society results from the interplay between three factors: political entrepreneurs, the prepolitical preferences and structures of a society (the raw material political entrepreneurs work with), and the constraining institutional structure. Political entrepreneurs combine interests, values, formal and informal social structures into political camps. They do so with the dominant aim to gain public office, and therefore they forge alliances that enable them to rise above the threshold of power.

Country-specific institutional thresholds constrain all office-seeking politicians – whether they want office for its intrinsic value or for promoting policies. If the size of a particular camp falls below the threshold, its politicians must consider what coalition could provide access to executive power. When the various camps have little in common in terms of substantive preferences, or when the institutional constraints allow small parties to exert influence, the coalition will involve cooperation between parties. The redgreen alliances in Scandinavia in the middle of the twentieth century exemplify this outcome. If the various cleavages do have a common denominator and if the translation of votes into seats and seats into governmental power penalizes small parties, the outcome will be an amalgamation of minor cleavages into a more comprehensive divide. The British Conservative Party, which represented and linked factions of landed and urban bourgeois interests in the nineteenth century, presents an example of the latter process.

As a result of the successful integration of hitherto separate segments, a pattern develops that may be called a 'mosaic cleavage party'. The parties following this pattern have a diverse electorate not because they do not work as expressions of group interests, but because they simultaneously serve a number of core groups. Such parties can be easily misclassified on the basis of electoral statistics. The German CDU in the 1950s is a case in point. The party has successfully united Catholics and Protestants in both its leadership and its electorate. Denomination, therefore, became a weak predictor of vote. And yet, denomination lays at the very essence of the party. Simply, the party became the political channel for not one, but two separate communities. Such a pattern may develop further, resulting in a complete amalgamation of the formerly separate elements, as happened with the CDU or the Dutch CDA, or the internal stratification may consolidate, as happens with Congress-type ethnic parties. The unification of larger segments succeeds when a political actor is able to identify the common ideological denominator and establish an organizational structure that allows for the aggregation of interests. This article argues that the Hungarian Fidesz is such an actor.

Structure and methodology

In the rest of the article I intend to demonstrate through a case study the crystallization of overarching cleavage lines, and the power and the limits of party agency on its environment. I will analyze the interaction between a particularly effective actor, Fidesz, and an amenable cleavage structure. The case presented is, therefore, not typical, but rather extreme. The advantage of extreme cases is that they can reveal mechanisms in their pure form and show the full potential of a specific phenomenon. Narrative case studies are particularly well suited for gaining insights into the dynamic relations between parties and the cleavage formation process. The empirical part of the article is structured as follows. First, I describe Fidesz's trajectory during the 15 years of its existence. Then, I briefly contrast Fidesz with the MSZP, the other major Hungarian party. Finally, I analyze the transformation of the party system and the constituencies, arguing that the decisions of the Fidesz leadership are responsible for these changes. The main purpose of the empirical investigation is to find out how radically the profiles of the constituencies changed and whether these changes were indeed in accordance with the messages sent by the party elites.

Party appeals are typically represented in the cleavage literature by the programmatic position of the parties as operationalized by content analyses of manifestos or by expert judgments. However, as Bartolini and Mair (1990)

pointed out, the peculiarity of cleavages is exactly that they restrict the room for rational calculation regarding programs, policies and candidates. Therefore, it makes more sense to capture the ideological position of the parties with cues that are visible for the less calculating type of citizens: discourse, self-labeling and coalition preferences.

Party appeals will be analyzed in conjunction with the attitudinal and socio-demographic characteristics of party electorates. Social background is represented by religiosity and urbanization. These two variables are central to Rokkan's model, and are relevant explanatory variables of Hungarian electoral behavior, being more powerful predictors of party preferences than class (Tóka 1992; Enyedi 2000, 2003). To these two variables I added age, which is rarely a major factor behind party choice in the West, but in Eastern Europe is one of the most consequential demographic characteristics. The attitudinal field is represented by left-right identification and authoritarianism. Authoritarianism was chosen because it is conceptualized as a major dimension of the political space in a large number of analyses across Europe (Middendorp 1978, 1989; Eysenck 1954; Kitschelt 1992, 1995; Evans et al. 1996). Moreover, authoritarianism is important because it unites political goals with psychological dispositions, providing political orientation with non-political anchors.

The trajectory of Fidesz

Most of the present-day political actors had appeared already in 1989 in Hungary. The ruling party transformed into the reformist Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). Following the 1990 election, the conservative MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum), the Christian-Social KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) and the agrarian-populist FKGP (Independent Smallholders' Party) formed a right-wing government. In Hungarian political parlance, 'right-wing' stands for a Christian-nationalist and/or anti-Communist orientation, while 'left' is associated with the Socialist-Communist legacy and a libertarian-cosmopolitan orientation. The year 1994 brought a landslide opposition victory and elevated MSZP, together with the liberal SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats), into power. Fidesz, the other liberal party, remained in opposition and broke up its already shaky alliance with the SZDSZ. The third election ended with a Fidesz victory, and the party could form a majority government with the MDF and the FKGP. KDNP was replaced in parliament by the radical nationalist Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP). In 2002, the number of parliamentary parties declined further: only four of them (Fidesz, MDF, MSZP and SZDSZ) managed to enter parliament. The Socialists and the Free Democrats could form a government for the second time (see Table 1).

Fidesz was anti-Communist in 1988, when it was founded, and continues to be anti-Communist, but in almost all other relevant aspects the party modified its ideological profile. The other Hungarian parties have also undergone considerable change, but Fidesz had to travel the longest road to reach its present position. The original Fidesz described itself as 'radical, liberal and alternative' (Bozóki 1989). The practices of direct democracy within the party, the cultural values and the non-conformist behavior of its activists, together with its leaders' ambition to represent a new style of politics made the party similar to Western left-libertarian parties.

The consolidation of Fidesz into a 'normal' party was fast, and resulted in the dominance of the 'liberal' label over the other two. The party won huge popularity in 1991–1993 with its professionalism and pragmatism, but it continued to support unpopular liberal tenets such as the protection of minorities and monetary rigor. It was anti-clerical, calling for the lustration of the priests, defending an ideologically neutral school system and rejecting the reprivatization of church properties. In 1992, the party joined the Liberal International.

In spite of the party's popularity, Fidesz's leaders realized that they would not be able to govern alone. The party's position in the party system could have justified a coalition with the SZDSZ and the MSZP. Choosing them would have equaled aligning with the left: neither of these parties was willing to govern together with a right-wing party, and no right-wing party was willing to govern with them. Governmental cooperation with the MSZP would have required from Fidesz the suspension of its anti-Communist rhetoric and the acceptance of a junior position in the government. Choosing the right-wing

Table 1. Percentage distribution of list votes in Hungarian parliamentary elections, 1990–2002

	1990	1994	1998	2002
FIDESZ	8.95	7.02	29.45	41.07*
MDF	24.73	11.74	2.80	
FKgP	11.73	8.82	13.14	0.75
KDNP	6.46	7.03	2.31	–
MIÉP	–	1.59	5.47	4.37
MSZP	10.89	32.99	32.89	46.10
SZDSZ	21.39	19.74	7.57	5.57
Others	*15.85*	*11.07*	*6.37*	*7.00*

*joint list of MDF and Fidesz.
Sources: Official gazettes and the website of the Hungarian Electoral Office.

parties required toning down its liberalism, but this formula also promised much more weight for Fidesz in the alliance.

In accordance with these considerations, the party started to modify its ideological appeal. At the party congress in 1993, Viktor Orbán, the party's president, claimed that his party was a national-liberal party. The new adjective 'national' might have escaped the attention of the public had the journalists and the representatives of the other liberal party (the SZDSZ, which was henceforth implicitly defined as 'non-national liberal') not reacted vehemently. In the following year, the party maintained a loose alliance with the SZDSZ, but stepped up its anti-Communist rhetoric and made gestures towards the right-wing MDF and KDNP. Public opinion, which was strongly anti-government and therefore anti-right at that time, sensed that Fidesz did not guarantee a complete governmental turnover and turned against the party.

After it lost the 1994 election, the party continued the modification of its vocabulary and the adjustment of its self-identity. Orbán started to speak of Christianity as his guiding principal in politics. Family became the central category of the party's program and the word '*polgár*' (meaning both 'civic' and 'bourgeois') was chosen as a new label of identification. Fidesz used both the democratic and the anti-Socialist connotations of the word, but toned down the association with the upper classes. In 1995, the party changed its name to Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party,[1] by which it declared its ambition to coordinate the anti-Socialist spectrum.

This was an audacious ambition. The party had to work out a strategy that was simultaneously radical enough to make the party's new position unambiguous, yet was flexible enough to accommodate the non-ideological segments of the population. The growing emphasis on the personal appeal of the party's charismatic leader went a long way toward satisfying both needs. The party combined modern and aggressive marketing techniques with a series of closed door meetings where the intellectual and spiritual elite of the right was persuaded to close ranks behind Orbán. Particular attention was devoted to convincing the leaders of mainstream churches about the new clerical credentials of the party. As a result of this strategy, at the 1998 election Fidesz and MDF allied, while the KDNP, which opposed the Fidesz-led integration, was deprived of church backing.

Fidesz distinguished itself by not tolerating any cooperation with the left. It criticized even such authentic right-wing forces like the MDF if they showed willingness to engage in dialogue with leftist parties. The aim of these emotionally highly charged confrontations was to destroy the possibility for a political center to emerge, to strengthen Fidesz's credibility as a right-wing force and to create a more loyal support base. The latter aim was as important as the former, since Fidesz was generally liked, but was not strongly iden-

tified with. According to panel data, the boundaries of Fidesz's electorate were the most permeable ones (Fábián 1999). Its main rival, the MSZP, could count on the relatively loyal support of one-quarter of the electorate, and on the social networks inherited from the previous regime (Gazsó & Stumpf 1998). A strong ideological appeal and links to social networks started to be seen as the preconditions of success within the Fidesz leadership.

The principal values of the party continued to change. One of Orbán's political advisors has summarized the new identity as follows: 'The right-wing camp has unequivocal values: nation, family, faith, order, work and respect for human dignity.' He described the values that were once so central to Fidesz – liberty, equality, fraternity and progress – as belonging to the rhetoric of the left (*Magyar Hírlap*, 7 December 2002). The party not only borrowed slogans from the Smallholders (God, family, fatherland), but increasingly identified with the mentality and interests of the countryside and small towns.

The views of the party on church-state matters changed perhaps even more radically than on other areas. By 1995–1996, Fidesz had accepted all the clerical demands of the traditional right-wing parties. Being in government, the party increased the volume of government subsidies to churches; elevated mainstream Christianity to the status of a governmental philosophy; reorganized the system of subsidies in order to favor large, established churches; and doubled the amount of time devoted to mainstream religious programs in public television and radio. Fidesz proposed state acknowledgement for church marriages and initiated the establishment of higher legal thresholds for church registration. Many pro-clerical initiatives originated not in the mainstream churches, but within Fidesz (Enyedi 2000).

A parallel movement was discernable in the international arena. Originally D'66 was one of Fidesz's main partner parties in the West. In the mid-1990s, Fidesz moved closer to parties like the VVD and the FDP. After 1998, Orbán established good relations with the CSU and Berlusconi in Italy. In 2000, the party left Liberal International, and one year later it joined the European People's Party. Shifts in the elite were followed by corresponding changes among the voters. In 1992, in the emotional space of the Hungarian electorate, measured with opinion thermometers, the right-wing block was opposed most radically by Fidesz. However, already in 1994, Fidesz was the party closest to the outgoing right-wing coalition (Angelusz & Tardos 1999). In 1993, the MSZP voters still chose Fidesz as their second preference (Polonyi & Závecz 1994). According to panel data, there was a high level of voter exchange between the two parties, but this exchange had diminished by 1995 and the two parties became segregated from each other (Fábián 1999).

In the 1998 electoral campaign, Fidesz appeared as a party with solid right-wing identity. For describing the party' position in that year, we can rely on

mass and elite survey data.[2] The mass survey was carried out at the time of the 1998 elections, in Spring, while the MPs were asked right after parliament started to work in the Autumn. The crystallization of a two-bloc competition was well mirrored by the opinion thermometer scores. Fidesz MPs liked not only the MDF, but the FKGP, and even the extreme right MIÉP more than the MSZP or the SZDSZ. This contrasts sharply with the situation five years before when the SZDSZ was Fidesz's ideological cousin, while Csurka's (MIÉP) program was attacked as Nazi by Fidesz leaders. The popularity of the liberal SZDSZ was as low in 1998 among the Fidesz MPs as among the arch-conservative parties. By 1998, the most moderate parties of the two blocs were further away from each other than the extremes within the blocs (see Table 2).

Fidesz was placed by the MPs and the voters (about 75 per cent of the mass survey respondents and virtually all the MPs were able to place the parties on the left-right continuum) between 6 and 7 on a left-right scale ranging from 0 to 10 (i.e., to a center-right position) (Table 3). The Fidesz voters' mean self-placement was at 5.8, the electorate at large placed Fidesz at 6.5, while the Fidesz voters' judgment concerning their own party's location was 6.4. These figures contrast with the data from 1992, when the voters placed Fidesz in the center, slightly to the left of the SZDSZ (Gazsó & Gazsó 1993). Fidesz's crossing of the cleavage line was accompanied by the symptoms of a genuine realignment. First, the number of those with strong party affiliation and stable party loyalties dropped (Gazsó & Stumpf 1998) and the differentiation of the party system declined in terms of conservatism and liberalism (Angelusz & Tardos 1999). Then, after Fidesz has established itself on the right, the party preferences re-crystallized: the number of those who maintained second party preferences diminished (Gazsó 2000), turnout increased, the politicization of society reached unprecedented heights and the volatility of party preferences declined. Net electoral volatility dropped from 28.3 (1994) and 33.6 per cent (1998) to 20.2 per cent (2002).

Table 2. Opinion thermometer scores among MPs in 1998

Faction membership	MDF	SZDSZ	FKgP	MSZP	Fidesz	MIÉP
SZDSZ	2.39	8.78	1.33	4.44	3.83	0.17
FKgP	6.06	1.65	9.44	1.18	7.35	6.00
MSZP	1.73	6.74	1.89	9.08	2.65	0.20
FIDESZ	6.84	1.93	5.85	1.11	9.81	3.47
MIÉP	5.50	1.88	6.75	2.13	5.75	9.02

Source: MTA Strategic Researches.

Table 3. Mean left-right placement of parliamentary parties by voters and MPs, and self-placement of voters in 1998

	MSZP	SZDSZ	Fidesz	MDF	FKgP	MIÉP
Judgment of all MPs (s.d.)	1.73 (1.94)	3.51 (2.67)	6.94 (1.62)	7.37 (1.77)	8.25 (1.40)	9.51 (1.01)
Judgment of party MPs	2.31	4.78	6.26	8.00	7.39	8.25
Judgment of all voters (s.d.)	2.95 (2.60)	4.01 (2.30)	6.50 (2.00)	6.20 (2.20)	7.09 (2.40)	7.88 (3.30)
Judgment of party voters	2.99	4.10	6.38	6.76	6.75	8.42
Self-placement of party voters	3.64	4.19	5.76	6.72	6.03	7.33

Source: MTA Strategic Researches and Median Omnibus Research.

The transformation of organizational strategy

The party's organizational strategy changed in tandem with the ideological ori-
entation. It started with collective leadership and a decentralized structure
reminiscent of the Western Green parties (Balázs & Enyedi 1996). The cen-
tralization and streamlining proceeded quickly, and by 1993, and particularly
after the 1994 election, Fidesz became the most centralized, most homoge-
neous and most disciplined party in the country under the firm leadership of
its charismatic leader. It maintained a low membership, and the party leaders
repeatedly expressed their opinion that, at the turn of the century, organiza-
tional links were of secondary relevance in party competition. This thin orga-
nizational makeup allowed the party to survive a period of low popularity
without major internal disputes, and facilitated a wholesale change in the
party's ideological profile and the use of modern marketing techniques.

During this media-centered phase, the party achieved outstanding results,
but also experienced gross and unexpected defeats. From their number one
position, commanding a popularity of 33 per cent in 1992, they fell to 7 per
cent and hardly managed to enter parliament in 1994. The ups and downs in
popularity were presumably major factors behind the decision of the party
elite to alter its organizational strategy. As a result, in the mid-1990s, the party
publicly acknowledged that the weak organizational networks, and the purely
parliament- and media-centered strategy, were obstacles in the way
of stabilizing the party as a major player. The leadership realized that the
party needed a *Hinterland*, a network of organizations, media forums and
elite groups that could bring social legitimacy, expertise and various other
resources. From then on, the party elite devoted tremendous energy to wooing
the traditional right-wing elites, the clergy and the 1956 veteran organizations.
Next to making programmatic concessions and offering positions for the rep-
resentatives of these circles within the party and in the civic organizations
around the party, Fidesz spearheaded and facilitated the establishment of new
right-wing umbrella organizations such as societies for conservative university
professors, think tanks and pressure groups (Csizmadia 1999).

The organizational adaptation continued when ex-FKGP and ex-KDNP
members established their own parliamentary caucuses within the Fidesz
faction, and were provided representation in the parliamentary leadership.
The Fidesz leaders encouraged those right-wing MPs, who were gravitating
towards Fidesz, to establish civic organizations. These societies (e.g.,
Hungarian Christian Democratic Society, Smallholder Civic Society) helped
to channel the voters of the agonizing right-wing parties to Fidesz. The newly
introduced institution of double membership served the same purpose, allow-
ing members of other right-wing parties to join Fidesz without breaking up

with their original party. However, the most radical step was taken after the electoral defeat in 2002. After losing the first round of the parliamentary elections, Fidesz concentrated its energy on organizing mass rallies. The success was unexpected: hundreds of thousands were brought to the streets. Orbán initiated the establishment of so called 'Civic Circles'. Within months, more than 10,000 Civic Circles were formed across the country, with more than 100,000 members. To appreciate this number, one must remember that Fidesz membership was around 10,000. Church-related institutions proved to be of considerable help. As one priest recalled: 'When the idea emerged, all the Rosary Societies in my environment turned automatically into Civic Circles' (see http://www.mpee.hu/dok/kiadvany.shtml).

The dual task of Civic Circles was to turn the electoral tide in the second round in favor of Fidesz and to organize a counter-society in case the left prevailed. After the election, the Circles kept the government under pressure by organizing demonstrations, gathering signatures for petitions, and so on, but they conducted non-political activities too, like donating blood, fundraising for charity, providing support for Hungarians abroad, organizing cultural events. The Civic Circles and the various media outlets maintained by them and by the party (including a new private television channel) helped to establish a higher degree of social closure between left and right. The integration of the right entered a new, society-centered phase.

These successes gave a new impetus to organization building within Fidesz as well. The framework type organization between 1993 and 2000 was not only adequate for the elite's needs, but it was also a practical necessity. Only an autonomous leadership could maneuver the party from the liberal corner of the party system to the conservative one. Radical ideological change, just as in the case of the British Labour Party, was made possible by centralization and by the firm leadership of a charismatic leader (Smith 2001; Kitschelt 1995). However, the consolidation of power and the integration of various separate groups called for a more complex organizational structure. The most recent party structure is supposed to mirror the social structure. Sections for workers, women, pensioners, smallholders, intellectuals, and so on, have been established. The leaders of the sections are members of the party's leadership. The representatives of the so-called 'partner institutions' (Christian Democratic, Smallholder, Roma and Youth organizations) were nominated as Fidesz candidates at the parliamentary and European elections. Local branches have been forced by the party leadership to open their doors to newcomers from the Civic Circles. As a result, party membership has increased to around 25,000.

As the new ideological orientation was expressed by a modification of the name of the party in 1995, so was the organizational turn. Since 2003, the party's official name is 'Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Union'. The institutionalization

of links to collateral organizations, the membership drive and the establishment of party-related media go against the leading trend across Europe (see, e.g., Katz & Mair 1994). These are surprising developments also because reliance on collateral organizations was found to be typical of parties that started as mass parties, and it seems to vary little across time (Poguntke 2000). The puzzle disappears, however, if one locates Fidesz *vis-à-vis* the process of cleavage building. The new organizational strategy was aimed at channeling minor cleavages into a major one, developing a mosaic cleavage party.

The attitudes of Fidesz towards cleavage building contrasts with the attitudes of its major rival, the MSZP. Next to Fidesz, the MSZP represents the only other success story of Hungarian politics. Since 1993, this party has been continuously one of the two largest parties, typically the largest. While the main task of Fidesz during the second part of the 1990s was to establish a strong ideological character and a friendly institutional and cultural environment, the MSZP rather wanted to move beyond its inherited social niche. Accordingly, the original slogan that identified the MSZP as the 'party of the salaried and wage earners' was replaced with catchwords like the 'national middle', 'modernization' and 'republic' symbolizing a supra-class strategy. The party campaigned with the vision of a depoliticized society, promised to 'fill the trenches' dug by Fidesz, and showed readiness to compromise with the right-wing opposition on such ideological issues as church-state relations, drug policies or policies *vis-à-vis* Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries.

The transformation of the electorate

Data and hypotheses

The above-described trajectories suggest a number of testable hypotheses concerning the changing role of structural determinants behind party preferences. Concerning the preference for Fidesz, authoritarianism, religiosity and, perhaps, urbanization are variables that are expected to change sign as time progresses. As far as the social embeddedness of the Fidesz vote is concerned, one expects a decline at the time of the ideological shift, and an increase after the crystallization of the new position. The growth in the level of social embeddedness must be limited, however. The concentration of the party system (the number of effective electoral parties has dropped from 6.7 to 2.4, while the number of parliamentary parties fell from 3.7 to 2.2), and the growth in the size of Fidesz work against it. A party that receives close to 50 per cent of the votes is unlikely to be very specific in many of its social or attitudinal characteristics. Therefore, one must appreciate if the association of the party preference with some of the social characteristics survived the party's rapid growth, and particu-

larly if this association became stronger. One anticipates less radical changes in the case of the MSZP, since this party stayed on the same side of the political spectrum, but, in accordance with the increasingly universalistic rhetoric of this party, I expect a decline in the level of embeddedness.

Three data sets will be utilized to check these hypotheses. The first survey was conducted in 1994 (N = 1,000), the second in 2000 (N = 1,002) and the third in 2002 (N = 1,022). The first and third were national random samples, weighted in order to be representative of the adult Hungarian population in terms of age, gender and education (in 2002, also residence). The second was a combination of a random route method and a quota, which required the sample to be representative in terms of region, residence, sex and age. Next to the standard socio-demographic variables, the questionnaires contained 10-point left-right identification scales and authoritarianism scales. Authoritarianism was measured with seven identical attitudinal items in 1994 and 2000, all originally taken from the Adorno et al's (1969) F scale, while in 2002 two of these items were replaced by politically neutral statements from Altemeyer's (1985) RWA scale (see Appendix). Cronbach alpha reliability scores were satisfactory (0.79, 0.78 and 0.85, in the three respective waves).

Having no proper time-series data, I will treat the 1994 data as standing for the liberal phase, the 2000 data representing the period of change and the 2002 data as representing the stabilized right-wing orientation. The least fortunate dataset is the one from 2000, since by this time Fidesz belonged to the conservative camp for some years. However, this is not necessarily a serious problem since voters need time to digest the changes in party ideology. On specific issues this may require not more than weeks or months, but on more symbolic dimensions, like authoritarianism or religiosity, voters may need years of frustration until they change party affiliation.

Results

According to the data, in 1994 Fidesz was the least authoritarian party in the Hungarian political system. By 2002, however, the electorate of Fidesz was on the authoritarian end. Since the voters of SZDSZ developed a particularly sharp, libertarian profile on this dimension, the two, once so close, liberal parties, were a world apart by now (Table 4). Table 5[3] shows that in 1994 the authoritarianism and religiosity of the respondents decreased their chance of choosing Fidesz. In 2000 none of these variables were significant, and in 2002 both had the opposite (i.e., positive) impact on the vote. Living in larger cities did not matter for Fidesz preference in 1994 and in 2000, but in 2002 it was already decreasing the chances of supporting this party. The left-right identification was not significant in 1994, but in 2000 and especially in 2002 it turned

out to be a major predicting factor. Age was the only variable that did not change sign. The electorate of Fidesz continued to be younger than average, although the impact of this factor decreased.

The data indicate that the association of party preference with left-right identity and with urbanization increased; the association with authoritarianism and religiosity temporarily weakened (while changing sign), then increased. The absolute impact of religiosity in 2002 surpassed the 1994 level. The relationship of MSZP preference with religiosity continued to be negative, but the strength of the relationship weakened. Urbanization was insignificant in 1994, but the 2000 and the 2002 data show the MSZP to be the party of urbandwellers. The relationship with authoritarianism was not significant in any of these years. Left-right self-identification has always been linked to the MSZP preference, and this relationship has somewhat strengthened, but not so spectacularly as in the case of Fidesz. Age was irrelevant in 1994, but the last two data sets show the MSZP turning into the party of the old (Table 6).

Left-right identity became more closely associated with party preferences during the following years. The ideological meaning of party preferences increased in spite of the concentration of the party system. In 1994 the irreligiosity of Fidesz could be explained by the young age of its voters. The anti-authoritarian outlook of the party was also partly the result of this factor. However, by 2002 the still relatively low age of the party's supporters already concealed the – increased and positive – impact of these two variables on Fidesz vote. Taking age into account also shows that authoritarianism does have a minor negative effect (around the statistical threshold of 0.05) on the MSZP preference, and accentuates the negative impact of religiosity (Table 7).

Surveying the correlates of party preferences, one is struck by the opposite signs of age and authoritarianism. The positive correlation between these two variables is one of the most stable findings in attitude research across many

Table 4. Authoritarianism first principal factor scores by party preference in 1994, 2000 and 2002

Party	1994	2000	2002
Fidesz	−0.42	0.09	0.14
SZDSZ	−0.28	−0.37	−1.16
MSZP	−0.19	−0.06	−0.08
MIÉP	−0.02	−0.08	−0.12
MDF	0.31	0.13	–
KDNP	0.35	0.56	–
Workers' Party	0.40	0.53	–
FKGP	0.56	0.32	–

Table 5. The impact of authoritarianism, church attendance, urbanization, age and left-right identification on preference for Fidesz in 1994, 2000 and 2002 (15 separate logistic regressions)

	1994				2000				2002			
	B	s.e.	sig.	Nag. R^2	B	s.e.	sig.	Nag. R^2	B	s.e.	sig.	Nag. R^2
Church attendance	−0.22	0.08	0.01	**0.02**	0.06	0.06	0.31	0.00	0.15	0.05	0.00	**0.02**
Urbanization	0.09	0.09	0.30	0.00	−0.04	0.07	0.57	0.00	−0.30	0.07	0.00	**0.04**
Authoritarianism	−0.54	0.11	0.00	**0.06**	0.06	0.08	0.48	0.00	0.25	0.07	0.00	**0.02**
Left-right identity	0.11	0.07	0.09	0.01	0.59	0.06	0.00	**0.23**	0.88	0.07	0.00	**0.45**
Age	−0.06	0.01	0.00	**0.15**	−0.03	0.01	0.00	**0.05**	−0.02	0.00	0.00	**0.03**

Table 6. The impact of authoritarianism, church attendance, urbanization, age and left-right identification on the preference for the MSZP in 1994, 2000 and 2002 (15 separate logistic regressions)

	1994				2000				2002			
	B	s.e.	sig.	Nag. R^2	B	s.e.	sig.	Nag. R^2	B	s.e.	Sig.	Nag. R^2
Church attendance	−0.36	0.07	0.00	**0.07**	−0.15	0.05	0.01	**0.01**	−0.12	0.05	0.02	**0.01**
Urbanization	0.10	0.07	0.19	0.00	0.16	0.06	0.01	**0.10**	0.19	0.06	0.00	**0.02**
Authoritarianism	−0.16	0.09	0.06	0.01	−0.05	0.07	0.52	0.00	0.08	0.07	0.24	0.00
Left-right identity	−0.75	0.08	0.00	**0.27**	−0.73	0.06	0.00	**0.32**	−0.90	0.07	0.00	**0.45**
Age	0.00	0.01	0.64	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	**0.07**	0.02	0.00	0.00	**0.04**

Table 7. The impact of church attendance and authoritarianism on Fidesz and MSZP preference after controlling for age (12 separate logistic regressions)

	1994			2000			2002		
	B	s.e.	Sig.	B	s.e.	sig.	B	s.e.	sig.
Fidesz									
Church attendance	−0.09	0.09	0.30	**0.03**	0.01	0.00	**0.02**	0.01	0.00
Authoritarianism	**−0.27**	0.12	0.02	0.16	0.09	0.07	**0.29**	0.08	0.00
MSZP									
Church attendance	**−0.38**	0.07	0.00	**−0.25**	0.06	0.00	**−0.19**	0.06	0.00
Authoritarianism	**−0.22**	0.10	0.02	−0.16	0.08	0.03	−0.12	0.07	0.10

countries and cultures. No wonder that it is so, since many of the items have a generation-specific appeal (see Appendix), but, and this is perhaps one of the most remarkable findings in this analysis, the correlation between authoritarianism and age declined as Fidesz communicated an increasingly authoritarian message to its predominantly young audience. The Pearson correlation between age and authoritarianism was 0.46 ($p < 0.0001$) in 1994, 0.21 ($p < 0.0001$) in 2000 and only 0.12 ($p = 0.002$) in 2002. The difference between the Fidesz and the other parties in terms of authoritarianism is particularly large within younger age groups – that is, among people with malleable attitudes. This may indicate that the divergence of the profiles of the party electorates is not due solely to the shifts of the voters between the parties. Even if to a smaller extent, the impact of parties on the way of thinking of a particular group of voters (in this case, youngsters) also seems to contribute to this state of affair.

For assessing the social embeddedness of parties we may treat the joint power of the two principal social background variables (religiosity and urbanization) as an indicator of their 'rootedness'. The Nagelkerke R^2 was 0.02 in 1994, 0.00 in 2000 and 0.05 in 2002 for Fidesz; and 0.07 in 1994, 0.03 in 2000 and 0.02 in 2002 for MSZP. The differences are small, but the trends over time are in accordance with the expectations: the embeddedness of the Fidesz vote first declined and then rose above the original level, while, concerning the MSZP, one can witness a monotonous decline.

Conclusions

The main task of the article was to tap the limits of the power of parties. The analysis has proved that parties can restructure the social and attitudinal underpinnings of a party system, and it has brought to light some of the mech-

anisms of this restructuring, but it has also shown the limits of voluntaristic explanations. The transformation of the Hungarian political landscape was traced back to elite interactions and rational calculations of politicians. In the course of the changes, a new attitudinal correspondence has developed between parties and voters. The main subject of the present analysis, Fidesz, was successful in re-aligning the political field and in re-profiling its own elec- torate. Beyond that, Fidesz has rejuvenated the right, and has probably con- tributed to the declining correlation between age and authoritarianism.

The changes in self-labeling, in the programmatic appeal, in coalition-pref- erences and in organizational strategy were instrumental in re-shaping the party's environment. Fidesz managed to find an umbrella ideology that made possible a sustainable coalition among social and attitudinal segments on the right. The raw material of the camp building was provided by the mosaic of agrarian, religious and national-conservative interests. Since it was possible to design an ideology that overarched all these interests and ideas, and since the institutional system contained strong majoritarian elements (low district mag- nitude, 5 per cent threshold for the party lists, the particularly strong position of the prime mister, etc.), there was both the necessity and the possibility to design an all-encompassing right-wing platform.

This platform was primarily cultural and not economic. In this regard, Fidesz was in tune with the general style of Hungarian party politics, which emphasizes cultural issues. Citizens regularly name economic problems as being the most important ones, and the cohesion of their positions on cultural issues like anti-Communism, nationalism and religiosity are not particularly strong (Tóka 2004). However, all the party coalitions are based on the simi- larities on these cultural issues. By their coalition preferences, the parties reassert the primacy of these issues. This practice provides an environment in which collective identities can form only around cultural issues. Consequently, these issues, and not the economic ones, differentiate the electorates of the parties. Discriminant analyses of party preferences indeed show a high degree of congruence among cultural dimensions (Karácsony 2003). The contrast between raw mass attitudes and the political structuration of the electorate highlights the ability of parties to determine which attitudinal dimensions form the basis of political identities and, consequently, cleavages.

There has been a close relationship between the changes in discourse, social profile and organizational strategy. Originally, Fidesz tried to become the dom- inant party of the right by simply presenting itself as the more competent representative of right-wing preferences, keeping its leadership and organiza- tional structure intact. In the next stage, the party developed links to tradi- tional right-wing social institutions, established new ones, allied itself with the MDF and allowed the ex-Smallholder and Christian Democrat MPs to join

the party's parliamentary faction. Finally, in the third step, the party initiated a social movement, re-organized its extra-parliamentary structure and institutionalized the cooperation of the once fragmented right within and around the party. It seems that organizational mechanisms continue to be important ingredients of cleavage building processes.

A new ideology that does not estrange the party's erstwhile supporters and simultaneously attracts new voters is, according to Smith (2001), one of the preconditions of radical party change. This claim may fit the trajectory of the British Labour Party, but not that of Fidesz. With its new discourse, Fidesz alienated most of its supporters in 1993–1994. Luckily for the party, its original popularity was so high that even after loosing more than 80 per cent of its potential voters it still managed to overcome the electoral threshold. The reason for the difference between the two trajectories lies not in the clumsiness of Fidesz leaders, but in the fact that Fidesz has changed sides of a cleavage, while the British Labour Party did not. Therefore the drop in Fidesz's popularity in 1993 and its gradual recovery in 1996–1997 should not be seen simply as a sign of the underlying volatility of the Hungarian political structure. It was more an example of an actor paying a high immediate price for positioning itself on that side of a cleavage where it had a better chance for domination. The fact that Fidesz almost perished indicates the strength of the crossed cleavage.

After the establishment of its new identity, and in spite of the rapid growth in support, preference for the party became, on some socio-demographic and attitudinal criteria, more predictable in line with its cleavage-centered discourse. The move of the MSZP towards a more universalistic direction had the opposite effect on the embeddedness of its vote. Orbán brought with him his talent, his activists well trained in media communication, and his popularity among the young and placed all these assets on the table of the right. The rejuvenation and modernization of the right-wing camp weakened some of the structural underpinnings of the Hungarian party system, but finally reinforced the boundaries between the two sides. As a result, a coalition between left-wing and right-wing parties is even less conceivable today then it was fifteen years ago.

Phenomena such as the increase of turnout, decrease in secondary party preferences, growth in the relevance of left-right identification and drop in volatility indicate that the originally shallow cleavage system became deeper. Party preferences have always been related to socio-structural and attitudinal divide, but the partisan mobilization and politicization of society, the perception of conflict situation was missing. Fidesz succeeded in making the masses understand that the elite conflicts are relevant for their personal lives and taught them to see politics as a struggle between mutually exclusive camps.

Generalizing the findings, one may say that sometimes parties find themselves on the 'wrong' side of a cleavage, confronted with a better-rooted competitor. In this situation, parties can try to blur that cleavage and introduce new dimensions into the political competition and/or can try to position themselves on the opposite side. The latter strategy is particularly risky and inevitably obscures somewhat the original cleavage line since the party brings with itself supporters whose characteristics differ from the voters on that side. However, if the crossed cleavage is deep, the core differences between the two sides will reappear. These core differences in the Hungarian case were authoritarianism, religiosity, level of urbanization and anti-Communism.

To sum up the party's achievements, Fidesz spliced the various ideological dimensions tightly together, merged the right-wing segments into one single bloc and consolidated the principal divide by creating more impermeable boundaries between the two sides. Meanwhile, the party managed to change position from one side of the cleavage to the other, and added age to the distinguishing marks of the two camps. It is likely that a further change, the declining correlation between authoritarianism and age, is also due to the party's appeal. These developments show that parties, and more generally political actors, can have a considerable impact on cleavage structures, but they also show the limits of agency. After all, most of the distinguishing features of left and right remained the same, and the political entrepreneurs had to adapt. Parties that were anti-Communist and liberal (Fidesz and SZDSZ) had to choose between one of their leading values. Thus, the Hungarian experience reveals both the relevance and the constraints of agency in cleavage formation.

Acknowledgment

Appendix. Authoritarianism scales from 1994, 2000 and 2002*

	1994	2000	2002
The most important virtues a child has to learn are obedience and respect for authority.	x	x	x
Young people sometimes have rebellious thoughts, but as they grow up, they should condemn these and adapt.	x	x	x
Young people need strict regulations and determination to fight for their families and their country.	x	x	x

	1994	2000	2002
Most of our social problems would be solved if we get rid of the immoral and perverted persons.	x	x	x
People can be divided into two groups: the strong and the weak.	x	x	x
Immoral conditions in our country are partly due to the fact that both teachers and parents forgot that physical punishment is still the best way of upbringing.	x	x	
It would be better for everyone if the authorities would censor newspapers and films so that rubbish is kept away from the youth.	x	x	
Most people don't realize how much our lives are controlled by plots hatched in secret places.			x
What this country needs most, more than laws and political programs, is a few courageous, tireless, devoted leaders in whom the people can put their faith. (23)			x

* All items were asked on four-point Likert scales. The scale score was computed as the first principal component of the seven items. All factor analyses produced one single factor.

Notes

1. FIDESZ was originally an abbreviation, meaning Alliance of Young Democrats. Since 1995, the word 'Fidesz' is interpreted as a reference to the Latin word 'fides'. For the sake of saving space, I will call the party 'Fidesz' throughout the text.
2. The analysis of mass political beliefs is based on the survey of a national random sample of eligible voters in Hungary (N ~ 1,400). The data on elite's beliefs are derived from the questionnaire answered by 201 out of the 386 members of the Hungarian parliament (Enyedi & Todosijevic 1999).
3. Tables 5, 6 and 7 show results of logistic regressions. Note that the Nagelkerke R squares are not interpretable as well as the R squares of linear regressions: two times larger Nagelkerke R squares do not indicate two times larger explained variance.

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Address for correspondence: Zsolt Enyedi, Department of Political Science, Central European University, Nador 9, 1051, Budapest, Hungary
Tel.: 363273000/2475; Fax: 363273085; E-mail: enyedizs@ceu.hu