Reading Budapest:

Political Polarisation in Contemporary Hungary

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Abstract:

The thesis aims at capturing a logic of political polarisation through an in-depth study of contemporary Hungary, a study which will combine rigorous empirical research with reflection upon the phenomenon of polarisation. The problem of political polarisation has become pronounced in Hungary since the turn of the millennium, and particularly since 2002, but the existing studies remain at a descriptive level, rather than outlining the logic and function of polarisation.

The following study reveals political polarisation to be a bipolar hegemony where each camp exists through the construction of the other as its enemy. The situation is frozen over a single frontier which serves as the source of identification for both camps. The political elites - who wish to maintain the situation - either project all political differences and lines of division onto this frontier, or minimize or downplay them.

The articulation of the polarisation, its frontier, and the function it serves, all become apparent in the analysis of the material, which relates to Budapest, and which includes both politician’s speeches and street names, memorials and architecture from the late 1980s to the present (2005). In order to gain insights into the relevant phenomenon, via the varied material, the methodology to be used will combine the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau with the conceptual history of Quentin Skinner and the writings of Walter Benjamin. The problems of the situation of polarisation for the democratic processes will become apparent through the discussion of Chantal Mouffe’s critique of consensual politics.

The thesis seeks to offer insights not only into contemporary Hungarian politics or postcommunist polarisation but also into politics and polarisation more generally, through the development of Laclau’s theory of hegemony. It makes a particular contribution to the study of political rhetoric and the role of rhetoric in the process of articulation and construction of discourses. Furthermore, it opens the way to the use of non-linguistic sources, such as architecture, in social science research.
# Table of Contents

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** ................................................................................................................................. 3  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ............................................................................................................................... 6  
**INTRODUCTION** ........................................................................................................................................ 11  
- Polarisation .................................................................................................................................................... 11  
- Historical Background .................................................................................................................................. 14  
- The Postcommunist Condition ...................................................................................................................... 17  
- Polarisation in Hungary ................................................................................................................................. 20  
- Method of reading the polarisation: rhetoric and the city ............................................................................ 25  
  - Benjamin for political inquiry: Method of the Flâneur ............................................................................. 30  
  - Reading Budapest: structure of the thesis ................................................................................................. 38  

**CHAPTER 1:**  
**POSTCOMMUNIST POLITICS AND POLARISATION IN HUNGARY** ................................................................. 42  
- Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 42  
- Postcommunist Elections and the Multiparty System .............................................................................. 45  
- Political discourses, a literature review .................................................................................................... 55  
- Literature on political polarisation in Hungary ........................................................................................... 63  
  - Political cleavages .................................................................................................................................... 64  
  - Descriptive and prescriptive attempts to account for polarisation ......................................................... 72  
  - Két Magyarország?! Are there or are there not two Hungarics? ............................................................... 77  
  - Fowler’s analysis ...................................................................................................................................... 78  
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................... 81  

**CHAPTER 2:**  
**LOGIC AND PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL POLARISATION** ............................................................................. 82  
- Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 82  
  1. Mirroring Hegemony .................................................................................................................................. 84  
    - Discourse .............................................................................................................................................. 85  
    - Hegemony ............................................................................................................................................. 89  
    - Hegemony as a process: fragmentation to unity to dislocation .............................................................. 91  
    - Myth and Imaginary in the Sedimentation of Hegemony .................................................................. 93  
- Logic of political polarisation ....................................................................................................................... 94  
  - Construction of communities ................................................................................................................... 95  
  - Frontiers .................................................................................................................................................. 100  
- Politics of rhetoric: articulating — and reading — political polarisation .................................................. 109  
  - Rhetoric as politics of the new ................................................................................................................... 112  
  - Skinner: politics of redescription ............................................................................................................ 116  
  - Naming, affect and catachresis .................................................................................................................. 117  
  - Concluding on rhetoric: aspectual differences ....................................................................................... 120  
- Polarisation and rhetoric: rearticulations, logic and problems ................................................................... 120  
- Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................. 122
CHAPTER 3:

THE LIBERAL MAYOR'S DISCOURSE: CREATING POLITICAL IDENTIFICATIONS BY ARTICULATING THE FRONTIER

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 124
Demszky: a dissident and a politician...................................................................................... 124
NINETEENTH CENTURY BUDAPEST .................................................................................... 127
15 MARCH: THE NATIONAL DAY OF THE RADICALS .......................................................... 133
Demszky: reaching towards the memories of radicalism ... and nationhood ....................... 142
CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................... 146

CHAPTER 4:

READING THE FIDESZ DISCOURSE IN BUDAPEST: CREATING THE FRONTIER, OCCUPYING SPACE

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 169
ORBÁN'S FIDESZ: REINVENTING THE DISCOURSE ................................................................. 169
Historical myths and the Fidesz discourse ............................................................................ 172
THE EXCLUSION OF BUDAPEST IN ORBÁN'S DISCOURSE .............................................. 175
FIDESZ PRESENCE IN BUDAPEST CITYSCAPE .................................................................. 178
Terror háza .............................................................................................................................. 178
Millenáris park ...................................................................................................................... 185
Nemzeti Színház .................................................................................................................... 187
POPULIST MOBILISATIONS AND SIGN-POSTING ................................................................. 189
CLAIMING SPACE AND CONSTRUCTING THE FRONTIERS OF THE COMMUNITY ............. 203
CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................... 204

CHAPTER 5:

CONTESTING AND SEDIMENTING POLARISATION: BIPOLAR CONSENSUS OF 2002–2005

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 206
CONTESTING AND REAFFIRMING THE BORDER: ARTICULATIONS OF NATION AROUND THE HUNGARIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS .............................................................. 206
The symbols and slogans of elections: civic and cultural nationhoods .................................. 209
Gatherings: occupying the symbolic space ........................................................................... 216
National interest and ideologies of progress ....................................................................... 219
REFERENDUM OF DECEMBER 2004: PROTECTING THE FRONTIER ................................... 223
Fidesz gains: mobilisation ..................................................................................................... 227
Low participation, disinterest in the 'national question' and the urban-rural divide .......... 229
Nation and Europe? .............................................................................................................. 232
INTEGRITY OR DIFFERENCE: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2005 .................................... 235
POST-POLITICS, CONSENSUS AND POLARISATION......................................................... 242
CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................... 248

CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................... 251

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...................................................................................................................... 257
PRIMARY SOURCES .............................................................................................................. 257
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Introduction

In this thesis I have chosen to study a crucial problematic in contemporary Hungarian politics: the overwhelming polarisation which has been felt at all levels of political and social activity since early 2000s. Polarisation implies a division into two camps, rather than – for example – fragmentation, or a spreading out of the relevant field, to encompass a number of ‘poles’. In my work, I will not investigate whether there are ‘two Hungaries’, what these might be or whether these can be reconciled. Instead of a mere description of the situation of polarisation, or the attempt to name the things that fall on either side of the divide, and instead of a focus on the metaphysical implications of polarisation, I will here study the logic of political polarisation in Hungary. I will analyse articulations and processes which contribute to the emergence of two ‘units’ and the maintenance of a situation I call a bipolar hegemony. I also reflect on ways in which polarisation can be tackled, in Hungary and beyond.

Political polarisation is an issue one could discuss in a range of contexts. Here I study Hungary. Looking at her native Ukraine prior to the ‘Orange Revolution’, Tatiana Zhurzhenko pointed out an important quality of the myth of polarisation within a country: ‘What the myth of the "Two

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I am here following Ernesto Laclau’s conception of logic, close to the everyday usage of the term. He writes as a reply to his critic Hillis Miller: ‘when I am speaking of “hegemonic logic” I am not referring in the least to formal logic in the usual sense. The two other members of the trivium – grammar and rhetoric – are also ‘logics’ in the sense in which I use the term.’ He argues that this resembles Deleuze and Lacan’s usage of ‘logic’. In a reply to Judith Butler he stresses: ‘By “logic”, on the contrary, I understand the type of relations between entities that makes possible the actual operation of that system of rules. […] while “grammar” is ontic [belonging to a particular language game], “logic” is ontological.’ In a similar way, I will deal, here, with a logic of (or logics that contribute to) polarisation. Nevertheless, I must stress that these logics cannot be captured purely at the ontological level, for grasping them requires a constant movement between the analysis of a particular context and the logic of politics. The topic of ‘logic’ and its role in explanatory political research has been discussed further by Jason Glynos and David Howarth in their forthcoming work. Paper discussed at the IDA Seminar, University of Essex, February 2005. Ernesto Laclau ‘Glimpsing the Future’, in Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart, eds., Laclau – A critical reader, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 305. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, Contingency, Hegemony, Universality, Contemporary Dialogues on the Left, London: Verso, 2000, p. 282-3.
Ukraines” in fact claims is that only one “true Ukraine” can exist.1 This implies that the myth of polarisation is actually a political tool, which tries to demarcate frontiers between us and them, and set out communities, or moral orders. In Ukraine, it creates a conception of the ‘backward’ character of the country and imposes a normative framework for democratization, but also functions in political discourse-creation, by demarcating political boundaries and ‘enemies’, through the creation of a normative boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The case is similar in Hungary, as is visible from my empirical research.

Given, however, that polarisation exists through its articulation – its production in the given context – I will be engaging in an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon in Hungary. The problem with polarisation is that it is reproduced in all political and social contexts, with an intensity which distinguishes it from mere two-party politics. Its totalising character makes it difficult to study. To grasp the phenomenon, then, I decided to narrow the focus. The title of the thesis, Reading Budapest, refers to the thematic I will follow throughout the work. I will deal with postcommunist Budapest and the political action which takes place in, and makes reference to, Budapest. This brings thematic coherence to the analysis of an issue which has spread into all social activity. It also demonstrates the appearance of politics in everyday life. Thinking with the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau,3 as I will throughout this work, one could say that discursive and political structures are overdetermined, which implies that a similar pattern would emerge in different material from the same period. By focusing on Budapest, then, I will be tackling a type of political polarisation which could be found elsewhere in Hungary (bracketing out some of the most banal cases of polarisation). All the chapters deal with recent events in Budapest. In reading Budapest, moreover, I will deal with a range of material, from public architecture to politicians’ speeches, which show the

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general logic of polarisation in a variety of cases and bring depth to the study. Furthermore, instead of ‘applying a method’ evenly to each case, I will raise different points and give different readings of the topics I am engaged in, while still showing how the case demonstrates the logic of polarisation. This variety will enable me to grasp the totalising system of polarisation.

As with any study a totalising system, the student has to be both outside and inside it. I have spent various periods in Hungary, up to three months in length, since 1999. In spring 2002, I found myself in a situation where a side had to be taken: I would be located within the existing bipolar system of differences even if I did not choose to be so myself. As I was not wearing the national badge – *kokárda* – and being more streetwise than the tourist I once had been, I appeared as a ‘left-wing’ Hungarian. Neither could I, however, identify with the ‘left’ agenda, apart from the liberal ethos of multiculturalism and anti-racism. (In this, I possibly shared the position of many Hungarians.) Ágnes Horváth and Arpád Szakolczai recognised the need of being inside and outside in their study of the communist system and the ‘muddy’, ‘soft’ socialism of the 1980s. ‘One had to be inside, had to live in Eastern Europe in order to understand what was going on; to be acquainted with this peculiar system where – at the discursive level – every sentence, every word, every emphasis and intonation had a special sense […]’ The legacy of this era still remains and Horváth and Szakolczai’s description of the situation in the 1980s is to some extent valid for the situation of polarisation in the 2000s. ‘For us, the most important character was not repression. It was rather a deformed, muddy, distasteful situation without solid values and respect for future achievement, and an all-pervasive cynicism not restricted to the official sphere. … We felt that one could fight against repression and oppression, but not against mud, except by becoming muddy oneself.’ While polarization with its apparently clean-cut, continuously reproduced frontier is a response of sorts to this one-time muddyness, it also – since it is a totalizing and all pervasive structure – limits the possibilities of political identification and action. It is because of this situation of bipolar hegemony


that I have felt the need to address the polarisation more personally, by thinking with discourse theory as a Benjaminian flâneur in Budapest, reflecting critically on contemporary Hungarian politics, being present yet also staring in from outside.⁶

I will discuss the methodology further below. First I outline the research problematic as well as introduce the location and period of study. I will end the introduction by setting out the structure of the thesis.

**Polarisation**

In my work I use the word polarisation in a specific sense. I mean – bipolar hegemony (following Ernesto Laclau’s concept of hegemony), which refers to the structure of a particular formation rather than notions of supremacy. This is in contrast to many other conceptions, such as that developed by Giovanni Sartori, which refers to a situation caused by high-level fragmentation.⁷ Rather, in my usage, polarisation indicates a concentration of political groupings on two sides, whose coherence is maintained by their common opposition to the other side. Polarisation implies a situation where there are two competing camps in a hegemonic situation. To think with Gramsci – one of the main influences on Laclau – politics is continuous cycle. There is always space for crisis; it is normal that the political parties dismantle or reproduce themselves, and gain or lose members. Gramsci highlights this cycle and the ‘normal’ process of changing representation with his term ‘organic crisis’.⁸ Laclau stresses this process as one between unity and fragmentation: it is the

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⁶ See also below my discussion on Benjamin on the gaze.
⁷ My schema is also opposed to his idea of ‘centre-fleeing’: in Hungary the two poles do push each other away, but while doing so they remain by the frontier, leaving little ‘ideological distance’ between them and competing over the same signifiers. It resembles a bi-partite political system, but – crucially – there are more than two parties involved. Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, Vol.1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, esp. pp. 98-130 and 273-93.
process of hegemony, which is this constant movement through rearticulations, necessary because of the inherent distance between the represented and the representative. In contrast, polarisation is a situation which is fixed into a ‘static equilibrium’ – to use Gramsci’s term, where none of the camps, classes or parties ‘has the strength to win’. I will elaborate this point in Chapter Two, and also return to the question of the conflictual character of politics, or of democratic politics, following the work of Chantal Mouffe.

By discussing and critiquing the situation of polarisation, my starting point is not that there should not be political frontiers. As Laclau has stressed, ‘there is only politics where there are frontiers’. Any system needs limits, and crucially political discourses and groups need something which is posited outside the system, not as a mere limit but something that is antagonistic relation as an enemy or adversary. A plurality of frontiers is part and partial of democracy, it enables the negotiations, conflicts of interest and debates that keep politics as an open process, which nevertheless tries to establish positions. Polarisation contains one dominant frontier, while others are being downplayed. This situation is not ideal, as it creates two ‘consensual’ systems, system where political differences are being downplayed on both sides, and where ‘politics’ as process of frontier-making is lacking. In short, for a functioning democracy, from my Laclauian perspective, politics should occur over more that one frontier. (Appendix 1)

9 ‘The passage from one party to another is an organic [and normal] phenomenon even when it takes place very rapidly by comparison to normal periods; it represents the fusion of a class under a single leadership in order to resolve an overwhelming problem affecting its existence. When the crisis is not resolved in this organic manner but instead produces the man sent by providence it means that a static equilibrium exists; it means that no class, neither the conservative nor the progressive class, has the strength to win, but it also means that even the conservative class needs a master.’ Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, Vol. 2, note 4§10, pp. 241-2, assertion original, emphasis added.


11 ‘The totality, however, requires limits, and the limits are only visible if we can see what is beyond them. That beyond, however, can only be one more difference and, as the system is the system of all differences, that would not be a true ‘beyond’: it would be undecidable between internality and externality; the only way out of this dilemma is if the ‘beyond’ has the character of an exclusion: not one more element but one in an antagonistic relation to an ‘inside’ which is only constituted through the latter. In political terms, an enemy which makes possible the unity of all the forces opposed to it.’ Ernesto Laclau, ‘Philosophical roots of discourse theory’, Centre for Theoretical Studies Working Papers, University of Essex, http://www.essex.ac.uk/centres/theostud/papers/Laclau%20-%20philosophical%20roots%20of%20discourse%20theory.pdf, pp. 4-5.
Polarisation in domestic politics is a symptom of the post Cold War era, the international static equilibrium. This is affirmed in a path-breaking study of social divisions around the world – a research project led by Peter L. Berger – whose description applies perfectly to contemporary Hungary:

- The Cold War has ended, and therefore the mental dividing lines of world politics, which provided patterns of explanation for international organizations and legitimation as well as for the internal cohesion of many societies, have disappeared.
- Also the ideology with a claim to universal dominance has vanished, and hence manifold distinctive enemy images and projections have lost their justification.
- Fixed political bloc formations and thus the segmentation of power have ended, and a variety of conflicts originating from numerous causes have emerged. Ethnic and nationalistic conflicts resurfaced, and solutions must be sought bringing with them new risks and dangers.¹²

For in postcommunist Hungary the ruling ideology, i.e. the uniting and dividing force in the country, and the subsequent polarisation, was gone: new demands and cleavages emerged. There was a movement from unity to fragmentation and then back to unity, through polarisation.¹³

Fragmentation is the moment in which the structure of the division between the power-holding ‘regime’, and the oppressed ‘dissidents’, has given way to undecided, incoherent, plural and developing identifications. In order to deal with this problematic of fragmentation – the lack of clearly-defined collective identifications, that is – nationalism, in many postcommunist countries, became a new force for unification. In Hungary, nationalism was taken up by the conservative government between 1990 and 1994 and also by the extreme right. But despite claims that there was a ‘more’ and a ‘less national’ camp, in an ethnically homogeneous country nationalism did not have enough differentiating power to provide a fixed political frontier, which could aid the identity-building of the ‘nationalist camp’.¹⁴ I will show throughout this thesis that polarisation emerged to provide an illusion of fixedness of political identities, for the political elites. In writing on conflicts Peter L. Berger stresses the role of mediating institutions, that bridge the gap in polarised societies.


¹³ This I will theorise in detail in Chapter Two.

¹⁴ This I will be looking at in different chapters in the thesis, particularly in the discussion on political frontiers, in Chapter Two.
I do quite the reverse in my thesis, by focusing on the way in which the conflict is reproduced. I also hope, in this way, to open up space for thinking how the polarisation could be broken down, whether through logics of change or mediating institutions.

**Historical Background**

Let me first outline the location and the context. Hungary is a country of ten million inhabitants in Central Europe, which was part of the Soviet Empire and the Warsaw Pact in ‘Eastern Europe’ from the Second World War until 1989. Its current boundaries were fixed after the First World War and the fall of the Habsburg Empire, in the Treaty of Trianon. Large sections of the former Hungarian Kingdom of the empire were ceded to the neighbouring countries, which left considerable Hungarian minorities abroad and turned Hungary into a relatively ethnically homogeneous nation-state.

Hungarian tribes settled in the territory of the Danube basin around 896, and the country became part of Catholic Europe around 1000, when the first Hungarian king was crowned and Christened. As I discuss in the following chapters, a millennium of the event was celebrated around 2000. The Hungarian language, *Magyar*, has separated the people from the surrounding Slavonic and German speakers. Most of the territory was occupied by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, and when the Turks were fought out, along with the Austrians, the territory became part of the Habsburg Empire. In the Spring of Nations – 1848 – the Hungarians rebelled, but their War of Independence in 1848 and 1849 was unsuccessful. Finally in 1867 they gained their autonomy within the Habsburg Empire, and independence in 1920.\(^{15}\) In the interwar period democracy was weak and Hungary, like its neighbours, was under the economic and partly cultural influence of the Germans. There was a

\(^{15}\) Although because of the traumas caused by the losses of the Trianon Treaty this is not usually considered independence in a positive sense.
short-lived ‘Soviet’ period of communist rule, by the Hungarian Béla Kun in 1919, followed by the
‘White Terror’ – an authoritarian interwar period – which resulted in the rule of the Arrow Cross
Nazis, during the Second World War. There were anti-Jewish laws from the 1920s, and the
Hungarian Holocaust was particularly painful: almost a half of the 200.000 Budapest Jews perished,
almost 500.000 nationwide.\footnote{16}{On Hungarian history, see e.g. László Kontler, \textit{Millennium in
Central Europe; A History of Hungary}, Budapest: Atlantisz 1999; Ignács Romsics, \textit{Hungary in the
Twentieth Century}, Budapest: Corvina & Osiris, 1999.}

In the nineteenth century Budapest was built into a metropolis and centre of both the nation and the
region. In fact it was united from the fast-expanding Pest, the old administrative centre Buda – with
its hills and wineries, and Óbuda (although not until 1873). In a location by the Danube, in what
was later called Óbuda – ‘Old Buda’ – there had once been a Celtic and Roman town. The
Hungarian kings had their base in the castles on the hills of Buda, or alternatively in the near-by
town of Esztergom, where the Hungarian Catholic Church was based. In the Middle Ages, the Buda
Castle was a flourishing international centre. Pest, on the other side of the river where the
Hungarian plain starts, was a market town and the economic centre of the region. When the
Ottomans advanced towards the West, Buda and Pest fell on the frontier-line. The Ottomans left
Buda in 1686, but the legacy of the more-than-a hundred years of Ottoman rule left their cultural
legacy in the region. The political centre of Hungary was transferred to Pozsony, today’s Bratislava,
and the Habsburgs returned it to Budapest only in the late eighteenth century. Thereafter, Budapest
experienced a massive increase in population, due to industrialisation and the freeing of the
peasants. Pest was flooded in the 1830s, and the city was restructured on the model of Paris and
Vienna. Fast-built houses for the aristocracy and the peasant-workers alike then emerged in the flat
side of Pest. Budapest was the centre of the 1848/9 revolution and the centre of the nation-building
process in Hungary. The political and cultural institutions, particularly those built since the
\textit{Ausgleich} of 1867 such as the Parliament strengthened this image. For centuries Budapest was a
multilingual metropolis, with German, Slavonic, Greek, Armenian and Jewish populations.
Standardising modernisation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, however, turned it into a Hungarian-speaking one. The World Exhibition of 1896 was a high-point in both the development of Budapest and the history of nation, since it brought Hungary to the level of the civilized nations. The subsequent periods of development came during the 1900s and after the Second World War when the city was turned into a greater Budapest; then in the 1960s, when the public transport was significantly improved, through the building of the metro and the new fast-built housing at the outskirts. After 1989 power in Budapest was decentralised, with the Mayor’s office and the Municipal Council functioning as the top of the umbrella.\footnote{On literature on Budapest, see especially László Nagy, \textit{Ces Villes Qui Ont Fait L’Europe: Budapest}, Genéve: Georg, 1998; and e.g. Gábor Gyáni, ed., \textit{Az egyesített főváros, Pest, Buda, Óbuda}, Budapest: Városháza, 1998; András Gerő and János Póór, eds., \textit{Budapest: A History from Its Beginnings to 1998}, trans. Judit Zinner and Cecil D. Eby and Nóra Arató, East European Monographs, No. CDLXII, Highland Lakes, New Jersey: Atlantic Research and Publications Inc., 1997.}

The twentieth century witnessed ethnic and cultural homogenisation in Hungary. In 1920, the Trianon Treaty – which ended the First World War for Hungary and was perhaps most significant in the history of traumas – hived off considerable areas of Hungary to Slovakia and Serbia, as well as Transylvania, which had had periods of its own history independent of Hungary, to Romania. The communist period further standardised much of the regional and cultural differences, and besides the difference between intellectual and popular culture Hungary remains a relatively homogeneous country. After 1990, the postcommunist period, in the guise of certain national-conservative politicians and intellectuals, re-appropriated some of the previously-suppressed regional accents. The conservative Fidesz government of 1998-2002, whose distrust of Budapest I will discuss in Chapter Five, revived the regional towns. But since it also had a vision of a ‘New Hungary’, it did not foster regional differences, but rather the difference between the countryside as a homogeneous unit, and Budapest. The other cities of Hungary are considerably smaller than the Budapest, which has two million inhabitants. The largest of them, Debrecen, with a population of around 200,000 and known as ‘the Calvinist Mecca’, is the centre of the east of the country and of protestant Hungary. The main industrial and forestry city in Hungary is Miskolcs, in the north of the
country. In contrast to the deprived east and north of the country, however, the western border cities such as Győr, Sopron and Szombathely have prospered since 1989. In the south, near the former Yugoslavia, the city of Pécs is the most culturally mixed in Hungary. Because of its status among the Hungarian cities, Budapest has a dual role – as clear centre of Hungarian culture and politics and as the metropolis which in many instances is excluded from the nation or country. This is as with other metropolitan cities, such as Vienna, London, Paris and Madrid – to mention only those. Therefore it offers a fascinating field for the study and articulation of political identities and of polarisation.

The postcommunist condition

In this chapter I study a period which runs from the late 1980s to the present (2005), with an emphasis on the later period. The era can be called postcommunist, which I use to refer to the era which is marked by the legacies of the state socialist or ‘communist’ period – yet which simultaneously claims to take its distance from that period. This characterisation is a rough combination of the arguments of Leslie Holmes and George Schöpflin. As Holmes argued: ‘postcommunist is better understood as the rejection of the communist system than as a clear cut adoption of an alternative system.’18 I would take his rejection of the concept of the transition from one system to another further. As has Schöpflin, who argues that postcommunist politics deals with both the legacies of the communist past and that of the previous periods.19

19 See for discussion e.g. László Andor, Hungary on the Road to the European Union: Transition in Blue, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2000 p. 3f. On the legacies of previous traditions in Eastern Europe see George Schöpflin’s work, particularly: George Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe 1945-1992, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993. Schöpflin calls it a political system: ‘...post-communism is a real political system, with its own political characteristics, features and dynamic. These features have been conditioned partly by the longue durée period and, importantly, by the consequences of the decisions taken since the end of communism. At the same time, post-communism must also be seen as a system sui generis, not just because no other countries have undergone these particular experiences, but because their political topography cannot easily be located in the field of democracy or authoritarianism; they incorporate elements of both.’ George Schöpflin, Nations, Identity, Power; The New Politics of Europe, London: Hurst, 2000, p. 173.
The most important factor contributing to polarisation is the simultaneous drive to unity and the construction of a strong 'other'. Hungarian politics has been non-consensual and political adversaries are often considered to be illegitimate. In his discussion regarding postcommunism, Holmes argued that there was a ‘near absence of the culture of compromise’ in postcommunist Eastern Europe.

To argue that there is an underdeveloped sense of consensuality and compromise does not necessarily imply that there is no desire for homogeneity. On the contrary there is in some ways too much expectation of homogeneity, partly as a result of past experiences. What is in too short supply is an appreciation that there can and should be conflicting views, but that these can and should be reconciled through negotiation and bargaining within the accepted framework of rules.20

As I will also stress throughout this thesis, this situation is coupled with a drive to unity. While I will be suggesting with Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau that disagreement and political frontiers are essential to politics, and therefore not something to be reconciled, Holmes rightly puts forward the two aspects of politics I will focus on here, manifest disagreement and calls for homogeneity, which stem as legacies of the state socialist period. The situation of polarisation provided both the missing unity and the crucial frontier between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The different unities too, in the case of Hungary, have often been constructed around the signifier of nationhood, which ‘provides the framework for many who have lost their usual references … and who fear losing their own identity as a consequence’, as Holmes has pointed out.21 George Schöpflin has argued that ‘theorizing about the nature of the conflict under post-communism, it can be argued that it is the reproduction of society itself that is at issue. Different social, political and cultural forces, with their own projects and languages of legitimation are engaged in a contest as to what contours the system should assume, what the inner meaning of democracy is and, vitally, what is to be the role of the nation and of citizenship under the new dispensation.’22 While, to follow Laclau, one could say that the constant reproduction of society is by its nature political and that the building of an ‘us’ and a

20 Leslie Holmes, Post-Communism, pp. 16-17.
21 Leslie Holmes, Post-Communism, p. 18.
22 George Schöpflin, Nations, Identity, Power, p. 175.
'them' is politics _par excellence_, the intensive search for unity, community, homogeneity and cohesion is also a response to insecurity about one's position, as well as about the future.

In the situation of postcommunist polarisation, political critique is expressed in terms of illegitimacy. Schöpflin argues, using Bauman’s term 'liminality', that ‘in essence the post-communist systems are marked by constant conflict over the most basic criteria of how power is to be legitimated, distributed, applied and generated.' In 2002, he attributed it to the non-interaction of different discourses. As Szakolczai argues, the socialist regimes were not only 'established under conditions of heightened, acute liminality, but could only function under such conditions. Communism was a unique political system that kept the entire society stuck in a permanent state of liminality: of confusion, threat, and uncertainty, all characteristic of transitoriness.' Not surprisingly, this significant legacy remains in the postcommunist period. It is visible in the process of continuous frontier-making, where one camp has denied the other a legitimate position of contestation, a status of an adversary, perhaps even called it illegitimate. The other camp through its

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23 See e.g. Ernesto Laclau, _New Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time_.

24 ‘In the ‘Central European thought-style’ … there is a certain _preference for religious or moral metaphors_, rather than, say, scientific ones, though both exist. There are metaphors of wholeness counterpointed by a fear of fragmentation and incoherence. There is a clear presence of historicising rhetoric, of looking for the explanations for one’s collective problems in a meaning that is attributed to the past; and the past is seen as an active agent, undercutting human agency. […] They have a certain _fear of being forever marginal, of not being actors in history_, of not having recognition on equal terms and ultimately of their own disappearance. Correspondingly, there is a longing for centrality, one that they half know is unattainable, because it is mythicised. Community and ethnicity tend to be seen as one, there is an ethnic path-dependence and the denial of this, underpinned by universalist counter-discourses imported from the West.’ George Schöpflin, ‘Central Europe: Defining a Thought-Style’, in _Reinventing Central Europe (Találjuk-ki Közép-Európiát?)_, http://www.talaljuk-ki.hu/index.php/article/articleview/221/1/62/, 18 July 2005, emphasis original, last accessed 13 September 2005.

25 As there is no consensus between the political powers, the actors may end up accusing each other of being traitors to the nation, Tóth and Török point out in their analysis of daily politics in Hungary in 2001-2002. In this sense the Fidesz slogan of 1998 ‘több mint kormányváltás’ (more than a change of government) and, in fact, every change of government since 1990, was actually presented as an attempt to remove ‘illegitimate’ political power, Csaba Tóth and Gábor Török, _Politika és kommunikáció; A magyar politikai napirend témái a 2002-es választások előtt_, Budapest: Századvég, 2002.


27 ‘The term liminality describes a situation of incomplete transition, a transformation in which elements of the old and the new live side by side but without much interaction. Different discourses are articulated but they do not engage with each other, rather they assert truths and truth-claims about the good life, social justice, identity, ethics, whatever. Instead the different discursive strategies of the contestants collide confrontationally, unable to effect change.’ Schöpflin, George, ‘New-Old Hungary: A contested transformation’, _RFE/RL East European Perspectives_, 10:4, 15 May 2002.

‘illegitimacy’, being-outside, constructs an opposing camp and a competing moral order. In fact, in polarisation i.e., bipolar hegemony, two camps which appear to have little contact with each other sustain themselves through their mutual opposition.

In Hungarian politics, fragmentation or extreme differentiation left the need to create a positive motivating and engaging feeling of unity in politics. The legacy of the previous totalitarian era's black-and-white positioning is the heightened sense of 'us' and 'them', the denial of the legitimacy of the 'other' and the necessity of the strong ties between the members of the us which forms a single community (as opposed to a pluralist network of different interlinked communities). Polarisation occurred because the drive towards a broad, united coalition and the necessity for each unity to have a meaningful other as its limit (in a changed situation – for the Soviets or the West could no longer function as such) brought about two coalitions opposed to each other. Thus in current Hungarian politics, we witness a situation of two competing hegemonising camps, which maintain themselves by continuously articulating themselves against each other. This polarised situation maintains the momentum by continuously politicising issues of politics and identity in Hungary. It is combined with the above-mentioned institutional factors, i.e. the political system and the discursive system of the 'historical legacy' of the nationalist-urbanist divide, and consequently there has not been room for questioning the divide or for a third coalition to establish itself against both of these camps.

The frontier kept at bay the other emerging demands and problems, which multiplied after the collapse of the state socialist regime, and some of the immediate concerns were removed. As I will show throughout the thesis, the main problem with the polarised situation is that in the same way as the one-party system or a consensus will bracket out less important demands for the sake of maintaining the illusion of unity, the bipolar hegemony brackets out any fringe or moral questions or demands which might shake the system of internal cohesion.
The two sides of the polarisation must be signified. George Schöpflin found ‘left’ and ‘right’, or ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’, as analytically unhelpful in analysing post-1989 political parties in Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{29} I am using them to denote the two sides of the polarisation as they are used in Hungary, which also comes up in the discussion on the political cleavages below. ‘Left’ refers to the Socialist Party, which has liberal economic policies (as do its social democratic counterparts in most European countries) and to the left-liberal Free Democrats Association, SZDSZ. ‘Right’ refers to the moderate and radical nationalist and ‘conservative’ parties – conservative in terms of traditional, mainly interwar, values – such as the Hungarian Democratic Forum, MDF, Fidesz (The Hungarian Civic Party) and the radical nationalist Hungarian Truth and Life Party, MIÉP. These two sides are also often dubbed as the urbanist and the national-populist sides (\textit{urbánusok} and \textit{népiek}), but the anti-nation/nationalist divide often appears to be just as empty as the right-left divide.\textsuperscript{30} Broadly speaking, all major parties in Hungary make reference to the nation, maintain a sense of community and foster liberal economic policies. Therefore, what one needs to do in analysing Hungarian politics is not just to look at certain key words, but their meanings in the broader political and conceptual context. Below I will give an outline of the developments in postcommunist politics and of the party system and its key personalities, all of which will be referred to later in the thesis.

The bipolar order in international politics has resulted in a replication of bipolarity in domestic politics. This is can be clearly felt in Hungary. By 1995 Raimo Väyrynen was already discussing the emergence both of multi-polarity and of political volatility and populism in domestic politics after the ‘erosion of bipolarity in international relations’.\textsuperscript{31} In Hungarian domestic politics, the year 1990 coincided with the final erosion of the bipolar order associated with state socialism. The new

\textsuperscript{29} This is because they do not have the same significations as attributed to the west, on the one hand, and because it is unclear who ‘conserves’ what in the postcommunist era, on the other. George Schöpflin, \textit{Politics in Eastern Europe}.

\textsuperscript{30} Fowler argues that these have been absorbed into the more dominant nation-urbanist conflict. See also my discussion below. Brigid Fowler, ‘ESRC “One Europe or Several?” Programme Briefing Note 2/02, May 2002’, http://www.one-europe.ac.uk/pdf/bn2-02fowler.pdf, p. 1, last accessed 13 September 2005.

situation was conditioned by the collapse of a ‘legitimating’ ideology or its counterpart – dissident unity legitimated by the opposition to the ‘illegitimate’ order. Subsequently, with the downfall of state socialism, a lack of frontier emerged. This lack, a result of rigid political frontiers, has led to polarisation, following an initial period of fragmentation. I will develop this point further in the thesis, and I outline the situation below.

Polarisation in Hungary

The Hungarian transition, or as the Hungarians prefer to call it – ‘change of system’ (rendszer-váltás), was a moment of national unity which followed the confrontation between power-holders and dissidents under state socialism. It was the moment when all sides sat at the round-table and negotiated a common future, a moment of recognising that 'we are the people, the nation', in an inclusive, rather than exclusive and nationalistic way. Unity was symbolised by mass movements such as emerged around the reburial of Imre Nagy, who became a national hero. And also the acknowledgement of 1956 as a national fight for independence, rather than the 'counterrevolutionary' status it had had during the Kádár era. The movement connected many different groups, but finally the unity was lost: the first Hungarian government ultimately considered Nagy and the revolution as reformist-communist, and consequently not of national value. There was an initial sense of national and social unity in Hungary in 1988-1990, also as a legacy of the non-confrontational Kádár era. However, this unity ultimately faltered and, as the

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32 See e.g. Giuseppe di Palma, ‘Legitimation from the Top to Civil Society; Politico-Cultural Change in Eastern Europe’, World Politics, 44:1, October 1991, pp. 49-80.


34 Karl Benziger, ‘The funeral of Imre Nagy’.

35 Kádár transformed the slogan ‘those who are against us, are not with us’ into ‘those who are not against us, are with us’. Andor accounts as the ‘best evidence’ for the consensus-based rule of the Hungarian state socialist MSZMP was ‘that that in December 1999 a media survey found János Kádár at No.3 (after King Stephen I and Count István
Hungarian politologist László Lengyel argues, Hungary divided at the turn of the millennium into two camps. The unity fragmented, and the search for new uniting forces led to a situation of polarisation in which two political units emerge.

The roots of polarisation lie in the postcommunist search for friends and enemies, when the collapse of communism brought out lines of division. This is what László Lengyel attributes to the rhetorical strategy of Hungary’s first postcommunist Prime Minister József Antall (MDF). According to Schmitt’s dichotomy, there were ‘naturally associated parties’ and ‘unnatural connections’. This way of constructing political identities and coalitions with clear-cut borders is reminiscent of the previous communist era, where the difference between the regime, the party members, enemies of the ‘society’ or the dissidents and the rest of the population were attempted to be made clear (at least at the level of rhetoric, although, in fact, they could sometimes be blurred). The structures of political identity were therefore passed on to the following period and manipulated. Also by way of an example, the division line between the populists and the urbanists, which I will be discussing later, was emphasised, in the same way as it was prior to 1989. This does not imply that Hungarian politics would have been polarised from the start. In fact, there were many issues and events, such as **Széchenyi** in the race for being the Person of the Millennium in Hungary.’ Andor, *Hungary on the Road to the European Union*, p. 7.

38 Carl Schmitt will be referred to in various parts of my work, mainly in conjunction with the discussion of Chantal Mouffe’s work. Mouffe’s reading of Schmitt is a ‘reading against’ him, where she reappropriates the other – the ‘enemy’ – by way, instead of – an ‘adversary’. This is in contrast to Schmitt, who supported the destruction of ones enemies, even in the most concrete terms, during the Second World War. Nevertheless, what we gain from Schmitt, from the perspective of this study, is the importance of frontiers and the construction of an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ in politics, even if this dichotomy – as with any such – is by its nature impure (see particularly my discussions in chapters Two and Five).
39 ‘According to his [Antall’s] conceptualisation the Hungarian party system was from the start (*kialakulatlan*) bipolar: on the one side there were nationalists (*nemzetiek*) and Christians’ right wing political family and traditions, the MDF, the Small-Holders and the KNDP, on the other the socialists’ and liberals’ left-wing parties, the MSZP, the SZDSZ and Fidesz. This differentiation cross-sectioned into communist-anticommunist, successor party–opposition categories, using partly historical, partly European ideological models.’, Lengyel, *Párttázból palotába*, p. 13.
as the Taxi Blockade of the early 1990s, which broke with the existing distinctions, or created new political frontiers. Nevertheless, the search for fixed political frontiers contributed to the full-scale polarisation of Hungarian politics by the late 1990s or early 2000s.

In his recent work Lengyel argues that the unity of the roundtable transition lasted until the turn of the millennium. In Lengyel’s argument seems to be that there was no general perception, throughout the 1990s, of ‘two Hungaries’ but rather of a united one – even though the rhetoric of polarisation was articulated through the party system. Lengyel believes that the construction of the two Hungaries occurred in the period between 1998-2002. This sedimentation of the polarisation we can observe in the developments between 1995 and 2002, which I cover, in Chapter Three via an analysis of the Budapest mayor Gábor Demszky’s speeches, and in Chapter Four via the construction of oppositions in the Fidesz discourse between 1998-2002. Nevertheless, whereas Lengyel, for example, looks at different periods, usually covering the contemporary situation, I try to look at the broader postcommunist period. This serves to clarify that there are always processes which will sediment and contest the polarised frontier. Polarisation is not the invention of a political party, such as Fidesz, but a structure of political articulation and identification, which in fact is maintained by all the main political parties. As I will show in the thesis, it is maintained because political and social groups articulate their identifications through the situation of polarisation, rather than through, for example, making serious attempts to form different identifications and frontiers.

After the failure of the originally revolutionary hegemonic unity of 1989, Hungarian politics progressed to a state of pluralist fragmentation, in which different small parties and coalitions constructed their respective discourses. In this stage of fragmentation, general illusions of national or societal unity were still maintained, an idea which Lengyel supports when he claims that polarisation only emerged at the turn of the millennium. Rather than moving towards consensus,

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41 Lengyel, Szorongás és remény, pp. 81-2.
42 Lengyel, Szorongás és remény, pp. 81-2.
then, political reforms of the electoral system – which I will outline below – led Hungarian politics towards domination on the part of large parties, and towards polarisation. The rhetoric regarding the division was accompanied by a drive to unity.

Seen in retrospect, polarisation in Hungary took a concrete form at the time of the elections of 2002, which have since been carefully by a number of Hungarian scholars, in the fields of both politics and sociology. Among other things, they indicate the urgent need of the ordinary citizens to take sides in their everyday life, in order to deal with the polarisation. In polarisation there is no middle ground. Rather, one has to choose sides, since there was a return to the Marxist-Leninist: ‘if you are not with us you are against us’, and not to the reformist communist claim under Kádár: ‘if you are not against us you are with us’. The political opponent is turned into an enemy, who has chosen an illegitimate and threatening position. The main thing which emerges from these studies is the drastic character of the opposition between the two party blocs (through the use of negative campaigning), as well as the emergence of polarised politics in everyday life. Demonstrating one’s political identity was important in the job market and in many work places, since there were prejudices against those who were suspected of voting for the ‘wrong’ parties.

The transformation of the system of political organisation was combined with rhetoric emphasising a bipolar politics. The strategy was to restore from the interwar period the ‘traditional Hungarian

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44 A clear example of everyday political polarisation is the usage of the *kokárda* (cockade), which was a symbol from the 1848/49 revolution, which had been widely used to express national feelings every year around the 15 March (when the revolution was commemorated). During the elections of 2002 the conservative front monopolised the symbol so that those wearing one were identified as members of that camp, and those not wearing one – as members of the left. Because of the visibility and everydayness of the symbol, polarisation was felt even more at the work place during this period. On the left, the absence of the kokárda was perceived as being like a yellow star to the Jews in the Second World War, as I will show in the last chapter.

45 E.g. Fowler has noted that identification with a party was often a factor in employment. Fowler ‘ESRC “One Europe or Several?” Programme’.
political divide’ – of national and urbanist camps. The general argument has been that the Hungarian 'right' was defending the nation and national values, the extreme being anti-Western and isolationist, and the left was internationalist, cosmopolitan, anti-nation (nemzet-ellenes), at best – civic, in its outlook regarding the nation. This suited the largest parties, which could rely on this discursive divide to provide at least an illusion of ideological substance and a claim to differentiation, as they accused the other side of being too national or too cosmopolitan. The institutionalisation of the frontier happened in 1994, when the 'liberal pole' disappeared: the right-wing liberal Fidesz joined the conservative national camp, and the left-liberal SZDSZ became a coalition partner of the election winning Socialist party MSZP. The two 'left' parties had common ideological roots. Their leading intellectuals established the Hungarian Democratic Charter in September 1991 as a 'counteroffensive against the authoritarian and racist tendencies of the right-wing government' – an oppositional action, in which Fidesz, notably, did not participate. They also shared a common vision of a liberal economic policy. Members of the SZDSZ had been steering the Kádárist regime of the 1980s towards a Thatcherite or Blairite economic policy, rather than a social democratic model. I will discuss these developments in the following, contextualizing chapter.

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46 The contemporary manifestations have been studied by Tamás Fricz. The divide had to some extent been asleep during the pre-1989 era, since nationalism was only articulated as being compatible with state socialism, wherein there were no grounds for an open divide to emerge. However, the divide was maintained, for example, in Hungarian literature, which has always been a base for the articulation of political discourses and differences. Tamás Fricz, A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma, Budapest: Napvilág, 1997. ‘A népi urbánus vita értelmezési lehetőségei’, in Márton Szabó Szövgyalóság írások a szimbolikus és diszkurzív politikáról, Budapest: Scientia Humana, 1998. See on literary and political canons: e.g. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, Irodalmi Kánonok [Literary Canons], Debrecen: Csokonai Press, 1998.

47 Originally the party of the youth, with a membership restricted to those 30 years of age, the party matured into a conservative national-populist party, and changed its name into Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Party, Fidesz-MPP (Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Párt), in 1996. Once back in opposition, the ‘party’ transformed itself into an Association, Szövsgég. In the time of writing, in 2005, the terms used are either, Fidesz, the Association or, officially, Fidesz Magyar Polgári Szövsgég. See the party web pages, http://www.fidesz.hu and http://site.szabad-europa.hu/online/menu/szovetseg.


49 This has been strongly argued by Andor, for example, and also suggests that the Hungarian Socialists have not changed their policy since the 1980s. But the shock therapy and close following of IMF recommendations was characteristic of rather than exceptional to their politics. Andor, Hungary on the Road to the European Union, Ch.1. The Hungarian left, rather than moving towards the right, has stayed on the right, even if their voters were on the left in terms of economic policy.
In my thesis, I will arrive at the following conclusions, through theoretical and empirical work on the polarisation of postcommunist politics in Hungary:

1. Postcommunist politics in Hungary are politics of a bipolar hegemony. Subsequent to the sense of unity in 1988-90, we witness a period of fragmentation, with dispersed political identifications which finally produced a sense of unity in polarisation: i.e. a situation of two competing hegemonies.

2. The units sustain themselves through their opposition towards one another. The politics of symbols and history have been an important way to articulate these two poles. The dividing line is impure and its function is as the source of negative identification for both of the camps.

3. The two camps of the bipolar hegemony are often dubbed the ‘nationalist’ and the ‘urbanist’ poles or as cultural nation and statist nation. In fact they are empty, but often compete around questions of nationhood. As we will see, on the basis of the theoretical discussion in the next chapter and the subsequent empirical analysis, nation emerges as a ‘floating signifier’, contested and articulated by both of the camps.

4. Problems of polarisation reveal it as the opposite of consensus, while it also exhibits similar features. It can be seen as a system of double consensus.

These points will be studied and made clearer in the rest of the thesis. Next I will take a look at the methodology of reading the city. The theoretico-methodological thinking of Ernesto Laclau, which is the main influence upon my work, I shall discuss in detail in Chapter Two.

*Method of reading the polarisation: rhetoric and the city*

A statement does not merely express a position for or against a proposal but also contains
definite formulations which specify the stand and mark the difference between it and the opposing views. When we are interested in the novelties and revisions of a certain standpoint, it is the minute details of the formulations that we should focus our attention on. – Kari Palonen

Any statement is inescapably the embodiment of a particular intention on a particular occasion, addressed to the solution of a particular problem, and is thus specific to its context in a way that it can only be naive to try to transcend. – Quentin Skinner

In this last section of the introduction I outline the ways in which I will approach the material, in the rest of the thesis. I will consider most of the material as statements, set in their period. In two of the chapters I will be focusing on political speeches and writings, and in one of them memorials and street names. I treat them as statements set in time, which reveal the position of the speaker or writer or actor at that moment. This also includes his or her redescription of the situation, the distance between the orator and the audience, as well as projection on others. Statements are crucial in the creation, negation and maintenance of political frontiers. They allow for one to observe micro-level articulations and thereby, of course, changes in the process of articulation. Political symbols can also be read as statements, set in the time and context in which they emerge. They are political acts in the same way as the speeches and the redescriptions involved in the speeches are. They also embody a number of significations in the same way as do the political speeches and symbols created through and evoked in them. The acts or symbols are relational and have to be understood in the context of other similar gestures.

In my postructuralist reading I combine discourse theory, wherein I highlight the Derridean influence, the thought of Quentin Skinner and that of Walter Benjamin. Following Skinner and the poststructuralists, I do not understand context as a totalising structure which determines the


51 Quentin Skinner Visions of Politics: Vol 1, Regarding Method, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 88. Note that the term ‘intentions’ is used by Skinner – especially in his later work – in a wide sense, which does not say whether the intentions are consciously perceived or unrealised: ‘a writer may not fully understand his or her intentions, or may be self-deceiving about recognising them, or may be incompetent at stating them.’ Skinner, Visions of Politics: Vol 1, p. 101.

52 I will not here go deep into the discussion of the dissimilarities between Derrida’s and Skinner’s writings. As the previous footnote shows, Skinner is not taking the voluntarist position he has often been accused of. Derrida by contrast looks at the texts which are ‘out there’, and his contribution to my study lies in highlighting the distance between the writer and the text, as well as the rereadability of texts, where new contexts also play a role.
meanings of things, but as one which establishes conditions of possibility – limits upon what can be imagined to be done and what can be challenged, and which on the other hand give meaning to the action. The task of the analyst of statements is to situate them in their contexts, see what they may be arguing and challenging. At the same time the context stresses ‘relationality’: the concepts we use and the things argued are constructed in a web of meanings; any identity, concept or statement is marked by meanings evoked by others. Therefore, it is vital to map out the discursive or conceptual context in which the statements are put forward.

The bipolar hegemony of polarisation is constructed through articulation, wherein – besides relationality and political logics – orators and practises play an important role. Skinner’s orator constructs her statements in a context marked by different meanings. This does not mean that she would not have a level of agency, or the possibility of redescribing the terms of the context – she is ‘freer than she might know’, to paraphrase Skinner – but she does it in the conditions of possibility presented by the context, whatever they may prove to be. Similarly, in my poststructuralist reading, the articulations taking place can be located in statements and practises by political agents, in their limited freedom. The identities I study refer to identifications, rather than positive identities. They are multiple, complex, contingent and overlapping. Therefore while there are no totalising structures, neither are there totalised ‘agents’, in the sense that we would be able to observe their positive identities and fixed motives, their singular ‘agencies’.


55 I wish to bracket out a full-blown theoretical discussion on structures and agents.


57 As Copjec has pointed out, Lacan’s reply to the 1968 student revolutionaries’ claim in his lecture room – ‘Structures don’t march on the streets!’ – was to argue that they indeed do not. For Lacan, structures belong to the ‘real’, not the ‘symbolic’, in which the structuralists would locate it: ‘They are not to be located among the relations that constitute our everyday reality; they belong, instead, to the order of the real.’ Joan Copjec (1994) Reading My
The articulation of a polarisation might not in all forms be an intentional tactic, but a logical consequence of actions. Nevertheless, Derrida shows us that while political speeches are necessarily set in the context of enunciation, which is often neither recalled, reread or repeated, there are nevertheless texts with which we may experience an increasing distance between the moment of writing and the writer. Recalling ‘original’ context, writers, intentions and meanings would insert a surplus of meaning into the original enunciation, as Derrida has shown with the concept of iteration. The ‘trace’ added would mean that the repeated original is no longer the original. It is also tied into the new context and overdetermined by other elements than those which overdetermined it before, whilst carrying the past relations with it to the new context. Therefore, the items recalled in this text also carry surplus meaning, and through reading are reinvested with meaning. With memorials and architecture, for example, one can observe a loosening of the relationship between the writers of the text and context of reading. Of course, the ‘true’ readings and ‘original meanings’ can be partly maintained by constant reference to the ‘origins’, ‘writers’ and ‘context’. Thereby we can also study them from the perspective of the Benjamian ‘now’, which I will discuss below, that is – the memories of the past they carry with them and the way in which they relate to other items within, and writings of, the ‘city-text’ and cityscape.

To sum up, statements become meaningful in helping us to understand how these articulations have worked in creating and negating the polarised situation. Conducting a poststructuralist reading of Budapest and the various ways in which it has been articulated, I stress both the indeterminacy of structures, the moments of relative freedom and novelty, as well as the relationality of any articulation. Things such as statements, political identifications or positions, are constructed in relation to others, through which they must be read. This is also the discourse-theoretical position,


Iterability implies both alteration and repetition. It constitutes a way in which identity gains its essence without being grounded, thereby always remaining contingent. For a discussion of iteration see Jacques Derrida, ‘Limited Inc.’, Glyph 2, 1977, pp. 192-257.
which as I have said is my theoretical as well as methodological guiding line. I will elaborate it in Chapter Two, therein focusing on the logic of polarisation.

Benjamin for political inquiry: Method of the Flâneur

Couldn’t an exciting film be made about the map of Paris? From the unfolding of its various aspects in temporal succession? From the compression of a centuries-long movement of streets, boulevards, arcades, and squares into the space of half an hour? And does the flâneur do anything different? Flâneur

I would like to see the crux of [the essay] in the theory of the flâneur … At the core of the text my critique of the concept of masses, made tangible by the modern metropolis, must be brought out. – Benjamin

In taking the city as an object of political inquiry, I have also discovered a method of research which could be called Benjaminian. The Benjaminian perspective allows me to develop, through the figure of the flâneur, a critical approach and to justify a method which grasps the overflowing city.

There are a number of readings of the flâneur in academic fields such as cultural and urban studies, architecture and literature. Following Baudelaire’s concept of the ‘flâneur’, many of them capture the movement and the gaze of the flâneur, but they mainly ignore the critical political aspect of the figure in Benjamin. Benjamin’s flâneur has a ‘seemingly passive spectator role’, which has led to a downplaying of the political character of the figure. What really makes Benjamin’s flâneur ‘critical’, in the sense of being political, is the necessity of his reading being a partial reproduction,

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a selection, which implies the making of political frontiers, and critique. Mike Savage has argued, crucially, that

Benjamin’s interest in the flâneur, … is not primarily concerned with delineating it as an actual social type which existed in specific urban historical settings, but as a theoretical, critical, counter to the idea of the mass, as an attempt to indicate the sorts of potential for critique which continued to exist.

In this comment one glimpses Benjamin’s critique of fixed totalities, such as the mass, which in the setting of the conflictual urban environment can be seen as mere productions composed through certain practises and the nature of the environment.

Furthermore, Benjamin’s flâneur is a tool with which to observe and reconstruct the urban environment. As Graeme Gilloch argues,

The flâneur provides Benjamin with a heuristic device for exploring the experiences and memories of the cityscape, with a model and method for his own reading of the contemporary metropolitan environment.

Distinguishing five types of urban writings by Benjamin, Savage points out that since the mid-1920s he ‘constantly used urban phenomena as devices for exploring the intellectual problems with which he grappled throughout his life and for which older means of inquiry seemed inappropriate’. David Frisby takes a sociological view by arguing that Benjamin ‘provides us with an analytic of flanerie that reveals potential affinities between this activity and the sociologist’s investigation of the social world’, which is visible in Benjamin’s own methodological reflections about the Arcades Project. Emphasis on the ‘watchfullness’ of the flâneur and the ‘figure of

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64 Kia Lindroos, Now-Time / Image-Space; Temporalization of Politics in Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy of History and Art, Jyväskylä: SoPhi, University of Jyväskylä, 1998.
65 Savage ‘Walter Benjamin’s Urban Thought’, p. 38.
66 Gilloch, Walter Benjamin, p. 213.
67 Savage ‘Walter Benjamin’s Urban Thought’, p. 36.
68 Frisby, Cityscapes of Modernity, p. 35.
69 Discussed in Frisby, Cityscapes of Modernity, esp. p. 37.
detective’, which Benjamin said to be prefigured in the flâneur\textsuperscript{70}, should not downplay the political side of gathering and reproducing information.\textsuperscript{71} In this connection, the politics of the flâneur-detective qua researcher should be emphasised. After all, for Benjamin research is a political activity of reading, observing and producing.\textsuperscript{72}

The urban space of the metropolis with which Benjamin was preoccupied, was too full of details to be recorded in any other form than as a collection of fragments represented in the present. Benjamin’s constructivist reading of fragments, therefore, questions – besides the systematicity of objects of study and the ‘authenticity’ of any systematization – the notions of the origins, tradition and authenticity of the object. This idea is present for example in his essay on the work of art, where the origin is re-thematised and ‘redefined in every present time’. Even – ‘the intelligibility of the origins is embedded in the understanding of the present time’.\textsuperscript{73} Consequently, any reproduction of a problematic, any piece of research, would only be a present and political\textsuperscript{74} – in other words, a contemporary and partial – representation. Necessarily, my flâneur’s reading of Budapest, which reflects on the logic of polarisation is partial and critical in its focus and the way in which I frame the problem, but this ought not to decrease its value for a wider understanding of the phenomenon and in offering points of critique which can be developed further.

In my reading I will not only look at discourses or rhetoric as speech or writing, but also as materialised in, and changing around, physical objects. An observation views material objects, in

\textsuperscript{70} Quoted in Frisby, \textit{Cityscapes of Modernity}, p. 36.

\textsuperscript{71} Benjamin’s parallel of the literary tradition of detective stories and to historical and socio-political research has been taken up by others too. A historically oriented introduction to social science research by Pertti Alasuutari starts from this premise, but unfortunately fails to give a proper account of both new methodologies in social sciences and the genres of the detective stories. This, nevertheless, probably proves his point about the relative beauty of the linkage between intellectual traditions of investigation, academic and literary. Pertti Alasuutari, \textit{Johdatus yhteiskuntatutkimukseen}, Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2001, see also in English: Alasuutari, \textit{An Invitation to Social Research}, London: Sage, 1998

\textsuperscript{72} Frisby, \textit{Cityscapes of Modernity}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{73} Kia Lindroos, \textit{Now-Time / Image-Space}, p. 131, emphasis original.

\textsuperscript{74} Gilloch, \textit{Walter Benjamin}, p. 4.
the contemporary time, as a collection of fragments. Architecture, street names and statues of a city date from various epochs, they commemorate people and visions, and they recall vocabularies from different historical periods. They form an incoherent or fairly fragmented set of objects, which is in the end observed from the present perspective. The need for flânerie is premised on the assumption that reality, or the surroundings, are too rich to be recorded by a one-to-one representation.

Similarly, with Laclau, a full representation is impossible. A Benjaminian methodology of constructivist history would be innovative and inspirational rather than rigorous, Lindroos argues:75

Benjamin’s history is constructed through collecting information, quotations and testimonies, and he edits them together as a construction reminiscent of avant-garde piece of art. Yet, through this view, ‘history’ always remains an open stage ready for any interpreter to step in and start acting in the game.76

The flâneur as a constructivist (or a cultural engineer), is not only a spectator but an ‘active participant in time’.77 The image of the history is constructed in the present, through subjective thinking, since the flâneur ‘critically disrupts the events by stepping “outside of the homogeneous temporal flow”’.78 This stopping of time refers to Benjamin’s perspective of cairollogical time, which separates past, present, future and the ‘now’, in which the other times can be experienced. In my work, by gathering different materials, I have sketched together a vision of the polarisation in Hungarian politics, and by doing so have critically engaged with it. Besides making a deconstructive move, I hope critically reflect on the topic by putting together these materials in the following chapter and bringing to the fore particular aspects of the issue of polarisation, as well as those of contemporary Hungarian politics. As with any representation, my work carries the trace of recompiling and interpretation. Finally, I must stress that rather than closing a case, I am studying an open debate in contemporary politics, wherein I hope to offer my work as a statement among others.

75 Lindroos, Now-Time / Image-Space p. 96, also fn. 137.
76 Lindroos, Now-Time / Image-Space, p. 97.
77 Lindroos, Now-Time / Image-Space, p. 97.
78 Lindroos, Now-Time / Image-Space, p. 97.
Reading Budapest: Structure of the thesis

In this chapter I have briefly outlined the postcommunist context, my research problematic regarding polarisation and my methodology. In the following chapter I will return to the context of postcommunist politics in Hungary, now in order to consider the electoral system and the developing dominance of two parties, as well as discussing the existing literature on postcommunist political discourses and polarisation in Hungary. This literature on parties, lines of division, cleavages and polarisation mainly consists of descriptive accounts or metaphysical debates.

The theory chapter will expand the methodology into a conceptualisation of the phenomenon and its logic. I will demonstrate through theory how polarisation is a bipolar hegemony. The discourse-theoretical thought and methodology also enables one to see political discourses as systems with limits. My particular contribution is to conceptualise how the discourses and the logic or process of the bipolar hegemony can be captured in the process of articulation or reproduction by thinking of this process with rhetoric, rhetorical moves and constellations. I also discuss the making of frontiers and the making of space and communities as part and parcel of a polarisation or bipolar hegemony. Reading Budapest, polarisation shows up particularly well, since any city is full of examples of the construction of space and, thereby, politics as the construction of people or communities. The rest of my thesis will show how the readings of the city from this perspective can be used to capture postcommunist political discourses and the process of polarisation.

The following empirical chapters all read politics through the city. During my research I have gone through material on urban change, urban planning documents, the politics of local government, material on tourism in Budapest, picture books about Budapest, material on its architecture and
cityscape. Because of limitations of space in this thesis and my decision to discuss the particular problem of polarisation – which obviously penetrates all the objects and literature outlined, I have bracketed these out from the thesis. Yet the thesis ‘reads the city’. The city appears as the site of collective memory and a platform for a politics of images of the city, the creation of a nation and of other communities.

In the first empirical chapter of the thesis, Chapter Three, which is on the Budapest Mayor Gábor Demszky, I will discuss the contestation and articulation of the political frontier of polarisation. Demszky tries to articulate his own discourse by contesting the frontier, but he also reinforces his own position by making references to the frontier stressed by his political opponents, most notably the frontier between Budapest and the government. I also take up the concept of *city images*, in my analysis of Demszky’s speeches. Rather than images of the city and mental maps of places by the city dwellers, such as in Kevin Lynch’s usage, I will instead refer to characterisations or imaginations of the city – its place and character – or to the ‘image’ projected on to the city in political discourses, and the cityscape. Whereas these can be seen in a wide range of literature, from estate agent and tourist brochures to novels, newspaper stories and urban planning documents, I will here focus upon the Mayor’s speeches.

In Chapter Four, I study the speeches of the Prime Minister Victor Orbán and the discourse of the Fidesz government, from 1998 to 2002. I show how the government occupied its space in Budapest and contrasted the existing cityscape and the city led by the Hungarian left, to a vision of the New Hungary. Politics is visible in, and done through, transforming the cityscape and occupying space. Reading the city, therefore, I focus on the action which is taken to change or preserve elements in

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80 I read the city from a Benjaminian perspective of finding politics in arresting moments and collisions of different times and styles: to evoke reflection, as M. Christine Boyer has said. I do not focus on popular reception, for which see e.g. Maria Bucur and Nancy Wingfield *Staging the Past, Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*, West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press: 2001. M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory; Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2001
the cityscape and architecture. These are indicative of the way in which contemporary discourses on the past and the future are developed. They are full of symbolic elements which are integral to political discourses. The construction of the frontier of political polarisation can therefore meaningfully be studied through the politics of the cityscape and Fidesz’ relationship with Budapest.

In the last chapter, Chapter Five, I study the processes of contestation and rearticulations of the frontier of polarisation. I first look at the politics of the gatherings in the cityscape of Budapest – the symbolic use and occupation of space in the 2002 election campaign. This shows how polarisation is acted out. The rest of the chapter focuses on the problems of polarisation which emerge from the continuous freezing of the frontier and the maintaining of unity on one side. The cases I investigate are the referendum on dual citizenship and the privatisation of hospitals, in December 2004, and the election of the Hungarian president, in June 2005.

My empirical chapters are, loosely speaking, chronologically organised: in the third chapter I study the speeches of the Budapest Mayor between 1995 and 2002, in the fourth chapter I look at the politics of the Fidesz government regarding Budapest between 1998 and 2002, and in the last chapter I investigate the developments and problems of polarisation from 2002 to the time of writing in 2005. The main points made in the thesis and the logic of polarisation will be summarised in the conclusion.

**Conclusion**

My intention in this thesis is not to cover political discourses in contemporary Hungary, but to investigate the logic of contemporary polarisation. Polarisation appears as a bipolar hegemony. Instead of covering ‘all’ or the ‘main’ political discourses, I focus on a few cases of discourse-
building by key politicians and the discourse of Fidesz government, as well as practises of community and frontier-creation. Furthermore, I also will not – in this thesis – discuss the postcommunist condition in general, although as we have seen in this introduction the many conditions of the era contribute to the process of polarisation. I also hope that my work on the articulation of political frontiers, unity and fragmentation, is illuminating to the understanding of the workings of postcommunist politics, as well as of politics in general.

Political polarisation is the main problematic in contemporary Hungarian politics. I seek to contribute to the understanding of the issue, of its roots and of its importance to the current political elites. I also highlight the problems it causes the workings of the democratic process and the rejuvenation of Hungarian politics. Following the Gramscian tradition, Ernesto Laclau has argued that hegemony is a process situated between unity and fragmentation. Polarisation, as a bipolar hegemony, has frozen the cycle, in the moment where two unities persist and the only contestation is that between them. The democratic ethos of hegemonic processes lies in the constant movement between unity and fragmentation and plurality of political frontiers. Political polarisation, as experienced in Hungary, brackets out many important demands and issues, by focusing upon the creation and maintenance of two political camps.81

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81 This is similar to consensual politics as such, as the concept has been outlined by Chantal Mouffe. See e.g. Chantal Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, London: Verso, 2000; *On The Political*, Thinking in Action Series, London and New York: Routledge, 2005.
Chapter 1:

Postcommunist Politics and Polarisation in Hungary

Introduction

In my thesis, I seek to outline the logic of contemporary political polarisation in Hungary using the theory of hegemony developed by Ernesto Laclau. Crucial to the theory is the idea of politics as contestation and frontier-building. In this chapter, I focus on frontiers in contemporary Hungarian politics, covering the existing literature and accounting for the main developments in postcommunist Hungarian politics, including the party system and the lines of political division. Laclau maintains that there is a need for frontiers in democratic politics. What separates totalitarian and democratic frontier-building, for Laclau, is the way in which the democratic frontiers are kept in flux, whereas the totalitarian ones are firmly instituted and essentialised. In the postcommunist situation, the difficult task was not to freeze the frontier yet at the same time to establish clear lines of division in which the party identifications could emerge. The units, in the ‘system change’, fragmented into dispersed identifications – what Gramsci much earlier called an organic crisis. Since the previous conflict had been between two moral orders – the power-holders and the dissidents, who claimed the current rulers as illegitimate – pluralism now implied the emergence of fragmented and diverse political groupings, who – in their role as a democratic opposition – challenged the new government. The legacy of the black and white worldview prevailed. Schöpflin argued, in 1993, that:

at the point when the totalizing party-state collapsed, the moral basis of the democratic opposition was actually or potentially harmful. […] While the assault on the legitimacy of the system in the name of a higher morality was essential until the end of communism, in democratic politics the use of moral categories was confusing and destructive. Morality cannot be bargained, yet politics is about compromises over the allocation of resources, it is muddy rather than clear and does not offer full satisfaction to any of the actors. […] The
political discourse in these countries was infused by calls to morality, for moral purity and other categories inimical to political compromise. This trend affected the nascent political parties that were emerging from the democratic opposition movements and would continue to inform politics for a while.  

He was right in this prediction, and, in fact, this legacy of the state socialist era persists. Postcommunist polarisation is symptomatic of the situation described: the political line of division has been frozen between two moral orders, each of which constantly articulate the other side as its enemy, as illegitimate, and by this action both construct and position themselves. This does not necessarily mean that their values are fixed. In fact, moral values are constantly rearticulated, but what does not change is the form in which the political spectrum is divided between two moralising camps. There are also other factors than the legacies of the previous era(s) that affect the situation, such as the party system and how it has been operationalised. All these factors and political logics have lead to the bipolar hegemony in contemporary Hungarian politics.

Most studies of postcommunist Hungarian politics have dealt with the ‘revolution’ or ‘transition to democracy’, or more precisely with the establishment of a multi-party system, of political elites, and the related development of economics, values, political ideologies and symbols, as well as articulations of nationalism and nationhood. There is also a range of literature on the particular

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88 While in my work I necessarily deal with revolution, and with the construction of communities within, and visions for, a post-communist Hungary, I have decided to bracket out an in-depth discussion of nationhood in this work. This is because the contemporary polarisation in Hungary is not merely about nationalism or nationhood. On the
phenomenon of dealing with the past, which became the subject of fierce political debates in the Hungarian parliament in the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{89} I will be making many references to the politics of the past in this thesis, since political debates contain regular references to key figures in the Hungarian past, along with readings of the past itself. Cults surrounding ‘great men’, such as Petőfi and Széchenyi, are still employed in coalition-building and frontier-making in contemporary Hungary.\textsuperscript{90}

The existing studies have mainly focused on the early 1990s, while the main focus in my work will be from the late 1990s to 2002, but also until the present. The relatively scarce recent literature available in English\textsuperscript{91} is focused primarily on the politics of Hungary’s EU accession,\textsuperscript{92} while there are also some studies on the politics (especially surrounding the discourse of nationhood\textsuperscript{93}) of the Fidesz government (1998-2002).\textsuperscript{94} Political polarisation in Hungary has not been extensively addressed in the English language literature (apart from Kovács: see my review below). The more general literature on Eastern Europe addresses divided societies, mainly from the point of view of nation in postcommunist Hungarian politics, see e.g. George Schöpflin, \textit{Nations, Identity, Power; The New Politics of Europe}, London: Hurst, 2000; George Schöpflin, ‘New-Old Hungary: A contested transformation’, \textit{RFE/RL East European Perspectives,} 10:4, 15 May 2002; Brigid Fowler, ‘Nation, State, Europe and National Revival in Hungarian Party Politics: The Case of the Millennial Commemorations’, \textit{Europe-Asia Studies,} 56:1, January 2004, pp. 57-84; Andreas Pribersky, Karin Liebhart and Sándor Kurtán, ‘A Temple for the Nation: Redesigning a Common Symbolic Space of Central European Conservatism’ \textit{Cultural Studies,} 16:1, November 2002, pp. 797-808.


I have bracketed out from the discussion the works on Hungary which appear in other languages than Hungarian and English. Also I have chosen to focus on literature on politics, broadly speaking, instead of looking at the sociological literature on ‘identities’ and ‘symbols’, which might indeed have some value for the study of polarisation. Here, however, I look at polarisation as a result of political logics.


\textsuperscript{92} Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, eds., \textit{Myths & Nationhood}, London: Hurst and Company, 1997; George Schöpflin \textit{Nations, Identity, Power}.

\textsuperscript{93} These often also include nationhood. Fowler ‘Nation, State, Europe and National Revival in Hungarian Party Politics’ See also the comparative study: Pribersky, et al., ‘A Temple for the Nation’.
ethnic conflict. ‘Transition’ in itself is a problematic term, which I have rejected because it implies a clear sense of departure and destination, whereas in my own work I deal with processes which have taken place in Hungary since the mid-1980s. My work aims to outline a logic of politics which could be studied further in different contexts, instead of merely contributing to the regional and postcommunist context. While the discourse-analytical perspective has been seen as being weak in producing ‘positive facts’ and ‘designer social science’, with my Laclauian discourse-theoretical approach I offer both rigorous contextual analysis and more general reflections on politics and democracy.

Postcommunist Elections and the Multiparty System

From the time of the failed revolution of 1956, Hungary, as in other de-Stalinized East European countries, introduced policies of reform, mainly in the sphere of economics. The ‘Gulyás communism’ of the Kádár era introduced consumerism, as a means of keeping the population relatively happy. As Tőkés has argued, the Hungarian ‘negotiated revolution’ was a long-durée...
and it already had firm roots – in the pragmatism of the Kádár era. The electoral reforms started in 1983 and the first competitive elections were held in 1985. The transition to the change of political system and multi-party elections was negotiated in round table discussions in 1988 by the dissident and the power-holding political elites. When the different dissident groupings and the former communist partisans organised themselves for the first multi-party elections to be held in 1990, the parties were born. Political parties were reluctant to call themselves as such, following the one-party era. Rather the politicians-to-be referred to their groupings as coalitions, associations and forums. I will outline the next developments in Hungarian politics by looking at the general elections, since the parliamentary terms provide a political periodisation in Hungary due to the drastic changes they have always entailed. This will also work as a general introduction of the postcommunist parties and the lines of political division.

Let me start by outlining the electoral system, which offers possibilities for political polarisation. In the same way as the design of the electoral system offers a chance for politicians to seek their fortunes, they can also try to manipulate the existing system for their own purposes. In Hungary, the structural potential of the party system was exploited in order to develop a political polarisation. The roundtable negotiations sought to ensure maximum compromise between the political parties and groupings, and consequently the Hungarian electoral system was a mixture of proportional representation and single member constituencies. Nevertheless, the logic of this incredibly
complex system could foster or be utilised by particular parties. Commentators on the national-urban polarisation, such as Kovács, also argue that the parties started already to organise themselves along this divide after the reform meetings in the mid-1980s (Monor meeting of 1985) in which the monopoly of the communist party was broken, and that the division held until 1989 and beyond.105

The ‘compromise’ electoral reform could then be seen as the maintenance of the balance between the populist-nationalists and the urban-liberals.

‘The electoral system of Hungary provides very strong incentives for political parties to build electoral coalitions, which are also identified as alternative governments before the electorate’, argues Csaba Nikolenyi.106 Bridget Fowler outlines the polarising character of the system in her article on the Hungarian centre-right: ‘Hungary has a mixed electoral system in which majoritarian effects dominate proportional ones – that is, the conditions for the running of party lists and (more importantly) the formulae for converting votes into seats advantage large parties and penalize small ones.’107 To succeed on the regional or national lists each party needs to pass a five percent threshold.108 This further favours large parties. One of the signs of action against fragmentation was the decision in 1993 to raise the threshold for entering the parliament at the general election, from 4 to 5 per cent, by way of a follow-up to the separating-off of 12 MDF MPs to form small right-wing parties, such as MIÉP, organised by István Csurka (who was ousted from the MDF for his racist account of the roundtable talks, stressed that the compromise that no party would be favoured over the others in electoral design, was a key part of the round table talks. Frances Millard, ‘Hungary: Politics of Negotiated Design’, in Sarah Birch, Frances Millard, Kieran Williams and Marina Popescu, *Embodying Democracy: Electoral System Design in Post-Communist Europe*, ‘One Europe or Several?’ series, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002, pp. 48-66. András Sajó, ‘The Roundtable Talks in Hungary’, p. 94.


107 ‘The system combines three elements: two-round single-member constituency contests; multi-member regional constituencies, where seats are distributed proportionally on the basis of voting for closed party lists; and top-up seats awarded proportionally for closed national lists on the basis of votes ‘wasted’ in both the first single-member constituency and list voting. The national lists thus link the single-member constituency and list-based regional elements.’ Brigid Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange: Fidesz and the Remaking of the Hungarian Centre-Right, 1994-2002’, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 20:3, September 2004, p. 94.

rhetoric). The move also was to leave the Kádárist MSZMP (renamed Worker's Party, Munkáspart) out of the next parliament. This contributed to the idea of the insignificance of small parties, and to the competition between the small parties regarding which, if any, of them would continue to have parliamentary representatives.

Despite the compromises made in the design process, the whole electoral system promotes the formation of a system composed of few parties only. As Fowler has pointed out: ‘the system has two “all or nothing” elements that shape electoral tactics’, in which the small parties usually aim to succeed in getting over the five percent threshold to avoid ‘wasted’ votes on the national lists, and the large parties focus on the single-member constituency seats:

For such [large] parties, the aim in these campaigns must be to aggregate votes against a single rival, by defining a favourable bipolar contest and encouraging vote shifting, by *inter alia* avoiding competing candidates. The single-member contests thus encourage inter-party electoral co-operation and bipolarism if not constituency bipartism.

In other words, the large parties tend to join with small ones for the single-member contests, which leads to the formation of common electoral and political fronts or coalitions, which would in turn lead to government. Furthermore, as Fowler pointed out – given that the sequence of candidates on the party-lists is already decided and that passing the five percent threshold would automatically secure 16 seats for the party, seat-seeking politicians would be wise to join parties where they would not risk missing the five percent target. This realisation would also present mergers of political parties as a viable strategy, as can be witnessed throughout the postcommunist era, especially on the centre right. Other factors – beyond the electoral system and the fear of ‘wasting’ votes – that motivate the electorate to vote for large parties is their seat-winning ability

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110 The number of political parties in the Hungarian 386-seat parliament has dropped from 8 in 1990 to four in 2002, when MDF became the fourth party, after its separation from Fidesz following an unsuccessful electoral coalition.

111 These were thought to favour independent candidates but, in fact, the numbers of independent candidates running and elected has been low throughout the 1990-2002 period. Frances Millard, ‘Hungary: Politics of Negotiated Design’, p. 64. For the logic of the party and political oriented systems in Eastern Europe see Sarah Birch, *Electoral Systems and Political Transformation in Post-Communist Europe*, ‘One Europe or Several?’ series, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003.

112 Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, p. 94.

113 Fowler focuses on the right in her article. Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, p. 94.
and ‘trustworthy’ character.\textsuperscript{114} So far I have argued that there is a latent tendency in the Hungarian political system to produce a two-party dichotomy. This bipolarity, however, needs to be operationalised. The building of the unity and the frontier, as Fidesz – for example – has done, has lead to the construction of two political camps which the electoral system turns into a two-party system. Nevertheless, the intensity of this operation and the way in which it constantly fights against fragmentation has lead to the situation of bipolar hegemony, as I will illustrate in the following chapters. In the next section I will look at elections in Hungary between 1990 and 2002, to demonstrate the move towards a two party system and to outline the party-political background.

\textit{Elections and Party System Development 1990-2002}

The first postcommunist parliament in Hungary in 1990 was composed of six parties, while the 2002 parliament only had four, and the common prediction for the forthcoming elections in 2006 is only two.\textsuperscript{115} This would follow from the pattern Fowler had outlined. The large parties aim at effecting a two-party system, since it gives them the best chance in fighting over the majorities needed for the single-constituency seats. The electorate is reluctant to ‘waste’ their votes on the small parties who might not succeed in passing the five percent threshold. Furthermore – as I will demonstrate in the rest of the thesis –, the attempts to totalise this political frontier between the large parties leads not only to bipolarism in the party system but to a situation of political polarisation, in which the single frontier is constantly reproduced in many sectors of life and governance and all differences are articulated to it. Fowler argued that ‘electoral system effects do not “just happen”. They depend on parties (and their voters) responding appropriately to the incentives facing them.’\textsuperscript{116} Indeed, there are actors who precisely operationalise this kind of structure. Equally, as I will demonstrate in my thesis, the actors respond to and act under other structures and processes. It is in this wider context that we can discover the full scale and logic of

\textsuperscript{114} These characteristics have been identified in the East European context by Sarah Birch. Sarah Birch, \textit{Electoral Systems and Political Transformation in Post-Communist Europe}, p. 129.

\textsuperscript{115} The Szonda Ipsos party popularity polls indicate this, in August 2005, see online: \textit{Szonda Ipsos}, http://www.szondaipsos.hu/polvelkut/partok, last accessed on 5 September 2005.

\textsuperscript{116} Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, p. 95.
polarisation, to which the electoral system is contributing. In the following sections I will outline Hungarian politics between 1990 and 2002 and the already theorised developments, via a brief review of recent Hungarian elections.

The first elections were won by a former dissident coalition that had taken a national-conservative party line – the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), with the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) a close second.\(^\text{117}\) By 2002 these two parties had become the two smallest of the four-party parliament. Of the middle-sized parties in 1990, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and Federation of Young Democrats (Fidesz), have become the two largest parties since 1998, and the Independent Small-Holders Party (FKgP), which followed the model of the interwar peasant parties and became the third largest party in the 1990 parliament, has disappeared from the party map. The unreformed communist party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (MSZMP) and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP), as well as a plethora of mainly agrarian and nationalist parties, did not manage to pass the threshold.\(^\text{118}\) The 1990-1994 government was formed by the MDF, the FKgP and the smallest party in the parliament, the Christian Democrat Party (KDNP).

The first government was known for its focus on celebrations of nationhood. It chose the focus due to its unpopular economic policies.\(^\text{119}\) Schöpflin argued that there were two false assumptions on which the first postcommunist government of MDF pursued its nationalist policies. First:

> It started from the assumption that the communists had shamefully neglected the national question and that Hungarian opinion was determined that historical wounds should be healed. In this context, the task of the new nationally minded government was to act as a protector of the Hungarian nation, regardless of where its members lived, both morally and


politically.\footnote{Schöpflin, Nations, Identity, Power, p. 386.}

The first postcommunist prime minister József Antall's notorious claim was to be 'the prime minister "in spirit" of 15 million Hungarians', which then included the Hungarian minorities outside the 10 million strong Hungarian state. The second false assumption was about the strength of national-populism: The MDF was a loose forum of national liberals and radical nationalists, and its right-wing, represented by a populist István Csurka, was making claims which were not outright revisionist – i.e. wanting to claim back the territories lost in 1920 – but could be interpreted as such in the context. Fearing for the loss of support, the MDF were slow to react to Csurka's racist rhetoric and ousted him only in 1993.\footnote{Schöpflin, Nations, Identity, Power, pp. 387-8.} Schöpflin argues that MDF nationalism was mainly at the level of rhetoric and intended to take steps towards the cultural unity of Hungarians in the Central European region. Nevertheless, this is present at the level of policies. Schöpflin himself pointed out that there had even been plans by the government in 1992 to extend citizenship with voting rights to all ethnic Hungarians in the region.\footnote{Schöpflin, Nations, Identity, Power, pp. 387-8.} These plans were revived when the national-conservative government was in power (1998-2002), under the leadership of Viktor Orbán of Fidesz, when the government granted extensive rights to Hungarians in the neighbouring countries, by passing a the Status Law of 2000.\footnote{The status Law of 2000 granted privileges – especially in the fields of travel and education in Hungary – to ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries. I will discuss this in more detail in the last chapter, where I also show how Fidesz sought the extension of citizenship rights to the Hungarian minority in the neighbouring countries, from 2002 onwards. An in-depth study with extensive background information and documentation has been published online. Zoltán Kantor, et al., eds., The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building and/or Minority Protection, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004.}

Since the newly-found ‘freedom’ of the postcommunist period did not satisfy the lives of ordinary people, the 1994 elections witnessed a landslide victory for the Socialists.\footnote{See, for wide-ranging discussions and analysis: Gábor Tóka and Zsolt Enyedi, eds., The Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly 1994: Analyses, Documents and Data, Berlin: Ed. sigma, 1999.} The party held more
than half of the seats, but formed a government with the successful liberal party, the SZDSZ. This coalition became one of the poles of the bipolar hegemony. Their unity was questioned but was ultimately strengthened by the two parties’ cooperation in government and later in opposition. There exist quite a few studies in English on these elections, since the return of power to the left captured interest even abroad. One of the explanations was that the public wanted a change and the left gained from its position in opposition. Bernard Tamas argues that the Socialists won because their rivals’ public performance was poor. Both the leading party of the government – MDF, and Fidesz, who were getting the highest popularity ratings, experienced leadership battles.

Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, in their survey-based analysis of the ideological bases informing the voting intentions of the Hungarian electorate, observed volatility in voting behaviour and the absence of social bases for certain types of voting They found that economic issues formed only a secondary political divide, while social liberalism and attitudes to the Roma and to the Hungarian minorities abroad dominated the scene. It was pointed out, too, that these were issues taken up by the previous government, while Evans and Whitefield argued that the Socialists had a more pragmatic approach and would bring economic issues to the fore.

This proved to be right. András Bozóki argued that, in terms of policies, the government took paradoxical steps. First it slowed down privatisation, but as a response to international concern regarding developments in Hungary and also to a crisis between the two governing parties, the

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130 The Prime Minister József Antall, MDF, who died whilst in office in 1993, and besides over his successor, there were battles over the position of the earlier-mentioned extremist István Csurka, who was later ousted. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Five, Fidesz experienced a strong competition between Viktor Orbán and Gábor Fodor, which the latter lost. Afterwards Fidesz transformed itself radically. See also Chapter Five.

government introduced tough economic measures (the Bokros package). Here the values of the reformed communist MSZP and of the liberal coalition of anarchists and economic reformers – SZDSZ – merge. The government also turned, for the first time, towards the nostalgia of Kádár era, yet at the same time rehabilitated the era’s most famous victim, Imre Nagy.\textsuperscript{132}

In 1998, the left lost the elections and the former ‘small party’ Fidesz emerged as the winner. Bozóki has attributed this to their elitist politics, corrupt deals and problematic leadership of the left.\textsuperscript{133} Fowler has emphasised the concentration of forces in the leadership of Fidesz towards the right.\textsuperscript{134} Selény aptly pointed out that Fidesz was the only parliamentary party not yet to have made it into government.\textsuperscript{135} By virtue of this, it could offer a sense novelty and the change wished for by an electorate that was disillusioned with the postcommunist changes. The Hungarian political right claimed an electoral victory, even if the Socialists remained the biggest party in the parliament since they had a third of the seats and a third of the party-list vote. The Hungarian electoral system, with its two voting days and combination of party lists and single constituencies, proved crucial. The once-small liberal party Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP, hereafter Fidesz), which had reinvented itself in the national camp and run a hugely successful campaign, gained 30 percent of the seats and 30 percent of the party-list vote. In the second round, it gained a landslide of the yet undecided seats. While the MDF failed to pass the threshold, the success of the 50 Fidesz-MDF candidates in joined-up single constituencies sealed the electoral victory for Fidesz, which formed the government with the FKgP. Support for the SZDSZ fell drastically, making it the second smallest party in the parliament ahead of the extreme right-wing Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP).\textsuperscript{136}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[133] Bozóki, \textit{Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon}, p. 435.
\item[134] Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’.
\end{footnotes}
Bozóki argued that Fidesz’s winning strategy in 1998 relied upon their reproducing the already-existing incoherence of expectations by the electorate:

People wanted simply western friendly globalisation-critical government; they simply wanted middle class and religion friendly politics and left-wing, populist reassurance (*megvalósítás*); change of elites and a strong state.¹³⁷

From this contradictory position, Fidesz worked, during their four years in government, to sediment political polarisation.¹³⁸ Now it was one of the big parties, and, in fact, the leading party of the right. It continued the already-established tradition in postcommunism of doing away with the legacy of the previous government, by way of a mini-revolution at every election.¹³⁹ This served to form the clear-cut frontier necessary for the compensation of the aforementioned ideological incoherence. Fidesz organised and monopolised national celebrations, and set out to build a ‘New Hungary’.¹⁴⁰ Funding by the government was selected on the basis of loyalty to the party, which was visible – for example – in local government funding, whereby Budapest’s economy suffered greatly because the government spent on the countryside. Generally speaking, whereas the previous government was accused of managerialism, the Fidesz government was blamed for establishing clientelist and neo-feudal practices.

By 2002, polarisation was the dominant imaginary¹⁴¹ in Hungary, which structured the political field as well as personal identifications. The elections were narrowly won by the MSZP, with 42 percent of the party list votes and 188 seats, as against the Fidesz-MDF electoral coalition’s 41 and

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¹³⁸ From the Laclauian discourse-theoretical perspective, Bozóki’s work could be criticised for its focus on the ‘strategy’, the perceived potential of the politicians to take the party discourse in a certain direction, rather than focusing on the way in which the party was bounded by existing structures, the conditions of possibility for rearticulation. Nevertheless, and as I will discuss below and in Chapter Two, political rhetoric and rearticulation are always bounded by the conditions of possibility and the attempts to redescribe the situation. Therefore, by attempting to outline the situation and being able to notice the changes in the party discourse, Bozóki is already addressing this problematic.

¹³⁹ This I discuss below in relation to the concept of liminality and the claims of illegitimacy.

¹⁴⁰ See e.g. Fowler, ‘Nation, State, Europe…’.

¹⁴¹ As I discuss in the following chapter, the imaginary refers – in my Laclauian discourse-theoretical approach, to the overarching, sedimented and structuring vision or myth, through which things are organised and gain their meaning.
178 respectively. What aided the Socialists was their position of opposition, which they could turn to their advantage.\textsuperscript{142} The SZDSZ stayed in parliament with 19 seats and had one joint seat with MSZP, and again became the Socialist’s coalition partner. The MIÉP narrowly fell below the five percent threshold.\textsuperscript{143} Because of the left-wing government and the way in which Fidesz kept the MPs of the MDF under its control (as I will show in the last chapter), the small parties have had little real power, and polarisation has taken Hungary further towards a two-party system.

While the five percent threshold and the importance of single-candidate constituencies in the Hungarian electoral system contribute to the polarisation in Hungarian politics, there must be other explanations for the turn towards a two-party system. This is suggested by the way in which the MDF and the SZDSZ, once becoming the largest parties, are then weak and struggle to stay in the parliament. The parties which drive towards the two-party system are mostly Fidesz and, to a lesser extent, the MSZP. Polarisation does not imply just any two-party system, but a system where the two poles find their meaning through the creation of the frontier between them. This covers over the potential incoherence and confusion of their ideologies and the lack of concrete policy issues under debate.\textsuperscript{144}

\textit{Political discourses, a literature review}

My work is not on political discourses in Hungary in general. Rather, it takes a discourse-theoretical approach to an aspect of Hungarian politics. I therefore deal with political discourses in Hungary by looking at the discourses of commemoration and community-building, in the following chapter, and


\textsuperscript{144} This lack has been observed by most of the scholars on political cleavages, as I will consider below.
those of Gábor Demszky and Viktor Orbán in Chapters Three and Four. The existing studies on party-political discourses focus on single parties or politicians, or on individual events – such as elections. Furthermore, while the word ‘discourse’ has become popular in Hungary, as it has elsewhere, the existing literature does not really possess an explicitly discourse-analytical or discourse-theoretical perspective. Rather than looking at the elements of the political discourses and the developments in their composition and rearticulation, the existing studies account for the development of the parties, their values, slogans and personalities. Some works on postcommunist discourses also deal with discourse in terms of common perceptions. Similarly the concept of ‘myth’ is often used, where it is considered synonymous with misconception.

In the Hungarian literature, the work of Márton Szabó is perhaps the closest to mine. I will be referring throughout my thesis to the articles in a path-breaking collection edited by Szabó on discursive politics in Hungary. This work gives insights into different phenomena, from the politics of the discourses regarding the change of system or postcommunist transformation, to

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145 See e.g. Kostelecký, Political Parties after Communism.

146 An extensive and polemical study is: László Lengyel, Kis magyar bestiarum, Budapest: Helikon, 2001.


149 Ágnés and Gábor Kapitány have been rigorously surveing Hungarian values and symbols, along with the values and styles of politicians. E.g. Ágnés Kapitány and Gábor Kapitány, Látható és láthatatlan világok az ezredfordulón, Budapest: Új mandátum, 2000; Ágnés Kapitány and Gábor Kapitány, Magyarság-szibólumok, Budapest: Európai Folklór Központ, Teleki László Alapítvány, 1999.

150 Dryzek and Holmes have surveyed these kind of ‘discourses’ in Eastern Europe, although not in Hungary. John S. Dryzek and Leslie Holmes, eds., Post-Communist Democratization: Political Discourses Across Thirteen Countries, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Ignác Romcsis, et al. have studied myths and misconceptions of the Hungarian past, in Hungary, from an historical perspective, which also points out ‘wrong’ conceptions of the past, implicitly suggesting that others are the ‘right’ ones. Ignác Romcsis, Mitosok, legendák, tévhitek a 20. századi magyar történelemről, Budapest: Osiris, 2002.


commemoration and national celebration. While inspiring to my own work, they remain often quite
descriptive and do not address logics, or take a discourse-theoretical approach, as in my work.

More often than not, the existing literature has its own political agenda in painting the picture of the
party or personality. Whilst I come from a poststructuralist and post-Marxist, as well as a liberal
political tradition, I have no party affiliation in Hungary or elsewhere and my work aims to place
itself outside the Hungarian political polarisation or the parties themselves, thus allowing me to take
a critical look at all the groups and personalities involved. There are clearly moments when an
outside position is impossible to take, but there is also a difference between the nature of many
critics of political parties, discourses and policies, and their pronounced or hidden affiliation with
the parties.

Instead of ‘ideologies’, I prefer to write in relation to questions of identification and party discourse.
In the postcommunist period, the mixture of ideological content, voter expectations and policy-
making possibilities, in the postcommunist government, has made party-ideological reconstruction
difficult. Furthermore, Hungarian party politics has been an elite phenomenon, rather than a popular
issue. Mihály Bihári, a leading Hungarian political scientist, ‘has characterised the party system as a
libegő (hovering or floating in midair) phenomenon that is detached from the mainstream of politics
and public affairs.’ The ‘witches kitchen’ (boszorkányhonyha) of the party elites has been a

153 E.g., Gábor Pál deconstructed Peter Kende’s book on Orbán – Viktor (see also Chapter Six). The already-quoted
work by Schöpflin could be read as expressing a subtle defence of, and strategy for, the conservative right.

154 Here I refer to the combination of Laclau and Skinner’s approaches. Until December 2004, when I joined the
research seminar of Márton Szabó, which is composed equally of people close to and distanced from all the main
political parties, I also have not had fixed academic affiliations in Hungary. Thereby I cannot position myself on the
political map of the party-affiliated centres for research and university departments, which has been usefully
outlined for the foreign audience by Máté Szabó – although in fact I feel that this mapping is more contingent than
Szabó maintains. A visible example of breaking with perceptions, and therefore of the contingency of political
affiliations, among the political scientists is András Bozóki, whom I quote throughout my work, and who has also
been a member of both Fidesz, the SZDSZ and finally – since 2005 – the minister of culture for the Socialists. Máté

155 Rudolf L. Tőkés, ‘Party politics and political participation in postcommunist Hungary’ in Karen Dawisha and Bruce
Parrott, eds., The Consolidation of Democracy in East Central Europe, Authoritarianism and Democratization in
closed world, and the public has been distrustful of the efficacy of this politics, which shows also in levels of participation, in elections and elsewhere.\footnote{Tőkés, ‘Party politics and political participation’, p. 136.} This legacy has contributed to polarisation, which, as I argue in my work, creates political frontiers only for the benefit of the political elites, and even so mainly of the largest political parties, whilst ‘politics’ as party politics is kept far from the reach of the wider population.

In the English language literature, Anna Seleny, writing on the foundations of the legitimacy and legacies of postcommunism, critiques traditional political science for ignoring symbolic actions and holding identities as fixed, and she also adopts the term ‘discourse’ to replace ‘ideology’.\footnote{Seleny ‘The Foundations of Post-Socialist Legitimacy’, esp. pp. 134-5.} Seleny distinguishes three discourses in Hungarian politics. The main one since 1989 she characterises as ‘an over-symbolized nationalist discourse at times exhibiting features of irredentism and bigotry’.\footnote{Seleny ‘The Foundations of Post-Socialist Legitimacy’, p. 131.} She recognises two more recent alternative discourses, one of ‘pragmatic compromise’ and another one which has its roots in post-1956 Hungarian socialism.\footnote{Seleny ‘The Foundations of Post-Socialist Legitimacy’, p. 132.} In Seleny’s analysis they constitute discursive toolkits for the political actors themselves. I will focus more on the kind of discursive projection or articulation – the ‘discourse’ – that political actors produce. Also, Seleny’s study is a modest book chapter, which nevertheless brings out some interesting details regarding historical legacies, in the discourse of the political parties. It does not therefore, however, take a similarly rigorous methodological approach, as I do with my discourse-theoretical framework.

Frequently, the transformation of party discourse is studied in relation to their election rhetoric and success. In this Bozóki’s work in particular, throughout the 1990s, has been interesting, since it shows the contingency inherent in the developments in Hungarian politics, which has broadly speaking to do with the development of political discourses – even if he would not use such
Ervin Csizmadia works with history and ideology, or what could perhaps be called a ‘party discourse’, in regard of the same parties I focus on in my work. In his ‘Two Liberalisms in Hungary’, he tries to map out the past and present, and ultimately outline a difference between Fidesz and the SZDSZ, while also positioning both of them in the liberal ideological framework. Csizmadia plays with already-existing frameworks or stereotypes, rather than looking closely at the elements of the discourses of the parties in question. This forces him to ignore the heterogeneity of the party discourses. Had he engaged in closer analysis, he could have accounted for the two liberal discourses in question as well as for the way in which the parties borrow, or are drawn to, various elements from different/similar imagined ideological frameworks or party discourses that exist or have existed.

The ideology and practices of the Hungarian Socialists have been covered mainly by Bozóki and Barnabas Racz, in the English-language academic literature. The main English-language works on Fidesz are by the British-based scholars George Schöpflin, and Brigid Fowler. The SZDSZ has been relatively under-studied, even it though it has been an important party in Hungarian politics, since it was one of the former large parties and is now a coalition partner. In this sense Chapter Four on Demszky is a rare attempt to deal with the Hungarian liberals.

Even if it has not been subject to close analysis, some analyses of the SZDSZ discourse are embedded in more general studies. For example, in writing on nationalist identities in Hungary

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163 See, in particular, Schöpflin, ‘New-Old Hungary’, and Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’.
Schöpflin refers to the SZDSZ, yet non-reflexively. He argues that besides the Socialists’ bounded nationalism, Fidesz/MDF’s cultural nationalism and MIÉP’s ethnic nationalism, there is a fourth conception of the national identity in Hungary: the ‘national urbanists’. They would reject emphasis on Hungarianness, seen characteristically in terms of the ‘backward, anticapitalist, antimarket, anti-Semitic peasantry.’ This could be seen either as an SZDSZ stance or as the stance of the other (formerly) liberal party Fidesz, which Schöpflin praised for being able to redescribe Hungarianness. It is unlikely many observers would put a 'national urbanist' tag on the SZDSZ, which is so commonly seen as cosmopolitan, metropolitan or anti-nation. However, as will become clearer later in my work, the strong sense of Hungarianness is also rearticulated in SZDSZ discourse, at least that of the Budapest Mayor Gábor Demszky. Nation is in the discourse of all major political parties in Hungary.

While MDF was the most religious and conservative and MIÉP the most nationalist of the Hungarian parties since 1994, Fidesz has flirted with both of these parties and their nationalist, even anti-semitic rhetoric, as well as with communitarian values. In the early 1990s the SZDSZ and Fidesz were the most anarchist and liberal parties, countering the establishment parties and the elites. Despite the differences in the self-images of these parties, Evans and Whitefield have pointed out that in 1994 they had essentially the same bases of electoral support. Fidesz was founded as a federation of young people, and limited its membership to those under 30, but in making the leap to the right in 1993 they threw away the age limits and became politically conservative. The SZDSZ was a loose coalition of anarchists and reform economists, yet at the same time was influenced by the social liberal thought of János Kis – a mentor to many in the party. To counter this ideological confusion and to survive the challenges of parliamentary politics and coalition governments with the Socialists – many of whom are former party members of the MSZMP the one-time dissidents

164 Schöpflin, ‘New-Old Hungary’.
165 Schöpflin, ‘New-Old Hungary’.
opposed – the SZDSZ MPs have become pragmatic politicians. Their electorate still remains largely composed of the groups they first represented – the urban dwellers, Hungarians of Jewish-origin, or simply social or economic liberals.\(^{167}\)

The same transformation of the party elite, without transformation of the electorate, has occurred amongst the Socialists. The idealised unity of the peasants and the workers, as well as communitarian values, still apply to their support base even if not to their rhetoric: MSZP voters are found in urban industrial areas as well as in the poor countryside.\(^{168}\) The SZDSZ and MSZP were united through their sense of progress through ‘modernisation’. The MSZP was neo-liberalised once in power with the SZDSZ, during what Bozóki has called the ‘wars of position’, in which the two parties negotiated their diverse policies. It lead to the implementation of the neoliberal Bokros package, which Bozóki names ‘a turning-point in the history of the Hungarian modernising Socialists.’\(^{169}\) They recognised their common reform-economist identities, which were already embedded in the Socialist tradition during the Kádár era, when economic reforms were implemented in order to cover over the lack of legitimacy of the state socialist system.

As I have already mentioned, Fidesz reinvented itself as a national conservative party after internal battles in 1993, and following the weakening of the MDF after the death in office of the PM József Antall. The new Fideszian Hungarian identity would replace the populist national conception promoted by Antall, which had been rejected in the elections of 1994 with MDF’s defeat to the Socialists, as Schöpflin points out. ‘Fidesz has sought to […] define a Hungarian identity that is both Hungarian and European at the same time, […] and (Orbán’s position specifically) that Hungarians have no need to be ashamed of being Hungarian.’\(^{170}\) Schöpflin argues that it has been difficult for the left – as for Antall – ‘to see that communism transformed Hungarian society by

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\(^{167}\) Evans and Whitefield, ‘Social and Ideological Cleavage Formation’.

\(^{168}\) Evans and Whitefield, ‘Social and Ideological Cleavage Formation’.


\(^{170}\) Schöpflin, ‘New-Old Hungary’.
This is, in essence, how Fidesz has tried to reform nationalist discourse in Hungary. In this thesis I will show how the concept of nation is only temporarily fixed in Hungarian political discourses, tied as it is to different visions of progress and fought over – as it is – as a term. Such moments are contested at the frontier of polarisation, in order to create unity on each of the sides.

Fowler has focused on Fidesz discourse, making important points. Besides nationhood, in the Fidesz discourse, the word *polgár(i)* emerged as the key concept. Or – to follow terminology I will develop in the next chapter – as an *empty signifier*. As Fowler argues:

> The normal translation (also used by Fidesz) of the ideology’s key concepts are ‘civic’ (*polgári*) and ‘citizen’ (*polgár*), but ‘bourgeois’ is a legitimate and perhaps more helpful rendering, with the associated social processes translated as ‘bourgeoisification’. The *polgári* concepts had two sets of historical associations: the political and socio-economic developments of the nineteenth century, and the communist designation of the Western states as the ‘*polgári* [that is ‘bourgeois’] democracies’. [...] the central stable element of the *polgári* concepts was its exclusion of the Socialists.\(^{172}\)

As I will show in the last chapters of the thesis, the content of *polgári* had also a strong notion of progress. It was vague enough to contain a lot of things, in a similar way to the term ‘modernisation’ on the left.\(^{173}\) While emptied out of its particular meanings, the term *polgári* nevertheless contained an element which was crucial for the development and sedimentation of Fidesz discourse. Following Laclau, one could say that the main characteristic of populist discourses is the process of sedimentation of overarching empty concepts, which make reference to the ‘people’. Thus when ‘people’ is here thought as ‘citizens’, one has a particularly telling example of populist rhetoric. As I will demonstrate in the last two chapters of the thesis, Fidesz combines the idea of constructing an elite conception of the people, as being ‘the advanced ones’, and a construction of the people which is opposed to that of the ‘communists’. Fidesz also managed to combine nationhood in its rhetoric with the concept of *polgári*, and de-emphasise it by that concept.

\(^{171}\) Schöpflin, ‘New-Old Hungary’.

\(^{172}\) Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, p. 104, 106

when necessary, as I will discuss in the last chapter.

In this work, and especially chapters Five and Six, I will be looking at the political rhetoric and discourse of the two liberal parties, which started from quite similar underpinnings and took different routes. In the course of the postcommunist period, Fidesz became the largest party and the SZDSZ became a small liberal party. After its second term in government with the Socialists, the SZDSZ risks being dwarfed by the MSZP, who are increasingly adopting reform-economist rhetorics and policies, similar to those of the liberals. The dominant ‘imaginary’ of polarisation, coupled with calls for a two-party system, further relativise SZDSZ’s position, whereas it strengthens FIDESZ’, since it leads the field of right-wing parties.

**Literature on Political Polarisation in Hungary**

In reviewing political polarisation literature in Hungary, I have decided to focus on the works which make reference to the phenomenon that I call polarisation, not the concept of polarisation itself. Here we come, for example, to literature on political cleavages, since the latter is a way of investigating how parties are positioned, and of where lie the frontiers or lines of division between the political parties, along with their discourses and their voters. The literature on contemporary polarisation in Hungarian politics is mainly descriptive, and it mainly exists in Hungarian. It aims to show whether or not, or if so when, there has been polarisation. I will start by dealing with the literature on political cleavages, then, before moving on to look at the literature on the urbanist/liberal vs. nationalist/populist divide in politics. Then I will move on to study the latest work of László Lengyel on the ‘Two Hungaries’. Finally, I will analyse briefly an account of polarisation by British scholar Brigid Fowler. The existing literature describes what the polarisation is about along with the dividing lines, considered too in relation to their historical roots.
Undoubtedly this is all valuable work, even if the literature usually does not tackle polarisation (polarizáció) itself. My input in the debate is to look at the logic of polarisation, and study it through the way in which it exists through being articulated around particular political actions and rhetorics. In the rest of this section I will outline what can be learned about political polarisation in Hungary on the basis of the existing literature.

**Political cleavages**

For the study of polarisation it is important to see how the party-political differences and dividing lines are mapped out in Hungary. This even if the political discourses I deal with are not only party-political discourses, or even if political polarisation spreads beyond party politics, as I will demonstrate throughout the thesis. Dealing with political dividing-lines, the political science literature, on the Anglo-American model, focuses on ‘cleavages’. These enable the political scientists to position the parties on a spatial mapping, to measure the differences between the parties, as well as parties and their voters. This approach has been taken up by the East European scholars analysing postcommunist politics. Already Alan Zuckerman suggested in his seminal review of cleavage literature in 1975 that cleavage comes with a ‘semantic baggage’, referring in its dictionary definition to ‘natural lines’. What is studied, then, is how particular party systems are representing certain already existing cleavages, such as class or religion. From my poststructuralist position the dividing lines are being politically created, through their rearticulation as a system of differences and the processes of political confrontation. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan’s work, which deals with the specification of cleavages as well as the role of political parties in maintaining the same and has resulted in detailed characterisations of the cleavages proper to West

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175 Zuckermann, ‘Political Cleavage’.

European parties, is either applied tout court or is debated in relation to the historical differences in the Eastern European context, as I will show in the case of Hungary. This, as well as a debate on ‘which of the cleavage types is most likely to be held “intensely” and to result in “polarisation”’, as Zuckerman has outlined in his influential article, will end up with dealing with essences rather than logics of polarisation, which I aim to capture.

Focusing on cleavages a Hungarian political scientist, Zsolt Enyedi, has argued – in line with the classics of the relevant literature, from Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan to the more recent Oddbjørn Knutsen and Elinor Scarbrough – that ‘we can speak about cleavage based political conflicts when opposing social groups withdraw into themselves’. This withdrawing does not necessarily mean total disengagement. In Enyedi’s contemporary account, cleavage starts to resemble polarisation:

The isolation between the groups comes into existence because the socio-structural categories (denominations, classes etc.), collective identities, political attitudes and political leadership, strengthening each other, draw a wall between the groups.

Sharing much of the viewpoint of Zuckerman, Enyedi nevertheless wants to demonstrate the role of agency in the formation of cleavages. He takes Fidesz as his example. He first analyses the party’s ideology and direction, then compares it with the MSZP and finally looks at the party system and voter preferences, showing Fidesz’s role in their formation. This work is highly valuable in its attempt to go beyond the assumed basis of party-ideologies and cleavages, especially in regard to Fidesz which, as Enyedi demonstrates, reinvented itself on the right. With Enyedi and the mainstream of political cleavage theorists, then, I agree that both political parties and value

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180 Enyedi, ‘A volontarizmus tere’, p. 3.
182 Enyedi, adopting an Anglo-American style, outlines and executes these steps in his article with a clarity rare to the existing Hungarian language literature. Enyedi, ‘A volontarizmus tere’, p. 7.
structures play a role in the construction of political parties and of dividing lines. However, against these I will suggest that political polarisation is about form and process rather than content. Rather than natural or unnatural lines of division, it is about the ‘drawing of the boundary’. Thereby it is important to look at the processes of drawing, in which both actors and value structures are involved. Next I will review the literature on political cleavages in Hungary.

Tomáš Kostelecký applies Lipset and Rokkan’s four cleavages – the centre/periphery, state/church, agriculture/industry and class cleavages – of Western Europe to the East European political parties, mainly of the early 1990s. He stresses political culture and argues that ‘the post-Communist parties continue to exploit tradition, even when they have no institutional history and are not historical in any real sense of the word. [...] contemporary post-Communist politics echoes old ideological cleavages, traditional political issues, and old symbols.’ With Schöpflin, he claims that the system of 1945-1989 preserved pre-modern values. Kostelecký discusses and locates all the four cleavages, along with other Western ones, in the different party systems in Eastern Europe, but contends that they will not become cleavage-based, like the (Western) parties, although European integration might have something to do with this. His work focuses on the existing understandings of cleavage in Western Europe, and this superimposing of imported categories and the concept of ‘political stability’ plagues his work, even when he develops an approach beyond the survey-based studies we will review below, by, for example, bringing in issues like political culture and symbols. Thereby he fails to understand the particular situation in Hungary.

Attila Ágh, in a study which takes a longer look at the changes, argues that the transnational links

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183 This even though his book was published in 2002. Kostelecký, *Political Parties after Communism*.
184 Kostelecký, *Political Parties after Communism*, p. 84.
185 Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*.
186 ‘It is clear that the party systems of East-Central Europe resemble those of Western Europe much more now, in the beginning of the new millennium, than they did in early 1990. It is almost certain that the East-Central European party systems will never become the classical cleavage-based party systems from the era of mass parties. It is probably safe to count, however, on the centrifugal and unifying forces of the process of European integration and predict that party systems in the region will tend to be similar to what will come to be considered the “European standard”.’ Kostelecký, *Political Parties after Communism*, p. 177.
have played a role in Hungary and the rest of the region, and have ‘Europeanised’ the Hungarian parties – externally, if not internally. He also attributes the bipolarity of the system to the West European model.\textsuperscript{187} Without dealing explicitly with cleavages, Ágh argues that the Hungarian and European parties are thus becoming closer to each other. This is intensified by their membership of the European Union and participation in the European Parliament in 2004, which deepens the ties between parties across the Union. Nevertheless, I argue that polarisation in Hungary has not emerged on the model of the Western European party systems, but follows a logic internal to itself.

An expert on the Hungarian political system, András Körösényi, distinguished three cleavages in Hungarian Politics: the religious-secular cleavage, the political class or \textit{nomenklatura} cleavage, and the urban-rural cleavage. Nevertheless, none of the elites were clearly from the previous system, which manifests itself through its reluctance to deal with the recent past.\textsuperscript{188} Körösényi’s account differs from views such as that of Tamás Fricz’s\textsuperscript{189}, who argues that the urban-rural divide is the main cleavage in Hungary, or Evans and Whitefield (see below) who emphasise the social liberal vs. nationalist divide in Hungarian politics. Evans and Whitefield and other students of Hungarian cleavages have argued that the economic cleavage in Hungary is weak, or at least weaker than the cultural-social one, while Körösényi finds no economic class division.\textsuperscript{190} In his article, Körösényi identifies the MSZP as the \textit{nomenklatura} party, religion as important for the small, right-wing

\textsuperscript{187} ‘From the late 1990s the Hungarian party system has become bi-polar, with about 80 per cent of public support behind the two largest parties. This structure, with parties and some smaller ones is similar to West European party systems, and the Hungarian parties have also developed their contacts with the major European party internationals. It can be interpreted as ‘external’ Europeanisation of the Hungarian parliamentary parties and party system, still without their ‘internal’ Europeanisation, that is without the full internal adjustment of party structures and practices to West European standards.’ Attila Ágh, ‘Democratic consolidation in Hungary and the Europeanisation of the Hungarian polity’ in Geoffrey Pridham and Attila Ágh, eds., \textit{Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe}, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, pp. 157-179, p. 162.


FKgP and KDNP, and, to lesser extent, for the MDF, and urban/rural conflict as central to the FKgP. He also looked at how these cleavages are represented and reproduced by the Hungarian political parties.

Without going further into the construction of the cleavages, Körösény argues that the ‘ideologies and world-views of the parties correspond to the socio-cultural character of their electorates’. What is noteworthy is that Körösényi launched his study from the survey of the MPs, whereas Evans and Whitefield have been more focused on the electorate’s views. Körösényi argued that there was a consistency between the political cleavages among the elite and those among the electorate, whereas Kitschelt et al. have argued that there is a distinction between the cleavage produced by the elites and the views of the electorate. It’s important to note these different plains upon which the political discourse-formation, or reflection, actually happens.

In their book on Eastern Europe, Herbert Kitschelt and his collaborators identified four dividing-lines in post-communist politics: the regime (anti- and post-communists), economic-distributive, national-cosmopolitan, and socio-cultural or traditional vs. individualist libertarian divide. Of these, the last two were attributed to Hungary, mainly through the values of MDF as contrasted to the SZDSZ. Their data is from early to mid-1994, when the MDF and SZDSZ were the largest parties. Nevertheless, later in the situation of polarisation, we can notice how all these divides have been rhetorically constructed into a single divide.

The terms ‘polarise’ or ‘polarisation’, for Kitschelt et al., refer to the fragmentation or unconcentratedness of policy issues. This broadly follows Sartori’s definition, but is the opposite

191 András Körösényi, ‘Cleavages and the Party System in Hungary’ in Tóka and Enyedi, ‘Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly 1994’, pp. 52-81, see esp. Table 1, p. 61.
of my usage of polarisation. Kitschelt et al. write:

Because Polish and Hungarian politicians cannot polarize electoral competition around economic issues in the face of reformist post-communist parties that embrace essentials of market capitalism, they have sufficient incentives to construct a single powerful socio-cultural divide on which to display meaningful programmatic differences and employ those to attract voters. [...] The relative diffuseness of socio-cultural divides in the Polish and Hungarian population surveys may signal that mass publics in these countries are not entirely willing to follow politicians in creating a socio-cultural super-conflict...  

The above quote shows, however, that Kitschelt et al. recognise polarisation in my terms, in Hungary, which I see as produced at the elite level, and which, at least in the 1990s, did not (yet) exist among the population. Given the opposite meanings of the concept, we are agreed on the existence of the phenomenon, while we disagree on the manner in which it exists. They argue that the ‘politicians cannot polarize electoral competition’, whereas in my thesis I will argue that the politicians only constantly reproduce the situation of polarisation and it does not appear to be in the interest of the political elites to pluralize or fragment the electoral competition.

Nevertheless, Kitschelt et al.’s approach is quite problematic. They emphasise the role of historical legacies in party formation, in contrast to the ‘tabula rasa theorists’, and also the non-contingency of various factors, in contrast to their colleagues such as Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, whose approaches deal with contingencies. By this they hope to claim theoretical rigor. They proceed by creating categories in relation to the historical legacy, and offer neither substantive evidence for them, nor a theory to deal with them. These categories do much of the work of explanation in Kitschelt et al.’s work. For example, discussing Hungarian politics in their work – in chapters such as ‘The Governability of Post-Communist Democracies: Coalition politics between passions and policy interests’ – they offer a descriptive account of coalition-building, and argue in their conclusion that the current situation is problematic. The reason for the development

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is attributed to the historical legacy of ‘national-accommodative communism’ whereby ‘the critical actors can less credibly announce sharply diverging policy positions in the most salient policy issues, especially in the economic area.’\textsuperscript{200} This is hardly a strong theoretical account. In contrast, in my thesis I shall demonstrate how polarisation occurs and explain its logic. While Kitschelt et al. deny the link between contingency and theory, I deal with the contingencies of the empirical context in order to make a rigorous theoretical point regarding the logic of polarisation.\textsuperscript{201}

Relying on databases of fixed questions which hypothesise the existence of certain kinds of cleavages, the kind of analysis I have outlined above cannot challenge the traditional or stereotyped essences of the lines of political division. It does not allow for new lines, which may not (yet) appear on the surveys sets,\textsuperscript{202} to emerge and it does not explain and show how the transformations occurred. This is symptomatic also of Evans and Whitefield’s survey data analysis of the 1994 elections. They set out to ‘investigate which political issues form the basis of party competition and how attitudes towards these issues structure party support choices’.\textsuperscript{203} Their analysis, however, starts from the assumed ideological contents of the parties and they then demonstrate how the voters differed from or resembled each other. In the latter task they do relatively well, pointing out which kind of people intended to vote for which parties and revealing the similarities between parties which had been thought of as having distinct voters and ideology. Nevertheless, the assumed ideological contents of the parties are not critically reflected upon. Neither are the schemata of survey questions and their applicability to the Hungarian context further considered. The assumed cleavages do not derive from the particular Hungarian context.

In their study, however, Evans and Whitefield point at something to which they do not award the

\textsuperscript{200} Kitschelt, et. al, \textit{Post-Communist Party Systems}, p. 378.\textsuperscript{201} Unlike the comparativists I have yet to test it in another context, but even in doing so I would start from the particularities and contingencies of the context in question, rather than imposing categorical differences.\textsuperscript{202} These are often designed to capture cleavages that are already-existing, so even if there were some random questions, they may not capture the new and unforeseen lines of differentiation, or demands.\textsuperscript{203} Evans and Whitefield, ‘Social and Ideological Cleavage Formation’, p. 1177.
importance required, because the assumed cleavage systems and lack of contextual analysis limits their thought and analysis as well as the conclusions they can draw. In discovering the cleavages around the time of the elections, their main claim is that the dominant cleavage was the social-liberal and nationalist one, rather than economic distributive one. Nevertheless, Evans and Whitefield – crucially from the perspective of the formation of the cleavages – mention that the right-wing government parties ‘have emphasised’ their own Catholic or Protestant identities and even the purported Jewish character of some of their competitors, as well as raising the status of Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania as salient issues. They acknowledge that the issues of the minorities within and outside the borders and the traditional and religious values were the main discursive content of the Antall government, while the economic issues were downplayed. Evans and Whitefield accurately predicted that the more pragmatic MSZP government would take up the economic issues. Nevertheless, Evans and Whitefield, due to their approach of finding out which of the given options would be ‘the dominant cleavage’, could not name this difference as the dividing line. It is precisely the difference between the two camps itself, rather than a substantive claim, which functions as the main dividing line.

Crucially, as I will argue in the rest of the thesis, what happened in Hungarian politics was that the dividing line between the values of the opposition and the government, however these may be described, became the dominant cleavage. While the parties transformed themselves in opposition and in government, they maintained the frontier. This is not brought up by the cleavage research or the research on political parties, which tend to focus on the singular dividing lines, essences, or characteristics of party behaviour. To substantiate my claim in the rest of the thesis I will outline

204 ‘Hungarian politics appears to remain centrally oriented around long-standing divisions relating to social liberalism, attitudes towards Gypsies, and the status of Hungarians in the neighbouring states. Thus, although the quite marked attitudinal differences between, for example, Democratic Forum voters and those opting for the Socialist Party indicate that ideological cleavages have arisen in Hungarian politics, the key to understanding public division over these issues appears to be factors such as religiosity and education.’ Here we can notice a distinction in Evans and Whitefield’s work between ‘ideology’ and ‘issues’, and I would argue that these two are closely linked and that ‘issues’ such as the religiosity and education can be ideologically loaded and divisive. Evans and Whitefield, ‘Social and Ideological Cleavage Formation’, p. 1198.


206 On political parties, which I have left out of the detailed review here because I focus on politics and polarisation not
the logic along which this operates as well as the way in which the divide is being articulated in contemporary Hungary.

**Descriptive and prescriptive attempts to account for polarisation**

There is a strong myth in Hungarian politics that there are two poles organised around conceptions of the ethno-cultural nation and cosmopolitan identity. This myth is maintained by the discursive strategies of political elites. Two important attempts to tackle this form of polarisation have been studied from a descriptive-prescriptive perspective. Tamás Fricz’s reading of polarisation is well-known in Hungary and influential in the Fidesz circles and in the contemporary establishment of the frontier of polarisation. Fricz argues that the nationalist-urbanist debate (*népi-urbánus vita*), is an old dividing line in Hungarian politics and culture, which has its roots in the 1930s, and in the peasant-populist and urbanist literature. In this he is perfectly well-informed: there is a powerful myth in Hungary about this kind of divide. This is also confirmed by János M. Kovács’s account, an attempt to show the Hungarian case to an international audience dealing with cultural and political polarisation. While Fricz, writing in Hungary, is close to Fidesz, Kovács, located mainly in Vienna, is loosely connected to the Hungarian liberal left.

However, because this dividing line has such strong roots, let me account for its background and then I will elaborate on Fricz’s and Kovács’s positions on the issue. Fricz calls it the *népi urbánus vita*.

*Népi* means 'populist', which, for Fricz, is an unproblematic label in Hungarian politics, when compared to 'nationalist'. It particularly refers to peasant populism of the Interwar period.

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207 Fricz, *A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma*.
208 Kovács, 'Uncertain Ghosts'.
210 Across the thesis, for simplicity’s sake, I also use the word ‘nationalist’. Its advantage is that one avoids the pitfalls of references of ‘nép’ to people’s socialism and the general problems of denotation with ‘populism’. We also will avoid certain theoretical discussions on populism, as outlined by Laclau. See e.g. Ernesto Laclau ‘Populism: What’s
Fricz sees these as ultimately empty categories, and Kovács argues that ‘[u]mbrella concepts such as populism […] and Westernism […] are contrasted as if their meanings were unambiguous.’\textsuperscript{211} I fully support this idea of the de facto emptiness of the categories. As I will show in the following chapters, politics in Hungary is done through assigning meanings to the two camps, which then maintain the frontier of polarisation and the political identities on both sides.

The empty character does not imply a lack of historical existence and continuity. Fricz and Kovács both argue that the roots of the debate lie in the interwar period, with its resonances of industrialisation and the mass-influx of country folk into the city during the nineteenth century. The debate has been revitalised in Hungarian politics over the years, mainly from the 1970s to the present. It coincides with a literary debate and, for instance, the anti-Semitic comments of the leading Hungarian populist writer Németh in the 1930s, which in turn strengthened the urbanist i.e. ‘Jewish’ camp.\textsuperscript{212} Fricz rightly argues, whilst downplaying the role of antisemitism in the nationalist-urbanist debate, that 'the nationalist-urbanist debate is first and foremost a contestation and discourse of societal-political-cultural concepts', whereby the Jewish question may become part of the discourse.\textsuperscript{213} The divide was taken up by the communists for their own political needs, as Kovács writes: ‘To put it simply the Populists were reactivated when the communist elite needed patriotic legitimation, and the Westernizers were sought when the nomenklatura wanted to initiate limited market reforms and open up a little to the West.’ The revolution of 1956, however, froze the conflict – Kovács argues. Therefore in the 1970s the memory of the revolution and the writings of the Hungarian democratic theorist István Bibó, who managed to keep out of both camps, could have led to a peace between the two camps, as Kovács points out. The same could have happened in the postcommunist period, as this was the time (as I will show in the next chapter) when the memory of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{211} Kovács, ‘Uncertain Ghosts’, p. 116, emphasis added. See also Fricz, \textit{A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma}, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Kovács stresses that the Urbanists who had gathered around the publication \textit{Nyugat} were mainly of Jewish families. Kovács, ‘Uncertain Ghosts’.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Fricz, ‘A népi urbánus vita értelmezési lehetőségei’, p. 206.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
1956 was brought into public discussion, as were the works of Bibó. Instead, the conflict, with its empty categories, was brought up in the context of 'political alternatives', in the late 1980s when the changes started – as Fricz argued.\textsuperscript{214} It had the element of restoration of the interwar political divide in Hungary and was strengthened by the emerging challenges of autonomy, modernisation, embourgeoisening and national independence.\textsuperscript{215} Through the years of postcommunism, the MDF was fighting the left and the extreme 'népiek' ('populists') and the MSZP was confined to the urbanist position, Fricz points out.\textsuperscript{216}

Fricz outlines five views on the debate, which can be summarised as being 1) old-fashionedly focused around the national question, 2) a counterproductive pseudo-question (or quasi-divide), 3) focused on antisemitism, 4) focused on a traditionalist-modernist divide and, finally, 5) his own positive view that the 'nationalist-urbanist debate in its contemporary meaning is still real, relevant'.\textsuperscript{217} Fricz argues that in Hungary, in the early 1990s, nation was a new concept which did not automatically include everybody in the country and also that it was not above the contestation of political parties, as in Western Europe.\textsuperscript{218} My constructivist challenge would be that nation always exists through its continuous rearticulations, also by political parties, both in the West and in Eastern Europe. Fricz also claims that the debate, which had recent roots in the ideological conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s, presented itself as an alternative for political positioning in the postcommunist era, and is the strongest dividing line, rather than a pseudo-debate in Hungarian politics. It resonated with projects on Europe and on modernisation and the search for a national identity.\textsuperscript{219}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Fricz, \textit{A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma}, p. 48.
  \item Fricz, \textit{A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma}, p. 24.
  \item Fricz, \textit{A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma}, p. 69.
  \item Fricz, ‘A népi urbánus vita értelmezési lehetőségei’, p. 209.
  \item Fricz, ‘A népi urbánus vita értelmezési lehetőségei’, pp. 204-5.
\end{itemize}
relation to which both positions can take up different contents. Thus his reading of the situation appears a bit formalistic, and his conclusion is that this frontier still has its importance, especially through its flexible articulation of differences. Fricz criticises the position that '[t]he biggest problem with the nationalist-urbanist debate is [that …] it mirrors divisions from past eras, and thus cannot respond to today's challenges', arguing that the age of dividing lines should not be seen as problematic per se. Indeed, old questions may be brought back to politics with success, but is this a dividing line which really resonates with the Hungarians? 

In his account, Kovács refers to the disciplining and group-forming character which the divide had in postcommunist Hungarian politics. This I will come back to in the last chapter. He argues that the populist-urbanist divide was ‘a rhetorical drama that contributed to the prolongation of the old debate. A sub-title of his is: “Back to the 1930s: Changing the Plot and Keeping the Scenes”’. Writing in the late-1990s, Kovács argues that the urbanists had won in Hungary, since ‘[i]n the 1990s, that is, in a post-totalitarian phase and in a Western (or global) environment, it became rather difficult to represent utopian, dirigist, autocratic, etc. programs’, and that ‘multiparty politics with all its lobbying mechanisms helped to break the PU [populist-urbanist] dichotomy by cross-cutting the confrontation.’ Also pluralism and marketisation of the cultural sphere, which would reduce the importance of the ‘state sponsored intellectuals’, who would then depend on the right

221 Commenting on the 5 December 2004 referendum on extending citizenship rights to Hungarians living outside Hungary’s borders, Fricz argued that the result showed that nation is still central to Hungarian politics, whereas in my reading – particularly in relation to the relatively low participation in the referendum and the divided vote – indicated that the politics of nationhood does not interest Hungarians. Fricz essentialised his previously ‘empty’ divide to a question on nationhood and made this divide – in which he is an expert – the most important issue in Hungarian politics. I will discuss this further in the last chapter. The original analysis was published as an commentary in Finland: Emilia Palonen ‘Unkarilaiset hylkäsivät kansapolitiikan’ [Hungarians rejected nation politics], in Turun Sanomat, 10.12.2004. Tamás Fricz, in Magyar Nemzet, 6 December 2004, http://mn.mno.hu/index.mno?cikk=254931&rvt=2&pos=150&s_text=fricz+tam%E1s&s_texttype=4&norel=1&pass=3.
223 Kovács, ‘Uncertain Ghosts’, p. 137.
224 Kovács, ‘Uncertain Ghosts’, p. 137.
225 Kovács, ‘Uncertain Ghosts’, p. 139.
government being in power, would help in bringing down the frontier of polarisation.\textsuperscript{226} In his article Kovács pondered what the future would bring. In the project of Peter Berger, where Kovács’ article is published, the stress is on finding mediating institutions, which might bridge the gap of the social division.\textsuperscript{227} One could argue that rather than disappearing, as did the archaic divide that Kovács implies it to be, it reemerged in a new formulation, in the form of the Westernising but nationalistic government of Fidesz. Fricz points out that that rather than modernism-traditionalism, what is at stake is competition between two concepts of modernisation, which in postcommunism have found new dimensions, through – for example – competition in the nationalist camp.\textsuperscript{228}

While offering important insights into the development of the myth of polarisation, and of its importance in different periods in Hungary, these accounts fall into the same descriptive category as the essence-loaded cleavage literature. They differ from the cleavage literature by taking a historicizing, rather than survey-based quantitative approach. They also offer their prescriptive advice. Fricz suggests polarisation is the way Hungarian politics should be seen and carried out. Kovács suggests that is does not have much to do with the realities of the contemporary Hungary and should be avoided as a remnant of the past, which brings in worrying visions of the interwar period. While I agree with Kovács that the polarisation should be avoided, I will investigate the logic of polarisation in order to show what kind of problems are posed by it. While I agree with Fricz that this dividing line exists and is always filled with meaning, I think this myth is a dangerous imaginary\textsuperscript{229} when it comes to the structuration and motivation of all social and political activity. The democratic ethos in the theory of hegemony of Laclau implies a process of rupturing and sedimentation, not a ‘frozen’ unity.

I will not argue that the \textit{népi-urbánus vita} is somehow a 'false' opposition: it is indeed a common

\begin{footnotes}
\item[226] Kovács, ‘Uncertain Ghosts’, p. 140.
\item[228] Fricz, \textit{A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma}.
\item[229] This concept of Laclau’s discourse theory I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter.
\end{footnotes}
and a powerful way of seeing the operation of the dividing line. The bipolar political system is often named 'nationalist' and 'urbanist' and filled with different contents. Observing in the last chapter the elections of 2002 – the high-point of polarisation in postcommunist Hungary – I have noticed that the competition was, in fact, about two conceptions of nationhood, rather than nationalism against a 'cosmopolitan' Hungarian left. This discussion will serve as the background to the hostile policies of the Fidesz government towards Budapest in the period of 1998-2002, which we will witness in Chapter Four, and the confrontation between Budapest and the government in Chapter Three.

Két Magyarország?! Are there or are there not two Hungaries?

The final example of existing thought on polarisation, which mainly takes the form of discussions, online articles and pamphlets, is the project organised by László Lengyel and Csaba Gombar. The couple started a public discussion in autumn 2004 on whether or not there are two Hungaries, as the situation of polarisation would suggest, and in what they consist if they do indeed exist as such. One of the results is a discussion among experts under the heading of ‘Divided Societies’, on the Reinventing Central Europe website. Lengyel’s starting point is that ‘the Hungarian political class got involved into a kind of “tribal war” and cut the society into two hostile camps: into “two Hungarias”. This made it impossible to solve the problems in a successful and dynamic way and has slowed down the country's development.'

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230 The concept of ‘nation’ forms part of discourses of all major parties, including the left-liberal SZDSZ, which is especially accused of being ‘anti-nation’ and which I will study later in the thesis, therein focusing on the metropolitan discourse of the mayor Gábor Demszky.

231 Most of these papers are in Hungarian, although I am quoting from the English versions. ‘Divided Societies’ (‘Kettéhasadt Társadalmak’) Reinventing Central Europe (Találjuk-ki Közép-Európát?), http://www.talaljuk-ki.hu/index.php/article/archive/18/ (http://www.talaljuk-ki.hu/index.php/article/archive/7/, in Hungarian), last accessed 5 September 2005.

232 ‘Struggle for political and economic power has become more acute. The role of Parliament has been reduced. Elements of semi-presidential governance have appeared in politics. Power has become more centralised, the autonomy of constitutional institutions and local governments has been limited and, as a consequence, the system of checks and balances has been seriously weakened. The vision of a centralized, protective national and/or social state has appeared both on the right and the left wing. The soft democracy of the transition has been replaced by a conflict-based, hard democracy. Political and economic life has become a zero sum game. “Either they defeat us and then all is lost, or we defeat them and then the winner takes all”. An atmosphere of general distrust set in. According to the conservative side, there is a ‘good Hungary’ (“with us, as its citizens”), and a ‘not-so-good country’ (“with our adversaries as its supporters”). According to the liberal side, there is a post-modern Hungary which has a European lifestyle and – opposed to it – a semi-modern Hungary of backwardness. The country has arrived at the
one, and it does not address the logic and function of the situation of bipolar hegemony.

Lengyel’s point is quite similar to my argument, which follows Laclau and Mouffe’s conception of the political as conflictual and pluralistic: ‘The only chance the country has for reconciliation and peaceful and dynamic development is the acceptance of the fact that there are not two Hungaries but there are several "Hungaries", i.e. a great number of social groups, strata and formations with both some shared and some conflicting interests. There is not one single Great Conflict and consequently there can be no one Great Reconciliation. … None of these little Hungaries is more equal than the others – there are only equal Hungaries.’

Yet I argue, and demonstrate throughout my work, that there is a strong and real constant reproduction of a ‘Great Conflict’, polarisation with a strong frontier in Hungary. Analysing the logic and content of this reproduced illusion of a single frontier is vital for tackling contemporary problems in Hungarian politics.

**Fowler’s analysis**

In the same descriptive field as the previous studies, Brigid Fowler – a UK-based scholar of Hungarian politics – has captured many important issues regarding polarisation. I already discussed those concerning the logic of the party system producing polarisation, as operationalised by Fidesz. In that piece she mainly accounts for certain factors which contribute to the polarisation, and mainly relies on the already existing descriptions of the political cleavages in Hungary. In her election analysis of 2002, she repeats the claims as to the existence of an urban/liberal vs. nationalist divide, which captures the totalising character of polarisation still present in

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borderline of illiberal democracy where democrats are not liberal and liberals are not democrats. Democrats do not wish to recognise the rights of the minorities, want to restrict freedoms in the name, and with the approval, of the majority. Liberals are increasingly nervous of the voters who threaten civil liberties and the achievements of modernisation.’ László Lengyel “Two Hungaries or more?” in Reinventing Central Europe (Találjuk-ki Közép-Európát?), http://www.talaljuk-ki.hu/index.php/article/articleprint/191/-1/22/, 15 April 2005, last accessed 5 September 2005.

233 Lengyel “Two Hungaries or more?”

234 See below and Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’. 
contemporary Hungarian politics and society.\textsuperscript{235}

Fowler further points out that the conflict: ‘has absorbed both the (post-) communist/anticommunist cleavage and, to some extent, the traditional left/right economic cleavage, with the right more prepared to intervene in the market than the left-liberals on national protectionist/social welfarist grounds.’\textsuperscript{236} I would like to take her analysis further by arguing that all articulated cleavages have been piled up on into a single frontier. I will demonstrate problems which emerge as a result of this process in Chapter Five. Fowler continues: ‘However, the primarily cultural and political nature of the conflict overrides economic differences – for example, between the liberals and the Socialists, or pro- and anti-market elements of the right.’\textsuperscript{237} This, as I will show below, is due to the disappearance of differences within the two camps themselves. As Fowler argues, this differentiation is not always played out, ‘At mass level, the big parties’ constituencies are poorly differentiated in socio-economic terms, with both major parties by 2002 resembling ‘people’s parties’ on the traditional Austrian or German model.’\textsuperscript{238} In the theoretical chapter which follows and with the empirical evidence in the other chapters of my thesis I will argue that polarisation, in fact, takes the form of competition between two populist camps, as a bipolar hegemony.

Fowler’s analysis, then, brings out important issues clearly and critically, which her ‘outsider’s’ position affords her. Nevertheless, even if it is fine regarding technical detail and accuracy of facts,

\textsuperscript{235} ‘For political elites, this divide has proved a powerful framework for interpreting and acting on developments since 1990, and for generating affective identities and loyalties. Only one significant party, FIDESZ, has ever ‘swapped sides’. All post-communist administrations have come exclusively from one side or the other. Since none has won re-election, right and left have alternated in power. [...] The electorate has looked to a succession of parties for the improvement in living standards which remains its priority, and has traditionally been unimpressed by party political infighting. At elite level, however, the conflict is institutionalised in a clientelistic public sphere. The two camps exhibit different languages, institutions and codes of personal behaviour. In several fields, identification with one of the camps is often a route to professional advancement. In the formal party system, the last decade has seen steady bipolarisation around this divide, with the emergence of two large parties and the hollowing-out of the centre. As a result, the 2002 election was the clearest bipolar contest yet.’ Brigid Fowler ‘ESRC “One Europe or Several?”’ Programme Briefing Note 2/02 May 2002’, http://www.one-europe.ac.uk/pdf/bn2-02fowler.pdf, p.1. Last accessed 13 September 2005.

\textsuperscript{236} Fowler, ‘ESRC “One Europe or Several?”’…’.

\textsuperscript{237} Fowler, ‘ESRC “One Europe or Several?”’…’, p.1.

\textsuperscript{238} Fowler, ‘ESRC “One Europe or Several?”’…’, p.1.
it sometimes gets tied into ‘factualities’ rather than looking at the way in which things are articulated and constructed through discursive processes. My analysis is separated from hers by an emphasis on articulation, rhetoric and discourse, which will bring up insights otherwise lost in analysis. These deal with the transformation of particular discourses, and the adoption of particular discursive strategies. Furthermore, I am able to develop further insights into the processes of polarisation gained in the empirical analysis of the case of Hungary, since I can capture the logic of polarisation with my discourse theoretical approach.

The polarisation has indeed heightened in the last ten years, an observation for which I will bring evidence in the following chapters. I will also demonstrate how the divide is vital for the political elites in creating identifications, and thereby political frontiers. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how changes of power at every parliamentary election also imply changes of policy. I also argue that polarisation keeps politics at the elite level. Nevertheless, while there are attempts by political parties to demonstrate their differences through political symbols, these can in my study be revealed often to be similar.239 The political parties do not appeal to the ‘median voter’ through a ‘one-size-fits-all’ rhetoric, in the same way as in they are perceived to do in Western Europe. Neither do they have centrifugal tendency.240 The Hungarian case makes visible the process in which the ‘median voter’, as a voter of Fidesz or MSZP, is being constructed. Contra Fowler I argue that polarisation does not appear as the hollowing-out of the centre. This centre is marked by crossings of the frontier when discursive elements are contested and redescribed in the manner which I shall theorise in the next chapter and demonstrate in the following ones.

The existing literature demonstrates that political polarisation in contemporary Hungary is an issue worth investigating further. In contrast to the above-outlined literature on polarisation, however, I will not presuppose any dividing line, be it the nation-urbanist divide or something else. I will

239 Even through their binary opposition, as I argue in Chapter Two writing on bipolarity drawing on Derrida.
240 See e.g. Sartori, Parties and Party Systems.
observe instances of articulation where the divide is being constructed and the different ‘essences’ that are projected on both sides. Polarisation for me is not a metaphysical question or matter of description. In contrast to the attempts to attribute meaning on either side, or to historicise and depoliticise the issue by seeing it as a reoccurring phenomenon in Hungarian politics, I will tackle the logic of polarisation. I want to see how it reproduces itself, and point out the function it has in the postcommunist construction of identities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to outline the context of contemporary Hungarian politics, whilst also discussing the literature relevant to polarisation. Since political polarisation is about discursive construction of a dominant political frontier, I have here covered the discussion on political discourses and frontiers in postcommunist Hungarian politics. This existing literature is mainly descriptive, reliant on pre-existing and Western conceptions of political frontiers, and for the most part lacks detailed analysis. Nevertheless, the discussion of the already-existing work should outline developments, coalition-building and frontier-making in Hungary since that which can be called the organic crisis, that followed the break-up of the revolutionary unity of the Hungarian ‘system change’ i.e., the transition, from 1989/90.

In the following chapter I will discuss the theory of hegemony and the logic of political polarisation, of bipolar hegemony. This theoretico-methodological part of my thesis will serve to improve our understanding of the way in which political positions and frontiers are articulated. The last three chapters of the thesis will engage in rigorous analysis of contemporary Hungarian politics, which tries to avoid the pitfalls of essentialism and preconceptions pointed out in the already existing literature.
Chapter 2:

Logic and Problems of Political Polarisation

[A] formation manages to signify itself (that is constitute itself as such) only by transforming the limits into frontiers, by constructing a chain of equivalences which constructs what is beyond the limits as that which it is not. It is only through negativity, division and antagonism that a formation can constitute itself as a totalizing horizon.
– Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985)

‘Politics is [...] a double operation of breaking and extending chains of equivalence. Any determinate political process in a concrete context is, precisely, an attempt to partially extend equivalences and to partially limit their indefinite expansion.’

Introduction

In this chapter I will look at the logic of political polarisation. My theoretical findings are deeply rooted in the empirical context of contemporary Hungary, which will be covered in the following chapters. In a dialectical fashion, the theory informs my research, yet the empirical study always informs theory. Understanding and explaining the empirical context is the main aim of my research, yet I also will make theoretical points by outlining the logic of polarisation. These points are significant to the development of the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau, which has inspired my research from the start.

The logic of polarisation can be captured through Laclau’s theory of hegemony, discussed below. I suggest in this chapter that polarisation entails a bipolar hegemony, which I will demonstrate in the course of the following chapters. Following Laclau, one can say that hegemony is a process which takes place between the extremities of fragmentation and unity. Political identities are constructed through negativity and polarisation is a situation in which the signifying frontier is constantly articulated at the same location. The identities are constructed on each side, and any incompatible differences are blocked out. Crucially, the bipolar system sustains both communities, which articulate their identities through the same frontier.

In the next chapters, I will demonstrate how the maintenance of the frontier of polarisation in Hungary is the primary task of the political forces who gain their identities from it and who tackle any contestation and emerging demands through it. As a form of politics, polarisation is similar to consensus. In fact, it is two consensuses divided by a frontier. While the problem of consensus is that political frontiers are being minimized – apart from that between the people who are able to participate in the polity and those who are not –, in polarisation disagreements are minimised on each of the two sides, and political divisions are all projected onto the frontier of polarisation between the two camps.\footnote{This I will highlight in particular in the last chapter, although I also make it visible in the rest of the thesis.} I stress minimizing since there will always be some confrontation within the consensual unit, but to maintain the situation conflict is kept to a minimum and its role in the political process is downplayed.

In the first sections I will look at the concept of hegemony, as I offer my reading of Ernesto Laclau’s work. In the second section I will suggest how we can take it forward, in the analysis of contemporary politics in Hungary. In the last sections of the chapter I will look at the way in which politics, and especially the situation of polarisation, is being articulated – and how it can be read – by discussing the role of rhetoric in the work of Laclau and also of Quentin Skinner.
1. Mirroring hegemony

In this section I will look at key concepts of discourse theory, such as ‘discourse’ and ‘hegemony’, and finally the role of ‘myths’ and ‘imaginaries’ in the processes of sedimentation and contestation of hegemony. The discussion of these concepts draws on my reading of Laclau and the concepts themselves have been operationalised in this work. I will return to them in the following chapters when engaging in empirical analysis. ‘Discourse’, according to the theory of Ernesto Laclau, is a system with elements and limits. I will look at the articulation of these elements and limits, and what falls, or is projected as being, outside the system, in political practice. This enables me to see what the different discourses are composed of in a given space and time, and how one’s difference from ‘others’ is emphasized in the process of discursive construction. To understand the process of articulation, I will draw special attention to rhetoric in what follows. I will isolate two rhetorical tropes which form part of discursive construction: paradiastole (redescription) and catachresis (the emergence of novelty). As I will discuss below, these might well be placed under the same name. Nevertheless, they serve different functions in discourse-formation. As the quote launching this chapter shows, the differentiating character of the political process becomes vital for the formation of coalitions, and for the logic of political polarisation.

244 My aim is not to offer a closed, or defined, system of definitions or engage in the definitional debates which are present in the fields of discourse theory and particularly Lacanian psychoanalysis. The terms of discourse theory are fluid and flexible, they have undergone great changes in Laclau’s own work from Hegemony and Socialist Strategy to New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time, Emancipation(s) and beyond. The fact that the theory does not offer fixed categories, however, is its greatest asset rather than a weakness, as it thereby offers tools for political thinking, whether engaged in political analysis or political action. Ernesto Laclau, New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time, London: Verso, 1990; Emancipation(s), London: Verso, 1996.

245 E.g. Laclau, New Reflections.


Polarisation in my work does not refer to the idea of a ‘multipolar world’ or ‘fragmentation’. Rather, I look at the situation where two communities are articulated in such a fashion that they mirror each other. They exist through their common opposition to each other. Possibly instead of two, we could imagine a polarisation between three parties, but due to the empirical case under observation, I will focus on polarisation as a bipolar hegemony. This is a situation where the hegemony is split into two parts, which maintain each other through the common frontier. Gramsci described the fixedness of the system in his concept of ‘static equilibrium.’ Following Gramsci, then, we could say that the break-down of a hegemony leads to an ‘organic crisis’. This is what happened in Eastern Europe after 1990, for example. The crisis is organic since for Gramsci it belongs to a cycle of events between the moment of unity – as I call it here – and the moment of fragmentation i.e., an organic crisis. These hegemonic processes, between organic crisis, fragmentation, and unity, appear on different levels and even simultaneously. Therefore the factor of a big crisis is not particularly unique to the macro-level of politics and society, or, for that matter, something that should be dreaded. It is a quite ordinary political process. In this chapter, instead of going into Gramsci’s work, I will study hegemony as developed further by Laclau. The shortcomings of the bipolar hegemony model are discussed further below and in the last chapters of the thesis. In the last sections I look at the process of articulation, in the construction of the oppositions, and the collisions, proper to politics.

Discourse

In social science since the 1980s, there has been an abundance of uses of the word ‘discourse’. It seems to signify everything and nothing at the same time. Here, however, I will use it in a

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249 Norval has discussed this process in South Africa following Apartheid, which, as she stresses, followed the events in Central Eastern Europe. Aletta Norval, Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse, London: Verso, 1996.

250 There are also different schools of discourse analysis, which I will not discuss here, but focus on the Essex based
specific sense – that developed by Ernesto Laclau. ‘Discourse’ here means a 'structured totality resulting from an articulatory practise'. Consequently a discourse is composed of elements, frontiers, and something which is outside its limits and no longer an element of the discourse itself. The elements are linked together through their equivalences, and their common opposition to something else. A 'logic of equivalence’ operates between the elements within the discourse and a 'logic of difference’ between the elements of the discourse and that which is identified as residing outside its system. Laclau argues that: ‘[t]he logic of equivalence, however, is merely the most abstract and general condition of existence of every formation.’ Thus the unit cannot exist without the logic of difference: if the logic of equivalence implies the finding of commonalities, the logic of difference shows what is dissimilar, thereby pointing to the importance of frontiers. Laclau argues that the totality, whether it be – for example – the society, people, nation or even just the party coalition, requires frontiers – the logic of difference as well as the logic or chains of equivalence.

If every frontier disappears, this does not simply mean that the formation is more difficult to recognize. As the totality is not a datum but a construction, when there is a breaking of its constitutive chains of equivalence, the totality does something more than conceal itself: it dissolves.

The system is not fixed but it requires continuous rearticulation in order to even exist. Therefore it is receptive to the contingency of its socio-political environment.

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According to Laclauian discourse theory, ‘discourse’ itself does not have necessary contents or centre. Its contents exist through articulation. ‘Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre.’255 In the process, certain key elements play the role of nodal points, which pin down many significations.256

Taking up the representation of the particular contents of the other elements, the nodal point is overburdened with meaning and, thus, partially emptied out of its particular meaning. To emphasise this process, Laclau calls it an empty signifier. For Laclau, the importance of these empty signifiers is that they are able to bring unity, or the affective investment necessary to create communities.257

‘The society’, ‘the people’, ‘the nation’, political groupings and other coalitions, have to be articulated into existence, and the ‘empty signifier’ plays an important role in their construction, by naming a commonality. In the discursive system elements get their meanings from their similarity to other elements inside the system and their difference from the outside. These systems are never fixed, total or full.

Society never manages to be identical to itself, as every nodal point is constituted within an intertextuality that overflows it. The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.258

In sum, the notion of articulation is vital to the whole process of construction of discourses.

Discourse theory starts from three main premises. It sees, with Derrida, the impossible fixity of

255 Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p. 112.


257 See e.g. Laclau, ‘Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?’ in Emancipation(s).

258 Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p. 113, emphasis original.
meanings or the infinite play of differences; with Saussure, it sees language as a structurally ordered system of differences, and with Lacan, it sees the social as incomplete and constructed as language. Consequently there are no identities that stand alone; they are all relationally constructed. Discourse is loaded with ‘overdeterminations’—structural relationality. Arguing this in line with Freud, Laclau goes on to follow Foucault’s rejection of the hypotheses of discourse-formation through reference, constancy and commonality, a rejection which therefore indeed implies a rejection of common character in favour of a focus upon relations between the elements within the discourse. Anything one might study is partly marked by other things, so to best capture it—its significations, and significance—one needs to look around to grasp it through its relations to others, through similar formations. I study political polarisation through a reading of Budapest, rather than searching for examples of ‘political polarisation’. The logic of overdetermination thus allows me to avoid essentialising polarisation.

To add complexity, things are not only relational spatially but also temporally: their existence is contingent on (re)articulation. Discourses and social practises exist through articulation, which also constructs differences:

As it is not the internal moment of a self-defined totality, it cannot simply be the expression of something already acquired, it cannot be wholly subsumed under the principle of repetition; rather, it always consists in the construction of new differences.

Studying discourses I look at them as articulated in different forms in a context, through practises and ‘speech acts’ alike.

In sum, discourse is not a fixed system or easily tangible ‘thing’ but a complex and contingent


260 See e.g. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, pp. 97-105.

261 Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p. 113-4. Emphasis original.

political form or constellation. We cannot simply define and give content to a ‘discourse’ and then observe its manifestations.\textsuperscript{263} We can only study how it is articulated into existence. Furthermore, while discourses construct subjectivities, as we will see later, they are also result of human action, intentional and unintentional deeds and motives, expressed through the process of articulation.

**Hegemony**

The concepts of ‘discourse’, ‘articulation’, and ‘empty signifier’ help to grasp the concept of ‘hegemony’, important for the study of polarisation as a bipolar hegemony. For Laclau, hegemony is a type of political relation and a process. It refers to the moment\textsuperscript{264} of unity in a discursive system – and the process of its creation and dissolution. At the moment of fixity any contestation or ‘floating’ of signifiers would be erased, and the representation of the system assumed under the privileged nodal point(s), the empty signifiers, and the exteriority – the ‘others’ outside.\textsuperscript{265} The term *floating signifier* refers to the element or concept which is being contested between different discourses or groups, whereas the term *empty signifier* refers to the way in which the discourse and other elements are represented or captured by one signifier.\textsuperscript{266} Hegemony is a process in which unity is fixed through the constant articulation of the signifying elements and frontiers. All elements are either tied to the system itself or projected outside of it. In practise, alternative articulations of

\textsuperscript{263} Here I refer to the common practise in linguistic and sociological approaches to discourse analysis, such as Critical Discourse Analysis. Writing on the case of Austria, Wodak mainly makes empirical and categorising remarks about for example the Haider discourse, the main focus is on the method and the abstraction of data. See e.g. ‘Discourse and Politics: The Rhetoric of Exclusion’ in Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka, eds., *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2002, pp. 33-60.

\textsuperscript{264} By ‘moment’, I refer to the arresting of time or a point of a cycle. It is a tool which enables us to make an analytical distinction between different points of the process of hegemony, which in their empirical existence are criss-crossed and contaminated by other processes. This same formalistic ethos is present in the other concepts I am using, whereby they should be regarded as analytical tools rather than essentialised categories. My usage of moment is slightly different from Laclau’s, who uses it to signify contents of discourses. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

\textsuperscript{265} Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 134-5. For the plurality of nodal points see, e.g., p. 139.

\textsuperscript{266} As argued already above, it derives its name from the process of representation: because it represents many things it is emptied out of its original meaning. It has become ‘full’ through universal representation and ‘empty’ of its particular signification. Furthermore, concepts are all tendentially empty as they can be emptied out and filled again with different meanings. The empty signifier, however, is overloaded with meaning that previously belonged to other elements. Laclau makes this clear in his latest work. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, London: Verso, 2005.
elements always contest the hegemonic formation and the meanings that have been fixed through it.

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe stress the unevenness of the ground on which hegemonising practises mark unity and difference. For hegemony ‘the articulation should take place through a confrontation with antagonistic articulatory practises – in other words, [...] hegemony should emerge on a field criss-crossed by antagonisms and therefore suppose phenomena of equivalence and frontier effects’. 267 The hegemonizing practises, in effect, simplify the complex, fragmented character of the social. However, hegemony is not necessarily a simple thing, but rather refers to the complex process of creating and dissolving discursive chains. 268 Discursive chain refers to the way in which different elements or concepts are articulated together, through their similarity but also their difference. 269 Furthermore, in the articulation of any community, e.g. ‘the people’ or ‘the society’, we would find simultaneous moves towards unity and difference, the marking of the frontiers of the unit in question.

In other words, discourses and hegemonic formations bring a necessary partial fixity to the unevenness and fragmentation which dominates the social. In a complicated way, they aim to simplify the plain of significations. Another part of the process of discourse building, studied in the next subsection, is that of the moments of rupture or dislocation, which question unity and difference, and, if successful, break the chains and frontiers of hegemony.

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268 To use Laclau and Mouffe’s example, Stuart Hall revealed that Thatcherism contained both ‘organic’ Tory and neoliberal elements, and on the other, that the hegemonising process is not satisfied by operating in one but on a number of different plains. See e.g. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 170.

269 Discursive chains can be also ones of equivalence or difference. In a chain of equivalence the elements are structured by the similarities between the element, whereas in chain of differences they are connected through the difference marking the relation between all of them. See e.g. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 127-34.
Hegemony as a process: fragmentation to unity to dislocation

Seeing hegemony and discourse creation as processes – from fragmentation into unity and, through contestation and rupture, towards fragmentation – is vital for the understanding of postcommunist politics in particular and politics in general. It offers a chance to think about how coalitions are built and maintained, on the one hand, and how they erode or can be contested, on the other. This serves to recognise hegemonising tendencies in politics, but also for thinking about forms of resistance against or through hegemonic structures.

Laclau stressed the cyclical character of hegemony between hegemonising practices, the extremities of hegemony and dislocation, or unity and fragmentation, in *New Reflections on Revolutions of Our Time*.

> While there is no form of government that does not produce dislocatory effects – and contain the seeds of its own dissolution – the cycle does not dissolve and is therefore constituted as a pure space providing the means of representation of any possible dislocation.\(^270\)

For Laclau, dislocation and rupture are, however, the ‘source of freedom’, which indicate the structural possibility of acts of identification:\(^271\) we are not wholly determined by structures and there is the possibility of contingent identifications. This does not mean that we are ‘totally free’ in our acts of identification, but, to borrow Quentin Skinner’s words ‘we may be freer than we sometimes suppose!’\(^272\) Contingency also indicates the possibility of articulating new political identities, differences and movements, which is crucial for our understanding of politics and the process of polarisation.

Whereas hegemonising processes try to freeze the field of representation and construct a sense of unity through the use of a few signifiers, the dislocatory processes enable one to question this


\(^{271}\) Laclau, *New Reflections...*, p. 60.

process by introducing new fault-lines and new floating elements, which cannot be subsumed under the hegemonic discursive structure. For polarisation this means that any floating elements are argued into the system of differences and dislocations are done away with. There can, however, appear moments of rupture, radical breaks in the flow, which cannot be articulated into the existing framework. They put into question and dislocate the system itself.

Dislocation is, however, not the only aim of politics, but is crucial to the process – between a ‘freezing’ fragmentation and a unity. As the binary opposite of stagnation, dislocation ensures not only a questioning or a breaking-up but also the emergence of new ideas and coalitions. This indicates its democratic ethos. Because of its destructive/constructive character, moreover, Laclau has also envisioned how it could be tamed. ‘The way to overcome the temporal, traumatic and unrepresentable nature of dislocation is to construct it as a moment in permanent structural relation with other moments, in which case the pure temporality of the “event” is eliminated.’ Dislocatory moments and processes, like hegemonising processes, are present in the way in which social phenomena take place and are shaped through articulation, even if only some of them will cause major ruptures or the fully-fledged dislocation of the discursive systems. Generally, the destructive effects of dislocatory moments are dealt with by hegemonising practises – the rearticulation of unity – wherein, for example, the dual-hegemonic system of polarisation is preserved.

In sum, in the process of hegemony, the hegemonising practises strive towards unity and the dislocatory ones aim to shake the system. In polarisation, conceived as a bipolar hegemony, the dislocatory effects of the demands, concerns and conflicts arising from the social are dealt with

273 Laclau, New Reflections..., p. 72.

274 Laclau makes the distinction between ‘the social’ and ‘the political’. With social he refers to the field of the social (often referred to as ‘society’ by authors who do not reflect on the way in which the society is seen as and institutes a totality) as structured by language, political action etc. The social is a field of relations from which political action emerges and which it impacts upon. These relations and practises in the social are not seen as political per se, but they can be politicised. In this way they are always potentially political, contestable and ideologically structured. See particularly Ernesto Laclau, ‘Impossibility of Society’, in New Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time, London: Verso, 1990.
via the articulation of unity and mutual difference within the bipolar system. In the following subsection I study the sedimentation of the hegemony through the categories of ‘myth’ and ‘imaginary’. Whilst I will look at the logic of political polarisation in the next section of the chapter, in the last section I will study rhetoric and the politics of articulation. This will clarify how we can think of and investigate hegemonising and dislocatory processes.

Myth and Imaginary in the Sedimentation of Hegemony

The final conceptual point I will make in this section on the articulation of polarisation regards the categories of ‘myth’ and ‘imaginary’. They are also vital for the understanding of hegemony as process. The logics of myth and imaginary can be thought of as the glue through which hegemonies and the particular case of a ‘bipolar hegemony’, or polarisation, are set into place. What is at stake is the sedimentation and, conversely, the contestation of discourses. For Laclau, a myth names the potential source of unity.

The “work” of a myth is to suture that dislocated space through the constitution of a new space of representation. Thus, the effectiveness of myth is essentially hegemonic: it involves forming a new objectivity by means of the rearticulation of the dislocated elements.

Here Laclau precisely highlights the rhetorical dimension and the idea of hegemony as a process between dislocations.

Imaginary is, simply put, a sedimented myth. This refers to the moment when the myth is frozen into a totalizing horizon, in order to overcome dislocations: i.e., it is an ideal model of social

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276 Laclau, New Reflections..., p. 61.

277 In the place of sedimentation one could say – ‘decontestation’ or ‘naturalisation’. But since I do not want to evoke the idea that some things could be ‘natural’ and since, too, I want to imply the action involved, I have chosen to use the term sedimentation.
order. It comes to symbolise the ‘absent fullness’ or ‘impossibility’ of society, the fact that any community has to be represented aesthetically, or in an incomplete way.

There is therefore a double movement governing the constitution of collective identities. On the one hand, no collective imaginary appears essentially linked to a literal content. As a collective imaginary represents the very form of ‘fullness’, the latter can be ‘embodied’ by the most diverse contents. In this sense, the imaginary signifiers forming a community’s horizon are tendentially empty and essentially ambiguous. On the other hand, however, it might be fundamentally incorrect to suppose that such ambiguity might be offset by the literality of the various social demands giving content to the imaginary in every historical juncture.

Consequently, with ‘myth’ I am not referring to something ‘non-existent’ or ‘false’ but something which fixes conceptions. In the chapters below I will show, for example, how – during the postcommunist period – the myth about the urban-rural divide, with its stereotypes and conceptions, will become part of the imaginary of polarisation, which leads towards a dominant conception that there are two Hungarics. Similarly I will, in the following chapters, investigate the process of myth-making on a smaller scale, such as, in Chapter Three, the myth of the metropolis and, in Chapter Four, the myth of the New Hungary, both of which are hoped to be turned into imaginaries – totalizing horizons of representation.

**Logic of political polarisation**

Having outlined the necessary conceptual tools to understand polarisation, I will here tackle its actual logic, paying particular attention to the construction of communities and – which is vital to this process – frontiers. ‘A hegemonic formation also embraces what opposes it, insofar as the opposing force accepts the system of basic articulations of that formation as something it negates,

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278 ‘The condition for the emergence of an imaginary is the metaphorization of the literal content of a particular social demand. Let us suppose that a particular social group is suffering a range of dislocations in its customary practices and proposes a series of measures to overcome them. This body of measures constitutes a certain spatial model – an ideal model in this sense: the mythical space of a possible social order. From the beginning, the duality of this space – literal content and metaphorical representation of fullness – is present, but insofar as the mythical space is directly linked to a specific dislocation, the possibilities for the expansion and autonomization of the moment of metaphorical representation are severely limited.’ Laclau, *New Reflections...,* p. 64.

but the place of negation is defined by the internal parameters of the formation itself.\textsuperscript{280} In the construction and maintenance of polarisation, negation is essential. My empirical research has pointed out to me the fact that polarisation is a ‘bipolar hegemony’, where all the frontiers are articulated into the same location. In this second part of my theoretical chapter I will first look at the construction of the people and the space. Then I will study political frontiers and their role in politics.

**Construction of communities**

Above I have outlined how discourses and communities, such as nations and ‘the society’, are created in conditions of contingency – through constant rearticulation. The process of hegemony is a process of contesting and giving content and shape to these communities. In the first subsection, I will look at Laclau’s work on constructing communities, and in the following one I will combine it with Doreen Massey’s thoughts on space and publics. This is vital to an understanding politics, where the construction of communities is integral. The insights by Massey are particularly illuminating as they show how what is at stake is the simultaneous articulation of the people and space, the space/public, as I call it. As I will show in the chapters to come, the construction of ‘the people’ always has a spatial dimension, since it also constructs space, or the imagined or experienced space. This is because the articulations of the community always take place somewhere, and this ‘somewhere’ is constructed, through relationships, in a given space. The community also imagines a space in which its relations take place, which is limited to what is beyond it. This applies even to virtual communities, but is more tangible in the cases I will be taking up, such as the imagined communities around nationhood, cities, and party political units. The difference between Laclau and Massey lies in the way in which Laclau starts from the construction of the community and Massey from a place which is transformed into a space and a

\textsuperscript{280} Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 139.
community. This enables me to ‘read Budapest’, to tackle the empirical cases, whilst simultaneously dealing with particular places and relationships with and around them – to capture the logic of community construction and thus the construction of a bipolar hegemony.

‘The people’ – Laclau
In On Populist Reason (2005) Laclau extends his theory of hegemony particularly to the moments of the construction of the people. He takes this up already in his conclusions to the Contingency, Hegemony and Universality dialogues, with Judith Butler and Slavoj Zizek, by stressing that ‘hegemonic, articulating totalities’ are shaped by two universalising and particularising moves – which I, in this work, refer to in terms of the hegemonising practices that tend towards unity and the contestation that tends towards fragmentation: ‘So there is no room for conceiving totality as a frame within which hegemonic practises operate: the frame itself has to be constructed through hegemonic practises.’ Among these totalities are ‘the society’, ‘the nation’ and ‘the people’.

Like hegemony, ‘populist reason’ is a political logic. It is about the construction of ‘the people’, or, in the most abstract sense, of social totality. Thus it can be extended to other concepts which could equally be so, for example: the Hungarians, the Hungarian left, the Hungarian nation, the ‘civic’ Hungary. Similarly, antagonism ought not to be seen as those critical and rare moments of clear-cut political oppositions such as that between the regime and the underdog, but rather as essential to politics and the construction of identities and communities in any form. Therefore the antagonistic construction of the community or the ‘people’ does not mean that there would only be one frontier or one people. The competing constructions of the people may receive only marginal attention in

281 The difference between Laclau and Massey’s earlier work has been discussed by David Howarth. In contrast to Howarth, I discuss only Massey’s latest work, which makes my point clear. See, David Howarth, ‘Reflections on the Politics of Space and Time’, Angelaki, 1:1 (Pelagia Goulimari and Gerard Greenway, eds., ‘The Uses of Theory’), 1995 [1993], pp. 43-57.

Laclauian thought. Following, however, the fuller account given of the logics of the floating and empty signifiers – which highlight the tasks of contestation and representation respectively – in *The Populist Reason*, the possibility of competing populisms, such as witnessed in Hungary, as well as the role of affect in politics through the signifying chains, can be more clearly envisioned.

One of the keys to understanding polarisation is that there can be a simultaneous process of construction of the people by two or more political forces. In this process, a force is recognised as the ‘other’. It is rejected from the discourse and, therefore, starts to constitute the unity of the rejecting discourse – its outside. At the same time, this rejected force constitutes itself through the rejection, recognising the discourse which rejected it as its own outside. This is how the bipolar system constructs and maintains itself, since all the sides constitute themselves by rejecting the other(s). This does not mean that the other would have the status of a ‘legitimate political opponent’, as it may well be assigned the status of an ‘illegitimate one’, but it is nevertheless recognised in its otherness. In the bipolar hegemonic situation, the polarisation – the strength of the ‘other’ – is obviously important for the strength of the ‘us’. Therefore the construction of the people is also a conceptual or discursive project of assigning meanings, which has wider effects through the relationality of concepts and political camps.

The logic of populist reason, or hegemony, shows how social totalities or the people are constructed through exclusions and inclusions. There is also a competition over concepts and meanings between the discursive camps or political forces, which in turn shape the forces themselves, and the social totalities which are being constructed. In a polarised context we can observe two simultaneous attempts to construct ‘the people’. Both operate through the negation of the other ‘people’.

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284 In this process desired elements are assigned to ones ‘own’ camp and the undesired to the other camp, whereby ‘our people’ is signified through the ‘goodies’ and the through the rejected ‘baddies’ which are projected onto the other. There can be competing notions of the ‘nation’, ‘the people’, ‘the Hungarians’ or ‘Hungary’, which can be seen as floating signifiers between the two camps, being tied discursively to either camp. For example, ‘Hungary’ in camp A would be crucially different from ‘Hungary’ in camp B, because it is being constructed through its similarity to the other elements assigned to camp A and through its difference from the elements in camp B.
‘Space/public’ – Massey

The politics of interrelations mirrors [...] that space too is a product of interrelations. Space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations. [...] identities/entities, the relations ‘between’ them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive. – Massey

Starting from the idea of space constructed through relations, Doreen Massey’s work offers interesting insights to the construction of the people – especially when reading the process taking place in Budapest, as I will in this study. For Massey space is not a dimension but ‘a production of interrelations’. This enables us to look at the creation of spaces in urban environment, and spaces in the political context. While Massey focuses on the social, in contrast to Laclau who focuses on the political, the creation of spaces informs one about the construction of social totalities and political polarisation. Massey’s conception of space resonates with the physical-geographical, unlike that of Laclau’s which relates to the creation of communities while acting against bounded territoriality. Massey’s point is important for my work on ‘reading Budapest’ since it allows me to look at the way in which relations are constructed in the city of Budapest and around the imagined territories – the city, Hungary, and the nation. I will be referring to her idea of the simultaneous construction of the ‘space’ and the ‘public’ throughout the thesis by the concept of ‘space/public’.

For Massey the multiplicity of relations is co-constitutive of the public and the space, in a process that is ongoing. ‘Space’ for her is not smooth, but in the Laclau-and-Mouffian fashion we can see it as an uneven surface crisscrossed with antagonisms. Therefore there would be mediation and non-mediation in the construction of the space and public, conflicts through which the process can be equated with the engagement of the political. Massey seeks radically challenge territorialisation through the concepts: space/public. Thus there would also be no privileged spaces in which politics

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287 This could also be virtual spaces see e.g. Kevin Robins and David Morley, *Spaces of identity: global media, electronic landscapes, and cultural boundaries*, London: Routledge, 1995.
would happen. Therefore we can argue that the politics of the construction of space/publics occurs at all levels of the social.

I show in my work how the political process of community-creation implies the articulation of space/publics. This space/public is useful for the analysis of political speeches, in which one would take into account the environment, and the mental mappings of the people amongst which the space/publics referred to are created. Chapter Three shows how the relationships at different levels are being evoked in the articulation of the space/publics, in political speeches given in a specific moment. The space/publics display increased levels of abstraction, from those gathered on the square around the statue, to the ‘nation-state’ or to the ‘nation’ in ‘Europe’, or the ‘Europeans’. Finally, different relations are being created and evoked in the contestation over different parts of the city. Similarly, one could refer to the space/publics which are not present, such as, in this case, the neo-nazi gatherings in another part of the city.

One can also notice that there exist processes of discursive construction of the same physical places into different space/publics, where the relations are brought forward and identifications through the space and towards the constructed publics occur. For Massey, space is essential, since without it there would be no publics, communities or identifications. In Chapter Four I show how the government constructed new spaces within the city, highlighting the borders to the 'old' city and constructing the 'new Hungary' – a new public.

Often when politics is studied through the city, the aim is to analyse 'manifestations' of politics. But the symbols such as monuments or street names, architecture or the ‘cityscapes’, might at some point have manifested something for the groups promoting them. In fact, they continue to be political in a very different way: through creating space/publics. They are read and related to, in

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288 Massey, *For Space*.
289 Massey, *For Space*. 
ways which had not been envisioned by those who initially constructed them. When different elements construct space through certain relationships, the relationality of language is taken to the city. Conversely, the cityscape contributes to community building, as I show in the following chapters.

These space/publics in the various political articulations function in the same way as Laclau’s discursive constructions. By emphasising the political processes of inclusion and exclusion, as well as their links to political rhetoric in the construction of space/publics, I will take Massey’s thought further towards politics, rather than remaining at the level of the social, where she prefers to locate herself. The space/publics, as Laclauian social ‘totalities’, are of course not total but totalising, in the same fashion as the identities constructed through them are identifications, rather than positive or fixed identities. Both Laclau and Massey argue that the construction of the people and the space is a continuous project. In the empirical parts of this thesis, I will investigate moments in the construction of space/publics, or communities in Hungarian politics.

Frontiers

There is only politics where there are frontiers. – Laclau

In this section I will make points about the logic of polarisation and political frontiers, which aims to take the theory to another level, a level which will be seen in my empirical research, which is in the following chapters. I first discuss political frontiers from a Derridian perspective, and in the light of Aletta Norval’s comments on Laclau and Mouffe’s work, comments which highlight the position of the frontier and make a distinction between fixed and fluid frontiers. Then discussing Chantal Mouffe’s work, I observe contemporary politics and its extremities – of consensual and polarised politics – and also the way in which frontiers figure in both. Frontiers are essential for

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politics and identifications in politics. But I should specify that as with antagonism, these should not only be seen as essential or clear-cut frontiers, such as those between a ‘regime’ and the ‘underdog’. Rather, the frontier achieves its highest moment of importance and fixity in the bipolar hegemony of polarisation, where communities are created through their strong sense of opposition to one other.

In short, in the logic of polarisation the frontier plays an integral part in the existence of each of the two sides. It not merely marks what is outside, but brings ‘what-is-outside’ into the discourse itself. In polarisation, the other, or the what-is-outside, is made constantly present through articulation, whether explicitly or implicitly. The aim of my work is not to single out two sides in Hungarian politics in an essentialistic way but to reveal a discourse about the opposition itself, and to question that opposition by revealing its logics and varying forms. Finally, it could be said that the politics of intense polarisation is equally as problematic as that of intense consensus.

Norval on frontiers of the political
As we have seen above, frontiers are crucial for the construction of communities and identities. Any unit or system would have to have its limits. In order for X to exist there has to be something that is non-X, which would then do its part in defining X. This is called, following Staten on Derrida, the ‘constitutive outside’. Derrida argues that:

what is proper to a culture is not to be identical with itself. Not to not have an identity, but not to be able to identify itself, to be able to say “me” or “we”; to be able to take the form of a subject in the non-identity to itself or, if you prefer, only in the difference with itself [avec soi]. There is no culture or cultural identity without this difference with itself.

The concept of constitutive outside can be extended to any discourse, community or identity-

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construction, and it shows the importance of the limits of the similarity with itself, in identity construction and, thus, politics. Nevertheless, Aletta Norval has stressed that the construction of frontiers is vital to political identities, rather than identities themselves. Discussing Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘minimal remainder’ and Derrida’s ‘iterability’ and ‘trace’, she argues that ‘the general logic of individuation has to be distinguished from formation of political frontiers (and the constitution of antagonistic forms of identity).’

As Aletta Norval has highlighted, the frontier separating the binary oppositions Derrida brings to the fore is essentially impure and, consequently, the friend/enemy opposition is actually quite complex. Therefore Norval suggests we go beyond the logic of exclusion Laclau has put forward.

She argues: ‘The idea of a constitutive outside is misleading to the extent that it lends itself to be read simply as emphasising the distinction self/other, rather than leading to the deconstruction of that binary.’ Norval stresses that the general logic of limits to identity must be separated from the process of political identity-building, wherein the drawing of frontiers is essential. There is a distinction between the concept of ‘frontier’ and ‘limit’. The limits of discourses are not outside, but internal to the discourse themselves, the difference belonging to the discourse itself. Frontiers mark the disagreement.

‘Now, it is possible, […] that identity may be individuated without making essentialist claims and also without overemphasis on exclusion, opposition, antagonism, and so forth.’ To tackle the potential paradox of anti-essentialism in Laclau’s work, which derives from the discursive logic of positioning elements inside and outside a frontier, Norval turns to the Derridean concept of iteration. Iteration implies that repetition would necessarily always involve alteration, i.e.

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Therefore, realising the Derridean twist in Laclau’s theory – which draws heavily on Derrida – or highlighting this aspect vis à vis his theory – contents of discourses then cease to be seen as essential, but always contingent, in the process of being changed. ‘From a Wittgenstinian point of view, it would be important to focus, not only on the moment of differentiation from “the other” but on the “minimal remainder” which makes this identity this identity and not an other. This insight allows one to acknowledge the importance and specificity of capturing the contextual feature of identity formation, at the same time as it recognises the role that differentiation from an other plays in the process constitutive of political identity.’ Therefore, the process of iteration works in both the articulation of the limits of identity as well as differentiation and political frontiers. The frontier is never totally fixed but is contingent on articulations. Thereby, in the process of political articulation we can locate at or beyond the frontier a wide range of elements and we can play with and contest the elements and their location by the other political forces.

Besides limits and frontiers, Norval discusses the particular types of political frontier Laclau and Mouffe put forward in the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, and the ideas of ‘democratic’ and ‘popular’ subject positions, which rely on fluid/contingent and fixed political frontiers respectively. This refers to the way in which our identities are seen as fluid, multiple and overlapping, in democratic contemporary societies, and fixed and totalising in the undemocratic societies of the past. Laclau and Mouffe associate the ‘popular frontiers’ with the ‘Third World’ and the ‘19th century’ in their early work, attributing ‘democratic frontiers’ to the contemporary and developed countries. This idea has been contested by Norval, who argues that the names Laclau and Mouffe use bring certain ideological residues into the schemata itself, and she instead proposes the terms

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301 There are, however, differences. In *the Politics of Friendship* Derrida argues against the frontier building, and the emphasis on the enemies, mainly taking issue implicitly with Chantal Mouffe’s work. However interesting it is, I will not discuss this debate here in more detail. See Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, London: Verso, 1997.


‘paratactical’ and ‘fragmented’. My work will show, indeed, that the seemingly simple and clear-cut ‘popular’ frontiers are present in the Hungarian case. Thus we can also assume that they would exist in other polarised contexts.

Polarisation is the process in which the ‘fragmented’ frontiers are trying to be fixed into a position of simplicity, which would then make easy the political articulation of identities by the political forces. This process is rather – whether consciously perceived or not – tactical for the maintenance of two opposing identifications with little content. In which case, instead of the third world context, we can locate them in a supposedly democratic regime. A more radically democratic and potentially popular move could be the dislocation of the frontier itself and the emergence of a plurality of fragmented frontiers.

In the rest of the thesis I will study the construction of communities through negation and the identities ‘of the frontier’, in contemporary Hungary. The idea as to the fixity and fluidity of the frontier becomes important when we see how identities are essentialised, are tied into content. The move to fix the location of the frontier is a tactical one. It aims to provide an illusion of permanence and fixity for the political identities. This would mean that the political forces do not need to tackle the changing contents of demands and political identities.

In Hungary, the emphasis on the articulation of the ‘popular’ or ‘paratactical’ frontier implies that political identifications are trying to be carried out as a ‘disidentification’ with the constitutive outside, provided by the other political camp. While frontiers are instrumental to politics, political identifications and disagreements could also be expressed in a different way, such as through ‘fragmented frontiers’ and ‘minimal remainders’.

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305 I see the contingent and fragmented ‘democratic’ subjectivity or frontier, in the Laclau and Mouffe schemata, as referring to the radical-democratic ideal of constant negotiations and open-endedness.
Mouffe: Limits of antagonism

The above discussion leads me to investigate Chantal Mouffe’s work on political frontiers. In The Democratic Paradox she puts forward a defence of political frontiers, as against consensual politics:

When political frontiers become blurred, the dynamics of politics is obstructed and the constitution of distinctive political identities is hindered. Disaffection towards political parties sets in and it discourages participation in the political process.\(^{306}\)

Following Mouffe, we can see that political frontiers are vital for both the radical democracy she is envisioning and also for ‘agonistic pluralism’ – her suggested improvement to liberal democracy, which I will draw upon in my analysis of contemporary Hungarian politics.\(^{307}\) Mouffe problematises the ideal of consensus, which she describes as the situation of (non)politics, in which frontiers disappear or are denied existence (apart from those which bound the consensual group or ‘society’).\(^{308}\) In consensual politics, political frontiers are minimized and democratic input, through contestation or the opening of a path along which different options might emerge and come to be debated, cannot be found. In a situation of polarisation, by contrast, the frontiers are fixed. Therefore contestation has no substance, since everything is articulated to the system of polarisation. One of the main claims in my work is that consensus and polarisation form two problematic extremities in politics.

In Mouffe’s vision of an agonistic, rather than an antagonistic, politics, we should be able to confront our political adversaries not as ‘enemies’ – as illegitimate partners in politics.\(^{309}\) Agonistic adversaries are always legitimate and necessary in the democratic political process. This is a key

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\(^{307}\) Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*.


\(^{309}\) On legitimacy, which had been a key issue in communist and postcommunist politics, Chantal Mouffe writes, on the contingency and limited nature of legitimacy. ‘...there is no unbridgeable gap between power and legitimacy – not obviously in the sense that all power is automatically legitimate, but in the sense that: (a) if any power has been able to impose itself, it is because it has been recognized as legitimate in some quarters; and (b) if legitimacy is not based in an aprioristic ground, it is because it is based in some for of successful power.’ Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, p. 100.
point to keep in mind when thinking about postcommunist and Hungarian politics, where there is a tendency to use the frontier to designate anything beyond it as illegitimate. This ‘hard frontier’ works so as to increase unity on the side of the ‘us’. The point in the earlier mentioned ‘democratic frontier’ is to keep the situation fluid and to maintain the contingency of the frontier. This would mean that neither ‘us’ nor ‘them’ would designate essentialist positive identities, but the identifications would exist through constant articulation. The frontier would be constantly negotiated and redrawn, not simply affirmed.

Mouffe critiques the thesis of Anthony Giddens on the disappearance of the left/right frontier, ‘the radical centrism advocated by the New Labour’ in Britain, and the contemporary liberal ideal of harmony through dialogue.

Nowadays politics operates supposedly on a neutral terrain and solutions are available that could satisfy everybody. Relations of power and their constitutive role in society are obliterated and the conflicts that they entail reduced to a simple competition of interests that can be harmonized through dialogue. This is a typical liberal perspective that envisages democracy as a competition among elites, making adversary forces invisible and reducing politics to an exchange of arguments and negation of compromises.  

Consensus keeps politics at the elite level and brings about an illusion that politics is about doing governance, that it is a ‘trade’ or ‘business’ and has nothing to do with contestation: the government is ‘running the country’ and it should not be disturbed. In this way, the neo-liberal logic of the market, with competition between certain products or ideas, is brought in to politics.

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The postcommunist countries have followed the liberal model in redesigning their political and economic systems, but certain contextual factors make them differ from the consensual west. Nevertheless, they end up repeating the problematic described by Mouffe. While Mouffe bases her analysis on the traditional liberal democracies of the West, George Schöpflin, dealing with postcommunism, argues that the contest is over something more fundamental: ‘Different social, political and cultural forces, with their own projects and languages of legitimation are engaged in a contest as to what contours the system should assume, what the inner meaning of democracy is and, vitally, what is to be the role of the nation and of citizenship under the new dispensation.’

This appears to deal with the contestation over relationships of power and the constitution of society called for by Mouffe. However, and similar to the Western case, we witness, in Hungary, a competition among elites, based on the attempts to pinpoint the existence and location of adversaries, which would reduce politics to an exchange of arguments and the construction of a frontier whose only purpose is conveniently mark the identities of political forces.

In contrast to consensual politics, which would de-emphasise political frontiers in the face of ‘rational’ dialogue, the frontier of polarisation attempts to set the border in a single location. All that political contestation would amount to is the affirmation of the existing frontier. Identities are created through the frontier in the sense that the frontier itself cannot be put in question. Characteristically, there is little beyond the frontier, since all political effort is focused on the maintenance of a single line of difference. In this case, the ‘popular’ or ‘paratactical’ frontier is not leading politics towards agonistic pluralism – the open and contestational politics Mouffe is envisioning. It moves towards closure.

The call for passion in politics and the idea of affect, both of which are also addressed by Mouffe,  

are directed towards solving the problem of consensual politics, in which decisions are made pragmatically in an already imagined community wherein nothing contests the constitution of ‘rationality’ and the ‘community’ as such.\footnote{On the politics of ‘rationality’ see Bent Flyvberg’s work on the establishment of rationalities in the local context. Bent Flyvberg, \textit{Rationality & Power; Democracy in Practice}, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.} For example, Rancière would speak here about the logic of the ‘police’, rather than of ‘politics’ – which would instead be about contestation.\footnote{See particularly, Jacques Rancière, \textit{Disagreement: politics and philosophy}, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.}

Looking at polarisation, however, it could be said that the frontier, which Norval has redescribed as paratactical, can be identified as a source of passions, at least for key periods. For instance, the extreme polarisation in Hungarian politics increased participation in the 2002 general election.\footnote{Approximately 70 per cent of the electorate made it to the polls in the 2002 elections in Hungary, although voting has been decreasing in many other formerly state-socialist countries. Sarah Birch, \textit{Electoral Systems and Political Transformation in Post-Communist Europe}, ‘One Europe or Several?’ series, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003, pp. 60-61.} It has brought affect into party politics, even to the extent that the majority of the population was carrying its party political affiliations – or not – as a token, \textit{kokárda}, on their chest.\footnote{I have looked at this in more detail in the first and last chapters of the thesis.} However, it has the same effect as does consensual politics. For the sedimented frontier merely keeps politics at the elite level, serves as an excuse not to engage in issues beyond this particular divide – or to articulate any emerging concerns into the division.

Mouffe argues: ‘[o]ne should realize that a lack of democratic contestation over \textit{real} political alternatives leads to antagonisms manifesting themselves under forms that undermine the very basis of the democratic public sphere.’\footnote{Mouffe, \textit{Democratic Paradox}, p. 114-5, emphasis added.} In consensual polities the lack of political alternatives leads to antagonisms which cannot be dealt with in the existing political forums. The same happens in pseudo-political polities, as are to be found in the polarised Hungary, where there appears to be a high level of contestation but the \textit{real} political alternatives or new concerns are excluded from contestation. In a polarised society ‘real political alternatives’, real dividing lines, are hidden behind the frontier. In the same way the left/right distinction – once it has become sedimented and now
only functions as a shell filled with archaic meanings, in relation to which the parties canvas votes—loses its meaning as a substantive dividing line, and no longer anything to do with the values which would influence policy preferences.

**Conclusion on the problematic of frontiers**

I have shown, with Laclau, that frontiers are essential for the processes of the construction of the people, and, with Massey, that the people and space are simultaneously created. Furthermore, I have argued, with Derrida and Norval, that political frontiers are necessary for the construction of communities and identifications yet that these are not outside the discourse but at the frontier, are both fixed and fluid, and that their deconstruction is a vital task for the analyst. I have followed Mouffe’s argument that frontiers must exist and be kept active, in order to bring forward alternatives and the passion for politics. The minimizing of frontiers causes problems for both consensual and polarised politics, problems which do not differ much. Frontiers should be multiple, fluid, contestable and contested. Recognition that articulation of political identifications happens through frontiers does not imply that there would have to be a single frontier. The single frontier or the freezing of the consensus both cause a situation of pseudo-politics, or the ‘politics’ of the ‘police’, to abuse Rancière’s term. This blocks out ‘true’ contestation, which would bring up new issues or enable the forming of new and changing coalitions, instead of merely reaffirming a frontier, as the current ‘contestation’ in Hungary does. In studying this frontier, in the following chapters, I hope to show how they are constructed, deconstructed and reaffirmed.

*Politics of rhetoric: articulating – and reading – political polarisation*
Synonymy, metonymy, metaphor are not forms of thought that add a second sense to a primary, constitutive literality of social relations; instead, they are part of the primary terrain itself in which the social is constituted. – Laclau and Mouffe

In the previous sections, I have shown that ‘articulation’ is vital for politics. In this section, I will look at the process of articulation, as I see it occurring in politics. As the above quote shows, Laclau and Mouffe recognised early on the link between rhetoric and the constitution of our realities – the construction of the social as a political process. Here I pay attention to two tropes: catachresis, developed further by Laclau, and paradiastole, studied by Quentin Skinner. These, and the analytic distinction between them, are crucial to the understanding and articulation of polarisation. Political forms such as polarisation find their shape and are contested through rhetorical manoeuvres. Rhetoric is the force which creates novelty: new coalitions, discourses, frontiers, etc., are articulated through rhetorical moves.

In the history of social and political thought the recent roots of a ‘turn to rhetoric’ can be traced to Nietzsche, and to Perelman’s *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Literary thinkers such as Derrida, Barthes, Todorov, and others (drawing largely on Saussure and the Russian formalists) were studying and developing rhetoric since the 1960s. In the social sciences the turn to rhetoric appeared either as part or outcome of the Foucauldian discursive turn in the late 1980s. In the history of political thought, Quentin Skinner significantly re-appropriated rhetoric.

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319 The recognition of the form of catachresis in Laclau’s work can also already be found in the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, when Laclau quotes Derrida, as follows: ‘The process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of a central presence – but as a centre which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself onto its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it, henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre...’ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 112. In this process we can recognise the way in which catachresis also functions as the *Ur*-trope for Laclau, that of the ultimate contingency and unfixity of meanings, which, as we will see below, is the main thesis in the turn to rhetoric, since Nietzsche.
In psychoanalysis rhetoric plays an important role in constructing our thought-worlds. There is a tendency to understand rhetoric either as the figurative use of language or the art of persuasion. Elements of both of these aspects are present in the approach I suggest here. The point is that we can think of political changes involving rhetoric both in terms of the structures of thought and of linguistic and rhetorical moves.

In this section, I first show how rhetoric can be seen as the ‘politics of the new’ and how it forms the basis for articulation, for the existence of things. Then I discuss, in more detail, two aspects of rhetoric: redescriptions, taken up by Skinner, and catachresis, by Laclau. Both of the thinkers are tied to a Nietzschean tradition of thinking rhetoric, through their anti-positivism and anti-essentialism. This despite the fact that Laclau tends to emphasize the idea of rhetoric as tropology (the study of tropes, figures of thought, and models of language) whereas Skinner is more interested in the performative, persuasive aspect of rhetoric. This section will enable us to proceed from the already-outlined concepts towards a fuller understanding of the logic of discourse theory and political polarisation. Since hegemonising and contesting processes occur through articulation, I will next show how rhetoric is vital for our understanding of articulation, and of discursive political changes. After outlining the creative force of rhetoric, I will consider two rhetorical strategies: paradiastole and catachresis.

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326 In this logic of location, and reading of the similarity, I’m indebted to Alejandro Groppo whose yet unpublished work I have been acquainted with on course on "Rhetoric and Discourse Theory", in the University of Essex, Summer School in Discourse Analysis. Also Kari Palonen’s work on Skinner has been instrumental for my analysis, especially Kari Palonen, Quentin Skinner: History, Politics, Rhetoric, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, especially chapter 6 ‘From Philosophy to Rhetoric’.
**Rhetoric as politics of the new**

What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after a long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions…

[...]

Only by forgetting that primitive world of metaphors, only by the congelation and coagulation of an original mass of similes and percepts pouring forth as a fiery liquid out of the primal faculty of human fancy, only by the invincible faith, that *this* sun, *this* window, *this* table is a truth in itself: in short only by the fact that man forgets himself as a subject, and what is more as an *artistically creating* subject: only by all this does he live with some repose, safety and consequence.

Crucial to the idea of rhetoric as politics of novelty is the discovery of creativity and the contingency of our concepts and ‘truths’, which Nietzsche stressed in his writings on rhetoric. Nietzsche writes about the ‘primitive world of metaphors’. From a Lacanian perspective we can also see that rhetoric – tropological thought – is vital for dealing with the constitutive lack in language, i.e. connecting the finite number of words and infinite things in the world. Rhetoric, therefore, implies an invention on the part of the language to find words to match the concepts we have. Rhetoric holds the key to articulation and thereby the existence of political discourses and systems, such as that of polarisation.

Perhaps the most commonly known trope is *metaphor*. The politics of metaphor designates the way in which we use certain figurative terms rather than others for certain political phenomena. This usage brings something new to the concept which we, for the moment, substitute with another term. Similarly, the process might contaminate the term, which now takes up the representation of the concept replaced. Jacques Lacan writes:

> Metaphor’s creative spark does not spring forth from the juxtaposition of two images, that is, of two equally actualized signifiers. It flashes between two signifiers, one of which has replaced the other by taking the other’s place in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present by virtue of its (metonymic) connection to the rest of the chain.

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328 Nietzsche, ‘On truth and falsity in their ultramoral sense’, p. 184.

329 See e.g. Lacan, *Ecrits*.

In studying politics and rhetoric, the focus is not on mere replacement but on the effects of it in the context where different elements are interrelated or overdetermined by meanings invested in them. When, in a political context, one term is replaced by another, we look at the effects it has upon the context and to what is being argued. Rather than at the level of radical changes, we can also observe the process of rhetoric at the level of *iteration*, to speak like Derrida – repetition which would always necessarily leave *traces* of what is repeated, whereby it would be changing its meanings and the meanings around it.³³¹ This means that while using them we rearticulate and change, at least to the minimal degree, our concepts.

Even if we take rhetoric to such a banal level as repetition, what is at stake is not a claim merely about the arbitrariness of meanings and their replacements as such, but one about contestation and transformation of specific conceptions. Skinner writes on paradiastole, the trope of redescription:

> As Quintilian explicitly adds, this means that strictly speaking we ought not to describe the technique [of paradiastole] as a case of substituting one word for another. ‘For no one supposes that the words prodigality and liberality mean the same thing; the difference is rather that one person calls something prodigal which another thinks of as liberality.’ What we are really claiming is that the *res* – the actual behaviour – possesses a different moral character from that which our dialectical opponents may have assigned to it.³³²

In this way, tropes lead us towards the understanding of contingency and articulation in politics. Going back to the Nietzsche quote above, we can now better appreciate the emphasis on the ‘artistically creating subject’. It implies precisely the possibility of articulation and of acts of identification which create the subject and the world around the subject, but which also allow for uncertainty and potential political turbulence. Through rhetoric, we create words and concepts by baptising, redescribing or renaming.

The element of persuasion in rhetoric is important for Skinner because it implies the role of the

³³¹ See on iteration discussion above and Derrida, ‘Limited Inc.’.

orator – the innovative ideologist in the process of political change\textsuperscript{333} – but it also implies a change in the ‘social world’ or the ‘social imaginary’.\textsuperscript{334} Laclau strongly objects to the idea of rhetoric as (mere) persuasion, because for him rhetoric is tropology which outlines ontological logics of politics, that structure the social. Thereby, tropes would reveal how changes occur and politics – moves between unity and fragmentation, for example – takes place.\textsuperscript{335} As I will show below, these two aspects of rhetoric, persuasion and tropology are not as distinct as one might think.

Skinner argues with Quintilian that ‘paradiastolic redescription [is] a \textit{perennial} possibility’,\textsuperscript{336} which indicates the contingency of concepts and language. This, and the idea of relationality, are central to both Laclau and Skinner’s thought. For Skinner, the politico-normative concepts have neighbourly relations with others, which will also play a role in the forming and changing of their meanings. ‘[M]any vices are “neighbours” of the virtues.’\textsuperscript{337} In his study of Skinner, Kari Palonen argues that the study of ideology is a resource for understanding how the context informs us about the ‘points’ of the agents, when they intervene in contemporary debates.\textsuperscript{338} Paradoxically, the importance of orators as individual actors is relativised, which reveals why scholars like Skinner and Palonen would be interested in them in the first place:

The wider intellectual horizon of each of the authors can rather be understood as a contextual element that facilitates our understanding of the aspects of their current moves. Correspondingly, the writers are dealt with less as concrete persons than as agents who intervene in debates on contemporary theory politics. Or, to put in another way, individuals are interesting only in so far as they facilitate the understanding of what they are doing when intervening in acute controversies.\textsuperscript{339}

In other words, the analysis of the articulation of changes goes beyond a single, momentary speech act and now contributes to changes in the normative-ideological order – which is also the object of

\textsuperscript{333} Kari Palonen’s work has focused on this aspect, especially Palonen, \textit{Quentin Skinner}.


\textsuperscript{338} Palonen, \textit{Quentin Skinner}, pp. 78-80.

\textsuperscript{339} Palonen, \textit{Quentin Skinner}, p. 79.
analysis for Laclau. I take this as my guiding line in the following chapters, when studying the speeches of Hungarian politicians.

On my reading, Laclau’s development of the theory of hegemony through rhetoric and – later – to the discussion of ‘catachresis’, indicates a shift of emphasis from tropological forms, the spatialising of political formations, to processes. The emergence of the form, or the realisation of the thing that could not be articulated before, is crucial for catachresis. Furthermore, the move towards rhetoric and a catachrestical politics, for Laclau, has been one of rethinking the role of affect in politics, which emphasises rhetorical moves and the people involved in political action. For instance, when I talk about (re)naming, I cannot ignore the idea of the connection between the object being named and the people involved in the naming process itself, and the relation of affect it implies. Here I do not merely talk about the formation being produced through empty or floating signifiers, but the processes, and the effects it has on subjectivities.

In the following sections I will outline two paths to innovation through rhetoric: the Skinnerian paradiastole, i.e. redescription, and the Laclauian catachresis, i.e. ‘naming the unnameable’. The latter refers to the naming of a novelty, something that could not be named or did not exist with a name prior to the moment of baptism. The former refers to the novelty created through redescription. Laclau argues, following Quintilian, that both of these tropes are the same thing. Redescribing would necessarily lead to novelty, since any change in the concept, composed of both signifier and the signified, would be a new formulation. On the other hand, the hegemonic process, where the signifier is named as a common denominator, does not, for him, start from a tabula rasa. Rather there are already-existing elements floating in the discursive field. Skinner focuses on paradiastolic moves of rhetorical redescription, as opposed to the logic of


unity/fragmentation emphasised by Laclau. I suggest that we ought to understand the distinction between catachresis and paradiastole in order to understand the political logics at stake in these rhetorical moves – and to capture the articulation of political polarisation.

**Skinner: politics of redescription**

Paradiastole is a trope of rhetorical redescription, where a term is substituted by another term, generally considered contradictory. It implies a rhetorical move. Typically it has been turning vices to virtues, ruthlessness to courageousness etc., or *vice versa*.

As Quintilian emphasises, the essence of the technique may thus be said to consist of replacing a given evaluative description with a rival term that serves to picture the action no less plausibly, but serves at the same time to place it in a contrasting moral light. You seek to persuade your audience to accept your new description, and thereby to adopt a new attitude towards the action concerned.\(^{342}\)

In paradiastole, the idea of an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ and the triangular arrangement between the orator, the opponents and the audience to persuade becomes clear. Redescription is the ‘crossing of the floor’, where the normative – i.e. the ideological – tone of something is changed by its renaming, and thus adapted to another conceptual setting. I say ideological because, for Skinner, the normative is ultimately ideological:

> all attempts to legislate about the ‘correct’ use of normative terms must be regarded as equally ideological in character. Whenever such terms are employed, their application will always reflect a wish to impose a particular moral vision of the workings of the social world.\(^{343}\)

In other words, paradiastole is a political logic which imposes a change in the normative order through the redescription of a specific concept. Paradiastole offers a political chance for redescribing the terrain in which one is operating, for putting into question or reversing the dominant conceptions which organise it. In the following chapters on the politics of polarisation, I will show how the elements being ascribed to ones ‘own’ camp are ‘good’, and those displaced onto the camp of the ‘other’s’ are ‘bad’. Sometimes they are also contested, and their character as ‘ours’

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or ‘theirs’ – or in the totalising bipolar world – ‘good’ or ‘bad’, which emphasises their normative value – is put into question. Paradiastole, therefore, makes visible the construction of the frontier, through articulating the contents on either or both sides of it.

**Naming, affect and catachresis**

The fullness of society is an impossible object which successive contingent contents try to impersonate through catachrestical displacements. This is exactly what hegemony means.344

This relation by which a particular content becomes the signifier of the absent communitarian fullness is exactly what we call a *hegemonic relationship*.345

… this representation is strictly catachrestical in its function as far as *it gives a name to an impossible object*, i.e. an object which can only exist through the act of naming.346

… 1) catachresis is the use of a figural term where there is no literal term that can replace it (e.g. when we speak of a leg of a chair); 2) catachresis is not, strictly speaking, a figure, for any kind of rhetorical figure *sensu stricto* can become catachrestical as far as there is no corresponding literal term […]; 3) as any rhetorical figure adds some meaning which could not be transmitted by the direct use of a literal term, all figures are, to some extent catachrestical.347

Laclau uses catachresis in (at least) three ways, between which he does not differentiate. As the first two quotes show, catachresis is seen as a synonym for the hegemonic processes. Relatedly, he sees it as the naming of the impossible object, such as society, which also creates it. Finally, in a universalising move, it can be considered ‘a dimension of the rhetoricity itself’,348 as Laclau argues, following Parker.349 It emphasises the gap in language between objects and terms. This moulding together of the aspects of catachresis in Laclau’s work obscures the understanding of catachresis as a political logic – which Laclau clearly feels it to be.350 It is important to notice that with catachresis

344 Laclau, in Butler, Laclau and Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, p. 78.
345 Laclau, ‘Why do empty signifiers matter to politics?’ reprinted in *Emancipation(s)*, p. 45
350 Laclau. ‘Glimpsing the future’, p. 306. The obscuring is symptomatic of a similar universalisation of the category of hegemony in Laclau’s writings, which has been subject to critique. See e.g. Butler, Laclau and Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*. 
we are not primarily talking about the crossing of the frontier but about unity. Construction of unity implies the process of assuming under the same name something which would not otherwise be assumed, such as the institution of hegemony on a field crisscrossed by antagonisms – or, crucially, the articulation of difference and fragmentation in a field where things are seen fixed, unified and uncontested. As a trope which offers illusions of essences, however temporary they may be, catachresis also allows for the articulation of the frontier – thereby making the cleavage visible.

For Laclau, hegemony, which derives from the Gramscian tradition, corresponds to the catachrestical ‘naming of the unnameable’ in two ways. On the one hand, hegemony entails the idea of a particularity taking the representation of a whole which did not exist before the process of its representation. Consequently it shows the process of coalition-building. The process of catachresis implies naming a whole which is always only represented through its component elements. In this sense ‘the naming of the unnameable’ refers to the contingent relationship between the unifying ‘empty signifier’ and the elements of the totality, as well as to the artificial way in which the link has been made. On the other hand, the frontiers of hegemony are unnameable because they are not fixed but in a constant flux and have no necessary essence. Naming them constitutes the totality itself. Their disappearance would mean the dissolution of the totality. Ultimately, this logic is, for Laclau, the logic of politics. In politics there are no ‘natural’ frontiers or communities. Consequently, the naming of the unnameable, in a situation of polarisation, implies the naming of the frontier – or what is beyond it – and thereby the construction of the unity for the unit itself.

In the process of naming, what is at stake is some sort of investment (Laclau uses the term ‘ethical

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investment’

354) or some input into the process of transformation which emphasises the link between the named and the forces involved in naming. This we can capture through the notion of affect. For Laclau, the catachrestical moment is fundamental to subjectivity because it transforms not only the named object but anything that is linked or related to the object itself. In terms of the political articulation of unity and difference, as in the discursive construction of hegemonies (political polarisation, for example), the ethical investment is crucial in building the relation between the subjects (e.g. orators, the masses and their discourses, hegemonies, movements), as well as the subjects and objects of politics.

The moment of naming is vital for politics, since due to the unevenness of the social there is no necessary reason why unity or similarity should emerge. This shows how decisions are made, and politics done, under the condition of contingency. This is why, when discussing Laclau’s theory and political frontiers, I must refer to deconstruction.

For if deconstruction discovers the role of the decision out of the undecidability of the structure, hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain requires that the contingent character of the connections existing in the terrain is fully shown by deconstruction.

The point of deconstruction is to reveal the contingent and rhetorically created character of ‘the people’ and ‘frontiers’, the ‘impurity’ of the binary opposition of polarisation and the formalistic conception of hegemony itself.

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355 This we can see for example in the process of the renaming of streets in Eastern Europe, which I have been studying. It is not simply that a street is changed, but the matrix of the street map itself and the people who are using the street names are also affected by the change. People who are involved in the transformation feel strongly about the change, and those less involved will still carry traces of the transformation in them. What is at stake is not the simple representation of a particular political ideology but a process that makes a particular normative order, to use the Skinnerian term, present in the everyday.

356 A paradigmatic case of this relation would be street-naming, where the connection between the name and the named is constructed in the naming process, as I will further study in the following chapter on the city-text. Usually in the literature on public memory and politics of commemoration, this process is characterised as ‘ownership’, where renaming the streets, ‘their’ past and commemorations is replaced by ‘ours’. However, the relationship goes beyond ‘owning’ to the construction of an ‘us’ through (re)presentation. The investment happens by highlighting a hero or vocabulary, and naming then creates a relationship between the naming body and the names and symbols of themselves. This does not mean that the relationship would always go uncontested; it simply raises a point about the bond created in the process. On commemoration see E.g. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution; Writing the 19th-Century City*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

357 Laclau, ‘Power and Representation’, reprinted in *Emancipation(s)*, p. 90.
Concluding on rhetoric: aspectual differences

Above, I have in effect outlined three tropes – metaphor, paradiastole and catachresis – which do not appear to be very different. The idea of metaphor stresses the aesthetic or mimetic dimension of representation.\textsuperscript{358} It highlights for Laclau the fact that the dislocations and demands of the social link together and form a collective, which comes to represent the collective and the groups, rather than simply being identical to the groups.\textsuperscript{359} Both paradiastole and catachresis imply a rupture with the existing order. Catachresis emphasises the process of the emergence of something new, whereas paradiastole focuses on the replacement of the old by something new, something which contradicts the old. Catachresis emphasises the production of unity and the frontier, through naming the unnameable – the contingent essences. Paradiastole marks the frontier through rhetorical moves of redescription. I referred to paradiastole and catachresis as tropes of ‘crossing the floor’ and of ‘coalition building’, respectively.

The two tropes do not necessarily have to refer to a different case to the one in question, but rather they point out the distinction between two aspects of the political process. Both address political moves which may have similar results, and offer merely aspectual differences or differences of perspective. Nevertheless, when making this analytical distinction I claim that they inform us as to how the process of articulation happens through the creation of new things and the reconfiguration of old circumstances, as we will see in the rest of the chapters.

Polarisation and rhetoric: rearticulations, logic and problems

Rhetoric is the method of reading, as well as of the articulation, of polarisation. The previous  
\textsuperscript{358} See for discussion on aesthetic and mimetic politics, F.R. Ankersmit, \textit{Aesthetic Politics; Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value}, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.  
\textsuperscript{359} Ernesto Laclau, \textit{New Reflections…}, p. 64-65
section showed how tropes have different forms. These forms translate, through the process of articulation, into the political processes. In political polarisation the frontier becomes the key place of identity construction. It maintains two communities. The situation of polarisation is so attractive for both of the communities that both of them rely on the frontier and articulate each other through it. This frontier is made visible while it is being contested and is relocated through paradiastolic moves. Anything ‘bad’ is projected on the other, or anything the other maintains as important, cannot be redescribed and tied to one’s own framework. It is considered undesirable, suspicious and ‘bad’. Anything desirable, on the other hand, is attributed to oneself. Whilst entailing paradiastolic moves, there are also competing claims over elements. This, following Laclau, is the contestation over floating signifiers. The problem with the situation of polarisation, however, is that the elements are mainly described through the normative framework of good/bad, legitimate/illegitimate, which means that they cannot be ‘legitimately’ contested in the public realm, or rendered openly political and contestable.

To maintain polarisation, any new cleavages or demands, which would of course emerge from the changing circumstances of the social, will need to be articulated into the existing system of polarisation. This also would imply redemptive or – following Skinner – paradiastolic moves, wherein the problems are always projected on the other and the achievements are always claimed by ‘us’. Anything the other side names ‘bad’ or ‘undesirable’ can be, in a similar vein, redescribed as ‘good’ or ‘desirable’. Similarly, anything which is not easily accommodated into the system is ignored or its significance diminished. The emergence of new cleavages, which cannot be easily articulated to the existing system, threatens to distort polarisation. This would put in question the identities and logic of the communities or political forces that are created through the situation of polarisation, since they are reliant on the imagined frontier, and on otherness.

Polarisation is the system of bipolar hegemony, which sustains itself through the constant
construction of the frontier by both sides. In this respect, it contains two constellations – two catachrestical moments at once. Neither of the communities would have any prior or necessary existence, but rather have been ‘invented’, to borrow Benedict Anderson’s term, through a catachrestical signification. The signification of something that was not there before can happen through an empty signifier, which gives a ‘name’ to the community – a perfect example of catachresis. It is visible in the Fidesz discourse (e.g. New Hungary; polgári, civic, Hungary; or, lately, the people of Hungary, Magyar emberek) which will be studied in the last chapters of the thesis. The community can also be signified through its frontier. In practise, these methods of signification exist as a combination.

As with any system, rearticulation is essential to the existence of polarisation. Therefore, there is an attempt to maintain the momentum of antagonism around that frontier. The other can rarely be seen except as an adversary – even if, in terms of maintaining the polarisation, the two ‘enemies’ are each other’s perfect partners. Since polarisation exists through the rearticulation of any new cleavages or demands into the existing system, it will obviously block any ‘real’ political antagonisms and crucial demands. There may even appear to be a consensus on the part of the two parties of the polarisation over the exclusion of certain demands, ones which would threaten the system and which can then be branded as ‘irrational’, ‘illegitimate’ or ‘irrelevant’.

**Conclusion**

To conclude: I have discovered and demonstrated my research three points, which are visible throughout the thesis and have been made clear in this theoretical chapter. First, polarisation solves the initial problem of fragmentation – a lack of unity – in postcommunism, by instituting a frontier

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which sustains two communities as a bipolar hegemony. Second, polarisation requires constant rearticulation and, therefore, constant antagonising around that frontier, since new cleavages or demands would otherwise emerge that would distort the situation of polarisation. Consequently, to maintain polarisation any new cleavages or demands must be articulated into the existing system.

In the above sections I have aimed to demonstrate the logic of polarisation, whilst also showing its problems, from the perspective of politics. Polarisation offers a chance for two camps to exist by making sure that the frontier between them establishes a strong imaginary – a system of differences in which all the demands that arise are articulated. This allows them to create their identities without paying too much attention to the contents of their discourses, beyond the emphasis on the frontier. As we will see in the following chapters, this is an asset in the context of postcommunism, where the generation of new discourses, which would resonate among the people within Hungary and fit the demands coming from outside Hungary, is difficult.

In the following chapter I will study the liberal mayor Gábor Demszky’s discourse. It presents a great example of political frontiers creating political communities and the role frontiers play in polarisation. In the chapter that follows I will look at Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz government’s discourse vis-à-vis Budapest, where the frontier problematic and the community-creation in polarisation again become visible. The last chapter of the thesis is devoted to cases which have contested and reinforced the situation of polarisation, thereby also demonstrating the above mentioned problems of polarisation, since 2002.
Chapter 3:

The Liberal Mayor’s Discourse: creating political identifications by articulating the frontier

Introduction

This chapter presents a study of political polarisation in Hungary through an analysis of Budapest Mayor Gábor Demszky’s (SZDSZ) speeches. I will first look at those making a reference to the nineteenth century in general, and then in particular those delivered yearly on 15 March, a national day marking the 1848 revolution and the start of the War of Independence against the Habsburg Empire. The speeches quoted here are a representative sample of Demszky’s rhetoric and discourse in general. As sources, I use Demszky’s speeches as mayor (1994 – March 2004, courtesy of the Mayor’s Office, Budapest City Hall) and a volume of interviews and speeches with Gábor Demszky. These speeches demonstrate the structure of Demszky’s discourse, and the creation and the negation of the political frontier. In particular, the yearly speeches at the statue of Petőfi, his political hero, are ‘statements’ which reveal Demszky’s description of the political situation and articulation, within the same, of the frontier between ‘us’ and ‘them’. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the choice of political heroes has been an important way of building political identifications in Hungary. These heroes work as nodal points of political discourses and can be contested by different political groups. These refer both to the location of the Free Democrats (SZDSZ) vis à vis the other parties and the government or opposition, as well as Demszky’s position towards the party section in the parliament and his city administration. They show that there are many possible

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political frontiers, but that the bipolar situation is reinforced even when the dominant frontier is put in question.

The speeches as statements in a given moment\textsuperscript{362} also offer a sense of the development of the polarisation in Hungarian politics, and the way in which Demszky confronted each national government. Several key features of his discourse, such as the primacy of local politics, decentralisation, the nineteenth century past, and pluralism are visible in these speeches. As my research in this work overall is intended to prove, the speeches indicate the way in which the signifier ‘nation’ dominates Hungarian politics. A strong sense of nationhood develops as a part of Demszky’s discourse, which he relates both to the nineteenth century and to contemporary developments. I have here analysed a selection of speeches, those focusing on the nineteenth century past and those given on 15 March. Furthermore, the 15 March speeches offer a chronological reading of developments in Hungarian politics regarding both Budapest and political polarisation over the period 1995-2002. The speeches show that increasingly, since 1998, Demszky has been questioning the divide in Hungarian politics between Budapest and the nation. He argued this with particular strength between 1998-2002 – years spent under a conservative government\textsuperscript{363} – by adopting the concept ‘nation’ into his own metropolitan discourse. In this chapter I demonstrate that the division is not as clear-cut as is sometimes argued but also that it exists through its negation: by contesting the frontier Demszky legitimises it.

The frontier, and its maintenance as a strong imaginary, is important for Demszky as it offers a chance for him to construct his discourse against other discourses. As we will see in the following chapter, the strategies in forming political frontiers in Hungary are similar to the rhetoric of Viktor Orbán (Fidesz). In this chapter I will show how he articulated the existing framework, history, and

\textsuperscript{362} See Chapter One for more on the use of ‘statements’ in political analysis.

‘political realities’, and redescribed them. The rhetorical moves of paradiastole, discussed in the theory chapter, imply normative changes in the polarised politics of Hungary, where the right and left have turned into ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, into an us/them divide of two normative orders.

It can be argued that my focus on the national day – or, similarly, the nineteenth century past – leads the focus in Demszky’s rhetoric onto issues, key words or rhetorical devices such as nationhood and the people. The occasion itself limits the possibilities of usage of some other rhetorical devices, and, thus, may overshadow those which often appear in his rhetoric. Nevertheless, I am here interested in the way in which Demszky deals with the concepts of the people and nationhood, which are often appropriated by the other political parties. Therefore, this chapter does not attempt to capture any totalising picture of Demszky’s discourse, yet offers significant insights into it. I have undertaken detailed research into Demszky’s metropolitan discourse and his politics regarding Budapest, of which this chapter is only a part. Much of the contestation and frontier-building occurs around the concept of nation and increasingly since 1999 Demzsky adopts it as part of his discourse.

I will start by outlining Demszky’s biography, demonstrating how he always sought to transform his field or his rhetoric, in a way which Skinner has called paradiastolic (as discussed in Chapter Two). In the rest of the chapter I will look at Demszky’s discourse and the rhetorical movements towards frontier-making, first via his speeches focusing on the nineteenth century image of Budapest and then via his speeches on 15 March, from 1995 to 2002. I chose this time frame partly based on the availability of the speeches (1995-) and close the selection at the height of the polarisation, 2002. This also follows, for example, László Lengyel’s analysis of polarisation, which places emphasis on the late 1990s and the turn of the millennium. My argument is that prior to the split of the ‘liberal pole’ by the departure of the Fidesz to the conservative camp and the rapprochement of the Socialists and the SZDSZ in government from 1994, the political spectrum
was still fragmented in the early 1990s even if temporary alliances were made. Studying Demszky’s speeches from 1995, therefore, enabled me to see the attempts to contest and reinforce the emerging polarisation.

Demszky: a dissident and a politician

Demszky has sought to redefine the terrain he engages in and also to transform his politics to suit it. As I will show in this biographical section, and in the analysis of the speeches, Demszky constructed a political frontier between himself, the opposition and the ruling powers. As we remember from earlier, a discourse, following Laclau’s thinking, is composed of elements besides the frontier and what is located beyond it. In regard to Demszky, one can see that both confrontationality and unity, the calls not only for freedom of speech and transparency, but also for a new type of politics (which is again contrasted to the ‘old’), become discursive elements which are repeated in his political rhetoric.

[László Kasza]: It was said earlier that nine residents of Budapest out of ten wouldn’t know the name of the president of the town council. Now the situation has turned around; nine out of ten know that Gábor Demszky is the Mayor of Budapest. How do you explain this big difference?

[Gábor Demszky]: People like personifying problems. They like finding someone responsible for what happens and also for what doesn’t happen. The latter, in particular, is important. There’s no tram – well that’s Demszky for you. My car was taken away – it’s Demszky again. There’s no milk [in the shops] – of course Demszky. Earlier it wasn’t like this, because no one accepted responsibility, power was impersonal. At best they would know the first secretary of the party, not really even the Prime Minister. It wasn’t common knowledge who either Jenő Fock or György Lázár were, people would only know Kádár, no one else. Power and responsibility in the city, here in Budapest, has become personified incredibly fast. And it is fine this way, as it shows that people are getting used to the democratic institutions.

The Mayor of Budapest Gábor Demszky is a metaphor for postcommunist Budapest, the city

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365 Top of the table Kádárist politicians. For more see: Gábor Demszky, ‘Bennem nincs bosszúvágy’ [There’s no vengeance in me], interview with Lázsló Kasza 1994, reprinted in Demszky, *Szabadság…*, p. 27.

governance, metropolitan pragmatist liberalism\textsuperscript{367}, opposition to the government. At the same time, of course, he works as the most important orator in, and on behalf of, the metropolis. Since 1990, as leader of the City Hall, which is run with a cabinet structure,\textsuperscript{368} he influenced the way in which the metropolis as a whole would develop. Demszky in many ways redefined ‘doing politics’ in the postcommunist era and contributed to the national level politics insofar as he was one of the main figures in the Free Democrats. In the 1980s Demszky became a well-known dissident and a samizdat editor. He was elected Mayor of Budapest by the City Council in 1990.\textsuperscript{369} Since then he has been the main actor in the politics of the city-image of Budapest.\textsuperscript{370} Demszky has also been one of the most popular politicians in his party, which he lead for six months at the turn of the millennium.\textsuperscript{371} Leading the list for the elections to the European parliament in 2004, he was elected as the only Free Democrat MEP.

To understand Demszky’s rhetorical moves, which create a strong opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’, I will look into his past.\textsuperscript{372} Dissident politics in the 1980s were anti-politics, as György Konrád argued: they were a politics of disengagement with the political system.\textsuperscript{373} As discussed in

\textsuperscript{367} This refers to the way in which he on the one hand tries to maintain the idea of Budapest as the city of the capital, site for investment and international headquarters – this kind of rhetoric appears besides his speeches, especially those opening shopping centres and international business ventures as well as the \textit{Budapest Model}. On the other a full-scale privatisation of the municipally owned firms and estates would imply a loss of a power-base for the mayor, and it would also not be a popular move among the voters. His pragmatist rather than ideological relationship to the belt-tightening monetarists could be seen in his sacking of one of his vice mayors in 2004. Pallai, \textit{Budapest Model}.

\textsuperscript{368} Pallai, \textit{Budapest model}, p. 72. This means for example that Demszky chooses his deputies who have thematic responsibilities in the city governance.


\textsuperscript{370} The city-image reflects on the cityscape and vice versa: it would be difficult to claim that there is one actor forming the cityscape, even if his politics reflected and informed the changes of the cityscape, like Demszky’s.

\textsuperscript{371} In 1994, when the direct elections of the mayor were introduced, local politics became a politics of personalities, and Demszky became the star of the vote: in the mayoral elections he gained 50 per cent more votes than the SZDSZ list in the local council elections. Báan, ‘Budapest at the Dawn of Democracy 1989-1996’, pp. 287-8.

\textsuperscript{372} Here of course we don’t fall into a purely causal explanation, whereby the previous activist experience would \textit{necessarily} have the consequence for the later political attitudes of Demszky, but they help us in understanding the continuities and discontinuities in his political and rhetorical development. Reflecting on the idea that motives would work as causes for action, Skinner argues that there are non-causal explanations. Quentin Skinner, \textit{Visions of Politics, Vol. 1}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Chapter One, many former dissidents’ refusal to form ‘traditional parties’, with heavy party structures and all the associations related to the Party, gave birth to postcommunist alliances such as, in Hungary, the SZDSZ and Fidesz. From 1985 and the introduction of a multiparty system in state socialist Hungary, dissidents turned into politicians. Demszky became a party politician in 1990 and promoted novel ways of doing politics as managerial and local. Furthermore, he was the first media politician in Hungary, thereby leading the way to the Fidesz politicians, especially Viktor Orbán. As László Lengyel, an analyst of Hungarian politics, argues: ‘The clothes, movements, gestures, mode of expression became more important than the contents of the decisions. [...] Demszky is the first real author of value-free politicking in Hungary.’

The dissident past influenced Demszky’s becoming the radical and the opposition politician he has been. The biography on his official web page stresses the fact that Demszky, b. 1953, started his political career as a dissident. It recounted how he was ousted from the university for one year in the early 1970s for student radicalism, and how he thereafter worked as a taxi driver and a librarian, wrote his first publication ‘Borravaló’ [Tip], gained a law degree and, finally, a degree in sociology in 1981. In 1976-1981 he worked for the academic journal Világosság [Light]. In a biographical

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374 We saw in Chapter Three on the city-text how postcommunist politics witnessed a rejection of the near past, calls for the exploration of the distant past and calls for novelty – in whatever form ‘novelty’ would be found. As already discussed in Chapter One, Fidesz was the party of youth, which rejected the old ways, limiting the membership to those under 30 years old and taking orange as their colour and symbol.


378 Lengyel, Kis magyar bestiarum, pp. 139-140. Curiously, this is similar to the case of the UK where the leader of the one-time Greater London Council in the 1980s (the Mayor of London from 2000, when the first elections for the new post were held) set a model of media politician to his party comrades Tony Blair and the rest of the New Labour leadership. See e.g. Marc D’Arcy and Rory MacLean, Nightmare! The Race to Become London’s Mayor, London: Politico’s, 2000.

Demszky stressed the importance of the dissident past which started ‘very early at 20-years old’, since already in 1972 he was banned from university after a student demonstration. In a rare study on Demszky, László Lengyel argued that he was a product of 1968, an era of global protests where ‘[a]s a crane Demszky, wanting to change everything, stepped and flew to the colourful world.’ Lengyel described how Demszky started of from the new left, but for him ‘radicalism was much more determinant than Marxism. [...] Soon he was disillusioned by New Left Marxism. Philosophising did not satisfy him. [...] Enough of theories, let’s see the reality!’ He turned to social sciences. He was one of the founding members of SZETA, the Foundation to Support the Poor (Szegényeket Támogató Alap), provocatively named since the official view had it that in communism, of course, there was no poverty, poor people and ‘the word poverty was forbidden.’ This connection and the comradeship of the SZETA became an important part of Demszky’s life and activism, but he took a step further to fight against the Kádárist state socialism.

In the early 1980s he spent time in Poland and learned from the Solidarnosc movement that openness is the most important quality of successful opposition to the state socialist power. He learned printing and imported a printing machine from Poland to a near-by cellar, ‘gave up his suspicion towards the Radio Free Europe and made links with the westerners’. In 1981 he founded with László Rajk, the son of a famous Hungarian Communist leader, who died after a show trial in 1949, the independent publishing house Független Kiadó, and participated in samizdat

381 He also accounts how he had had been in constant conflict with his mid-cadres (középkáder) parents who went to Nigeria for three years and ‘when they came back in 1981, they found a member of the democratic opposition at home. [...] By then I had already ten years – if not exactly organised and straight forward, nevertheless actual – history in the opposition.’ Demszky, ‘Bennem nincs…’ reprinted in Szabadság..., p.15.
382 Lengyel, Kis magyar bestiárum, p. 118.
383 Lengyel, Kis magyar bestiárum, p. 120.
384 ‘Demszky lived with poor, as poor. To this day, he is drawn to the poor’, Lengyel argues. Lengyel, Kis magyar bestiárum, p. 122.
385 Lengyel, Kis magyar bestiárum, p. 128, pp. 124-128.
publications, especially Beszélő (the Speaker). Lengyel characterised Demszky as an adventurer (kalandor), and explains that whereas some of his contemporaries chose dissidence for the sake of dissidence, ‘Demszky called the system against him’. Lengyel noted that Demszky survived the depression typical to bravery, the questions of doubt typical of activism, and the suspended prison sentence, which finally made him a hero. Demszky did not put himself forward as a candidate when the opposition was allowed to run for the Hungarian parliament in 1985, in order not to legitimate the system. But had he done so, he would have won, Lengyel argued. This obviously could be put into doubt, but the naïve enthusiasm of Demszky had a charm, and whereas he could have been proven to be too young to be elected, the youthfulness was a significant part of his character and appeal. This is quite similar to that of Petőfi – his political idol, as we will later discover in more detail – the young, easy-going, talented, slightly macho poet, with radical sympathies.

Once back from the US in 1989, Demszky joined his former dissident colleagues in the Free Democrats’ Association (SZDSZ), participated in elections and gained a seat in the parliament for Budapest’s 7th district in 1990. ‘But he was afraid of the public role’, Lengyel argues. ‘He was cramped. He read his speeches – wrong. He was not an organiser. He was capable of managing a small group but unsuitable for party management.’ He was nevertheless valuable for the SZDSZ for his fame and for breaking with the traditional Jewish stereotypes of the party, and this has been one of his main qualities within the party contests. He was made the mayoral candidate, leading the SZDSZ list in the local elections and was elected as mayor by the newly formed City Council on 31

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386 Lengyel summarised Demszky’s vision in the early 1980s: ‘Not only conciliation but action is the target, as the West takes us seriously only when we show action. In the mid-long term the system has to be broken down.’ Lengyel, *Kis Magyar Bestiárum*, p. 128.
387 Lengyel, *Kis Magyar Bestiárum*, p. 131.
388 Lengyel, *Kis Magyar Bestiárum*, p. 132.
389 Lengyel, *Kis Magyar Bestiárum*, p. 133.
390 He was awarded the International Federation of Journalists’ Freedom to Publish prize, on which he spent the year 1988/89 in the US, Columbia University. Lengyel, *Kis Magyar Bestiárum*, p. 135.
391 Lengyel, *Kis Magyar Bestiárum*, p. 135.
October 1990. He gave up his place as an MP. 392 ‘At the age of 38, this was, in essence, his first job’, Lengyel points out. 393 ‘He renewed himself. From a flimsy intellectual he changed into an orderly and target-oriented politician.’ 394 He made the city governance his own field, and only returned to national politics for a short period as the party leader from December 2000 to June 2001, where he could not really find his position, 395 and in 2004, he led the SZDSZ list in the elections for the European Parliament. 396 This did not mean that Demszky had been out of the national limelight. He was also able to claim – through his role as the Budapest mayor, wherein he was the object of complaint and praise alike – an important position within his party.

I have already mentioned pragmatism as characteristic of Demszky. His value-free media politics, which set a trend to Fidesz politicians such as Viktor Orbán, 397 was in contrast to the ‘intellectual politicking of the SZDSZ’, which served to make the relationship between Demszky and SZDSZ uneasy. 398 Through his dissident characteristics Demszky contributed to the juxtaposition of the national government and the capital city, and further to the polarisation in Hungarian politics. However, in some ways he broke down the differences. Lengyel argues that Demszky ‘transformed his image as an opposition politician to that of the all-Hungarian, all-Budapest (össznemzeti, összbudapesti) personality, that represents the capital city.’ 399 Lengyel writes in the period when Demszky had recently lost his party chairmanship. In the period he had a discourse of

392 ‘Demszky Gábor főpolgármester életrajza’ [Mayor Gábor Demszky’s biography], http://www.demszky.hu/demszky_gaborrol/oneletrajz.
393 Lengyel, Kis Magyar Bestiárum, p. 137.
394 Lengyel, Kis Magyar Bestiárum, p. 139, emphasis added.
395 Lengyel argues, regarding Demszky’s short-lived party leadership, that ‘the national politician Demszky did not know how to position himself among the symbols of the country.’ This had to do with the contrasts with the two posts he was holding, on the one hand leading the big city and the nationally small party, and on the other, experiencing the smallness of the capital city vis à vis national politics. Lengyel, Kis Magyar Bestiárum, p. 143.
396 The election posters argued that he can do both jobs: ‘Demszky also to Europe’. See also ‘Demszky Gábor főpolgármester életrajza’ [Mayor Gábor Demszky’s biography], http://www.demszky.hu/demszky_gaborrol/oneletrajz.
397 Lengyel, Kis Magyar Bestiárum, p. 139.
398 Lengyel, Kis Magyar Bestiárum, p. 139-140. I do not focus on this tension or Demszky’s brief term as the party chairman in my work, despite the effects it might have had upon his rhetoric.
399 Lengyel, Kis Magyar Bestiárum, p. 139.
‘equidistance’, and tried to turn SZDSZ into a pole between the big parties Fidesz and MSZP, rather than an affiliate of the Socialists. At that point, in opposition, the SZDSZ parliamentary fraction was weak, and Demszky exercised his power. He also had public conflicts with other young liberal revolutionary of the 1989/90 system change, Viktor Orbán in the 1990s. These contributed to the hostility and frontier-building between Budapest and the national government when Orbán was the PM between 1998-2002. The final transformation in Demszky’s political character, and the blow that might keep him out of the next municipal elections in autumn 2006, was the scandal over the expensive villa in Croatia, to which he had travelled using the municipal transport company BKV’s vehicles. This image of a neo-gentry leader was in contrast to the image of Demszky as a man of the people, which was particularly powerful in comparison to the SZDSZ intelligentsia.

The above account shows Demszky’s personal transformations and the attempts to transform politics using the political skills of paradiastolic redescription: the initial rejection of party politics which lead to the turn towards local politics, the move from an oppositional attitude to an all-Budapest or all-Hungarian disposition, from the taking care of the poor to the transformation of Budapest into a business-friendly high-culture metropolis. These transformations did not necessarily mean that Demszky totally left the ‘old’ position behind, but that he found new ways of placing the dissident attitude, the extra-political position, or social awareness. In the next section I will be looking at the way in which he transformed the nineteenth century into a golden era upon which he would base his politics and in relation to which he would project content onto his discourse, mainly through the articulation of difference.

**Nineteenth century Budapest**

In this section, I tackle the articulation of nineteenth century Budapest as the relevant field of
articulation and the ‘golden era’ of Demszky’s political project, which also reconstructs the frontier of polarisation. The period was a necessary one for Demszky as it was the high-point of the development of Budapest, and because the later eras, in their xenophobia or socialism, were problematic for his liberal party and, as we have seen in the chapter on the city-text, are already categorisable as the golden eras of the Hungarian right. The nineteenth century existed in the popular memory through the World Expo organized in Budapest in 1896, as a showcase of nationalism – and, thus, as an era of the Hungarian right. The rearticulation was therefore a tough task. There were no already-existing heroes and images of liberalism, from the period; they had to be created.

The revolutionary year of 1848 gave legacies that the generations of politicians and intellectuals have been able to rearticulate and use in their discourse-building. The heroes of the revolution such as Petőfi and Széchenyi have a cult status, they are popular heroes, over which the contemporary political figures even compete. Similarly, political eras can be competed over. While Demszky’s choice of Petőfi was quite an easy one, as a liberal national hero, the late nineteenth century and the quite unknown metropolitan politician Podmaniczky was a challenge. As I already mentioned, the choice of the Golden Era fell almost out of necessity to the late nineteenth century, as all other eras where already occupied by other political groupings. Nevertheless, through the era Demszky articulated a range of signifiers which were continuously present in his discourse.

Demszky articulates his city-image as a response to the challenges of the time: to improve Budapest’s standing vis à vis national politics (whilst the Hungarian right placed their emphasis on the countryside) and vis à vis other cities in the Central European region. Demszky insisted in 1994: ‘Back then [in the nineteenth century] Budapest was the fastest developing capital city on the continent. At the present time it is down to us whether we can make Budapest once again like that by the millennium.’

The city-image shows his articulation of the metropolitan location, a central

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position in the region, to the liberal values of capitalism and progress, as well as to multiculturalism.

In Demszky’s speeches the image of nineteenth century Budapest\footnote{From the first chapter we remember the necessary background information: Budapest was unified in 1873 of the towns of Pest, Buda and Óbuda. Fastest growing of these three, since the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century, was the old market town Pest, in a node of transport links which, given the industrial development, multiplied in size and in population in the nineteenth century. Buda, with Esztergom where the Hungarian Catholic Church was based, had been historically one of the centers of governance. When the Hungarian leadership escaped the Ottoman occupation with the help of the Austrians, the Habsburgs ruled Hungary from Bratislava, closer to Vienna. The Habsburg emperor Joseph II declared Buda the political capital of Hungary in 1784. Pest became the site of the Hungarian revolution in the Spring of Nations 1848. Once Hungary was given an autonomous status in the Habsburg empire in 1867, Pest-Buda became the political center of an area stretching from Croatia and Transylvania to Slovakia. It was also recognized as the little sister, if not an equal, of Vienna. Budapest was built over the nineteenth century: floods damaged much of Pest in the early part of the century so it offered a possibility for large-scale rebuilding and restructuring of the city.} was focused on the Habsburg Europe, although he also stressed the Euro-Atlantic tradition of the metropolis, which resonated in postcommunist NATO Hungary.\footnote{During the nineteenth century, all over Europe and America, metropolises emerged. During the twentieth century, with their rapid development, they became critical points in the economic, social, political, cultural development of the \textit{whole world} and they spread out at an ever quicker pace, grew together with their suburbs and surrounding settlements. Demszky, \textquotedblleft Az 50 éves Nagy-Budapest...\textquotedblright\ c. levéltári napi konferencia megnyitója\textsuperscript{402} [The Opening of the archival day conference titled \textquotedblleft 50-year-old Greater-Budapest\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{402}], 16 November 2000, Nagybpko.doc, Beszédek 1994-2004, emphasis original.} The Habsburg Empire, an important imagined region in the postcommunist period, however, revoked the idea of Central Europe, where Budapest would emerge as a center.\footnote{In February 1998, in a conference on the future of Hungary, Demszky referred to the transport network around Budapest developed in the nineteenth century: Budapest as a metropolis is not only the centre of the country. For here not only all the Hungarian transport links meet but it is also the junction for a transcontinental railway, road and sea-way networks. […] Budapest – with Prague and Vienna – is the most important finance, trade and cultural capital in Central Europe. Demszky, \textquoteleft Előadás a \textquoteleft Magyarország 2000\textquoteright tanácskozásán\textquoteright [Paper at the \textquoteleft Hungary 2000\textquoteright conference], 20 February 1998, mao2000.doc, Beszédek 1994-2004.} The nostalgic investment in the ideas of the Habsburg Empire was also important for a memory of the independence of cities. Within the umbrella of the empire the largest cities in that region – Prague, Bratislava, Budapest – could in this spatial structure be detached from the context of their respective nation states. In other words, parallels can be made between Budapest, Vienna, Prague and Bratislava without making parallels between Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Demszky’s political project was to turn Budapest into an European metropolis to counterpose the national government.
The nineteenth century regional metropolises were centers of progress, development in technology and culture, and financial centers of their time. Budapest was built by the investment of capital. As savings were regulated, the most profitable form of investment was the real estate. That is why the buildings, palaces even, in the center of Budapest competed in decorations: they had to show off the value invested in them. In postcommunist Budapest the old buildings were in deep decay and needed foreign investment for renovation. Demszky argued on tourism, in 1995:

Budapest has been for more than a century one of the centers of civilization in the Central European region. It always attracted large numbers of tourists and business people alike from abroad with its cosmopolitan (világvárosi) character, unusual panorama, historical parts of the city, vibrant cultural, business and nightlife, with its spas – except for the years at war and the more or less two decades after 1948. However, the explosive global development of tourism that has taken place over the recent decades and increasing competition between the big cities of the region forces us to ask the question: in what areas can we remain or rather become the center of attraction of the region? As a center of business and commerce Budapest must consider primarily the tough concurrence meant by Vienna and Prague. However, we have a very good chance of Budapest becoming the most important financial center of Central Europe.404

From this quote we can see how the connection between the cities in Central Europe also takes the form of competition. The mayor employs this idea to call for support to Budapest.405 This is, clearly, either optimistic thinking, targeted to the local or national audience, or simply an already relative topic, as American tourists were experiencing Central Europe rather in Prague than Budapest.

Through the nineteenth century spirit Demszky evoked the sense of progress and development, investment in the city and its infrastructure, without which it would not be able to raise itself to glory. This is also visible in his choice of role models. Demszky turned Count Frigyes

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405 ‘Perhaps it’s needless to say that the bigger traffic development and building-works in Budapest are of national and regional importance (bridges over the Danube, fast-train network, circular roads, connections to motorways). Therefore, their influence on traffic reaches beyond the area of the capital city, and size of the investment is essentially beyond the competence and capabilities of the Capital. Consequently, these issues also contain a suggestion to the government: if they take catching up with Europe seriously, they must help.’ Gábor Demszky, ‘Közlekedési koncepció + olimpia – közgyűlés’ [‘Transport concept + the Olympics – City Council’], Budapest City Council, 31 May 2001, Olimpia-közgy.doc, Beszédek 1994-2004.
Podmaniczky into a metaphor for development in contemporary Budapest and into his role model, in a speech opening the commemorative exhibition of this late nineteenth century city-developer. Demszky stressed that even if Podmaniczky did not belong to the main canon of the Great Hungarians, he should be remembered by the two million Budapest citizens. In the similar way as the national hero István Széchenyi was, by a commemorative law, the ‘Greatest Hungarian’, Demszky suggested Podmaniczky was the ‘Greatest Budapestian’.

The way the ‘Greatest Hungarian’, Széchenyi, was the one to envision modern Hungary and to put Hungary on the track of European development, the same way Frigyes Podmaniczky was the most important planner of the European capital of modern Hungary, the Greatest Budapestian.

This rhetorical move was to redescribe and transfer the title of the moderate nationalist nineteenth century reformer Count István Széchenyi, declared by the commemorative law in the 19th century as the ‘Greatest Hungarian’, to a contemporary metropolitan reformer. He also declared this relatively unknown figure the ‘second founder of Budapest’. Here the implicit ‘first founder’ is Széchenyi, who proposed the unification of Budapest and in practice united it through the building of the city’s first permanent bridge in the early nineteenth century. Instead of the canonized heroes of that period, particularly of the 1848 revolution – Széchenyi, Kossuth, Petőfi or Batthyány – Demszky’s role model here represents the later era which built Budapest into a flourishing metropolis and the capital of Hungary. As we will see in the 15 March speeches he takes up this earlier period again, as the periods can both used for the creation of his discourse. He also makes the distinction between Hungary and Budapest by highlighting the importance of the metropolis.

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406 Podmaniczky, Frigyes (1824-1907) an MP and responsible for the development of the city as the President of the Capital’s Public Works Council (Fővárosi Közmunkák Tanács).
410 Podmaniczky was commemorated with a statue by the municipality in the centre of Budapest in 1991.
Demszky praised Podmaniczky for having ‘a character in which idealism was combined with realism in a rare harmony characteristic of great politicians’:\footnote{Demszky, ‘Podmaniczky Frigyes emlékkiállítás megnyitója’, 20 June 1995.}

When one had to fight tyranny – he fought. When one had to endure pause and wait – he endured and waited. When there was a need and opportunity to achieve an intelligent compromise – he chose this type of politics. When he could build – he built.\footnote{Demszky. ‘Podmaniczky Frigyes emlékkiállítás megnyitója’, 20 June 1995.}

This pragmatism also comes up in Demszky’s own comment on the phenomenon of the world exhibitions, important in the history of Budapest’s development. A World Expo was originally planned with Austria in the late 1980s, to take place in Budapest in 1995/6. While the Viennese rejected the plan in a referendum, the Hungarian conservative or national liberal government of 1990-94 went ahead with the plans. Demszky saw that the Expo would help to build the city, as the 1896 Budapest World Exhibition had done. In an interview in 1994, Demszky answered the question of what he thought about the World Exhibitions as a genre:

Maybe honesty is not typical of politicians these days, but I will tell you: I truly don’t like them. I consider them as something from the last century, today just an out-dated vestige. But this is irrelevant for two reasons. First of all, because it is beneficial for Budapest, therefore, no matter how pre-historic, it must be done. Second, because it is true that in recent times there was a remarkable World Exhibition, the one in Sevilla: 10 billion dollars were spent, beautiful things were built, I envy them for it. However, Hungary cannot reach this level, because there is not enough money for this. [...] What determines, is that if we get the money, there will be music, if we don’t, there won’t.\footnote{Demszky, \textit{Szabadság}, p. 24.}

Even though there finally was no money for the Expo in the 1994-98 left-wing government’s budget, already in the early 1990s the Expo plans had a specific function in providing guidelines for the development of the infrastructure of the city, and places reserved for the Expo have been used in contemporary projects. In the same way, the 1896 World Exhibition essentially transformed Budapest – and also had a nation-building function, which the postcommunist Hungarian right wanted to recall with the Expo plans.

Because of the emphasis on rigorous nation-building, Demszky was also partly critical of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless the values of the period bring the nation into Demszky’s rhetoric.
Commemorating Podmaniczky, Demszky listed how the family had defended the values of ‘homeland and progress, Hungarianness and Europeanness, patriotism and Budapest cosmopolitan (világpolgári) local patriotism.’ At the time, in 1995, with the Socialist-Liberal national government, local and national patriotism were relatively easy to articulate together, compared to the period when the Hungarian right monopolized nationhood in the national governments of 1990-94 and 1998-02. In Demszky’s rhetoric nation does not constitute the opposite of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is contrasted with the vision of monocultural nationalism coming from the Hungarian right – which Demszky creates as his discursive-ideological counter-pole.

A later example of Demszky joining nation and multiculturalism is the celebration of the national day of 20 August 2000 – marking 1000 years of Hungarian statehood and membership of Catholic Europe. Demszky travelled to the predominantly Hungarian town of Salonta in Transylvania, Romania, which in the late nineteenth century had been part of the – in effect – multicultural Hungary. The speech given to the local Hungarian minority, in which is presented images of both contemporary and nineteenth century Budapest, is a critique of monocultural policies which had been plaguing the Hungarian minority in Romania. In doing so it also tackled monoculturalism in Hungary and articulated a vision of multicultural nationhood.

Demszky argued that Budapest was the center of Hungary and Hungarian nationalism, yet at the same time it was the regional hub and a multicultural metropolis, both in the nineteenth century and today. He recalled the past:

415 In the speech Demszky describes how the members of Podmaniczky’s family had been sympathisers of the Hungarian Jacobins, the later generations died in Vietnam as an American citizen and patriot for the freedom and protection of Western culture, Demszky, an American educated anti-communist articulated his respect. Demszky. ‘Podmaniczky Frigyes emlékiállítás megnyitója’, 20 June 1995.

416 ‘Out of the cities in Hungary Budapest happens to be the one that preserved most truly, even over the last two centuries, the thousand year old Hungarian tradition of peacefully living together of different peoples languages and cultures. There are many reasons for this. Originally, the contemporary Hungarian capital was made to bloom mainly by non-native Hungarian speaking citizens in the last century. These citizens, language-wise and in terms of feelings, turned Hungarian, but at the same time they preserved their own culture, religion and customs.’ Gábor Demszky, ‘Ünnepi beszéd a nagyszalontai múzeumkerben’ [Speech at the Salonta (Nagyszalonta) Museum Garden], 20 August 2000, 2000-aug20.doc, Beszédek 1994-2004. Emphasis original.
At the turn of the century Budapest grew into a metropolis, and afterwards it attracted many of the various peoples of the Monarchy at the time, and of the sons and daughters of the surrounding countries, to try their luck here. Croats, Slovaks, Gypsies, Ukrainians, Romanians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Poles, Armenians – each of them represented one color of the cloth that made the Hungarian capital similar to the European metropolises. Budapest became the most liberal point in Hungary, regarding the pluralism of both views and nationalities (nemzetiségek).\footnote{Demszky ‘Ünnepi beszéd a nagyszalontai múzeumkertben’, 20 August 2000.}

And he described the present:

Contemporary citizens of Budapest are worthy successors of the era of [King] St. Stephen. As real Europeans, as citizens belonging to the most advanced world, they are the self-conscious patriots (hazafi) of Hungary. And besides their Hungarian-ness, they can proudly declare themselves to be German, Jewish, Roma, Serbian, Armenian, Greek or Romanian. As is natural in a real metropolis.\footnote{Demszky ‘Ünnepi beszéd a nagyszalontai múzeumkertben’, 20 August 2000.}

The national day marked a millennium since the coronation of the first Hungarian king\footnote{Unsurprisingly, this date, 20 August 1000, may be inaccurate. The feast coincides with traditional harvest festivities. Whether today of new bread or the national day, what matters are the significations afforded to it in political articulation. Heino Nyyssönen, *Kruunu – Unkarin tuhatvuotinen arvoitus* [The Crown – The Thousand-Year Puzzle of Hungary], Jyväskylä: Atena, 2001; Katalin Sinkó, ‘Új kenyer ünnepe’ in Márton Szabó Szövegvalóság, írások a szimbolikus és diszkurzív politikáról, Budapest: Scientia Humana, 1997.}, celebrated by the national Fidesz government who invested heavily in symbols of nationhood. Using the terms the Hungarian Right sought to monopolize (such as hazafi, patriot, or polgár, citizen), and in reference, moreover, to the citizens of Budapest, to Europeanness, to progress and to multiculturalism, Demszky challenged the monocultural vision of the right. He made a link between multiculturalism and multilingualism both in Budapest and in Transylvania and emphasized the maxim of St.Stephen’s father Géza, which had been ignored by the Hungarian right: ‘a multilingual country is stronger than a monolingual one’.\footnote{Demszky ‘Ünnepi beszéd a nagyszalontai múzeumkertben’, 20 August 2000.} Demszky rearticulated the advice: ‘We who for the last decades have been living in two very multiethnic countries – Hungary and Romania – know that *multicultural countries and cities are stronger than monocultural ones*.\footnote{Demszky ‘Ünnepi beszéd a nagyszalontai múzeumkertben’, 20 August 2000, emphasis original.} This is how he evoked a different tradition of Hungarianness to that of the Hungarian right, yet deriving from the same king in the first instance.

In the speech Demszky also articulated a concept of ‘*real metropolis*’ and named Budapest as the
‘most liberal point in Hungary’. This can be seen as stressing his own status within the SZDSZ, where he was aiming to become the party chairman. Taking a closer look at Budapest, however, it should be said that multiculturalism barely shows in the cityscape. The celebrations supported by the City Hall reveal the liberal perspective towards the minorities, which involves tolerating them, recognizing them, and giving them rights. Moreover, the celebrations offer a chance to consume different cultural traditions. Alongside small ethnic and cultural festivals, celebrations of multiculturalism in Budapest included the Jewish festival. In the opening speech to the Budapest Jewish Summer Festival 2000 Demszky argued that Jewish culture and multiculturalism are essential if Budapest is to become a European multicultural metropolis. Here Demszky challenges the concept of the ‘sinful city’. His liberal party is accused by the political Right of cosmopolitanism and is subjected to anti-Semitic rhetoric, but he shows his pride in the Jewish character of the city. Opening the same festival in 2001 he emphasised the:

Budapest that became a metropolis a hundred years ago, at the time pulling in masses of Central European Jews, in their hundreds of thousands. This Jewish community at the same time became the creative force for the development of the city. Following the right and left-wing isolationist dictatorships, we have been building a metropolis again in Budapest over ten years. The Jewish culture again an important role in shaping the character of an open-minded European metropolis. This year’s summer festival also proved this well.

The festivals function as demonstrations of the metropolitan character, of the multiculturalism of Budapest. Multiculturalism emerges as the pluralist counterpart of the idea of a homogeneous national culture. Yet simultaneously, it merely celebrated different consumable cultures and performance, such as the alternative pop culture of the Budapest Parade, the Jewish Budapest, or the Roma, rather than flagging-up multiculturalism in everyday life.

The revival of the memory of the nineteenth century offered a chance to articulate alongside each other the liberal values of freedom and progress (as development through investment and

capitalism), as well as nationhood and the multiculturalism of a European or Central European metropolis. All these ideas were reproduced by Demszky, for example, in his speeches on the national day of 15 March, which celebrates the beginning of the 1848 revolution, to be studied below. Demszky, drawing on images of the late nineteenth century, constructed his city-image of contemporary Budapest to reflect ideas of progress, nationhood and freedom. He deliberately this particular era. Afterwards, the peaceful co-existence of minorities made space for a more exclusive Hungarian nationalism, which also appears in contemporary Hungarian politics. In his speeches Demszky opposes the contemporary nationalism promoted by the Hungarian right, who have chosen the interwar period as their ‘golden era’. He counterposes this to his own clear preference – to the late nineteenth century past. It has also been chosen as the only possible era of reference given that the later eras are occupied by the others political parties or are seen either as too nationalist, too socialist or too insignificant for Demszky and his party. The example of multiculturalism shows how the discursive elements listed above do not have much substance, but it is argued that they exist through their counterparts. The nineteenth century functions as the counterpart to other eras of history.

15 March: The national day of the radicals

The 15 March can be seen as the ‘radical’ national holiday in Hungary. As it commemorates the start of the war of independence against Habsburg Austria, it is an independence day of a kind in Hungary. Hungary has three national days: 15 March refers to the 1848 revolution and the War of Independence, 20 August to the crowning of the Hungarian King Saint Stephen in year 1000 – thus it is either a religious or civic ‘founding of the Hungarian state’ holiday, celebrated under

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communism as the New Bread Day, which reflected folk traditions — and 23 October refers to the revolution of 1956. The choice of the official national day was subject to debate in the first postcommunist Parliament, and the order of importance of these days still varies for the different political groupings. For example, the conservatives favoured 20 August, whereas the liberals celebrated 15 March, which resonates with 19th century liberalism and nationalism. Dénes Némedi, analysing the Hungarian press coverage during the early 1990s of 15 March, revealed the lack of a constitutive political frontier between the right/conservative/nationalist camp and the left/liberal/cosmopolitan camp. The way in which Magyar Hírlap, of the Hungarian liberal left, covered the national day differed from that of the Népszabadság, the daily of the Hungarian Socialists, turned into a national day in 1994. 15 March was valued more often from a ‘sacred cult’ perspective by the conservative, right-wing, nationalist press (Magyar Nemzet, Új Magyarország, Pesti Hírlap) than in the Magyar Hírlap – associated with the left liberals and SZDSZ, which emphasises it from an ‘activist sacral’ perspective. In contrast, sacred elements of both sorts are missing from the Népszabadság coverage.

The fact that sacral wordings of both kinds are almost totally missing from the Népszabadság, points towards the fact that the cultist-activist differentiation is not identical with the politically oriented, pragmatical and a metaempirical conception of the nation. The concept of nation in the liberal Magyar Hírlap is pragmatic and political, but it places a strong emphasis on its exceptionality – that the revolution is run for the signification of the active ecstatic totality.

The emphasis comes across in Demszky’s speeches, which I will study below. Némedi in his analysis also recognises a difference between the pragmatic and political use of the 15 March in the

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425 Sinkó, ‘Új kenyer ünnepe’, p. 263.
427 Dénes Némedi, ‘Március 15. Az ünnep és a sajtója’ in Márton Szabó, Szövegvalóság, p. 259
428 Némedi, ‘Március 15. Az ünnep és a sajtója’, p. 259
conservative papers and the liberal *Magyar Hírlap*, and the more historically focused, socialist *Népszabadság*. The importance the liberals attach to 1848 serves to undermine the strong fixed frontier between the two sides. In analysing the speeches of Demszky I will show how he articulates political differences through 15 March, with a strong commitment to the revolutionary tradition following 1848.

The annual 15 March speeches, which take place by the statue of the national revolutionary poet Petőfi (Demszky’s political idol beyond the metropolitan Podmaniczky) in commemoration of the student revolts and the War of Independence of 1848/49, became a tradition for Demszky. A look at the speeches from 1995-2002 reveals Demszky’s reading of the political context, the rhetorical development of Demszky’s relationship to the concept of nation, the emergent myth of the city-countryside divide, a treatment of the relationship between the government and the city, and the polarisation of Hungarian politics in general. These speeches are delivered in the public space of Budapest, by a statue commemorating a historical period, and, as we will see below, they address the citizens of Budapest and Hungary on a national day, also thereby creating conceptions of these publics. The audience is more extensive than the party membership but still relatively favourable to the Free Democrats, since the different political groupings in Hungary use the spaces of the city selectively, and gather around certain statues. The liberal celebrations take place at the statue of Petőfi who delivered the 12 point declaration that launched the revolution. Hence the gathering in this place is broadcast live on the national television. The extreme right, by contrast, has been gathering in the Heroes Square, which was a major site for meetings in the authoritarian Interwar period.

The confrontation between the opposition and the power-holders is then already built into the character of this national day. Sometimes the confrontation was between Demszky and the government, sometimes between the party’s parliamentary faction and Demszky. However, as we

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have seen in the theory chapter, the confrontation – like the memory of the revolution of 1848/49 –
can only exist through its continuous articulation. The rest of the chapter shows how Demszky has
been articulating the memory of the revolution, drawing parallels to the contemporary situation, and
thereby articulating the elements and frontiers which would construct his own discourse in 1995-
2002.

**Demszky: reaching towards the memories of radicalism ... and nationhood**

For many years already, we citizens of Pest gather by this statue, and cheat ourselves a little
bit.
We speak of Sándor Petőfi and Lajos Kossuth but we think about ourselves. For them we
brought flowers, because of them we carry our kokárda, but with the symbols of freedom
we are remembering our own desires; we were citing their ideas [in 1988 and 1989], but
already then those arose from our hearts.  

As the opening quote of this section shows, Demszky projects towards the future, in his annual
commemorative speeches, through references to the past. They are in essence historical
articulations, à la Benjamin, which are given at a specific location and moment, but which also
work and reflect on different times. As Benjamin argued: ‘To articulate the past historically does
not mean to recognise it the way it really was (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it
flashes up in a moment of danger.’  

Demszky articulates these moments of danger – the
threatening political situations and positioning, often the drift between the government and the city
– in his speeches and gathers momentum through them. Here we could talk about paradiastolic
move. The way in which Demszky redescribes the present through the past indicates a move which
redescribes the normative content of the present. The present appears as the synonym of the recalled
past, as a moment of danger and of revolution. The present condition is no longer seen as having to
do with a happy, cheerful, well-managed national day, on which a crowd has gathered to celebrate

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431 Gábor Demszky, ‘Polgártársaim! Barátaim!’ [Fellow citizens! Friends!], speech at the Petőfi statue 15 March 1995,

the heroic moments and personalities of the past. It is problematised, seen in terms of a threat.

As we saw in the theory chapter, Massey has argued that both space and public are co-constitutive and continuously created through social relations. In the moment of speech-giving Demszky contributes to the articulation of his publics in the space created by relationships surrounding the statue of Petőfi. These publics work at different levels, like the spaces which are produced through the references. The address of Demszky’s speech on 15 March 1995, and every year afterwards, reveals the way in which he establishes a parallel between Hungary and Budapest. ‘Polgártársaim’ – ‘my fellow citizens’ – refers to the citizenship of Budapest and Hungary alike, as the reference to ‘Magyarorszag-város polgárai’, citizens of Hungary and the city, at the end of the speech, reveals. Demszky uses a version of the word ‘polgár’ – citizen – which, as was seen in Chapter One, was adopted by the right, especially Fidesz whilst in power in 1998, in an exclusive way. These are the only speeches in which he uses this address. It bears a reference to the liberal ideal of the ‘citizens’, of the French revolution, an idea which was continued during the revolutions of 1848. For Demszky, the development of democracy and citizenship appear more important than the national flair of the 1848 revolution. However, as we will see later, in 1999 he refers to the 19th century Hungarian liberal priorities of constructing a modern nation. While Demszky creates his own constituency, he also articulates the space/public of the metropolitan city, as well as that of the nation or state.

In analysing the speeches I aim to show how the units or publics of nation and metropolis, and the

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434 In the document for 1996 there was no address. Gábor Demszky ‘Hazánk az arcát keresi.’ [Our homeland is looking for its image], speech at the Petőfi statue 15 March 1996, 96marc15.doc, Beszédek 1994-2004.
438 Demszky’s concept of citizens, as those of the 19th century Hungarian liberalism and the French Revolution, derives from the geographico-political unit, which reinforces the importance of the metropolis alongside that of the state.
discursive frontier between them, are both recreated and negated by Demszky. Nevertheless, as we can see from Demszky’s rhetorical moves, he often, especially in moments of extreme polarisation (e.g. 2000-2002) attempts to negate this frontier with calls for unity. As we will see in the following sections, time and again – by referring to the frontier and by engaging with the discourse of his political opponents – he maintains the frontier and its imaginary existence. The speeches reveal that ‘nation’ is a dominant floating signifier in Hungary, being mobilised and claimed by different political parties, and that even its counterparts such as internationalism and metropolitanism are articulated with the idea of nation.\textsuperscript{439} The Budapest Mayor Gábor Demszky makes claims over the concept of ‘nation’.\textsuperscript{440} I now focus on the problematic of the political frontiers as articulated by the Mayor of Budapest.

\textit{An Uneasy Coalition 1995-96}

In the 15 March speeches of 1995-1996 Demszky addressed the status of challenger which both his party SZDSZ held in relation to the government and which he himself held within the party. Demszky remained a dissident within his own party, for the SZDSZ had been urging the cancellation of the Expo 1995 since their time in opposition to the pro-Expo MDF government. The Expo would have provided massive investment for Budapest and therefore SZDSZ party comrades were letting Demszky down – or, depending on ones point of view, Demszky was unfortunately siding with the Socialists and the right-wing opposition. The years 1994-95 witnessed the wars of position, in which the two governing parties were fighting over the agenda.\textsuperscript{441} The speech of 1995 reinforces the polarisation in Hungarian politics, but also later questions the unity of the left. In the

\textsuperscript{439} As we discussed in the theory chapter, Derrida has shown that the binary opposition is not one side’s exclusion or expulsion of another, but that the border between the two is in fact contaminated. See Aletta Norval, ‘Social Ambiguity and the Crisis of Apartheid’ in Ernesto Laclau, ed., \textit{The Making of Political Identities}, London: Verso, 1994, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{440} Metropolis-building and nationhood are not necessarily opposites but favoured at times by both sides of the political spectrum. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the Hungarian right also funds projects to give international prominence to Budapest and, through metropolitan development, to offer a way to celebrate Hungarianess (e.g. the Budapest World Expo 1995/96, Budapest’s Olympic bid for 2012).

earlier-quoted opening of the 15 March speech from 1995, ‘we speak about Petőfi and Kossuth…’, refers to heroes of 1848 as well as to the alliance between the Free Democrats and Socialists. It reinforces the idea that unity has been created among the governmental parties. The speech, which follows the election year 1994, evokes – through the memory of spring 1848 – that of the election battle of the previous year, and goes on pondering the connection of the present with the future.

Demszky opened the second section of the speech as follows:

Friends! Those who joined us last year also know that we came here full of concerns. We could see hope vanish again. We had just freed ourselves from dictatorship and the new politics were already crushing the country. It invaded our privacy, corrupted our friendships and used up our air. In March many of us came here to say ‘leave us alone!’ And when faced by a choice we made our choice. The country decided overwhelmingly to replace those who had given in to temptation.

Here Demszky drew the frontier between the democratic left, which made it to the government, and the right, which he sees as anti-democratic. While Demszky defended, for example, the government’s controversial financial policy (without directly mentioning the Bokros package introduced just days before by the Finance Minister), by saying it was truly postcommunist, and called for patience to be shown towards the reforms. Demszky’s hesitation regarding what to do next carries a trace of the uncertainty over the direction in which the policies of the coalition government were going. Here the reference is made to the Finance Minister Lajos Bokros who launched his neoliberal stabilisation program – the notorious Bokros package – on 12 March 1995. The package increased SZDSZ’s loyalty to the government. He argues, ‘Breaking free feels good. What’s more, it feels ecstatic. For a day or two. But on the third day we ask ourselves, what else is there? What to do next?’ and later ask ‘How to go further?’

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These questions draw us closer to the worry Demszky has about the unity of SZDSZ and MSZP in government, which he addresses via the conflict between the capital city and the government. The biggest controversy Demszky saw arising between the government and the metropolis – though not the SZDSZ and the MSZP –, regarding the government’s vision for Budapest, was the cancellation of the Expo after the elections of 1994. In his 15 March speech of 1995 Demszky insisted that the accountability of the government should involve carrying through decisions made under the previous government. ‘When we want an accountable government we expect that the government doesn’t try to win a battle, whereby every well-intentioned opposition is seen as a loss. […] Instead, [it should] conclude the program for which there was a mandate.’ Criticising the government in which his own party was a coalition partner, Demszky attempted to undermine the idea of two united fronts in Hungarian politics.

Slightly in conflict to the idea that ‘there would be music if there is money’ from the state – evoked from the Expo plans – Demszky displayed an anti-etatist position, arguing that the Budapest citizens know better than the majority of Hungarian politicians what a free society is. It was in keeping with the idea mentioned idea that Budapest is the most liberal point in Hungary. By this he indicated to his party that Budapest was the liberal stronghold, under his leadership. Demszky also created frontiers between Budapest and the rest of the Hungary, between Budapest and the national politics, and between the anti-etatists and etatists, in which instance he wanted to see that the Socialists would remain on the same side as Liberals. In 1996, Demszky argued that 15 March 1848 provided the basis for the ‘political institutions of a modern civic state’, insisting that the state

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447 This is in contrast with the interviews of Demszky where he cautiously insists that the decision of the Budapest Expo was for the parliament to make, not him, and even opposes the ideas of the Expo along his party line. Demszky, ‘Bennem nincs…’ reprinted in Szabadság..., p. 25.

448 This anti-etatist position invests more trust in civic organisations and local government than in the state. It goes well with the spirit of the 15 March 1848, which entailed a popular uprising against an oppressive empire. This was discussed in the introduction as conditions of postcommunism. See also George Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993; Nations, Identity, Power; The New Politics of Europe, London: Hurst and Company, 2000.

would be self-limiting as opposed to the oppressive empire.

In his 1996 speech, with the words: ‘Our homeland is looking for its image’\textsuperscript{450}, Demszky referred to the modernisation process the left-wing government had carried out, but also to the construction of community and nationhood. Even if Demszky did not here yet use the word ‘nation’, ‘homeland’ falls importantly in the same category as had been emphasised in the period of the previous, national conservative MDF government, to denote difference from the state-centred discourse during the socialist period.\textsuperscript{451} Demszky retained the idea of homeland from the national-conservative period 1990-94, but the argument that it is ‘looking for its image’ indicates that it was being rethought or redescribed in relation to what it had been.\textsuperscript{452}

Both the 1995 and 1996 speeches addressed the novelty of the postcommunist situation and transition. They constructed and questioned the unity of the leftwing government, they created a distinction between Budapest and the state, Budapest and the rest of Hungary, and pondered the character of the state and the ‘homeland’.

\textit{Budapest, Hungary, Nation and Europe}

The speeches in 1997 and 1998 witness the creation of three overlapping spaces/publics, the metropolitan, the national and the European, and at the same time the illusion of unity. These issues were crucial, since in the election year 1998 the anti-metropolitan nationalists accused the left-wing government of deserting the nation with their neoliberal policies\textsuperscript{453}, and the liberal mayor went to great pains to try to establish a link between the nation and Hungary’s position in Europe – the EU membership the government was thriving for. Yet, simultaneously, he projected a vision of national


\textsuperscript{452} Demszky ‘Hazánk az arcát keresi.’ 15 March 1996.

\textsuperscript{453} See e.g., Bozóki, \textit{Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon 1987-2002}, p. 326.
unity and of the importance of nationhood for the left.

In 1996 Demszky called for the unity of the country by opposing the division of the country into East and West. In 1997, he stressed the importance of maintaining Budapest as the centre of the country. By making these points, Demszky tried to avoid the division of the country and to respond to any accusation by the political right that Budapest – which, as the north western part of the country, prospered after the fall of the Iron Curtain – would be the leading force in the creation of the divisions.

In the election year 1998, Demszky emphasised, in his 15 March speech, the role of Budapest in the European-wide movement of the year 1848, the ‘Spring of Peoples’ – ‘Népek Tavasza’ – which liberated people in general, and Europe in particular, in an eastward movement, starting from Paris, and later to Berlin and Vienna, and finally to Budapest on 15 March 1848.

Today, one and a half centuries ago, on a rainy day, the Spring of Peoples started in Pest-Buda. The cleansing storm had started already in February with the Paris revolution, later sweeping over Berlin and a range of German territories. On 15 March it reached Vienna, the capital of the empire of which our homeland also formed a part. As a direct effect of this the wave of reforms reached Pest too. For a historic moment the Hungarians (magyarság) became part of the community of peoples who rose up for a constitution and rights of freedom – and in our case also for independence.

Here the important moments are: the stress on the cities of revolution and the inclusion and elevation of Budapest into the league of European metropolises – Paris, Berlin and Vienna; the stress on Europeanness; the idea that the 1848 movement was liberal, and in Hungary also a national movement; the use of magyarság, the community of Hungarians, alongside the peoples in

454 ‘It requires a great deal of understanding and generosity from both sides. But this is the price of keeping the unity of the country. Now that we ended Europe’s division we shouldn’t create an East and West divide in our country, among Hungarians. After all, what can the future hold for a country where boys from neighbouring towns look at each other with anxiety and fear? I believe the country is undividable. It is not an option to throw out certain groups or regions like ballast for the sake of progress. Should we agree to do this just once, there will be no end to it. There will always be some without whom the future might seem easier.’ Demszky ‘Hazánk az arcát keresi.’ 15 March 1996.

455 ‘Budapest has been the centre of the country since 1848. Since then, when Budapest was strong, the country had hope too.’ Demszky, ‘Hazánk az arcát keresi.’ 15 March 1996.

general. ‘In the Spring of Peoples we were one of the peoples fighting for the freedom of Europe. We were members in the promising community of nations’, 457 Demszky argued, thereby making an implicit reference to Hungary joining Europe first in 1989 and to Hungary’s future membership of the EU, which the MSZP-SZDSZ government had been working towards.

In 1999 Demszky made an even more obvious link between nationhood and the EU, by describing membership as a ‘national aim’. 458 In fact, rather than calling for celebrations of the thousand years of Hungarian statehood at the millennium – a popular theme for the government, as we will see in the next chapter 459 – Demszky argued that ‘the most important national aim at the turn of the millennium is: the union with Europe!’ 460 Here he is making a paradiastolic move – turning something that had been seen as bad and elitist, anti-national and having to do with the cosmopolitan politics of the left, into something ‘national’.

In the process Budapest is elevated to the status of the ‘engine of progress in Hungary’. 461 Through the common goal of progress Budapest and the nation, or country, cannot be separated. While Demszky was calling for national unity in 1996, the experience of a common European past, and the revolutionary spirit and its identification as a metropolitan factor, provided the possibility for Demszky to articulate Budapest as having risen in significance above the nation-state. In the 1997 speech he stressed that Budapest had been the centre of the country since 1848. 462 In his 15 March speech of 1998 Demszky does not ponder whether Hungary is among the European states but rather whether Budapest is in the league of the other European cities. Therefore – as already shown through the examples of the nineteenth century nostalgia – Demszky implies that the Europeanness

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459 See also Brigid Fowler, ‘Nation, State, Europe and National Revival in Hungarian Party Politics’.
of Hungary happens via Budapest, a European metropolis, where the revolution of 1848 happened following the larger European movement. Thereby, moreover, the national day and the related national pride are deposited within the European tradition.

The discursive construction of the nation also became more important in Demszky’s rhetoric towards the late 1990s. In 1998, 15 March preceded the elections which took Fidesz-MPP conservative coalition to power, ushering in an era of the state-sponsored celebrations of nationhood. The conservative right was accusing the Hungarian left, during the election campaign, of being cosmopolitan, too ready to bow to the West and reluctant to respect and celebrate Hungrianness. Up until 1998, Demszky avoided the word ‘nation’ (nemzet) and preferred to speak about the ‘people’ (nép), the traditional term in leftist discourse, and also because the revolution of 1848 was one in which other nationalities participated, in the fight against the Habsburg empire and the imperial order in Europe. In this way, by creating its own space/public, the word ‘people’ can refer to the citizens of Budapest and Hungary alike.

In the election year 1998, the audience addressed by the 15 March speech shifted from fellow citizens and friends to fellow citizens and Hungarians. In the speech, as we saw above, Demszky also mentions the community of Hungarians (magyarság). Nation is mentioned in the context of turning toward the West:

The one-time experience of the liberation on 15 March helped the Hungarian nation through the coma of one and a half centuries. And since the slow and difficult wasting-away of the soft dictatorship did not offer a similar experience, today we have to draw from there [15 March], too. From there we can gain push-power, which is necessary for the creation of economic prosperity, for the modernisation of the country and for catching up with the developed Western world.

A similar reference to the nation and the past in regard of the vitality of the contemporary condition will be witnessed in the following chapter on Viktor Orbán’s speeches.

See e.g., Bozóki, Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon 1987-2002, p. 236.

The turn to nationhood in parliamentary politics had its impact on Demszky’s rhetoric. Whereas in 1996 he talked about the ‘modern liberal state’, in 1999 Demszky ties the concept of ‘modern nation’ to the liberal tradition in Hungary. ‘The Hungarian liberals strove [in the nineteenth century] to create a nation first of all. They envisaged the modern nation not as a small circle of the privileged but as a wide community of people identifying with being Hungarian.’ This move contested the idea, spread by the Hungarian right, that the liberals are against the nation (nemzet-ellenes). The leftist concept of nation, based on the territory of Hungarian state, and typical to the late 19th century reformers, re-emerged in Demszky’s rhetoric in 1999. He argued that the 12 points of the 15 March declaration of 1848 condensed a ‘free Hungarian society, [and] a program for a democratic and independent Hungary’. As with the nineteenth century city-image, nation in the 15 March speeches at the turn of the twentieth century was equated with signifiers such as freedom, progress and Europe.

Clearen or Blurred Frontiers? Against Fidesz, with Nation
Rejecting the myth of the nation-metropolis divide, Demszky argued against the reduction of the gap between Budapest and countryside by lowering the standard of the metropolis, and articulated a new dividing line between the government and the rest:

Those who restrict freedoms (Szabadságnýírbálók) [i.e. the government] still intend to play off Budapest against the Provinces. Just as they intend to do away with the difference between quality and unreadable newspapers, they hope to eliminate the unequal position of the capital and the countryside. Every decent attempt at civilisation strives for that. But attempts at civilisation up until now aimed at the urbanisation of the countryside, not at making the city provincial.

By using the term szabadságnýírbálók – meaning those who quite randomly restrict freedoms – Demszky criticised the Fidesz government and reinforced the idea of a frontier between the national government and the metropolis. He named as the crux of the problem the government’s strong

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opposition towards Budapest, articulating a strong frontier in Hungarian politics. In contrast Demszky wanted to restore the link between the countryside and the metropolis, for example by reminding his audience that both in 1848 and in 1956 ‘the Hungarian countryside had stood by the revolutionary capital city’. Concluding his speech by saying that the capital city would also help the countryside, Demszky again tried to relativize the juxtaposition of the countryside and the metropolis, which is fundamental to the imagination and constitution of the discursive frontier in Hungarian politics. However, by doing so he rearticulated the same frontier, by, in effect, calling the government anti-Budapest.

In 2000, Demszky’s 15 March speech started to reflect the polarised politics more clearly, provoked by the deepening and concretisation of the Fidesz government’s hostility towards Budapest. The speech started with the address: ‘My fellow citizens! Budapest people [nép]! Hungarians!’ As Chapter One showed, this seemed to be the left-wing construction of nationhood, based on citizenship within the politico-geographical unit. However, Demszky referred to the ‘nation’ when addressing the polarisation in Hungarian politics. Arguing that: ‘During the past week the best of the nation – conservatives, left-wingers and liberals – wanted the same as the 1848-ers: Hungarian independence, the freedom of every citizen and accountable governance’, Demszky crucially included his liberal party and the Hungarian left within the nation. He reminded his audience that in 1848 – in contrast to the situation in contemporary Hungary – these people could unite and form

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471 Two months later Fricz argued in the conservative Magyar Nemzet (20 May 2000) that the polarisation in the Hungarian parliament was so deep that there was no chance for compromise of consensus. ‘There is virtually no crossover between the national and the cosmopolitan-minded. There is either a complete lack of intermediary groups, organisations and public figures or there are some rare exceptions and this serves to make it more difficult to achieve the necessary political consensus. Relations between the elites of the two camps are not free of subjective animosities and, from time to time, visceral hatreds. Radical opposition becomes visible in the work of the Parliament as well: a coarsening of tone has become typical, tempers are given free rein, it becomes impossible to reach compromises or consensus. Opposition becomes particularly pronounced when bills containing expressions of values are debated.’ Quoted Gusztáv Kosztolányi, ‘Sex, Lies, but No Videotape; Two years of Fidesz. Part One’, Central European Review CER, 25:2, 26 June 2000. http://www.ce-review.org/00/25/csardas25.html, last accessed on 13 September 2005.
a common manifesto for peace, freedom and unity:

At the end of the nineteenth century all of them together Budapest into the fastest-developing city in Europe. If the city lead by the opposition constructed schools and hospitals the government responded by [building] new routes and the first metro line on the continent.\textsuperscript{473}

This is a direct reference to the shelving of the plans for the fourth metro line by the Fidesz government, and the lack of co-operation between the parties and between the government and the capital city, as well as the construction of frontiers, instead of unity, by Fidesz.

An even more direct reference to the contemporary political polarisation was made by Demszky when he referred to the celebration of 15 March. He blamed the polarisation on the drift of Orbán. He reminded the crowd that when, 12 years earlier – in 1988, the anti-communists – ‘dubbed “hooligans” by the state socialist press’ – interrupted the 15 March celebrations, ‘Viktor Orbán was among us’.

[But n]ow the Hungarian prime minister is no longer with us. This is the first time since the change of the system that the Hungarian state television is not sending a broadcast from the Petőfi statue. Maybe it means that the Hungarians forgot about it? \textit{Voilà!} Here we are. And next year there will be even more of us.\textsuperscript{474}

He gave an illustration of the exclusion the government attempted to construct in its rhetoric and practices. As the above quotes on 1848 show, Demszky usually seeks consensus, but now he argued that Orbán has deserted the democratic coalition and its ideals, Hungarians as well as Budapest.

This was a response to claims that the left would have deserted the nation and its interest.

Exclusion here works in two ways: the first exclusion is the claim that Orbán has left the democrats, and therefore excluded them and the ideals they hold from his discourse. The other exclusion is of the PM: ‘Orbán is no longer with us’. Orbán exists outside the crowd standing united around the statue of Petőfi. Demszky cunningly ties up his own discourse around elements of SZDSZ, Petőfi, 1848, the Budapestians, freedom, democracy, and the other ideals of those gathered around the


statue, which, through the exclusion of Orbán constitutes a counter-discourse to Fidesz. It includes all the elements present at the moment of commemoration, i.e. those which Orbán seems to have deserted. Thereby, the departure or exclusion of Orbán reinforces the unity of the group gathered by the statue, and becomes constitutive of the discourse Demszky is promoting. We could see Demszky trying to deny the frontier, and move into the middle of the dividing line between the Socialists and the Fidesz. Yet at the same time, he exploits the idea of a strong frontiers in Hungarian politics to gain unity for his own discourse.

As discussed in the theory chapter, frontiers are essential for unity.\textsuperscript{475} It is a form of exclusion, which shows how the exclusion is integral to the system itself, yet simultaneously outside it. This is the earlier-mentioned idea of contamination of the bipolarities, derived from Derrida. The importance of frontiers and polarisation in politics is that it can offer a sense of permanency to the exclusion and also to the totality of the discursive system itself. The frontier rests on the idea that the two positions can never be bridged for reasons considered as logical or natural. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, a powerful myth in Hungarian politics is the idea that – by way, moreover, of a necessary historical feature of Hungarian politics – a frontier exists between the metropolis and the countryside.\textsuperscript{476} In what follows, we will see how Demszky proceeds to contest the incompatibility by integrating a concept of nation in his discourse.

As we saw from the above, from 1999 onwards the term ‘nation’ has regularly appeared in Demszky’s 15 March speeches, usually in order to contest and thereby revive the idea of polarisation.\textsuperscript{477} In 2001 Demszky made a significant rhetorical move: he fully adopted the term most


\textsuperscript{477} Demszky, ‘Polgártársaim! Budapest népe! Magyarok!’ 15 March 1999; ‘Köztársasági Elnök Úr! Polgártársaim!'
associated with the opposite side into his own rhetoric. Thus, he was challenging Orbán and contesting the idea of the particularity and difference of ‘nation’ and the nationalist discourse. As I will discuss below, this can be seen as the contestation of a ‘floating signifier’, where the two sides want to hegemonize a concept for themselves.\(^{478}\) By reclaiming the term ‘nation’, alongside ‘Hungarians’, Demszky attempted to destroy the monopoly that had been claimed by the Hungarian right – and to which he, by avoiding the use of the term, had contributed – over the term ‘nation’. The idea that ‘nation’ would no longer be a term of the right in Hungary but also of the left, would contest the whole conception of polarised politics and the discursive frontier. Nevertheless, since Demszky used it explicitly to respond to the precise phenomenon of postcommunist polarisation, he therefore again confirmed its existence.

In 2001, like the Hungarian right, Demszky used the term ‘Hungarians’,\(^{479}\) and finished his nation-centred speech in the words of the Kossuth song: ‘Long live Hungarian freedom! Long live the homeland!’ This usage of vocabulary common on the Hungarian right (Magyar and haza, homeland), yet in a form which is stripped of extremism and ‘innocently’ used among all Hungarians, in part questioned the stereotype that the liberals were anti-nation (nemzet-ellenes), propagated by the Hungarian right, and the implication that nation and the metropolis would not be compatible. By contrast, Demszky argues:

> The interests of the nation and the interests of freedom never stand against each other. There is no such national goal for which it is worthwhile to give up our freedom. In other words, only a free nation can be happy and successful. Only a free nation has a claim to honour, only a free nation can gain a good image for the country.\(^{480}\)

Reconciling the opposites Demszky also highlighted how they have been and can be thought of as

\(^{478}\) This I have discussed in the theoretical chapter, Chapter Two.

\(^{479}\) ‘15 March 1848 is the birthday of the modern Hungary. We, the Hungarians, can be proud of the fact that modern Hungary was born one day as the fruit of the battle for the freedom of the nation and the citizens.’ Demszky, ‘Polgártársaim! Budapest népe! Magyarok!’ 15 March 2001.

opposites. However, he also constructed the dividing line between those who call for freedom, and those nostalgic of the repressive eras of Horthy and Kádár.\textsuperscript{481} This refers to both segments in the left and major segments of the right, which had been deprived of the democratic tradition of the 1848. Demszky evoked the fear of the possible return of the two eras.\textsuperscript{482} The speech marks a moment in which political loyalties are called for, a moment of choice, or of politics. In 2001 Demszky tried to claim freedom and nationhood for his own discourse, which was constructed against those ‘freedom-cutters’ mentioned in 1999 – the national right – which he argued was against freedom.

In 2001 and in 2002, Demszky started his speech with Petőfi’s question “are we slaves or are we free”, in an attempt to mobilise the public to realise their potential for the common fight, to create unity for the common cause. ‘On the greatest day of celebration, we stand in front of the statue of the greatest poet of Hungarian freedom. “Are we slaves or are we free?” was the question the poet posed 153 years ago to the mutinous Pest crowd.’\textsuperscript{483} Demszky argued that the ‘freedom loving Hungarians’\textsuperscript{484} had been gathering on 15 March even when there was no freedom. These ‘freedom loving Hungarians’ have been of different groups, of which Demszky named the 1848 heroes, ‘conservative Batthyány, liberal\textsuperscript{485} Kossuth, radical Petőfi, left-wing Táncsis’ and the following

\textsuperscript{481} ‘We are loyal to 1848 if we know that freedom and order, freedom and prosperity, are not each others’ opposite. Over 150 years there has always been someone to offer us false options: we were promised order and prosperity in return for our freedom. But the freedom-less consolidation of the Horthys and Kádárs was no real order, neither did it bring long-lasting prosperity. And yet some wish to evoke nostalgic feelings towards these eras. We must not fall for this! Those who think of the Hungary of István Tisza, Horthy or Kádár with nostalgia, reject the legacy of Petőfi and Kossuth. We show respect to our forefathers of March by believing in the power of our freedom.’ Demszky, ‘Polgártársaim! Budapest népe! Magyarok!’ 15 March 2001.

\textsuperscript{482} The speech, as Benjaminian historical articulation, offers Demszky the opportunity to ‘seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger’. It includes a twist on the same lines as the opening quote in my analysis: ‘we […] gather around this statue, and cheat ourselves a little bit’ (from Demszky’s 1995 speech). In other words, this day is not just about national history but about the recognition in the present of a hint, a memory of the past. The memory which flashes up also constructs or at least reinforces the idea of the moment of danger.


\textsuperscript{484} This echoes the rhetoric of George W. Bush, the American president at the time. It is not particularly surprising given the affinity of Demszky towards the US where he studied on a scholarship in 1988-89, and also the majority of East European postcommunist politicians, who saw the US as their ally in the dissident struggle against the dominance of Soviet Union in the region. On 11 September 2001, Demszky argued in a public speech in Budapest that ‘we are all New Yorkers’. Demszky, ‘Megemlékezés a Hősök terén’ [Commemorations at Heroes’ Square], Budapest 21 October 2001. SZEPT11-okt21.doc, Beszédek 1994-2004.

\textsuperscript{485} However, as I argue here Kossuth has been associated with the left, especially since he, as an expatriot in the UK and the US, was influential in the workers’ movement. See esp., Péter, László; Rady, Martyn and Sherwood, Peter, eds., Lajos Kossuth Sent Word... Papers Delivered on the Occasion of the Bicentenary of Kossuth’s Birth, SSEEES Occasional Papers, 56, London: Hungarian Cultural Centre and School of Slavonic and East European Studies,
generation, Endre Bajcsy-Zilinszky – the most acclaimed Hungarian World War Two hero in socialist times, and the 1956 hero Imre Nagy, applauded in 1989. He again stressed the idea of unity and national pride over these 1848 leaders who fought together for freedom. Obviously, Demszky attempted to construct a frontier between an oppressive regime and the liberals, the conservative Fidesz government being the oppressors and the left-wing opposition the freedom-loving revolutionaries.

In the 15 March speech of 2001, Demszky described his opponents and outlined some problems with the national government. Demszky’s opponents are influential anti-liberals:

There are fellow citizens, some in high elected positions, for whom freedom is an excess. They outspokenly discuss how freedom of the press, the rights of the opposition, freedom of conscience and religion, render effective governance difficult. They find multicoloured-ness disturbing and unnecessary, as it impedes the emergence of their favoured set of values.

In this reference to anti-liberalism, Demszky is referring to the emphasis on Christian values, xenophobia, and anti-metropolitanism. He problematised the etatist ideas, such as centralisation, increased taxation and preferring efficient government to the government by people. ‘Delimitation of the government is not only important when our views are not represented in the government, but also when our people are in the government.’ In other words, in 2001 Demszky attempted to adopt the signifier ‘nation’ and thus move the frontier of Hungarian politics from

2003.

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487 This mirrors the 1995 speech, where the previous conservative MDF government (1990-94) were seen as the postcommunist oppressors. Demszky, ‘Polgártársaim! Budapest népe! Magyarok!’ 15 March 1995.
489 Brigid Fowler, a specialist on the postcommunist Hungarian right argues that ‘for many in the ‘national’ camp, principally in the more traditionalist parties of the first post-1990 right-wing government and Hungarian Justice and Life, one further specific element of Hungarian national identity is Christianity.’ Fowler, ‘Nation, State, Europe and National Revival in Hungarian Party Politics…’, p. 60
490 By contrast, on the political right, Tamás Fricz argued in the conservative Magyar Nemzet (20 May 2000): ‘The MSZP and the SZDSZ accuse the government of being in cahoots with the "extreme right" on certain issues – in other words with the MIEP (Hungarian Justice and Life Party). The accusation, which has no foundation in reality, forms part of a political strategy designed to prove that the government is right-wing extremist and dictatorial, which thereby discredits it abroad [...]’. Quoted Gusztáv Kosztolányi ‘Sex, Lies, but No Videotape; Two years of Fidesz. Part One’.
491 High taxes are a problem as the citizens have less say on what their money is used for, Demszky argues. Demszky, ‘Polgártársaim! Budapest népe! Magyarok!’ 15 March 2001.
nationhood, to freedom. Finally, he tried to hegemonise politics through the use of the term ‘freedom’ (and democracy, delimitation of government) by simultaneously calling for others to join a common front against the oppressors or anti-liberals. Strikingly, in the course of a single speech he proceeded as if to – in turn – demolish, rearticulate, reconstruct and hegemonise the imaginary political frontier, to put it to work as a uniting force in his discourse rather than that of the nationalists. He also may be seen to create a continuum between the left and right where he could position the SZDSZ in the middle.

While in 2000 and 2001 the unity of freedom and nationhood was created against the government parties which were trying to restrict freedoms, the following year he had a more straight-forward task: to counter-hegemonise nationhood, which was important for the government’s rhetoric. In the midst of the polarised electoral campaign of 2002, when the symbol of the patriotism of 1848, the kokárda, became monopolised by the Fidesz-led front, 15 March as a revolutionary day crystallised in Demszky’s speech. Demszky launched his speech with revolutionary flair:

Hungarians! Budapestians! My fellow citizens! Today we came here to celebrate and to demonstrate. Celebrate Hungarian freedom and democracy’s greatest commemorative day and to show our determination to defend our freedom and democracy.

Here we can see how Demszky tried to contribute to the creation of the space and the public in the revolutionary moment, and, as in previous years, referred to the past and to Petőfi’s question. ‘[T]hen, 154 years earlier, just as now, we know how to answer’, Demszky said. He named 15 March as the celebration of ‘Hungarian democratic powers’ in each era. He includes in the same chain of symbolic events the 1956 demonstrations, the 1972 student protest against Kádár’s regime, the 1988/1989 demonstrations, and the election time of 2002, and argues: ‘Today again we stand against the powers that restrict our freedom, peacefully and democratically, with dignity.’

493 As mentioned earlier, Hungary has three national holidays which commemorate historical events, and which are politically contested. As with the choice of the national coat of arms and the location of the crown jewels, the political groupings in Hungary were divided upon this question, the liberal SZDSZ supporting 15 March.


In his speech, Demszky redrew the frontier between the power-holding Hungarian right and the coalition of socialists and liberals. He affirmed the existence of extreme polarisation and the need for mobilisation prior to the elections in 2002. He emphasised the unity of the Budapest and the Hungarian revolutionaries, through Kossuth et al., against conservative Fidesz-ism. He pointed out that in 1848 the citizens of Pest and the opposition in the parliament, Petőfi and Kossuth, were fighting together for freedom, against the repressive powers. These two figures, symbols of SZDSZ and MSZP, which represented the radical forces, are left of the list of names and groups he enumerated in 1999, when calling for unity. The moment of danger was again evoked by the memory of the past, recalled to gain political progress:

If after April [and the general elections] everyone can feel that there’s nothing to be afraid of, that the laws and regulations are not toys at the mercy of the government, that there are not two classes of citizens – protected and unprotected, if politics ceases to be a boxing match, spurt, punch-up, sensation, then for sure more has occurred than a change of government – i.e. the return to the normal, fearless, consensual, Western Hungarian democracy, which was envisioned in relation to the system change, to the democracy that Kossuth, Batthyány and Petőfi fought for between 1848-1849.

Again, Demszky made a crucial exclusion. He named Petőfi, Kossuth and Batthyány as the democrats but left without mention a more moderate contemporary politician, Count István Széchenyi, ‘the Greatest Hungarian’ claimed and celebrated by the Fidesz government. This reinforced the idea of a discursive frontier. In other words, instead of really contesting the frontier Demszky affirmed both it and the relevant exclusion, which offered a sense of unity in the crowd.

By telling a story of Kossuth, the defender of press freedoms – an issue close to Demszky’s heart from his dissident years – in the year marking the 200th anniversary of Kossuth’s birth, Demszky

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499 By contrast, in the previous day’s press conference Demszky took a more moderate stand, in favour of consensual politics. He even quoted Széchenyi and argued that Kossuth and Széchenyi’s heritage ought to come together to foster ‘normal, consensus-based, intrepid, parliamentary democracy’. Perhaps this was a difference between the two audiences, where for the greater and more critical audience Demszky wanted to stress the lack of a frontier and for the other, smaller and more partisan audience, construct a frontier whereby the crowd could easier unite against the ‘other side’. Demszky, ‘Kedves Barátaim!’ [Dear friends!], 2002-marc15-sajtófogadás.doc, Press conference 14 March 2002, 5pm.
made his criticism of the government, drew the frontier between ‘us’ and ‘them’. He criticised ‘them’ of the dominance of the government of national radio and television, the clientelist ‘new aristocracy’, antisemitism, the distrust of neighbouring countries and great powers, and the division of the nation.\footnote{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.}

Kossuth convinced the Hungarian aristocracy to renounce their feudal rights. In contrast to this, the current government is building a new vassal upper class, with rights, out of the party’s clientele [klientúra]. … Kossuth moulded the nation by unifying interests. The current government intends to split it into two hostile camps.\footnote{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.}

Yet after this description of the opponents, which strongly implied the existence of an imagined frontier and the need to offer an alternative, Demszky once again retreated to the terrain of consensual politics, and criticised the frontier: ‘We call for the unity of the Hungarian people. For us they are not our enemies – those who voted for the party in power four years ago – but our fellow citizens (polgártársaink).’\footnote{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.} His option for the new alternative was to do away with polarisation, but at the same time he was always reminding his audience of the existence of the two camps.

Demszky highlighted the government’s hostility to Budapest by raising the issue of Budapest’s metro, ‘the vital, nature-preserving construction project’.\footnote{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.} Demszky blamed the government for ‘centralisation’ (against the metropolis). He argued: ‘Now there is a need for a government which sees a partner not an enemy [in Budapest].’ The alternative was to be found in the left-liberal order: ‘Kossuth’s Hungary’ was ‘civic, secular, modern, free’ to which the ‘favoured’ (MSZP-SZDSZ) government would turn it again in four years.\footnote{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.} Of course, by describing the current government and offering an alternative, he rearticulated the frontier anew in his speeches. Its existence, in fact, would be fundamental for getting his party into power, as his task is to swing people to his side of the divide and make them vote. To do that in a discursive field dominated by the signifier ‘nationhood’ he needed to rearticulate ‘nation’ with a new meaning and adopt it as part of his

\footnotetext{500}{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.}
\footnotetext{501}{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.}
\footnotetext{502}{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.}
\footnotetext{503}{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.}
\footnotetext{504}{Demszky, ‘Magyarok! Budapestiek! Polgártársaim!’ 15 March 2002.}
rhetoric. As already seen in this chapter, nationhood and metropolitanism are actually closely linked in Demszky’s speeches, through the idea of heroes and golden eras for Budapest.

By 2002 the political polarisation had progressed to its apogee, and Demszky claimed the idea of nationhood and articulated it into his own discourse. He stressed the frontier between the Hungarian political right and the left, embracing the unity of the left. There was no question that a political divide existed, but the divide was again rearticulated by the mayor himself.

**Conclusion: Demszky Rearticulates the frontier as an imaginary**

The chronological organisation of the speeches shows that certain rhetorical moves, such as exclusion or recognition of the moments of danger, are repeated over time, but that the content of the moves and the relative stress upon them indicate that the discourse of Demszky is not fixed but always rearticulated in the changing context. However, it is important to note that while the object of exclusion changes, and the elements inside the discourse – or at least the stress laid upon them – vary, the frontier appears as sedimented during this period in Hungarian politics. The analysis of the speeches shows how certain key themes repeat in Demszky’s speeches: freedom/liberalism, the positioning of Budapest and Hungary in Europe, unity, nationhood, conflict between Budapest and the national government, polarisation or the discursive frontier in Hungarian politics. All these elements are included in the system forming Demszky’s discourse. Also, crucially, the frontier itself, which means that this is not a mere limit but integral to the discourse itself. As the frontier implies exclusion it is simultaneously the expression of the constitutive outside within the discourse: consequently the frontier and the excluded are both internal and external to the discourse. As we saw in the theoretical chapter, with Norval, ‘it would be a mistake to think of frontiers in terms of a stark and absolute inside-outside division’.

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505 This is in contrast to, for example, the case of South Africa, see Norval, ‘Social Ambiguity…’, p. 121
506 Norval, ‘Social Ambiguity…’, p. 121.
The divide in Hungarian politics is often created by the impure binary opposition: nation-metropolis. Articulated by the nationalists, the metropolis was invested with a set of negations, captured by the term ‘anti-nation’ (nemzet-ellenes), which makes it an empty non-‘nation’, or non-‘us’. Demszky, in a side-sifting and redescribing paradiastolic move, brought ‘nation’ into his rhetoric and contests the meaning of both the anti-metropolitan nationhood and the metropolis, along with the normative content attach to them. However, Demszky in these speeches does not articulate a specific positive content for the nation, nor does he make a distinction between ‘his’ or ‘their’ nationhood. For example a juxtaposition of ‘right-wing’ ethno-cultural and ‘leftist’ civic nationhood is not visible in Demszky’s speeches.

By analysing these speeches delivered on a national day I have shown the antagonism between the national government and the city that derives from the increasing polarisation in Hungarian politics between the years 1995-2002. These speeches have also offered a chance to analyse the way in which Demszky’s uses of the signifier ‘nation’ change over time in speeches delivered in the urban space of Budapest. More often than to the ‘nation’ he made references to ‘the Hungarians’ or the ‘people’ – until 1999 avoiding the word so common in the rhetoric of the opponents. This is illustrative of the idea that ‘the possibility of creating any identity at all is related to the exclusion, and in many cases silencing, of the other’, which highlights the importance of frontiers in politics. Since 1999 Demszky denied the exclusion of Budapest from Hungary, his party from the nation, and the exclusion of nation in the leftist rhetoric. From then on he made reference to it in crucial periods and in specific ways. The calls for unity were always accompanied by reference to the existence of a frontier. This coincided with the increasing polarisation and the simultaneous hegemonisation of nation by the governing parties, the Hungarian right, around the celebrations of

507 See also Norval, ‘Social Ambiguity…’, p. 121.
508 In the next chapter we will see how Viktor Orbán (Fidesz) has avoided references to Budapest in his rhetoric in a similar way.
509 Norval, ‘Social Ambiguity…’, p. 121.
510 The anti-semitic writers of the extreme right in particular, referred to SZDSZ as the party of Jews, and thus outside the nation. See for evidence e.g. Gerő et al., Anti-semitic Discourse in Hungary in 2000, Budapest: B’nai B’rith Budapest Lodge, 2001.
the ‘Hungarian Millennium’, in the year 2000. Characteristically in 2002, Demszky continued using the word *polgártársaim*, my fellow citizens, contesting the concept which Fidesz had monopolised. Through the process of acknowledgement and negation, however, Demszky played with the imaginary frontier and ended up re-enforcing it.

Although Demszky articulates nation into his discourse and thereby questions the whole idea of the frontier, he still wants to maintain the idea of the frontier. He talks about anti-democrats, referring to those who wanted to monopolise nationhood, but he does not specify any substantive dividing line. Why does he introduce a radically new difference into the discursive field? Perhaps because the old division between the anti-metropolitans and the metropolitans, which derives from the 19th century Hungarian literature, sustains a system of difference in politics, wherein the parties do not need to contest other policies and values. Therefore contests are held over on a simple dimension. Reinforced in this way, the myth of a division, which can take the form of the nation-metropolis divide, becomes a strong political imaginary.

Finally, what occurs is that the ‘old’ frontier of polarisation is articulated into the system of differences of the ‘other’, divided from the ‘us’ (i.e. democrats, freedom seekers, the Hungarian left, inheritors of the 19th century revolution). [See Appendix for Chapter Three.] This enables Demszky to articulate his own discourse, through what he posits as outside the frontier, and the signifiers he claims on his side. The logic, as well as the myth, of polarisation are important for the Hungarian political elite for constructing points of (dis)identification.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have demonstrated how Demszky constantly articulates his discourse through the

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511 See e.g. Fricz, *A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma.*
frontier, whether in the national day speeches or in the case study of the articulation of the city-image of nineteenth century Budapest. As we will see in the next chapter, in the polarised politics in Hungary the government focused on the celebration of the Hungarian Millennium and ignored Budapest, and ‘nation’ emerged as the concept that structured the discursive field of politics. In both the ‘nineteenth century’ and the 15 March speeches, Demszky tried to deny the binary opposition of the metropolis and the nation, which, as we saw in Chapter One, Fricz and Kovács, for example, have shown to be a dominant frontier in Hungarian politics, at least from the 1930s on.512 By denying the frontier, he reconstructed the myth of the frontier. The contest became one over the ‘nation’, which can be seen as a ‘floating signifier’ contested by different political groups, who attempt to tie it to their discourse. Demszky wanted to equate it with concepts such as multiculturalism, metropolis, liberalism and freedom. In this way he contested the imagined frontier between the nation and the metropolis but constructed a frontier between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Whereas we can see that in the mid-1990s the frontier was sometimes between the two ‘left-wing’ parties – the SZDSZ and the Socialists –, in the most polarised situation of 2000-02 it had clearly to do with the Fidesz government. The divide is one between two moral orders: ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. Therefore, the crossings of the frontier, the reclaiming of different elements or floating signifiers, is not whichever redescription, but a specifically paradiastolic one.513

Political frontiers in the rhetoric of Demszky are constantly contested, demolished and reconstructed. The ‘left’ and ‘right’, in this imaginary divide, have been sedimented by constant reproduction. Even when building a tripartite picture Demszky articulates the positions ‘left-wing’, ‘right-wing’, and ‘liberal’ on a continuum, not a triangle. On a continuum the ultimate frontier can also be inserted in a bipolar way. In the last instance Demszky inserts it between left and right where the liberal position belongs to the left. The situation remains black-and-white – not, for

512 See also my discussion on the literature in Chapter One. Fricz, ‘A népi urbánus vita értelmezési lehetőségei’; János Mátyás Kovács, ‘Uncertain Ghosts…’, pp. 113-145.

513 As discussed in the theoretical chapter – Chapter Two, paradiastole implies a change of moral character by turning vices into virtues and vice versa. ‘Floating signifier’ implies the contestation of different elements whereby they can be seen as belonging to different discourses, as I also discussed in relation to Laclau’s theory, in the same chapter.
example, red-yellow-and-blue. The frontier offers a sense of unity and identity for both sides. In the absence of discursive elements, which would offer differentiating content, the frontier has been turned into an ‘essence’ itself. More radical articulations of differences in Hungarian politics, which would tackle and dismantle this frontier and thereby offer new cleavages and sources of contestation, are yet to appear in post-1989/90 Hungary.

Frontier-politics offers a way to articulate political identifications through negation, whereby little content is to be invested in the discourse as such. For Demszky the discursive frontier became important as a ‘playground’ – the space for politicking. László Lengyel critiques Demszky’s politics in 2001 for being pragmatically victory-seeking.\(^{514}\) His politics is of the paradiastolic ‘crossing the floor’. Pragmatic politics maintains the frontier between the two camps, it relies on the redescribability of concepts, their transformation into the property of the opposite camp or their integration through associative links into new ideologies or conceptual sets. The target of politics is therefore the shift itself – the victory rather than the accomplishment of something substantial. Lengyel argued that whereas SZDSZ stood (in 2001) where Demszky once stood, the politician himself no longer stood with the party.\(^{515}\) He argues that what is missing from Demszky’s politicking is passion, belief in the accomplishment of novelty, rather than mere victory. This coincides with Mouffe’s calls for a passion for politics\(^ {516}\), which is lacking in both consensual and polarised politics, as I argued in the theoretical chapter. The frontier is never proposed with an alternative, crossings happen without questioning the idea of the frontier, polarisation or the ‘floor’ itself, and without rethinking what the poles signify. Demszky’s effort to provide an alternative to the frontier, fails through his bipolar rhetoric and constant references to the dominant imaginary of the frontier. In the next chapter I will look at frontier-construction in the discourse of Viktor Orbán and the architectural projects of the Fidesz government.

\(^{514}\) ‘I don’t know whether he has thought through (végiggondolta-e) what he actually wants besides victory’, Lengyel says. Lengyel, *Kis magyar bestiárum*, p. 144.

\(^{515}\) Lengyel, *Kis magyar bestiárum*, p. 143-4. By 2005 the SZDSZ may well have become as pragmatic as Demszky, but this discussion is beyond the scope of my current work.

Chapter 4:

Reading the Fidesz Discourse in Budapest: creating the frontier, occupying space

Introduction

This chapter studies political polarisation in Hungary through reading the Fidesz-MPP, hereafter Fidesz, Government’s (1998-2002) discourse focusing on its relationship with Budapest. I look mainly at the discourse of the PM Viktor Orbán and the politics of the government regarding Budapest. The opposition of the city and the nation or government was played out during this period since the national government was conservative and the city led by the left-wing parties. My research shows that, on the one hand, Viktor Orbán, in his speeches, tried to exclude Budapest from his discourse by avoiding any of the positive connotations of the city; on the other hand, at the turn of the millennium Fidesz attempted to mark certain spaces, and their own presence in the city. This process of shaping the cityscape offers us a chance to study the discourse of Fidesz through its relation to the existing cityscape, by investigating the drawing of frontiers and novelties it would be bringing to the city, which in turn can be seen as vital for the construction of the discourse. I will

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517 A draft of this paper was discussed at the workshop on Fidesz discourse at the Research Centre for Political Discourses, Institute of Politics, MTA. My warm and sincere thanks for the comments and inspiration go to professor Márton Szabó, as well as to my colleagues, especially Gábor G. Fodor, Gábor Pál, Zita Draskovich, Anna Földvári, János Vencel Téglás and Zoltán Gábor Szűcs.

518 While here I focus on Fidesz discourse on Budapest, see – on the particular theme of Fidesz and nationhood or nation-building – e.g. Brigid Fowler, ‘Nation, State, Europe and National Revival in Hungarian Party Politics: The Case of the Milennial Commemorations’, Europe-Asia Studies, 56:1, January 2004, 57-84.

519 This may appear to contrast with the previous chapter, in which I focused on the Budapest mayor Gábor Demszky’s speeches. By reading the speeches and the contemporary state sponsored architecture at the same level, however, I will be relating the PM Orbán with his government and his party Fidesz. This can be justified by the role Orbán had in the government and in his party, as compared to the relationship between Demszky and the SZDSZ – which Demszky briefly lead but in which he was not as influential or authoritative in as Orbán was in Fidesz.
look at this process through three pieces of public architecture dealing with history and culture. These show how Fidesz is building its vision, the polgári ‘new Hungary’, also in the cityscape of the capital city. In the last section of the chapter I will look at the populist articulation of polgári Magyarország in 2002, which will also serve as a background for the discussion on Hungarian politics, in 2002 and beyond, in the following chapter.

Following Laclauian discourse theory, outlined in the earlier chapters, the Fidesz discourse can be said to be a system of thought composed of certain key things or points Fidesz puts forward, whether explicitly or implicitly, as well as what it excludes. As discussed in Chapter Two, discourse is always contingent and, in effect, only exists through constant articulation, which also is prone to change it. It can be seen as nationalistic, insofar as it centres around, or holds as one of its most important signifiers, the concept of nation. It can be seen as anti-Budapest, insofar as it considers Budapest as its ‘other’. While elsewhere we may tackle the Fidesz discourse through its elements, such as the concept of 'polgár', discussed in the first and the following chapters, I am studying it from the perspective of what it seems to bracket out – Budapest – and what it does with this ‘other’.

We will observe how, besides excluding, Fidesz tries to domesticate the metropolis and its symbols. The exclusion does not mean that Budapest is unimportant for Fidesz or resides totally outside the Fidesz discourse. Rather, it is vital for Fidesz as an ‘other’ and a platform for the projection of its ideology.

Reading from a discourse-theoretical perspective means that I do not only deploy discourse theoretical tools in analysing what is being said and how it is being said ‘in politics’, but I study how different things are being articulated in the practises and rhetoric of the party and, here, its leader Viktor Orbán from 1998-2002. This in order to get to grips with the discourse, the system of thought which results from these articulations. Orbán’s speeches are influential for the party

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520 These can be seen as ideological spaces, since they promote a world view and deal with the way in which the past, present and future are projected.
discourse, especially during the time he was the PM, and a selection of them is also publicly available, published online on his web site (http://www.orbanviktor.hu), unlike the other Fidesz leaders’ speeches. I also look at the rhetoric and practises of Fidesz in and regarding Budapest in 1998-2002, and see what Fidesz has been excluding and including in their discursive construction, such as the bracketing out of the past, the ‘old’, or contemporary Budapest and building their new vision in the city. This means we can include in the study of discourse things which do not appear as speech or writing, but other symbols and practices which would have discursive meaning such as architecture or budget allocations. Crucially, this offers insights into political polarisation in Hungary. As we discussed in the previous chapters, the content and borders of these communities, societies and nationhoods are constructed and contested. Fidesz constructs the ‘new’ or ‘polgári’ (civic/bourgeois) Hungary in terms of the creation of a community and nationhood, which differed from that of other political forces, and by its newness questioned the old conceptions of society, nationhood and community. This is visible also in the rejection of the contemporary Budapest cityscape and the creation of Fidesz spaces in the city.

Like Demszky’s discourse, Orbán’s Fidesz discourse focused both on the frontier and on myth-making, even though I focus more on the frontier in the case of Demszky and myth-making in the case of Fidesz. These two processes are in practice inseparable. Myth is an important tool for the maintenance of a frontier and a polarisation and it relates to the idea of the nation and society as constructions. It works as a metaphor for the absent fullness in society; it creates a sense of structure and unity in a terrain which is necessarily uneven and incomplete. ‘The fascination accompanying the vision of a promised land or an ideal society stems directly from this perception or intuition of a fullness that cannot be granted by the reality of the present.’


522 Laclau, New Reflections..., p. 64-65.
The myths which become apparent in this study are those of the nation/populist-metropolitan divide, and the Fidesz vision of a ‘new polgári Hungary’. Both of these aim at turning into imaginaries an establishing vision for society. In so doing they put forward the Fidesz discourse, articulate its elements and form the limit between the discourse itself and its counterparts. As the imaginary is never complete and it always needs to be rearticulated to exist, Fidesz had to do its politics in such a way as to maintain the divide. As I show here they did it by presenting it as an opposite pole and by creating themselves a space in the metropolis, which reinforced the divide. The imaginary would break down in the realisation that either it or the myth cannot be articulated to cover the existing subject positions and demands:

[I]nsofar as the mythical space begins to absorb less collective demands, and an increasing number of dislocations that cannot be integrated into that space of representation coexist, the space is, so to speak, re-literalized; its power of metaphorization is reduced, and its dimension of horizon is thus lost. (Laclau 1990: 65)

In Hungarian politics, frontiers, myths and imaginaries are continually fixed and rearticulated in the same way that the collective demands are absorbed into the existing system of differences, which reinforces polarisation and maintains the horizon. Nothing that would have significantly challenged the system in the way Laclau outlined above, in the form of demands and dislocations which could not be articulated within the system, has emerged, as my analysis will show.

*Orbán’s Fidesz: reinventing the discourse*

In Chapter One I outlined the background to the transformation of the party system in Hungary, including that of the liberal parties. In the previous chapter I discussed the background of Demszky at length. Here I will offer a review of both Fidesz’ and Orbán’s transformation. This helps in understanding the development of the frontier of polarisation, as well as the Fidesz discourse regarding Budapest.
Fidesz was formed in March 1988 by 30-odd young politicians to be, who aimed to reject the old system and politics. The party was called the Association of Young Democrats, and it had a membership restricted to those between 16 and 35 years of age. It had an oppositional discourse insofar as it wanted to reject the past, communism and the current form of politics. This call for the ‘new’ instead ‘old’ was highlighted in the first election campaign of Fidesz in 1990, and has marked the party discourse ever since.\textsuperscript{523} In this respect there is a great degree of continuity in the Fidesz discourse from 1998-2002.

In the previous chapter I argued, with László Lengyel, that Demszky was always a radical and an oppositionist rather than politician of fixed principles. The same applies to Orbán. In contrast to Gábor Fodor who sought to establish Fidesz as a liberal party, Orbán turned it into a conservative one when he saw a space opening, on the right-wing front, for a new conservative party. Orbán was a pragmatist partisan, whereas the more ‘fundie’ Fodor was loyal to the ‘anti-party’ ethos of the early Fidesz.\textsuperscript{524} When the popular liberal Fodor lost the leadership battle and left the party, Orbán was left in ‘unchallenged control’.\textsuperscript{525} The weakness of the MDF after Antall’s death offered a chance for Fidesz to advance towards the more nationalist conservative position.\textsuperscript{526} Fowler gives a clear account of how the changes of leadership, and what in the context of my work could be seen as general political identity formation, profited Fidesz, which became the largest opposition party by 1997.\textsuperscript{527} Orbán was able to exploit the openings that occurred around him. Whereas ‘Demszky called the system against him’, for Orbán the bipolar opposition between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’, as with the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, or ‘communism’ and ‘anti-communism’, has been the significant


\textsuperscript{524} Fowler points out the issue of a ‘party-like’ character. ‘The group around Fodor was more interested in encouraging cultural and intellectual activities, rather than focusing only on ‘party-like’ goals, and was more resistant than the Orbánites to the establishment of a single ‘party line’.’ Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, p. 108.

\textsuperscript{525} See e.g. Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{526} See e.g. Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{527} Fowler, ‘Concentrated Orange’, pp. 85-90.
political framework. This is also how he had chosen to employ the myth of the nation vs. metropolis as the frontier formation in his polarising discourse.

Another similarity between Demszky and Orbán has to do with the media and personality politics.\(^{528}\) Whereas Demszky was the symbol or personification of Budapest, as discussed in the previous chapter, Orbán fulfilled the same role for Fidesz and the Hungarian right. While Demszky’s Mayoral Office set the path for development in the municipal government, Orbán instituted his own Mayoral Office, which basically functioned as a super-ministry.\(^{529}\) This removes any doubts about the role of the PM in the policies, which I study later in this chapter.

In this chapter I will be looking at both Orbán’s speeches and the Fidesz discourse, as he – especially during his time as PM – has a key role not only in the government but also in the party. This obviously worked to articulate the content of the party discourse. Orbán also embodied – or rearticulated, gave shape to – the Fidesz discourse of progress in 1998-2002. He was a ‘first generation intellectual’ who came from the countryside to the metropolis to earn his success. As an ‘English-speaker’ he was in touch with the world as well as the real countryside of Hungary, and he represented the ‘new, professionally built future’.\(^{530}\) The rearticulations of the party discourse were also connected to the rearticulations of Viktor Orbán as a person. Dealing with the transformation of Orbán since 1990, Péter Kende argues in his biography \textit{Viktor} that Orbán and his party are not real

\(^{528}\) I showed this in the previous chapter with László Lengyel’s analysis. See also Gábor Pál’s analysis of the Orbán biography \textit{Viktor} by Péter Kende: Pál Gábor, ‘Szövegváltozatok a Fideszre’ forthcoming in Szabó, ed., \textit{Fideszvalóság}.

\(^{529}\) ‘The all-embracing Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), according to the German model, was established only in 1998, by the Orbán Government. The new and re-organised PMO has improved the performance of central government, although it has induced controversies about the over-extension of executive power as a whole at the expense of other centres of power as well as intergovernmental relations between central and local government. Altogether, the new PMO, the ‘flagship’ of the central Government, has transformed the workings of executive power beyond recognition. It has acted within the incumbent Government like a super-ministry, managing the control and co-ordination of the major policy-making processes of the individual ministries.’ Attila Ágh ‘Democratic consolidation in Hungary and the Europeanisation of the Hungarian polity’ in Geoffrey Pridham and Attila Ágh, eds., \textit{Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe}, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, pp. 157-179, p. 163

\(^{530}\) These are taken up in an interview with László Kéri, reproduced in Péter Kende, \textit{A Viktor}, Budapest: Kendeart, 2002.
but fake – a mere ‘image’. Gábor Pál, critically deconstructing Kende’s reading, distinguishes three different intellectual schemas of transformation that Kende constructs for his readers, which resonate with the already-existing media-informed conceptions of the readers about Orbán. First, there is the image of a manipulated media politician, which does away with the ‘real person’; second, the turn away from a radical liberal position towards the national and conservative right, by way of an expansion of the party; and finally, the disappearance of the earlier playful characteristics of Fidesz, to his role as myth-builder. Regardless of the biases of Kende’s reading, this representation with its conceptions are important to point out, for they show the connection between the politician and the party and the transformations the party had undertaken since their founding in 1990 and until the period of 1998-2002, and how the potential for transformation always prevails with Fidesz, and Orbán.

In sum, Orbán is an important figure both his party and in the Hungarian right, through his personification of the party discourse. He and the party went through significant transformations in the 1990s. There is a clear attempt to construct clear cut and bipolar political frontiers in Orbán’s discourse. However, the personification of the discourse of the party in the person of Orbán was tied to the myth-making. Also there appeared the need to affiliate to the national-conservative side, whose calls for novelty were accompanied with calls that referred to the nation and the country. As we will see below, the vision of a ‘New Hungary’ was maintained through drawing the political frontiers of the ‘non-Hungary’, as metropolitan Budapest, and the old, such as the communist past or the run-down Budapest.

**Historical myths and the Fidesz discourse**

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532 Gábor Pál, ‘Szövegváltozatok a Fideszre’, forthcoming in Márton Szabó, ed.
Here I will discuss the background to two myths which operate within the Fidesz discourse: the metropolitan-countryside divide and the New Hungary. These are linked to each other and emphasised to varying degrees: the New Hungary is the vision Fidesz puts forward, whereas the metropolitan-countryside divide is a tension which underlies the discourse and the suspicion towards the contemporary urban Budapest gets reproduced in the practises of exclusion and articulation in the Fidesz discourse.

To understand the complexities of the process of Fidesz politics and discourse formation, I should briefly account for the history of the relationship between Budapest and the Hungarian state and nation. In Chapter One I discussed the myth of the nationalist/populist vs. urbanist/liberal debate by going through contemporary literature. It also emerged in the previous chapter on Demszky. Here, because Fidesz discourse plays with this myth, I will go through it again. The népi-urbánus divide, not unlike its equivalents in other countries, had its roots in the period of mass industrialisation which coincided, in Hungary, with the era of nation-building. While there was a great difference between the countryside and the metropolis in the late nineteenth century, the metropolis itself functioned as a centre of nation-building, which focused on the countryside, on traditional values and on the creation of a metropolis that would be of European value, and, thus, would elevate the Hungarian nation to the level of other European nations. It was only later, more specifically in the Interwar period, that the myth of the distinction between the cosmopolitan Budapest and the Hungarian countryside gained significant value it has been reproduced in contemporary Hungary.

In the postcommunist and post-Helsinki Accords era, a situation was created in which contestations of state borders are not allowed, and, consequently, in which the otherness necessary for the

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533 As its only metropolis, which expanded rapidly since the eighteenth century Budapest has played an important role as the prime site in the development of Hungary and the creation of the Hungarian nation. This multicultural metropolis, broke away from the Germanic dominance in the early nineteenth century, Hungarianising its street names, and called for independence from the Habsburg Empire in 1848/49. It became the centre of administration with the establishment of the Hungarian parliament and other state structures since the Compromise of 1867. It became the site for the projection and articulation of the Hungarian nationhood in particular through the Millennium Exhibition, the Budapest World Expo of 1896, which brought the country, nation and its newly expanded metropolis to the international limelight.
creation of political discourses and identities must be created within the polity in question. Thus the népi-urbánus myth converts an internal political enemy into the ‘other’. The myth upholds two distinct discourses: that of the urbanists and that of the népiek, where the latter carries connotations of both populists and nationalists.\textsuperscript{534} Besides reference to the literary and historical heritage,\textsuperscript{535} this bipolar positioning creates substance in itself, since whatever the urbanist would be, the népi would not be. Tamás Fricz argues that it was present in a latent way in the Kádár era and was imported into postcommunist politics as the main dividing line.\textsuperscript{536} It serves the function of frontier-builder in contemporary politics. While it is maintained on the right by political scientists such as Tamás Fricz and in political rhetoric via comments regarding the left being anti-nation – nemzet-ellenes – it is also sustained by the left, which is trying to insist that it is not anti- but pro-nation, thus reproducing the myth itself, as we have seen in the previous chapter and will observe in the next chapter.

The Fidesz discourse draws on the interwar period as its golden era, yet at the same time claims the heritage of István Szécsényi, a moderate reformer of the early nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{537} In the way in which Fidesz deals with Budapest we can witness the attempt to reform the city, in the sense of bringing out Fidesz’ vision of the nation and of the future of Hungary, in the new architecture and in the bracketing-out of the contemporary old-style Budapest, which derives from the nineteenth century. At the same time, through the exclusion of contemporary Budapest from their rhetoric and at the level of practice, in its lack of attempts to tackle contemporary problems in the city (for

\textsuperscript{534} Fricz uses word népi ‘because populism in Hungarian has such a negative flavour’. Tamás Fricz, \textit{A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma}, Budapest: Napvilág, 1997. However, thereby he is precisely naturalising or hiding the roots of the interwar populism that could be imported to present politics through the usage of the distinction.

\textsuperscript{535} In the nineteenth century, the rapid transformation of life-worlds, the influx of immigrants from the countryside to the expanding Budapest had an impact on the discourses of politics and culture. Hungarian literature, especially, has witnessed the difference between the metropolis and the country-folk, which, when arriving in the capital, experienced a whole new world. A divide between the authors idolising either the countryside and traditional peasant way of life or the metropolitan buzz, and reacting to Enlightenment and Modernism, became the main divide in Hungarian literature. It was also taken up in politics, especially in the interwar period. On politics and literary canons, see Mihaly Szegedy-Maszák, \textit{Literary Canons: National and International}, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2001.

\textsuperscript{536} Fricz, \textit{A népi urbánus vita tegnap és ma}.

\textsuperscript{537} Szécsényi was present in the political rhetoric of the Hungarian right: in, for example, the government’s plan for distributing money in connection with the Hungarian millennium of state-founding (in 2000), the \textit{Szechenyi terv} (plan), and a government sponsored historical drama film on Szécsényi (\textit{Hidember – the Bridge Man}), which opened not long before the general election in spring 2002.
example by financial means, as opposed to the help they provide to the countryside) Fidesz sustained the myth of a countryside-metropolis (*népi-urbánus*) divide, strong in the interwar era.

Crucially, the myth provides a way to articulate the frontier of political polarisation, and the myth of a New Hungary, the vision for the future, provides the Fidesz discourse with content. The myth of the *népi-urbánus vita* in Hungarian politics has not got an *a priori* status but achieves its position only insofar as it is claimed as the dividing line in Hungarian politics, even if another dividing line could equally well be argued into existence. Given that I am looking at the Fidesz engagement in Budapest, I also need to look at this myth, which, as I said, is not necessarily the *only* dividing line in Hungarian politics, or the most important element of Fidesz politics. It is obvious from my research below that Fidesz strongly puts forward the myth of the division in order to reinforce its position in politics and to rearticulate the frontier of polarisation.

**The exclusion of Budapest in Orbán’s discourse**

Reading Fidesz leader and PM Viktor Orbán’s speeches, from 1999-2002, which are available on his website, shows that he only makes a dozen references to the Hungarian capital city (e.g. Budapest, Pest or the capital city, *főváros*).\(^{538}\) It might seem that Budapest does not mean much for Fidesz, since its leader makes little or no reference to the city, but in fact it is crucial to the Fidesz discourse. Budapest has significance through its exclusion or absence. The earlier-mentioned imagined frontier between the countryside and the metropolis in Hungarian politics and the pejorative or minimal use of synonyms for Pest or Budapest in Orbán’s discourse together indicate

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\(^{538}\) I have analysed the Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán’s speeches from this period, 1998-2002, which are archived on his official web page, www.orbanviktor.hu. This choice is in part a deliberate attempt to study the main figurehead of the party, in part a decision of necessity, since the speeches of the other leaders of Fidesz were not available in such a reliable and in-depth way. This is also true of the party leader of the other conservative party in the nationalist camp: leader of the MDF Ibolya Dávid. On the archive of Dávid’s web pages there’s not a single speech which includes a reference to Budapest. Not even when she tackles anti-semitic accusations in relation to two rival Budapest football clubs! Dávid Ibolya web pages http://www.davidibolya.hu/fooldal/archivum/archivum.phtml accessed 2005-01-29
that one should take Budapest seriously in studying Fidesz’ discourse. But how to study a lack, something which is not there? I have decided to focus on the rare cases, when Orbán in fact mentions Budapest in his speeches. These illustrate how the city resides on the political battleground, and alongside the silences demonstrate the important role of ‘Budapest’ in the construction of the political frontier. For the understanding of the role of Budapest, it’s important to note that Fidesz as a political party has moved from the liberal pole to the conservative right.\footnote{In the early 1990s Fidesz represented the radical liberals in Hungarian politics (see e.g. Ervin Csizmadia, \textit{Két liberalizmus Magyarországon}, Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1999), but according to Fricz, who sees the Hungarian party system as the division between the \textit{népiek} (referring to populists rather than nationalists) and the urbanists, confirming the earlier mentioned myth, moved towards the Hungarian Democratic Forum MDF in 1994. Fricz, ‘A népi urbánus vita értelmezési lehetőségei’, in Márton Szabó \textit{Szövagvalóság írások a szimbolikus és diszkurzív politikáról}, Budapest: Scientia Humana, 1998.} In that position it took, in 1998, the conservative pole to power, after four years in opposition, by forming a government with the MDF, and the Independent Small Holders Party (FKgp). As a discursive camp the Hungarian right was united through their mistrust of the cosmopolitan Budapest and of the left, that was leading the city. This is where they wanted to create and maintain the political frontier, for instance by cutting funding to the city and cancelling the plans for the new metro line, in 1998. Besides the opposition, what united the right was the search for nationhood. Fidesz focused on articulating a new conception of nationhood, visible in Budapest for example in the calling off of the planned building of the National Theatre, and creating a new, ‘more national’ one, a project for which I will account later in this chapter.

Typical of Orbán’s speeches is the fact that on the few occasions he mentions Budapest, he either refers to it as the place of giving the speech,\footnote{e.g. Viktor Orbán, ‘Kőszöntő beszéd az Interpol konferencián, A nemzetközi bűnözséről és a bűnüldözősről’ [Welcoming speech at the Interpol Conference, On international crime and investigation], 24 September 2001; ‘A média és a helyi önkormányzatok szerepe a stabilitási egyezmény végrehajtásában c. konferencián Szegeden’ [‘The role of the media and local governments in the carrying-out of the stability agreement’ conference in Szeged], 23 March 2000, http://www.orbanviktor.hu.} if he finds no other geographical reference,\footnote{Sometimes he finds another geographical reference: for example in a speech at the European Academy of Science and Arts session in Budapest on 9 November 2001, Orbán only speaks of the basin of Danube (\textit{Duna-medence}), as the reference to the place of the occasion. Viktor Orbán, ‘Az Európai Tudományos és Művészeti Akadémia budapesti ülése’ [European Science and Arts Academy’s session in Budapest], 9 November 2001, http://www.orbanviktor.hu.} or he uses it in a negative way. While ‘Budapest-centric’ (\textit{Budapest centrikus}) appears in the rhetoric of
the nationalists in the polarised election year, Orbán uses it in his speeches only once. It in fact forms a counterpart to the countryside, *vidék*, which has a range of positive connotations in his and other Hungarian *népiek* or nationalist rhetoric. In the closing speech of the election campaign, Orbán was apologetic about giving the speech in Budapest rather than a small village. Referring to the plans for the Olympic Games 2012, Orbán hoped the co-operation between the ‘capital city and the government’ would succeed and called it a common enterprise ‘independent of whether we are Budapesters or country folk (*vidékiek*)’ independent of where we work and what we do. Here, obviously, the juxtaposition of the metropolis and the countryside drew the discursive frontier: the *vidék* is on the side of the government, just as the ‘capital city’ and the citizens of Budapest on the opposing side. The same occurred when he emphasises the importance of the Olympic Games for the development of ‘not only Budapest’ but other parts of Hungary, too.

Similarly in international contexts, Orbán tried to avoid the elevation of Budapest. For example, in his speech on foreign policy on 23 July 2001 he refers to Budapest simply as the ‘capital of a country’, thereby trying to diminish the international significance of Budapest by subordinating its international role to the state and locating it on the same level as any of the other state capitals.

The only times he gives a positive characterisation of Budapest’s centrality refer to the crisis in Yugoslavia in 1999 and, in the election year 2002, to the fact that an American firm (General

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543 Orbán was making positive references to countryside (*vidék*) in many of his speeches. For example, he stressed the equal status of countryfolk with the rest of the Hungarians in his Parlament exposé of 18 October 2001, (Parlamenti expozé 2001 október 18.), and in the post-election speech (‘Amit létrehoztunk, az megmarad; Hajrá magyarak!’ [What we put forward that will stay; Go Hungarians!], 21 April 2002, Budapest), he particularly thanked, among others, the Hungarians of the countryside (‘vidék Magyarsága’). http://www.orbanviktor.hu.


548 In the speeches stored on Orbán’s web pages, the only references to Budapest’s international position occur when
Electric) has changed its head-quarters from London to Budapest.\textsuperscript{549} This shows how Budapest, though rarely, can have international significance, but it is not raised above any other Hungarian town or city, since the countryside, i.e. the non-Budapest Hungary, still has preference over it.

Silencing, by way of exclusion, is crucial for identity construction, and the silencing of Budapest – whether through the rhetorical means of leaving it without mention, or, as discussed in my theoretical chapter, through Skinnerian \textit{paradiastolic redescriptions}\textsuperscript{550} that diminish its significance or moral value, or practices of cutting funding – is constitutive of Orbán’s nationalist discourse. In fact, Orbán prides himself on the fact of his government investing outside Budapest. Practises and policies are crucial in the search for the \textit{discourse} since they reveal what is held to be important within the discourse and what not. This way acts are discursive, in the same way as ‘words are deeds’. He calls the Széchenyi Plan, introduced to fund projects for the Hungarian Millennium (2000-2001), historical, in its opposition to ‘Budapest centrism’:

If we have a look at what sort of picture the distribution of the applications to the Széchenyi Plan over the geographical area shows, then I can tell you today that in every other Hungarian settlement, in every other Hungarian settlement [sic], investments that are linked to the Széchenyi Plan are taking place. Similar cases have happened in Hungarian history, which is notoriously Budapest-centric, only a long time ago, if ever.\textsuperscript{551}

Finally the Hungarians could be emancipated from Budapest, Orbán seems to argue.

Besides marking the enemy or creating the opponents, exclusion through renaming or redescription is also a crucial rhetorical strategy in the construction of the nationalist discourse itself. Hostility to Budapest underlies Orbán’s speech at the opening of the ELTE University’s new building in South


Buda, the area where the Expo 1995/96 was to take place. In the speech Orbán creates an image of this place and its counterpart on the other side of the river, the National Theatre and its surroundings, as a ‘whole new town’.

I am very happy that this district, or this part of the bank of the Danube, now becomes another symbol. This place already talks about how there are break-through plans in Hungary for the forthcoming decades. Clearly you came along the same path, since we have arrived here. You can see what kind of construction takes place here, even in the neighbourhood of this building. A whole town is being built up here. A whole university town. And if from here one looks towards the Danube, one can see the area in which the Millennium district is being built [National Theatre, see below], which can be finished, according to the estimates, within a year and a half or two years. In essence, a new city is being built on the two banks of the Danube.

Orbán makes a mental devolution of the space from Budapest. And, indeed, the former Expo territory was also formally owned by the state. This reinforces the discursive frontier through the continued, constitutive exclusion of the metropolis from Orbán’s discourse. Unity between other elements of Orbán discourse was now gained through their common opposition to ‘Budapest’.

When from late 2001 onwards Budapest reappeared in Orbán’s speeches, it was to highlight yet another national project. The need to celebrate nationhood through big state-funded projects, such as the Széchenyi Plan or the infamous Expo 1995/96 (planned by the pre-1990 regime and the 1990-1994 government, and cancelled by the leftwing government in 1994), rather than offer managerial or rational governance is a crucial difference between the nationalists and the left parties in postcommunist Hungarian politics. Orbán’s project to evoke national feelings for the next term in government (2002-2006) was an Olympic bid for Budapest 2012. It re-appropriated Budapest for the Fidesz discourse to some extent, since the city was required to make the bid. Orbán pointed out that, ‘the capital city also supports the bid and this provides a good chance that there will be again a big common venture.’ However, the wording made the distinction between the metropolitan city


554 Fowler, ‘Nation, State, Europe…’, pp. 57-84.

and the national government clear: the Olympic bid was a project of reluctant unity.

But why play the ‘unity-card’? Importantly, Orbán took up the *ideal* of unity during the time of the elections. Pure antagonism is hardly appealing to the masses who engage in the collective national or civic duty of voting. Through the Olympic bid the government could show that not all bridges were burned and that co-operation on issues of national importance was still possible with the adversaries, such as the Budapest administration. The bid, accompanied by the reestablishment of contact between the capital city and the government\(^{556}\) can be seen as an attempt to gain votes in the city: under-funded since 1998, it would finally gain funds for an urban development project. In his speeches on the Olympic Games Orbán was still avoiding references to the city, but at the end of a long speech in the Olympic bid conference of 27 March 2002, organised only days before the elections, Orbán mentioned Budapest:

> The Olympics naturally must be organised by Budapest, but we all know that the whole country’s efforts are needed for Budapest to be able to organise the Olympics. And the government will be able to mobilize this effort, this joining of forces (összefogás), will, and the financial power that goes with it, for the aim that Budapest would offer a home to these games.\(^{557}\)

Underlying his speech was a suspicion and antagonism towards the big city. To put it simply, Orbán told the Budapest leadership that if the city provided the facilities, the government would bring the fame and funding. Those were the terms of the reconciliation, which the Budapest Mayor Demszky accepted, and the bid went ahead, supported both by the government and the capital city, until 2003, when it was called off by the left-wing socialist liberal government.

How is the exclusion constitutive of the Fidesz discourse, read here through Orbán’s speeches? While nation and Hungarians are crucial elements of Orbán’s discourse, contemporary Budapest

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\(^{556}\) In the middle of the elections of 2002, Orbán argues that ‘there are no obstacles for the co-operation between the capital city and the government’. Viktor Orbán, ‘Beszéd az olimpiai konferencián’ [Speech at the Olympic Games Conference], 27 March 2002, Budapest, http://www.orbanviktor.hu.

forms the constitutive outside. This concept implies the need for a point of disidentification, of exclusion, important in the process of the construction of identities.\textsuperscript{558} Crucially, the right-wing discourse on the nation in an ethnically homogeneous country centred around the idea of a Hungarian Diaspora, yet even though the concept of nation is tied to the geographical borders of the imaginary Carpathian basin\textsuperscript{559} and the Hungarian language\textsuperscript{560}, the right-wing elite’s position in government did not allow outright attacks on neighbouring countries, with whom relationships had to be kept in order to avoid regional problems and international pressure. Therefore, the constitutive exclusion had to be found within the political borders of the nation state. The \textit{népi-urbánus} myth, the historical opposition between the metropolis Budapest and the countryside, functioned as the frontier. Orbán’s speeches showed attempts to exclude Budapest through a redescription that diminished its international role, its moral and historical worth, or simply through silence – the omission of Budapest from his rhetoric.\textsuperscript{561} This meant that Budapest could represent the other with which Orbán did not wish to engage, but against which he articulated his discourses. In order to find out how Fidesz nevertheless dealt with the capital, I will next look at other practices of Fidesz, which established the government’s imprint on the city by the spring of 2002, through the attempts to mark space and create a distinction between the old and the new (Fidesz) Budapest in the cityscape.


\textsuperscript{559} This is a popular mode of contemporary articulation of the geographical location of Hungary, which draws upon the naturalness of the borders of pre-1920 basin-like Greater Hungary – from the Slovakian mountains to those in Transylvania, Serbia and Croatia, and finally to the Alps beyond the Burgenland on both sides of Austro-Hungarian border.

\textsuperscript{560} This is visible in the way that the Hungarian Status Law of 2000 was created to give greater rights to people with a knowledge of Hungarian language and culture in the neighbouring countries, rather than judging them as Hungarians based on their family relations, i.e. Fidesz, as we discussed earlier, emphasised ethno-cultural, rather than genetic, blood-based Hungarianness. See also Chapter Five.

**Fidesz presence in Budapest cityscape**

While in the speeches of Orbán we can notice the distance created – for instance – between the countryside and the metropolis, we will now study how Fidesz has in fact engaged with Budapest by highlighting its own presence and its own discourse in the city. It was perhaps impossible for Orbán to disengage with the national capital (although maybe he simply chose not to do so), but still he next took it as a platform for the implementation of the discourse on ‘new Hungary’, especially in relation to the past. I will now outline three major projects which promoted the Fidesz government’s discourse in the cityscape of Budapest. That is, in terms of conceptions of history/memory, progress, and arts (in particular the Terror Háza Múzeum, Millenáris Park and Nemzeti Színház, the National Theatre; see pictures in appendix for Chapter 4). In the very last part of this chapter I also account briefly for the way in which the party used the spaces of Budapest during the election campaign of 2002. These will show how Fidesz made visible its presence in the very city with which it was reluctant to engage. Through these three projects it is possible to see the discursive contents or elements which are put forward. It has been important for the Hungarian right to carry out large-scale projects that articulate and emphasise its vision for Hungarian national identity. Orbán’s government 1998-2002 celebrated the Hungarian Millennium which marked the Millennium of Hungarian ‘statehood’, the crowning and Christening to Catholicism of Hungarian King Stephen in year 1000, and which also tied Hungary to the Western European sphere of influence as opposed to the Orthodox, Eastern Christian, and Ottoman Muslim Europe. However, the three public buildings I will focus on, which opened during the election campaign in the spring of 2002, made an impact on the cityscape and brought the Fidesz discourse to the fore. All of them stage an exhibition while bringing new elements to the cityscape. Exhibitions, starting from the previously mentioned World Expo 1995/96 plans, have been important in the postcommunist period. To a large extent these are tied to the need for identity-construction and a rewriting of history in the period after 1989/90.\(^{562}\) For Fidesz, it was also to show their presence in the city, and

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\(^{562}\) See also Fowler, ‘Nation, State, Europe and National Revival in Hungarian Party Politics’.
to herald the start of a new era in Budapest and Hungary: this is all done in contrast to the past and to the political opponents.

A telling example of frontier-building in Hungarian politics that also has its Budapest dimension is the reference to the Expo 1995/96 and the conversion of the question of support or opposition to the plans for the World Exhibition, in its discursive dimensions, into a long-serving political difference. This serves Orbán as a way of articulating his discourse through Budapest.

You also could see that Hungary has progressed in all the sectors towards a new era. I do not know, I’m still remembering what the building looked like three-four years earlier. I don’t know, your good fortune brought you to this spot (vidék), which is a part of Budapest that has experienced lots of misery. The World Exhibition, which finally never succeeded, should have been here. Afterwards, however, university real estate projects started here, and until 1996 something was still moving here. Then a restriction package was introduced in Hungary and these skeletons were left here. However this building, where we are now, over three-four years, was a startling example of the creative potential of Hungary.

Here Orbán creates the political frontier between those who cancelled the Budapest World Expo of 1996 – the left-wing government of 1994-1998 – and refers to the way in which Fidesz government has tried to emphasise Hungary’s creativity and its ability to build things. The Fidesz government had precisely wanted to construct something new. It had emphasised the sense of progress of Hungarians in its exhibitions such as the Millenáris Park (see below) and its choice of heroes, such as Széchenyi, the man with a vision for Hungary and for the unity of Buda and Pest. The ‘Hídember’, a high-budget historical drama on the life of Széchenyi, sponsored by Fidesz government, came out prior to the general elections 2002. Therefore the cases which I will present here construct a vision of the past which should be divorced from the future or a vision of the past which will give inspiration to the future. Simultaneously, they demonstrate the presence of Fidesz in Budapest, which signals a break with the contemporary Budapest and the flow of the cityscape.

563 This, in 2002, refers to the Fidesz’ government’s term in office.

564 Orbán refers to the Bokros package of economic reforms introduced by the left-wing government in 1995, discussed in the earlier chapters.

Terror háza

The case of Terror Háza museum shows how Orbán’s government rejected the communist past, in the space of Budapest. This is an example of their political frontier-building and continued projection of polarisation, through the politics of past and of the cityscape of Budapest. The House of Terror Museum, Terror Háza Múzeum, opened on 24 February 2002, shortly before the general elections, and was a project to write national history. It was a memorial of the victims of political terror and torture, but it also sought justice through investigating the past of the victimizers, the Hungarian national socialist Arrow Cross Party and the Communist Secret Police, the ÁVÓ/ÁVH.

Both of these organisations had their head-quarters in the Andrássy út 60 building which now housed the museum/memorial.\(^{566}\) The attempts to write official history are always political. The political logic of the exhibition, which focuses on the Communist terror, and devotes only two of the thirty-odd rooms to the ‘blood-thirsty’ Hungarian Nazis,\(^{567}\) was to make a distinction, which had been influential for the Hungarian postcommunist right, between the Nazi years and the Interwar period, and to highlight the terror of the Communists. The Communist secret police is shown, in the exhibition, and most probably quite correctly – historically speaking –, to have inherited the methods of the Nazi period and, to large extent, its personnel. What is not described in the exhibition but implied in the way in which it is closely associated with Fidesz and the Hungarian right,\(^{568}\) in the polarised context, is that the Hungarian Socialist Party is an inheritor of the Stalinist and the Nazi legacy. These two aspects were emphasised for example by contemporary foreign press reporting:

The director of the Museum is Mária Schmidt, the advisor to the Primer Minister Viktor Orbán (Fidesz). She “insists, however, that conservatives are simply redressing the historical balance. "Because history in Hungary was told by the Communists, it was a falsification," she says. Hungarian governments before October 1944 were not terror regimes, Ms Schmidt

\(^{566}\) ‘This museum commemorates the victims of terror and is also a memorial, reminding of the dreadful acts of terrorist dictatorships’, was the official statement. (House of Terror Museum leaflet 2002, p.1) At the entrance of the museum there are two memorials of equal size, one to the victims of Arrow Cross terror and another to those of Communist terror.


\(^{568}\) Images and sound of the speech of the PM Victor Orbán at the opening of the museum and the departure of Soviets troops from Hungary were projected to the public in the last room, following the memorial for the victims, in the election period of 2002.
says. Ms Schmidt believes the museum has boosted Fidesz’s campaign against an opposition she claims is still mired in the Communist past. "There were over 130,000 people coming for the opening of the house. They were showing that those people in Hungary who do not want to live under Communism or other dictatorships are . . . very strong." 

The museum rearticulated the political frontier between the two sides in Hungarian politics – with the ‘good’ people on the side of Fidesz – in the form of a statement, rather than opening the past for interpretations or reconciliation.

It also had an impact on the cityscape of Budapest. It is located in an UNESCO World Heritage protected area, the Andrásy út boulevard, and therefore its façade could not be radically changed. The museum, however, marked the space: in the heart of metropolitan Budapest, on the Hungarian Champs Elysée, with its sky-blue colour and the black cornice, it stands out from the streetscape.

Besides marking a building with what it sees essentially as the dark side of the Hungarian communist past, it disrupted the flow of the metropolitan cityscape, which is seen as associated with the urbanists in Budapest, where the local government is led by the Hungarian left.

The opposition it created shows the extent of the polarisation, since anything of the left, the liberal SZDSZ and the pre-1956-communism would be positioned at the same pole, by the right. Therefore, it demonstrates both Fidesz’s presence in Budapest and its governmental control over public commemoration and history, and it is also instrumental in the construction of the ‘other’, which is this time not Budapest (although it resides in the Budapest space) but the Hungarian left and the Socialists.

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570 It later received a blade wall, which caused debate at the local and national level: the Municipal City Council voted for its abolition (with Fidesz and other right-wing representatives walking out) in February 2003, but in October the experts on city governance ruled that because of the rights invested in the district the wall cannot be demolished without a citizens’ initiative. Budapest Portál, Budapest hirek [Budapest News], ‘Pengefal: mégis elbontják’ [Blade Wall after all to be demolished] http://www.budapest.hu/engine.aspx?page=news&artname=20030226-cikk-megis; ‘Nem bontható a pengefal’ [The blade wall cannot be taken down], http://www.budapest.hu/engine.aspx?page=news&artname=20031009-cikk-nem.
Millenáris park

Millenáris park, the Millennium Park, became a showcase of the Fidesz discourse on the ‘New’ and *polgári* Hungary, which centred around concepts of progress and nationhood. Through it Orbán’s government reinforced the situation of polarisation and claimed for itself the concept of progress, as well as maintaining its hold over the concept of nationhood. Terror House’s contemporary – the Millenáris park exhibition centre – which opened in late 2001, was an exhibition of Fidesz values. It hosted an exhibition, a theatre bloc and a separate entrance building. The exhibition celebrated the progress of Hungarians, from arts and sports to science and technology, and offered a national spectacle. The creation of this space was a political act by the national Fidesz-MDF government, and Fidesz also held its election galas there in 2002. It is a piece of contemporary architecture with a legacy of progress through entrepreneurship and excellence, concepts central to the Fidesz discourse. It also, through its form, is argued to have taken its distance from the rest of Budapest – the dirt and shopping centres –, and thus had an impact on the cityscape by creating a space in the city that can be associated with Fidesz.

The attempt to create a separate space, distinct from the metropolis, in order to promote the Fidesz discourse, is visible in the character of the park and its buildings. Contemporary commentators, whose texts in the *Régi/Új* Magyar Építészművészet (MÉ) I have been reading by way of local interpretations of the space, and by way of a complement to my own analyses, referred to the ‘noise and smell of Margit körút and Moszkva tér’571 – the near-by junctions of transport. They have also praised the park’s apparent disconnection from the city, and referred to the way in which countryside landscapes added to the political charm of the newly created space:

… the Park remains a closed world; its sphere is the result of the "exploration of an interior block". The noise and litter of the city stay far away. There is silence, which is a most precious value in itself. Visitors are advancing towards a park that is not surrounded by main roads, and approach its even more protected centre.572

However, what is achieved by the green area is the enclosure of the space, its detachment from the

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572 Gábor Locsmándi, ‘A Walk Round the Park’, MÉ, 2002/1, p. 21
surrounding city. It is a self-contained space gathering aspects of countryside, even including the floods (árvíz), thereby building an imagery of the Hungarian plains and rivers. The park – like the world exhibitions for Walter Benjamin\textsuperscript{573} – forms a singular space and projects or sells the idea of progress. While the space is argued to resemble the Hungarian countryside – vidék (a sacred category in Fidesz discourse) – there is something uncannily metropolitan in its design. The architecture of the Millenáris park – the combination of elements of wood, water, redbrick, steel and grass makes it resemble other contemporary transformations, on the international scene, of old industrial buildings, and, thus, gives it a metropolitan flair.\textsuperscript{574} Consequently, rather than ‘national’ or vidéki, the park could be equally be described as contemporary or ‘metropolitan’ in design.

It can of course be seen as ‘Fidesz-like’ because of its combination of tradition and the contemporary, progressive character that the party sought to project as its self-image. Also, it is precisely the illusion of detachment from the metropolis and production of a vidéki space that is, in a somewhat contradictory way, complemented by another key element in the Fidesz discourse: progress through industry, enterprise and excellence, as is presented in the history and form of the building. The building was once part of Ganz Electric Works, the renovation of which had already been planned in the early 1990s, when a competition for designs was held. The buildings were designed by three architects but ‘there is plenty of room for perceiving the differences, as the scales of the original hall-blocks and the vast water surface of the park come to join the different elements in unity’, argues Gábor Locsmándi in his review in the leading Hungarian architectural journal.\textsuperscript{575} He claims that the landscape architects, mostly students, who designed the green areas ‘made the greatest contribution to the creation of new values.’\textsuperscript{576} The values refer mainly to the ‘industrial heritage’: in an international workshop ‘the prize-winning teams of Hungarian students managed to


\textsuperscript{574} Pictures representing this character can be found in the Transit 15 exhibition of contemporary Hungarian design, published also at the Magyar Építészforum, Hungarian Architect Forum web page. See especially: http://tranzit.epiteszforum.hu/en/gallery.htm?11&10&10.

\textsuperscript{575} Locsmándi, ‘A Walk Round the Park’, p. 21

\textsuperscript{576} Locsmándi, ‘A Walk Round the Park’, p. 21.
get their fellows of other nationalities to accept and grasp that the site at issue includes a most significant relic of Hungary’s industry.’

Thereby these seemingly contradictory elements can be articulated in political discourses and in the urban space simultaneously.

The view of progress was reinforced in the current exhibition Álmok álmodói, világraszóló magyarok (‘Dreamers of dreams, Hungarians writing the world’), which was to be opened on the national day 15 March 2001, but was postponed until 3 November 2001. It expressed the Hungarians’ achievements in the fields of arts and especially of natural sciences and technology, in the form of a canon or a heroic order, and thus works towards compiling a set of nodal points of the discourse of Hungarian national pride. As a nation-building project, it is comparable, although of smaller scale, of course, to the Hungarian World Exhibition of 1896 and the whole park can be seen as a substitute for the unfinalised World Expo 1995/96, which the Hungarian right had been promoting, but which the left cancelled once in government in 1994-1998. Andor Wesseléyi-Gáray highlighted the connection to 1896 in his review of the Millennium Exhibition:

Hungarians’ sense of identity is largely defined and determined by the centenary of the year 1896. The Millenial Exhibition has provided a summary and a cross-section of what the country’s industry, architecture, fine and decorative arts had produced by then, whilst also representing major achievements of architecture and city development, guaranteeing a significant source of inspiration for our age. The exhibition opened on the occasion of this latest millennium has been constructed following a similarly wide-ranging and large-scale claim: thus the two halls of Ganz Park offer an overall view of the past 250 years of modernity starting from the era of enlightenment, summarizing what Hungary’s scientific and intellectual heritage has offered as a contribution to it.

Cast in scientific terms and highlighting the impact of Hungarians upon world-scale developments and the progress of modernity, ‘[t]he historical intellectual attitude of the exhibition has its sources in 19th-century positivism’. The emphasis of the Millennium Exhibition is upon the personalities behind the scientific revolutions, and also the products that transformed lives both in Hungary and abroad. The exhibition presented in the form of fragments the achievements of Hungarians who

578 Andor Wesselényi-Gáray, ‘Installed Secrets; Dreamers of Dreams – Hungarians of Worldwide Interest’, MÉ, 2002/1, p. 27
were famous in their own country and many of whom also made their fame abroad, while still being considered Hungarian.\textsuperscript{580} This also brought in an element of Fidesz discourse to Budapest: the conception of the cultural nation of Hungarians, as opposed to the state nation. With multiple-entry tickets and a scheduled stay at least until the end of 2002, which it completed, it also offered a sense of permanence.

Viktor Orbán in his opening speech of the exhibition asked the question: ‘How and in what way, in the life of a nation, must they be placed in an order of importance – the people, who take forward not just their country, but often, as can be seen over there [in the exhibition], also the world.’\textsuperscript{581} His reply also emphasised the idea of nation-building and progress: ‘If we do not affirm the memory of those kinds of people, there will not exist the kind of people who appreciate them, and if there will be none of those who appreciate them and their real value, then surely there also will not exist, either, those who follow their path and their example, in their own areas of science.’\textsuperscript{582} This again demonstrates how Orbán’s Fidesz assumed the specific task of emphasising Hungarian history, culture and achievements – not for the past’s sake, but for the future. The emphasis on the nation’s past was not mere preservation, but had prospective significance. In another contemporary speech he argued: ‘The past and the nation’s culture belong to the one who nurses then, who care for them. I think the future also is for this one.’\textsuperscript{583} He also stressed, with Renan,\textsuperscript{584} that nation is a daily plebiscite. Thereby he argued that it is enough to think daily, for instance, of the crown of the first King of Hungary – St Stephen, of the Danube and its bridges (of course he is here not mentioning

\textsuperscript{580} With the number of ex-patriot Hungarians being similar to the ex-pat Irish, many those who left were not necessarily valued or known at home anymore, whatever their international fame. However, the same year an exhibition at the National Museum celebrated the Hungarian Nobel prize winners, who were mostly expatriots.


Budapest, which may have been implicitly referred as it is a city that bridges the Danube), ‘and all that which has a particularly profound sound, a harmony addressing us’, ⁵⁸⁵ but that there is also a need for the connecting points and ties which can be created for example by the artists and scientists who lead the way. ‘We have a need for all the creativity and thoughts which take us forward’, Orbán argued, stressing again the importance of looking forward and of daily nation-building, which is also present in the contemporary building projects in Budapest. ⁵⁸⁶

To conclude – the Millenáris Park was the space where Fidesz had its election galas in 2002. The park and the exhibition came to be seen as a collective space in which to escape from metropolitan Budapest, a space for reflection on national progress and values, through the personalities and products on display. It was the showcase of Hungary, aimed towards the West as well as the homeland, demonstrating that Hungarians had nothing to be ashamed of. ⁵⁸⁷ It was to function as a collective form of reference and a boost to national pride. However, even if the park was argued to exist (as I have shown) in contrast to the metropolitan space, in fact – through its heterogeneous form and the way it contrasted with the grubby Moszkva tér – and, moreover, through its novelty and sleekness, it resonated rather well with its contemporary shopping centre Mammut II and the villas in the nearby Buda Hills, the most prestigious living area in Budapest. ⁵⁸⁸ Through the play on surroundings, values and layers of history, it offers – in a ‘metropolitan way’ – the chance to enjoy national pride and a sense of progress – just as with the shopping centre it is supposed to counterpose. In so doing it promotes the vision of the *polgári* (advanced and civic) Hungary in Budapest, and in making a break with the past and the ‘old’ cityscape, it reveals the actual discursive links between the contemporary, developing Budapest (or at least Buda and the well-off II district) and Fidesz.

⁵⁸⁷ This was crucial part of the Fidesz discourse on the nation, as Schöpflin argued. George Schöpflin, ‘New-Old Hungary: A contented transformation’, *RFE/RL East European Perspectives*, 10:4, 15 May 2002.
Nemzeti Színház

The National Theatre, Nemzeti Színház, or the (New) Nemzeti, showed how Fidesz wanted to make a break with the previous left-wing government and to claim their space in the city. The politics of relocation and redesign of an already-planned building maintained political polarisation in Hungary – and rendered it visible and material, in the Budapest cityscape. The National Theatre became the key imprint of Fidesz in the cityscape of Budapest. It is located by the Danube and, thus, manifests itself in the panorama over Budapest, as seen from the bridges and the Buda castle. The National Theatre has been perhaps the most debated building project in recent Hungarian history. Its rebuilding had been called for since it was declared unsafe in 1875 and subsequently dismantled. In the socialist era, and this is what seems to remain utmost in the Hungarian popular memory, the site and the remains of the original national theatre were removed in the 1960s with the building of a new metro line in Budapest and a new National Theatre was created in contemporary and socialist style in the VII district in 1966. The location of the new National Theatre was debated in the 1990s: the original site hosted an office building and it was planned for Erzsébet tér in the centre of the city. Finally the Orbán government of 1998-2002 drastically increased its budget and the theatre was located in south Pest by the Danube, in the area formerly planned for the Budapest Expo 1995/96. It was accompanied by another cultural complex. Subsequently, it was the design, rather than the location, that caused controversy, which demonstrated the mistrust embedded in polarised Hungarian politics. This resembled the politics of other symbols and public memorials from 1990, some of which I discussed in Chapter Three. As I will show below, the new Nemzeti is a memorial, an exhibition, and a concrete example of the interference of the politics of nation-

589 This has been pointed out to me by many Hungarians in private conversations, for example when they have been commenting on my work.

590 See for the increasing costs and plans e.g. Gábor Angyal and Gábor Tenczer, ‘Millenniumi Központ: város a városban’ [The Millenium Center: a City in a City], Népszabadság (NSZ), 31 December 2001, p. 6.

building in Budapest from the 2000-2002 period.

Fidesz’ involvement in the choice of location and design was crucial. In the competition held in 1996, Ferenc Bán’s modernist building, with a theatre flexibly modifiable to the preferred uses, was chosen as the winner, in 1997. Protests came, for example, from the Hungarian World Association (Magyarok Világszövegsége), who declared the building, which had two glass walls, as not Hungarian enough (‘nem szimbolizálja a magyarságot’). In October 1998 the government decided not to build the theatre as planned, but made new plans. György Schwajda was chosen to be the special advisor to the government (kormánybiztos). He was a key figure, who in March 1999 argued that there would be no open competition, but that Mária Siklós would be the main architect of the new theatre. It was first planned for the City Park, then in August 1999 – because of the trouble with the local government in the grounds for the unfinalised Budapest Expo 1995/6 – by the Danube. This relocation also meant that it is in the state-owned territory, where there is no need to negotiate with anyone. As I already mentioned above, the territory was marked apart from the rest of the city. Around the National Theatre a new Millennium neighbourhood (városrész) was created with another culture hall and some new luxury housing. In this way Fidesz marked its discursive presence in the city, and its power to have an impact on the cityscape.

Architectural styles were made into a dividing line, which also coincided with other political frontiers e.g. the left/right and nation/metropolis divides. Finally, Schwajda and the Hungarian Chamber of Architects launched a competition for February 2000, which was won by György

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592 Ilona Rév, ‘Az elveszett Nemzeti’ [The Lost Nemzeti], NSZ, 9 May 2001, p. 16.
595 See e.g. Gábor Tenczer, ‘Késésben a Millenniumi Városközpont; Három épület engedélytervei még nincsenek a hivatalnál, a Mol kulcsfontosságú telkéről folyik az áralku’ [The Millenium City Center under delay…], NSZ, 3 February 2001, p. 33; and T. E. G., ‘Nyártól épül a millenniumi városrész; A főváros és a kormány harcának újabb erőpróbája lehet a beruházás sorsának alakulása’ [The Millenium City Building Starts from Summer; the City and the Government’s fight Newest Challenge…], NSZ, 7 February 2001, p. 27.
Vadász in May.\textsuperscript{596} Instead of the György Vadász’s modernist glass-walled theatre building, the government decided to take Mária Siklós’s post-modern organic and historicist architecture as the design. For the debate was regarding what design would be ‘Hungarian’ enough, too modern, late-modern; Vadász defended his plan by arguing that he combines the thoughts of two architectural circles, tradition and 21\textsuperscript{st} century technology, and simplicity whereby the design is contemporary and Hungarian.\textsuperscript{597} In Hungarian architecture, the current dominant discourse seemed to have it that anything ‘organic’ could, almost by definition, be seen as national, whereby any glass-walled box must be foreign, metropolitan.

Architecture offered Fidesz a way to create a frontier between the ‘communists’ or the Hungarian left and themselves. This division, was articulated into a division between late-modernist and organic architecture. The political usage of the népi-urbánus vita in Hungarian in these terms architecture had a prior case, in the “Tulip Debate” of the 1970s, when a group of architects in Pécs wanted to decorate high-rise buildings in housing estates with folklore decorations. It initiated the organic architecture movement, with the now internationally known architect Imre Makovecz as its key figure, but also by politicising architecture essentialised the modernist and organic aesthetic styles into a polarisation, which was followed up during the postcommunist period.\textsuperscript{598} As Virág Molnár has argued, the Tulip Debate demonstrated ‘how the “urbanist-populist” discourse functions as a discursive trap in Hungarian society, as a symbolic frame that the architectural profession could effectively use as a resource to police the boundaries of legitimate architecture.’\textsuperscript{599} To question the polarisation, Iván András Bojar, a critic of contemporary Hungarian architecture, has argued that the two tendencies of Hungarian Architecture – (late- or neo-) modernist and organic (or critical-


\textsuperscript{597} See e.g. ÚjMÉ 2000/3, p. 53.


Bojar also stressed that post-1989 Hungarian architecture as a whole focused on identity-building, playing in between historicism and the attempts to imagine the future. However, the attempt to emphasise the distinction between the two aesthetic traditions was a strong component of Fidesz’ politics. It was crucial for their aim of maintaining the népi-urbánus myth that they create and mark a frontier between them and their political opponents: this time the ‘legitimate’ or state sponsored style was organic not (late- or neo-) modernist architecture.

Siklós’s design of a traditional theatre put forward eclectic and neo-historicist elements. Asked why she had chosen eclecticism as the architectural style, she replied that these were the wishes of the commissioner. The building which resembles a ship, thereby portraying the journey from the old National Theatre to the current one, is composed as a monument or, even more crucially, an exhibition. Its surroundings pay tribute to Hungarian theatre. Tied to the rear of the building is a memorial for the old Nemzeti, a tragic face and commemoration of the year of its destruction. In the front of the ship, there is a neo-classical façade ‘drowning’ in the water, whilst a live fire rages on top. This symbolises the fall of the old theatre. At the front of the building, hidden behind the façade, there are figurative plaques referring to famous authors and actors – and in the garden in front of it, a statue park of famous actors and actresses. Staged too, is the whole history of Hungarian theatre: even the death of the old National Theatre is played out. As an exhibition, to think with Walter Benjamin, it creates an enclosed space, the personalities on display are to be consumed, and this turns the visitor into an audience. Benjamin, who studied world exhibitions, noticed their function in displaying advancement, selling the idea of progress to the masses. Furthermore, inside the exhibition – as Benjamin pointed out, quoting Otto Rühle: ‘[t]he

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601 Bojár, Közben, In the Meantime, p. 11.
commodity is transformed into an idol that, although the product of human hands, disposes over the human. Marx speaks of the fetish character of commodity.\textsuperscript{604} The Nemzeti, similarly, aims to offer answers and capture meanings rather than playing with abstractions and, as Rév describes, its form is drinkable like lemonade, easy for people to understand.\textsuperscript{605} Rather than opening space for thought, it closes it, gives content to the national identity and values – similar to the way in which the architect was chosen in disregard of artistic competition, which indicates the need of Fidesz to prescribe national values.

Viktor Orbán, writing on the national day 15 March 2002, confirmed the way in which the Nemzeti was indeed a monument. He argued: ‘[Since the eighteenth century] there was no real Nemzeti, yet it existed [in people’s minds] since there was a building thought of and regarded as the Nemzeti which was demolished.’ With the simultaneous absence and presence of the theatre, Orbán refers to the National Theatre built in the state socialist period – a modernist building – which was considered by many not to have been the real substitute for the original Nemzeti which was demolished. He continued:

The Nemzeti had actors. Indeed, the greatest actors played in the Nemzeti, and so the National Theatre always virtually existed, even though the theatre really has been constructed, as a building, only now. This history somehow had to be built here, in the walls, whereby when we come here we must reflect on the – over a hundred-year-old history of theatre plays, and with it on Hungarian intellectual history, which preceded the rebuilding of the theatre.\textsuperscript{606}

Through this monument, Fidesz marked its space in Budapest, its vision for a new Hungary and a new Hungarianness, and rooted in the past of the nation-building eras.

Finally, as with the other buildings I have accounted for, the form of the new Nemzeti interrupted the flow of the cityscape, which made the building stand out as a monument to Fidesz, its era, and

\textsuperscript{604} Quoting Otto Rühle (1925) in Benjamin (1999 [1982]) Arcades Project, G5,1, p. 181-2.


\textsuperscript{606} Orbán, ‘A miniszterelnök gondolatai a Nemzeti Színházhől’ [the PM’s thoughts on the National Theatre], writing on 15 March 2002, Budapest, www.orbanviktor.hu.
its aims to define, celebrate and monumentalise (the best of) the nation. The elements of kitsch and historicism are typical of this style of post-modern architecture. The theatre is, by the virtue of its roundness – it is, remember, in the shape of a ship –, in total opposition to its predecessors – the block-shaped original early-nineteenth-century Pesti Magyar Színház, the Hungarian Theatre in Pest, and the socialist period’s National Theatre in Erzsébetváros. But like the other two buildings, it manifests its era, it is the imprint of the Fidesz period in the city. In fact the shape sets it apart from other buildings, and disrupts the metropolitan cityscape. Perhaps that is why the government funding the Theatre preferred Siklós’s design to the prize-winning ‘metropolitan’-looking piece of Vadász. However the Nemzeti emerged as the ‘odd-looking’ contemporary building which compliments the heterogeneous metropolitan cityscape of Budapest. Standing in South Pest, the largely un-built area designed for the Expo, it is a symbol of the Fidesz period in power. And perhaps even more than the tucked-away Millenáris Park, it makes Fidesz’ imprint in the city rather than denying the value of the city itself. It also works as a reminder of the conflictual politics and polarisation of the time, a monument to the political frontier, by the Danube and on the famous panoramic cityscape of Budapest, as seen from the bridges and the Buda castle.

Next to the Nemzeti Fidesz commissioned another cultural institution, the Palace of Arts. It included a concert hall and museum space, first planned for the House of the Hungarian Heritage, but finally housing the Museum of Modern Arts. The building was to improve the status of the area, tucked away from the centre, by establishing a quarter for arts in South Pest. In contrast to and to work as a background for the new National Theatre, this new palace was of late-modernist architecture, a glass-walled palace with little decorations. The financial plan for the palace was quite expensive (the socialist government negotiated a bit cheaper terms after 2002) and therefore, even if it only opened in 2005, it works as a reminder of the Fidesz era.

To conclude on the cityscape transformation, we have observed that the projects are all disruptive of
the flow of the metropolis, trying to create their space in the city itself. They were responses to the past and to nationhood, in terms of rewriting the national past, making or commemorating national heroes (and villains in the case of the Terror House), or in terms of the changing plans made under the previous government. In doing so they emphasised the frontier between the ‘metropolitan urbanists’ and the népi-nemzetiek. They also put forward certain key elements of the Fidesz discourse, such as progress and excellence, high culture, countryside, traditional rather than modern values, and cultural Hungarianness. They bring the Fidesz discourse to Budapest.

**Populist mobilisations and sign-posting**

Finally, having covered Budapest’s absence from the Fidesz discourse and the construction of the Fidesz cityscape in Budapest, I will make a brief final excursion into the way in which, during the election campaign, Fidesz sought to claim key spaces in the city. In this it was making a populist move, bringing mass gatherings, symbols and sportsmen to Budapest. The polarisation around the elections of 2002 will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Also, the link between polarisation and populism has been discussed in conjunction with Laclau’s theory in Chapter Two, and I will return to this theme in the last sections of the next chapter. The focus here is on the way in which Orbán’s party continued colonising the cityscape of Budapest not only through architecture but through gatherings and by maintaining a symbolic presence in Budapest.

As I will discuss in more depth in the following chapter, the Fidesz-MDF election campaign in 2002 culminated in the Kossuth tér (the square in front of the Parliament) gathering on Saturday 13 April. They had already earlier that week gathered huge and agitated crowds in front of the University of Sports Sciences in Budapest. The plan here was to show the presence of Fidesz in

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politics and in Budapest and to mobilise people for the election campaign. On Saturday Fidesz supporters streamed into the city on busses and trains. The crowd, described in the opposition-oriented commercial TV channels as some tens of thousands, and in the more conservative media as one-and-a-half million, was generously portrayed by the Hungarian media. In some it provoked feelings of national pride and confidence in the bourgeois coalition, whereas in others it aroused feelings of fear – originating in the historical memory of the pre-WWII events. From 13 April on, for a few weeks at least, Kossuth tér became synonymous with the massive Fidesz-MDF rally, its Hungarian tricolour and kokárda. This was one way in which the party claimed or colonised the city for itself.

The manifest presence of Fidesz symbols in the public space had started earlier. Here I am not referring to the political posters, which, as I discuss in the next chapter, dominated election-time in Budapest, but to the presence of the kokárda, the symbol of the 1848/49 revolution, worn around the national day of 15 March on the chests of people in Budapest. Just walking the streets of Budapest one would see every other non-tourist carrying the kokárda, which in the election year 2002 was monopolised by the Hungarian right. This is not an insignificant way of showing Fidesz presence in Budapest and manifesting the frontier in Hungarian politics. However, while the kokárdák gradually disappeared, another symbolic political act in election-time Budapest became a permanent part of the city: the renaming of the Népstadion Ferenc Puskas Stadium.

A major renaming event also took place the week before the first round of the election. The City Code of Budapest forbids street naming after the elections have been called, but public buildings can still be renamed. Also, according to the City Code on street naming, a street can only be named 25 years posthumously. On 28 March the news broke that the Népstadion, People’s Stadium,

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608 MN 15/4/02. BBC Monitoring estimated at least 500.000. Viktor Orbán in his post-election speech referred to 1,5-2 million. Among others Magyar Hírlap 15/4/02 claimed the latter figure logically impossible.


would be renamed after Ferenc Puskas, perhaps the most famous Hungarian football player of all
time, yet who was still alive. The committee deciding was the Friends of Sportsmen, including
the President of the Republic Ferenc Mádl (Hungarian Democratic Forum, MDF), the PM Viktor
Orbán and the Minister of Youth and Sports Tamás Deutsch (Fidesz). Puskas, whose 75th birthday
present this gesture was supposed to represent, was famed for example for scoring two goals for the
Aranycsapat (Golden Team) who beat England 3:6 in 1953, perhaps the biggest sporting event in
the Hungarian national canon. Puskas left the country after the 1956 uprising and won the Spanish
league five times and the cup twice, whilst playing for Real Madrid. He belongs to a rare category
of ex-patriot Hungarians commemorated in Budapest. The public acknowledgement was a very
popular move and gained publicity. The renaming resonated well with the other projects described
in this chapter, which were all about the symbolic creation of nationhood, the community of the
cultural nation, and promoting Hungarian excellence at home and abroad, as well as anti-
communism. Consequently, besides articulating Puskas as part of Fidesz discourse or its symbolic
system, it also reinforced elements of Fidesz discourse in Budapest. Furthermore, it removed some
of the Socialist vocabulary (nép, people) from the city-text, and thus marked once again the frontier
between Fidesz and its political opponents. The city of Budapest responded by renaming the
Népstadion metro station simply as Stadionok. This is how they avoided the new vocabulary
introduced by Fidesz.

The last three moves I have described can be seen as populist in the sense that they appeal to the
masses, and create an illusion of a community of people. These all happened in the space of
Budapest: mass gatherings where popular artists and sportsmen join politicians in calling for unity
of the people caused the mixing of national identity and party political identity in its most banal
aspect, and were finally coupled with the move to commemorate a national sporting hero, thereby

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613 Viktor Orbán, ‘Beszéd a Kossuth téren, kétmillió polgár előtt speech’ [on Kossuth tér, in front of two million
disregarding formal conventions. Through these processes Fidesz moved from the creation of spaces for the elites to recognising the masses in Budapest, a theme that I will develop in the following chapter.

Claiming space and constructing the frontiers of the community

In Chapter Two I discussed in more depth Doreen Massey’s concept of space,614 and the way of studying space/publics. This construction of space/publics closely resembles the spatial view of discourse and community building that Laclau has theorized, and through which, in this chapter, we have been looking at frontier-building, proper to the relevant political discourses. In Chapter Three I investigated conflicts in community-building through the city-text. In the previous chapter I demonstrated how Demszky was articulating space/publics by making a reference to different audiences, and relationships which also took a shape in a territory, whether imagined or real. Before finishing the chapter, I want to discuss further the insights regarding the ‘colonisation’ of space and public architecture, vis-à-vis the construction of space/publics.

Looking at the three cases of contemporary architecture, it is clear that these could construct a space of their own. The space is not just a smooth space where everyone is agreed on the function and character of the piece of architecture. On the contrary, it is ‘criss-crossed by antagonisms’, to use Laclau and Mouffe’s expression. Although, or because, there are disagreements about the character of each monument, relationships are created through the encounter in the relevant place of a public, a community. Emerging from the local environment into a space, created and marked by a complex set of relations, it becomes a symbol. When I mentioned Millenáris, Nemzeti or Terror Ház to people in Hungary, many things would be recalled, and because of the situation of polarisation I would often invoke the kind of confrontations that are taking place around the buildings, or the

feelings as to how a certain space is ‘ours’ or ‘theirs’. I see this as the way in which community-building happens. Places are marked and turned into space, through the relationships constructed between them, which, in turn, construct the place into a space. Furthermore, controversies at stake in the renamings, and other markings of space are productive because they help to construct space. For in political identity-construction there is no point in naming or building something that will not have an effect, resonating pro or contra.

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate that Fidesz was marking or colonising space or reclaiming Budapest for itself from the left, or rather – for ‘the new’ from ‘the old’ in Budapest. This space-making, and marking of the space of the ‘other’ and also of one’s own space, helps to construct the communities of ‘us’ and ‘them’. This is vital for Fidesz’ politics in Budapest; they could demonstrate a crucial difference and yet project something of their own. The apparent disengagement with Budapest created the illusion that it was not really Fidesz’ city, unlike many of the middle-sized towns in Hungary, and that Fidesz rejected the values of the metropolis. The nineteenth-century flair for nation-building, however, necessitated the large-scale projects whereby the government also needed its flag-ships in the national capital – affording it the same role as in the nineteenth century. Fidesz adopted a colonising attitude, a continuous frontier-making in relation to the surroundings. The sharpness of the frontier and the antagonistic relationships that created the spaces contributed to the frontier of polarisation and to a perception of clear-cut political communities, such as that of Fidesz itself.

**Conclusion**

To conclude: I have shown above that while Budapest was not visibly present in Fidesz discourse, Fidesz aimed to be visibly present in Budapest, during the period of the Orbán government (1998-
2002). On the other hand, it demonstrated its conception of polgári (advanced) Magyarország, Hungary and Hungarianness, with a prospective flair, cherishing excellence and achievement, high culture and enterprise. It placed its imprint on the cityscape, creating monuments which were to cover the tragedy of the loss of the Budapest Expo, and would thus demonstrate the presence of the Hungarian right in Budapest, and in the Parliament. Fidesz also named and confronted their enemies in the city, tackling both the recent past and the Socialists through the Terror háza museum, by disrupting the flow of the contemporary cityscape by architectural monuments, by rallying in the city, in short, by taking symbolic political control of the alien and showing the presence of the countryside in the metropolis. Adopting a policy of ignoring the metropolis was marked by its own impossibility in two ways: first, Budapest remains the political, cultural and economic centre of the country; second, in order to articulate and maintain a discourse through an opposition, the opposition also needs to be continuously articulated and thus tackled. Fidesz did not only avoid Budapest but also engaged with it. It is evident from my account above that even when calling for unity around its vision of nationhood, Fidesz pursued a politics of polarisation, and created rather than dismantled the political frontier as the defining social imaginary.
Chapter 5:


Introduction
Having investigated moments of articulation of political discourses and processes of polarisation in the previous chapters, with particular reference to the Budapest mayor Demszky and Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz government until 2002, I will, in this chapter, study polarisation from 2002 to the time of writing – 2005. I take examples of political moments in which the polarisation has been sedimented and contested. I will finish by discussing partisan politics and consensus, taking inspiration from Chantal Mouffe, and on the basis of her recent work On The Political. This will allow me to establish my claims regarding the problematic nature of polarisation, with reference to the empirical case of Hungary. The first section here will be an analysis of the polarised election campaign of 2002, and will be based on two campaign days, and the events surrounding, therein, the two main political parties in Budapest. This will show how the two parties aimed at demonstrating their differences, yet at the same time claimed the same concept – nationhood – and rearticulated the same frontier that provided them their sense of identity. In the second section I will look at how the polarisation was maintained through the referendum on citizenship and the privatisation of hospitals in December 2004. In the last section I look at the way in which the internal unity of the two groups was reinforced and contested at the election of the Hungarian president in June 2005. The aim of these analyses is to demonstrate the logic and problems of polarisation. These will become visible in the discussion of Chantal Mouffe’s work, which I discuss at the end of the chapter and which will highlight the problems and logic of polarisation.

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615 Chantal Mouffe, On The Political, Thinking in Action Series, London and New York: Routledge, 2005
Through the empirical analysis I will show how: 1) at the same time that the appearance of the polarisation is maintained, key elements at the frontier of polarisation have been contested by the two camps (elections 2002, referendum 2004), 2) the polarisation does not appear to interest the people, yet the illusion of it is maintained by the political elite (referendum 2004), 3) the integrity of the camp is the main aim of the polarisation-building elite (cf. the presidential election of 2005). These examples draw together points many of which have been made visible in the previous chapters. The cases studied here will allow me to map out the logic and problems of polarisation suggested in the introduction, theoretical chapter and throughout the thesis.

I could, of course, take many examples of the same processes. Even reading a daily newspaper would enable one to analyse the way in which the process of frontier-building, sedimentation and contestation happens, and at a very banal level. The cases I take up, however, are some of the key moments in Hungarian politics during this period. An illuminating example of reoccurring banal frontier-making is the case of the István Bibó statue, unveiled next to the Hungarian parliament in the summer of 2005. Bibó has been a key figure in Hungarian political thought, and an influence on the thinking of all major parties. The official ceremony held by the government parties and the MDF was lead by the former president Arpád Göncz and the Socialist PM Ferenc Gyurcsányi. Fidesz did not participate in the ceremony. Instead, the PM faced a demonstration by the Jobbik, a recently established youthful but strongly nationalist and religious right-wing party, who declared him not Hungarian enough to celebrate Bibó’s heritage, because of his comments regarding the 2004 referendum. The claims were over the heritage of Bibó and the ‘Bibó College’, which operated as a cradle for democratic postcommunist politics in Hungary. That is where the liberal


parties in particular, such as Fidesz, had launched themselves in 1988 and after.\textsuperscript{618} Therefore Bibó, whose heritage could be seen as a bridge-building force between the two camps,\textsuperscript{619} became an element at the frontier, which helps to create camps and their respective discourses, through the competing claims made regarding him.

Schöpflin has argued that the Hungarian parties articulate their discourses but do not engage with each other.\textsuperscript{620} This is due to the polarisation, where the choice is always between two alternatives: the good and the bad. In my analysis, below and in the previous chapters, we can see how the party discourses are indeed articulated in the context of, and against, the other party’s discourse. Some analysts of Hungarian politics have argued that whereas Fidesz is leading the discourse-making, the Socialists merely follow them.\textsuperscript{621} The situation where one camps sets the problematic and the other follows, by reclaiming or countering it, comes across in this and other examples I will make in this chapter. In the rest of the thesis I show how the maintenance of the frontier became a group-forming activity, where the two discourses were promoted through an emphasis on the frontier.

In the first chapter I discussed the folk/nation vs. urban/liberal debate. In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated the importance of nationhood for the postcommunist Hungarian elites. This theme has been recurring in postcommunist Hungarian politics.\textsuperscript{622} Yet I have decided not to study...
nationalism or nationhood as such, but to look at identity and community-building in Hungarian politics. In the first two sections of this chapter we will look at nationhood and the competing claims made about it, thereby making visible the unity within the camps, along with the opposition to the other – often achieved by contesting the concept that the others had been monopolising. In the last two sections I will focus more on the production of unity as against the danger of fragmentation. This will show how the camp continuously attempts to secure its borders and integrity. Cohesion – whether within the camp or the party – was more important than winning. On the left it was more about the integrity of their own party, rather than the camp. With the SZDSZ, more important than winning was to find their own identity against the MSZP and to be taken seriously as a coalition partner, hence their lack of support for MSZP’s nominated candidate. The MSZP wanted to be able to choose freely their candidate.

Contesting and reaffirming the border: articulations of nation around the Hungarian Parliamentary Elections

In this section I focus on the creation of unity within the two camps of the polarisation and the contestation over nationhood in the parliamentary elections of 2002. Party politics in Hungary at the time was divided into two camps: the conservative parties Fidesz-MPP and MDF were in electoral alliance, which also gave a sense of unity to the left, who constructed their campaign against the conservatives. The right wanted to stay in government and the left wanted them out: both MSZP and SZDSZ were obviously eager to get a seat in the government as they had during the previous parliamentary term: 1994-1998. This contributed to the black-and-white campaigning.

I have been arguing throughout the thesis that they are conservative, even though when MDF makes an effort to distinguish itself from Fidesz, it is precisely the conservative ideology that is used in order to show the fundamental difference between Fidesz and MDF. Fidesz would be considered non-conservative due to their ‘radical’ and ‘progressive’ policies and flair. Nevertheless, their emphasis on nationhood, religion and organic values relate them not only to the MDF but also to other ‘conservative’ parties in Europe. Furthermore, as was already discussed in Chapter One, being a conservative in Eastern Europe can also refer to the willingness to conserve state-socialist values and practices. See e.g. George Schöpflin Politics in Eastern Europe 1945-1992, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993.
The elections and the politics of that period have already been studied in-depth, in Hungary. This existing research demonstrates what an intensive and totalising campaign the elections actually represented, that there was a lot of negative campaigning involved and that the media was – and still to large extent remains – divided and partial on politics. Finally, the research shows that party politics spread to people’s personal lives, for instance via schools and text messages. For example, Géza Boros shows how the negative campaigning was done in the streets of Budapest, through different posters and through modifications to them. Thus it suffices that I here focus on the key slogans and events in the electoral campaigns, as well as the two competing concepts of nationhood at the core of the campaigns, and the conceptions of progress to which they were tied. In the yearbook of Hungarian politics, particularly Ágnés Kapitány and Gábor Kapitány take issue with the values and symbols of the campaigns, and the differences between the two sides. Their argument is that the ‘left’ and ‘right’, with their current and traditional meanings have been confused and articulated in a mixture of elements. They distinguish a campaign of two cultures: one mixing elements of individualism, focused on the present, open to other cultures, with conflicting elites and clear distinction to lower status associations; the other campaign is past and future oriented, focused on the community and in the need to show power, independence and sense of location of nationhood, bringing together different groups. Rather than merely studying the essences of the campaigns – especially as for instance the community and individuality aspects can be found in both campaigns – I look at the way in which the two campaigns were created through

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differentiation.

In Chapter One I already described the parliamentary elections of 2002, and the details of the electoral system. In 2002 Hungarians first went to the polls on the 7th April, to vote for the single-seat constituencies and a countrywide list; in the constituencies, where no candidate secured a simple majority of the votes during the first round, a second round of voting took place two weeks later, on 21 April.\footnote{Some of the votes were also distributed from the reserve list of votes (the ‘unlucky’ votes, that did not manage to be used to elect a candidate to the parliament). After the second round, there was a major confusion regarding these reserve votes: whether those cast during the first or second round (or both) would be used for the remaining seats in the parliament. In a tight situation where the difference between the two blocks in the parliament only ran to 20 seats, and given that the government parties who won the second round were set in opposition, since the first round votes were counted for this purpose, this would be an interesting question to study. It is however out of the scope of this paper, in which the focus is upon the election rhetoric. See Chapter One and e.g. Magyar Hírlap, 26 April 2002, pp. 1-2, for an elaborated article.} Nine parties ran a national list.\footnote{The governing parties of 1998-2002 – Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Part (Hungarian Civic Party, Fidesz-MPP, hereafter Fidesz) – united with the Magyar Democratic Forum (Hungarian Democratic Forum, MDF), the Független Kisgaszda-, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt (Small Holders Party, FKGP) and the opposition Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party, MSZP), Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (Association of Free Democrats, SZDSZ), Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (Hungarian Truth and Life Party, MIÉP), two small left-wing parties Munkáspárt (Workers Party) and Új Baloldal (New Left) as well as the centrist party Összefogás Magyarországért Centrum. HVG 29 March 2002.} I will focus on the largest parties: the right-wing coalition Fidesz-MDF and the left-wing opposition MSZP and SZDSZ who united for the second round of the elections. According to the opinion poll predictions, the main parties – Fidesz-MDF and the MSZP – were neck and neck, in February. By March, Fidesz-MDF had a slight lead over the Socialists.\footnote{This is evident in the Szonda Ipsos polls. Szonda Ipsos, http://www.szondaipsos.hu/polvelkut/partok, last accessed 6 September 2005.} The intensive campaigning and the dominance of the election in the mass media led to a turnout of 71 per cent at the first round, the highest during the postcommunist period.\footnote{HG, 13 April 2002, OSCE/ODIHR, 8 April 2002.} Of the single-member district candidates, 45 were elected directly during the first round, compared to only one in 1998. During the second round the campaigning intensified, with the remaining parties organising themselves even more clearly along two fronts – the left front and the polgári (civic) government front – after the defeat in the first round, following an opposition campaign. Turnout was still high – 68 per cent.\footnote{The coalition of Fidesz-MDF gained 178 seats in the parliament, whilst of the left wing parties, the MSZP won 168, the SZDSZ 19 and the two parties jointly won one seat. The MSZP-SZDSZ government was formed with 188 MPs, as compared to the 178 MPs of the opposition. See Ministry of Interior, Central Data Processing, Registration and
whereas Fidesz-MDF gained 41 per cent.\textsuperscript{632} Crucially, both blocs were able to celebrate a victory after the second round: the Socialists and the Free Democrats because they had gained a simple majority for their coalition, the Fidesz-MDF because they had narrowed the gap and won the second round. This created ideal conditions for maintaining the polarisation.

\textbf{The symbols and slogans of elections: civic and cultural nationhoods}

To begin my analysis, I will look at the symbols and slogans of the elections, which reveal two distinct conceptions both of the past and the present, and of nationhood. The symbols and slogans aimed at creating unity within the camp or the party.\textsuperscript{633}

Keeping with the logic of the postcommunist polarisation, the right-wing parties campaigned against the return of the past – against the returning ‘mummies’ of state socialism (seen as Stalinist/Leninist) and the neoliberal Bokros packages of the previous left-wing government.\textsuperscript{634} Therefore their paradoxical slogan ‘\textit{Jövő elkezdődött}’ (the future began), can be seen as being invested with a rejection of the ‘communist’ past and the continuation of the process of building the future in the second term in office: what had happened until now was only the start.

While the Hungarian right was making reference to the socialists in their election rhetoric, the Socialists were also making reference to the politics of Fidesz. The slogan ‘\textit{Velünk az ország}’ (the country is with us) has a range of references. First, it refers to the way in which the country was not

\textsuperscript{632} As we remember from Chapter One, the SZDSZ gained representation in parliament with 5.6 per cent of the vote, whereas the nationalist Hungarian Truth and Life Party (MIÉP) and the Centrum party failed to secure the 5 per cent threshold for getting into parliament, winning just 4 per cent of the votes.

\textsuperscript{633} As Ágnes and Gábor Kápitány have argued – since 1994, the symbols did not present the community (as a whole) but just the parties. Rather, in my analysis, they have been presenting or creating particular communities around the parties, which also can be universalised i.e. can be take up beyond the party itself. Here what is at stake is the creation of frontiers as well as that of a direction for the party, as the above authors have also observed. Ágnes Kápitány and Gábor Kapitány (2003) \textit{Értékválasztás 2002}, Új mandátum, Budapest, pp.43-83.

\textsuperscript{634} See on the mummy, Boros, ‘Múmia visszatér’, p. 267.
with Fidesz. This means that Fidesz had been dividing it or ignoring certain parts of it, and now it is
the socialists who would integrate the country. The existing exclusion, as the attempt to reclaim ‘the
country’ indicates, refers to the idea that Fidesz had concentrated power in its own elite. Second, the
emphasis on the ‘country’ indicates that civic Hungary, rather than the Hungarian nation, is the
primary reference for Socialists. This stresses the importance of the state borders and the Hungarian
citizens, as opposed to the emphasis on the cultural nation or the post-1920 ‘Trianon Hungary’, on
the part of the conservative parties. Third, it plays against the negative conceptions of
nationlessness and cosmopolitanness, attributed to the MSZP by the Hungarian right. Conversely,
since the country was with the Socialists the MSZP was also with the country, i.e. the Hungarians
throughout Hungary, not just the in cities.635

One of the ways in which the two parties distinguished themselves from each other, through a
common frontier, was the rhetoric regarding the ‘15 million’ and ‘10 million’ Hungarians. The ten
million represented the position of the ‘Velünk az ország’ campaign, in which the Socialists claimed
to be the party of the Hungarian citizens. The 15 million referred to the Hungarians both within the
country and in the areas near to Hungary, i.e. with the emphasis on the ethnic Hungarians that the
Hungarian right-wing government had maintained.636 These were the two conceptions of nation
which featured as the dividing-line in Hungarian politics during that period. The Hungarian right
emphasised the term ‘nemzet’ (nation), whereas the left emphasised ‘ország’ (country) and

635 The left, and particularly the SZDSZ, were seen as the urban parties, as is confirmed by the research on the electoral
bases I discussed in Chapter One. This conception was further strengthened and kept visible by Fidesz’ campaign
regarding that which they claimed to be the interests and values of the countryside.

636 The 15 million ethnic Hungarians had already been discussed by the first freely elected president of Hungary –
József Antall of MDF. The historical urge of the nationalists to reunite the Hungarians was produced by the trauma
of the Trianon treatise of 1920, which reduced Hungary to a third of the size of the Habsburg double-monarchy. It
still remains part of the collective psyche of the Hungarians. During the state-socialist era the trauma could not be
usefully discussed in the open, but the memory was maintained in literature, especially that dating from the Interwar
era, much of which has been republished recently. György Csepeli, Structures and Contents of Hungarian National
Identity, Results of Political Socialization and Cultivation, Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Verlag Peter
Lang, 1989. András Gerő, László Varga, Mátays Vince, Antiszemita közbeszéd Magyarországon 2000-ben; Anti-
Given that the peasantist, anti-modernist and anti-Western populism of the Interwar period survived in its cultural
form, postcommunist populist – most notably the MIÉP and its leader István Csurka – have tried to shape the
political agenda by articulating the trauma and the issue of hatarontúli magyarok – Hungarians living in the
'Magyarok' (Hungarians).

The Fidesz government took care of the Hungarians in the neighbouring countries (hataron túli magyarok). The extensive politicking regarding the kokárda – which symbolises the cultural and historical unit of the Hungarian nation, the 15 million Hungarians (the 1848 and the 1867-1920 Hungary) and also the revolution of 1848 – is indicative of Viktor Orbán’s conception of nationhood in 2002 as well as of the revolutionary and polarising spirit of the election campaign. One of the main reasons for the domestic dissatisfaction with the Fidesz-led government was its focus on areas outside the country. Therefore the defining of Hungarians in relation to fixed borders was a sensible tactic by the MSZP. Paradoxically, it resonated with ideas of keeping the state benefits only for the Hungarian citizens, while the policies of the MSZP-SZDSZ government had and would continue to erode the welfare system. At the first round, the Socialist candidate for PM, Péter Medgyessy, argued that he would like to be a Prime Minister not of two times ten million Hungarians but of 10 million Hungarians. By this he meant the country should not be polarised. Crucially, when attacked about ignoring the Hungarians in neighbouring countries, he explained that he wished to be the Prime Minister of 10 million Hungarians, but would also take care of 15 million Hungarians. This was how he distanced himself from Fidesz-MDF and brought a pragmatic flair to the proceedings, in contrast to the nationalist rhetoric associated with recent events in the Fidesz foreign policy, such as the criticism of the ‘Beneš decrees’ and the row caused by the Status Law, that gave members of the Hungarian national minority from the neighbouring countries preferential treatment over others from the region.

637 In 2001, besides founding a Hungarian University, the government pushed through a Status Law to facilitate the incorporation of Hungarians from neighbouring countries into the domestic labour market. See e.g. Tóth and Török, Politika és kommunikáció, pp. 342-6.

638 ‘A round badge in the shape of a rose made from a ribbon with national colors’, first worn by the revolutionary youth of the 1848 revolution and customarily worn on the national days, especially on 15 March, that marked the beginning of the revolution. István Bart, Hungary and the Hungarians: The Keywords; A Concise Dictionary of Facts and Beliefs, Customs, Usage and Myths, Budapest: Corvina, 1999, p. 91.


640 These deal with the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920, and Hungarian borders and minorities outside the country. See, on these, ongoing contemporary debates, e.g. Tóth and Török, Politika és kommunikáció; Andrew Purvis, ‘The Empire Strikes Back: Hungary’s new status law pleases ethnic Hungarians living abroad but angers some of its
Both concepts, 10 and 15 million, were present in the speeches of the party leaders during the evening of the election campaign. On election night the outgoing PM Orbán constructed the frontier again in his speech, arguing that ‘as was heard from the headquarters of another party’ the future of Hungarians would be the future not of 10 million but 15 million Hungarians.\textsuperscript{641} This kept alive the idea that the elections had been a contestation over two concepts of nationhood. Medgyessy’s post-election acknowledgement of the existence of the ‘15 million Hungarians’ meant for Orbán, in his moment of defeat, that the civic bloc’s campaign had been successful – at least in putting forward their conception of the 15 million Hungarians. Similarly, we will see in the case of the referendum of 2004 how the left acknowledges the right at the moment of victory. This is important, since despite the claims of illegitimacy and a situation where the two sides are enemies rather than adversaries, they realise that their existence depends on the frontier.

The frontier was also important for the small parties. Analysing the election slogans, sociologists Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány argue that the small parties rejected polarisation. The Workers Party claimed to represent the workers and the MIÉP – ‘real Hungarians’. ‘The Centrum party for example devised a formula in which they were on one side and the big parties on the other (saying that “besides vegetables” [i.e. the orange of Fidesz and the carnation of the Socialists] “there are other alternatives”).\textsuperscript{642} By doing so they still repeated the idea of polarisation, except that the frontier was now shifted to that between them and the two big parties, and there was again, therefore, only two alternatives. As a small party in 1990, this was Fidesz’s rhetorical strategy for the election, and they still utilise the bi-polar us/them rhetoric, which contributes to the situation of polarisation.\textsuperscript{643} It is vital to note that this aspect of Fidesz rhetoric (which, as we saw in Chapter

\textsuperscript{641} ‘Premier admits defeat, still sees future for “civic Hungary”’ \textit{BBC Monitoring} 22 April 2002.

\textsuperscript{642} Kápitány and Kapitány, \textit{Értékválasztás 2002}, p.82.

\textsuperscript{643} “Please choose” was a classic Fidesz slogan, where the choice was between the old and the new. Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány make this point in their analysis, and it’s an important one when looking at the continuity of Fidesz discourse. Kápitány and Kapitány, \textit{Értékválasztás 2002}, p.82.
Two, refers to strategy, performance and action) has not changed. It was a bipolarising party even before its turn to the right.

To sum up, the elections of 2002 clearly indicated the way in which polarisation is performed, acted out and created in the political campaigns. The contestation between the two camps was organised around different claims on nationhood, and claiming other universal constructs, such as the country or the future. When the numerical figures ten and fifteen million were taken as part of the campaign, space was also opened for fundamental differentiation – a single frontier between the camps. The above account shows how the frontier was created to a large extent by making contrasts, but also by making claims that would cross the frontier and make it visible. Importantly, it reveals how Fidesz had a oppositional, polarising discourse, strongly marking the frontiers between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The Socialists played with this discourse by opposing it or reclaiming elements that Fidesz had adopted for itself. In the following sections I will investigate other examples of this construction of the bi-polar hegemony and the problem for democratic politics it creates.

Gatherings: occupying the symbolic space

The affective element of national identity gains significance in provocative situations (crowd, insult, aggression and prejudice) when normally low emotional tension is increased by situational cues. … enhanced manifestations of national sentiment reduce the field of decision-making, pushing rational calculations into the background. Emerging from latency, national feelings become the prime mover of unexpected social turmoil and revolutionary events. It must be borne in mind that national self-identification is shared by the overwhelming majority of people in Hungarian society. – Csepeli

In this section I aim to show how national identity is constructed, manifested and reinforced in action. The two political camps tried to mobilise on the basis of their respective concepts of nation.

I will study this in the context of two campaign days in Budapest, and via the categories developed

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644 Csepeli, Structures and Contents..., p. 56.
by a Hungarian sociologist, György Csepeli. Csepeli argues that identity is activated in rituals and ceremonial occasions whose ‘goal is to demonstrate identity or stress other aspects connected to it.’\(^{645}\) He enumerates five requisites of an event which ‘jointly induce the individual to define himself as a member of the in-group’, which also all featured in the two analysed events: scene, distinction among participants according to their roles, non-contingency of interactions, visual and auditory indicators of affiliation or identity and regulated behaviour.\(^{646}\) In my study below, these categories help to indicate differences between the two parties or camps, their discourse and the conception of nationhood.

The Fidesz-MDF election campaign in 2002 culminated in a gathering in Kossuth tér, the square in front of the Parliament, on Saturday 13 April. Earlier that week, the coalition had gathered huge and agitated crowds in front of the University of Sports Sciences in Budapest. The crowd, described in the opposition-oriented commercial TV channels as some tens of thousands and in the more conservative media as one and half million,\(^{647}\) was generously portrayed the Hungarian media. The media was present in the campaign and functioned as a vehicle for the spread and sedimentation of polarisation. In some it provoked feelings of national pride and confidence in the polgári coalition, whereas in others it aroused feelings of fear, originating in the historical memory of the pre-WWII events. This event was comparable to the MSZP-SZDSZ joint pre-election happening in Budapest City Park, Városliget, on Friday 19 April. This in spite of the fact that the event did not feature in the eve-of-election newspapers – which almost ignored the forthcoming second round of the elections – whereas the Kossuth tér event was broadcasted live on both of the Hungarian state channels. Both events drew a huge crowd of people and were the main events of the campaigns. As we will see below, the number of references to the Fidesz event was also noticeable in the MSZP festival. In the next paragraphs I will analyse the events, using Csepeli’s categories.

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\(^{647}\) *Magyar Nemzet*, 15 April 2002. *BBC Monitoring* estimated at least 500.000. Viktor Orbán in his post-election speech referred to 1.5-2 million. Among others the liberal *Magyar Hírlap* (15 April 2002) claimed the latter figure to be logically impossible.
Scene: Both events were cast in an open access space. As the parties in government, Fidesz-MDF chose the parliament square as their platform. The leftwing parties instead chose Városliget, the City Park. ‘The more obvious the definition of the situation, the easier it is for the category of identity to be activated’, argues Csepeli. Perhaps on these grounds the political national identity was more readily evoked on Kossuth tér than in Városliget, where the event took the form of a popular festival, in striking contrast to the rightwing coalition’s more politically orientated gathering. Besides mobilising voters, the Kossuth tér event’s secondary aim was to show the left the power of the polgári movement. The event even monopolised for a while the name of the square, which came to symbolise the Fidesz-led gathering. From the 13 April on, for at least few weeks, Kossuth tér became synonymous with the massive Fidesz-MDF rally, its Hungarian tricolours and kokárda. This had the further effect of claiming the historical heritage of the progressive 1848/49 revolutionary Lajos Kossuth, who for instance as an ex-patriot from Hungary in Britain and the US worked with local labour movements. Now, having lost the first part of the elections, the Hungarian right was on a revolutionary quest, reinforced by the association with Kossuth. They were even singing the 1848 revolutionary ‘Kossuth song’, and calling people to the polls as to a revolution for ‘Hungarian freedom’.

The Városliget, City Park, was a characteristic choice for the MSZP and SZDSZ. As András Gerő has argued in his article on the political use of city spaces of Budapest in the 2002 elections, there


649 Csepeli, Structures and Contents..., p. 41.


651 As we remember from the previous chapters, and especially the heroes of the liberal mayor Demszky, the choice of political idols has been an important choice as an empty signifier for the political groupings. In the run up to the elections Fidesz had mobilised around the more conservative figure of the revolution, Széchenyi – sponsoring an expensive historical costume drama Hidember, and carrying the picture of Széchenyi on their campaign stage. By contrast Demszky’s hero of the same revolution was the young poet Petőfi.
were only two squares in Budapest which could gather a mass: Kossuth tér and Hősök tere, since the park of the National Museum and Szabadság tér were under construction. However, the former was used by the government parties, and the use of the latter for mass gatherings had strong authoritarian and fascist connotations (as did Szabadság tér where Interwar irredentialist, revisionist, statues had been proposed to be returned, as discussed in Chapter Three). The left opted for the parks, which perhaps reveals their elitist rather than mass character, as Gerő would say, but I would argue that MSZP’s choice specifically the difference from the mass mobilisation of Fidesz. The park used for the laid-back first of May gatherings differed from the demonstration place outside the Parliament. This is evident in the other aspects of the gatherings. Of the few parks in Budapest, they could have chosen Margit Island, which is accessible through bridges only, or the Népliget, the state-socialistically described People’s Park, in the area where the MSZP candidates had already won their constituencies in the first round. In contrast, the city park borders the areas of Budapest where the second round elections would be decisive. And it was precisely the city, Budapest, led by the Mayor Demszky of SZDSZ, who voted left in the elections. The Városliget also evokes feelings of metropolitanism and progress, it being the location of the 1896 Millennial Exhibition, one of Hungary’s heydays. Városliget, referring to a territory, also fits the MSZP slogan ‘Velünk az ország!’ Finally, and controversially, the choice of Városliget could be read as an incursion into the area of Fidesz influence: the access to the park is through the metro station of Széchenyi fürdő (Széchenyi spa), which is also located in the park. Count Széchenyi belongs to the vocabulary of the Fidesz party, whose headquarters are only a bloc away from the Heroes’ Square that bridges the park and the city.

**Distinction between participants according to their roles:** There was a fairly clear division

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654 Although the name originates from the late nineteenth century, as with the Prater or Volksgarten in Vienna – handed over to the people of Budapest by the ruling Habsburgs, these associations can nevertheless be brought in. See e.g. Pallas Nagylexicon Online, http://www.mek.iif.hu/porta/szint/egyeb/lexikon/pallas/html/016/pc001672.html#9, last accessed 14 September 2005.
between the technical staff, main speakers, entertainers and audience as well as passers-by (in limited numbers) in both cases. The main distinction was that the Fidesz-MDF took high-profile supporters – sportsmen and artists – to the scene, while the leftwing parties did not, perhaps as a response. In the Kossuth tér event people came with trains and buses from the Hungarian towns and countryside, whereas to the more low-key MSZP-SZDSZ event people mainly used local transport, from different parts of Budapest. The difference between the atmospheres of a political rally and a festival caused a bigger distinction between the acting PM (and his team) and their audience than between the opposition politicians and their audience.

Non-contingency of interactions: Both events had characteristically ceremonial features: speeches accompanied by never-ending applause, artistic entertainment, the shouting of slogans and the waving of flags. To note the differences, the MSZP-SZDSZ festival music was pronouncedly non-aggressive, and historically anti-racist, jazz\footnote{The repertoire included: \textit{When the saints go marching in} and \textit{Just a gigolo}, which made references, heavy with irony, to the self-righteousness and overblown character of the Fidesz-MDF campaign and PM Orbán himself (and his ties with the Italian Premier Berlusconi), in contrast to the revolutionary appeal of the other side.} whereas Fidesz-MDF’s was popular Hungarian. In Városliget the atmosphere resembled that of a festival where different people go to be entertained by music, comedy and speeches, as well as consuming sausages and beer, which implicitly referred to the ‘majálisok’ of the communist times and the peace times of the pre-1920 era.\footnote{Majális, originally a pagan festival, as stressed in the Pallas Nagylexicon, was taken over by Workers movement as the May Day, and during the state socialist era there was a parade on this day. As Bart points out, from the 1990s the First of May has taken on a more ‘Sunday atmosphere’, a relaxed mode which was reproduced in the Városliget gathering. \textit{Pallas Nagylexicon} Online, http://www.mek.iif.hu/porta/szint/egyeb/lexikon/pallas/html/067/pc006743.html#4, last accessed 14 September 2005. Bart, \textit{Hungary and the Hungarians}, p. 111.} The people who went to Kossuth tér considered it an important event in order to show their strength and unity: it had a revolutionary mood. Here leafleting was popular, whereas in the Városliget event there was none.

Visual and auditory indicators of affiliation or identity, and regulated behaviour: The Városliget gathering was marked by both a lack, and incoherence, of symbols, beyond the normal
májalis, May Day, feeling. Near to the stage there were a couple of SZDSZ flags along with a purple umbrella, and some people were wearing red paper carnations or even self-made pins to show their support for one of the two parties. This contrasted with the uniformity of the crowds on Kossuth tér where the presence of the kokárda, cockade, and the national flags, dominated the scene. I focus here on two symbols: the kokárda and ‘magyarok’.

Kokárda. One of the main features of the whole campaign was Fidesz’s monopolisation of the symbol of national affection, the kokárda. Their claim was that all who would wear it would be polgárok, citizens or the bourgeoisie of Hungary. The nationally-minded people, who wear the kokárda, would also choose Fidesz-MDF. This caused an angry reaction in the left and liberal press. For example, the liberal political weekly Magyar Narancs described it as ‘the lowliest deed’, and said that in practice the absence of the symbol was made to seem like a yellow star. The kokárda is a symbol of banal nationalism, to borrow Michael Billig’s term. It is worn on official occasions, especially 15 March, and often stays on people’s coats after the date too. Closer to the elections, however, the symbol did not go banally ‘unflagged’ but was ‘flagged’ through added significations, noticed and worn with pride – to follow Billig’s argument. Those without a kokárda were, of course, also noticed. On the eve of the second round of the elections, when the kokárda were removed to secure the secret ballot, the symbol’s absence was noticeable in the cityscape. Whereas in Billig’s study the nation-state ideology requires national symbols to create the nation, here the national symbol created a divide, once it had been monopolised by a political front.

657 I discussed this concept of Fidesz’ in Chapter One, and again in the previous chapter, and will be making more in-depth references to it further below.
658 Editorial in Magyar Narancs, 11 April 2002.
660 See also Olivér Dessewffy, ‘Konzervatív kokárda’, Magyar Hirlap, 30 March 2002.
661 Billig, Banal Nationalism.
662 Billig, Banal Nationalism.
Magyarok

Several historical examples demonstrate that almost hypnotic effects may be evolved by “Magyars” being shouted in a crowd, and this suggestive influence may result in the most irrational crowd behaviour. – Csepeli

The election campaigns of 2002 showed that Hungarians can get excited by national rhetoric on any side of the political spectrum. Besides mobilising a visibly agitated and nationalistic crowd in Kossuth tér, the Fidesz-MDF election rhetoric also evoked a reaction in the leftist gathering. The accusations of being betrayers of the nation and the mobilisation of the ‘national civic front’ against the ‘communists’, as the MSZP was branded in the some of the leaflets of the right, were present in the MSZP prime ministerial candidate Péter Medgyessy’s speech in Városliget. A single line, ‘we too are Hungarians’, evoked a huge wave of shouts ‘magyarok vagyunk’ (we are Hungarians). Medgyessy continued: ‘and we wear the kokárda when we want – and take it off when we want.’ The latter referred to Orbán’s recent call to remove the kokárda at the eve of the elections to minimise the election fraud, which made a further claim regarding the status of the kokárda as a party political symbol. These references to nationalism were received with huge enthusiasm. Thus while the right attempted to monopolise the national feeling and mobilise a crowd with it, references to the nation were present in both campaigns.

To sum up, the election campaign in Budapest demonstrated how the positions of the two political camps manifested in different ways. The left organised their event in direct contrast to that of the right. Yet when the right was claiming a monopoly over signifiers of the nation such as the kokárda, the left was eager to claim them back. This contributed to the continuous politics of articulation.

663 Csepeli refers to a study from the 1970s according to which national shame was rejected by 93 per cent of the Hungarians, while 82 per cent of them emphasise national pride. He argues, revealingly: ‘The affective element “pride” of Hungarian national identity is sensitive to negative stimuli of attack.’ Csepeli, Structures and Contents..., pp. 41, 58.

664 See above and e.g. Tóth and Török, Politika és kommunikáció.

665 Péter Medgyessy, campaign speech at the MSZP-SZDSZ event in Budapest Városliget, 19 April 2002. As witnessed by the author.

666 See e.g. Népszabadság, 19 April 2002.
over the frontier, which also simultaneously constructed the frontier.

**National interest and ideologies of progress**

The election campaign put forward different concepts of nationhood and progress, which are important for my discussion of the later events, in the next section. The concept of the nation promoted by the largest parties is tied into that of progress and national interests. The absence, or one-sidedness, of the national question in the public discourse during communism complicates the discussion of the nation. Even if there was a notion of great socialist patriotism uniting the citizens, \(^{667}\) 'generations grew up in the belief that political and not “national” organs were acting in their place and for their interest', Csepeli argues. \(^{668}\) This was the basis for MDF’s postcommunist emphasis on the Hungarian minority abroad. \(^{669}\) ‘Progress’ had generally positive connotations in Hungarian politics, where for instance there was consensus among the main parties that the goal for the country is accession to the EU. However, the parties had very different ideas about the meaning of progress and preferential policies. This entitled Fidesz to accuse the MSZP of a lack of vision, of technocracy and of a readiness to sell the country to foreigners i.e., to get into the EU at any price. The MSZP accused Fidesz of focusing on exclusive high-profile projects such as the *Millenáris park* and the new National Theatre, and noted the way in which these were used to raise Fidesz’ own profile – and Fidesz’s conception of progress, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Ultimately, the sense of progress and nationhood shows who the party believes to be the *people*, in whose interest democratic government is expected to function.

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\(^{668}\) In his work in the 1980s, Csepeli argues that students in higher education have only a vague picture of the historical geography of Hungary, its ethnic composition, as well as the existence of ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries, due to the education system and the mass media, even if 'one third of the Hungarians live outside Hungary’s borders' Csepeli, *Structures and Contents…*, pp. 103, 110, 108.

\(^{669}\) Bart argues that while Hungarian borders became a taboo topic after the Second World War, ‘the average Hungarian … is placing its hopes in European integration’. He further notes that since many of the intelligentsia in Hungary ‘are … refugees [as the result of the Trianon treaty] or the sons and daughters of refugees, and the trauma of losing their homeland is their personal experience, the welfare and legal status of the Hungarian minority has remained an urgent and delicate issue in the domestic as well as foreign policy of Hungary.’ Bart, *Hungary and the Hungarians*, p. 182.
One might argue that the defeat of Fidesz was caused by the strong emphasis on nationhood: did the stress on the 15 million Hungarians and the nation backfire, so that Fidesz finally lost because of this? I argue that this is not so simple: it has more to do with a failure of a sense of progress, combined with a strong nationalist rhetoric. Bozóki attributes Fidesz’s image change prior to the 1994 elections as one of the reasons for the MSZP’s victory.\(^670\) Also in 2002 a small transformation could be observed when Fidesz decided to campaign on the streets and use the *kokárda*. However, in some ways Orbán’s stress on the nation has only decreased since 2001: in the 13\(^{th}\) party congress in 2001 Orbán used the words nation (*nemzet*) or national (*nemzeti*) 40 times in a 4000-word speech and a year later in the 14\(^{th}\) party congress 4 times in a 2800-word speech.\(^671\) Accounting for the failure of nation-focused parties, Bozóki argued that Csurka’s nationalist rhetoric failed to gain ground in the early 1990s due to his inability ‘to address the middle class with his proposals.’\(^672\) By contrast, Orbán’s 2002 election campaign witnessed a populist attempt to unite the Hungarians and especially the middle classes (citizens as *polgárok*, the bourgeoisie) through the concept of a cultural nation and a sense of progress.\(^673\) This explains the relative lack of emphasis on nation, which was downplayed with the concept ‘*polgár*’. 

Even if the emphasis on the 15 million Hungarians had been the keyword for the civic coalition (Fidesz-MDF) in the elections of 2002 and especially its second round, they did not manage to form a hegemonic front and thereby to attract the majority of the votes. In the second round the discourse of the Fidesz-MDF coalition filled the space left by the MIÉP and the Small Holders Party (FKGP),

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\(^{671}\) Speech archive, http://www.orbanviktor.hu.Judging by the post-election debate, the Fidesz emphasis has again slightly shifted. Whereas the stress is still on the 15 million Hungarians, the countryside became important for Orbán after the first round. Recently he has increasingly been arguing that the new government would sell the land of the Hungarian farmers to foreigners. ‘Hungary’s outgoing premier threatens to bloc new government’s measures’, *BBC Monitoring*, 8 May 2002. 

\(^{672}\) Bozóki, ‘An outline of three populisms’, p. 29. 

\(^{673}\) This can also be witnessed in later developments: initially after the elections Orbán set out to focus on the cause of the *polgári* movement in Central Europe, rather than continuing as leader of his party.
who had failed to pass the five per cent threshold in the first round of the election. Fidesz focused on their strongholds in the countryside and the traditional Hungarian values such as the family and nation, which had previously held less interest, in a future-oriented campaign. In his speech on Kossuth tér, after the first round, and knowing that he would have to secure a majority of the votes in the coming round, Orbán argued that in the polgári jövő, civic future, the homeland would be more than the Hungary of ten million. ‘Coalition and co-operation is a good and important thing, but little. We want more: national unity. […] Co-operation turns into national unity when everybody knows how to say yes [to the current government].’ However, their concept of progress shows that this national unity has its limits.

The national unit is tied to concept of modernisation. Progress for Fidesz meant the development with the polgárok, defined perhaps as people who had vision. Polgár was a term which Fidesz never tried to define, although several qualities were attached to it. Civic-ness and inclusion in the community were clearly some of them. Another meaning was anti-communism: it had been used to describe all the ‘bourgeois’, bad and non-socialist things in the society under communism. Read in reverse, it emphasised the priority of the polgárok over the proletariat. The concept also entailed progress. In the Kossuth tér speech Orbán uses the metaphor of different trains on which the voters could board to reach their future aims. On the left, the question was posed over an exclusion of those who can’t even make it to the station, let alone get on (the right) train. In this sense, Fidesz appeared – in its conception of progress and of a selective community – as a typical conservative party.

Bozóki claims that in Hungary, unlike in the Balkans, the socialist party emphasises

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675 See also Chapter One.
676 Orbán, speech of 12 April, on Kossuth tér reprinted in Magyar Nemzet, 15 April 2002.
677 See e.g. Mozgó Világ, 20:31, April 2002.
modernisation. One of the decisive factors was political strategy. The MSZP managed, in 1994, … to connect the hope and instinctive attraction of the public to “sound strength” and expertise, with the interests of the party members and their satellites. Though MSZP never promised that bread would be as cheap as in the socialist era, neither did it do anything either to dissolve the existing illusion.

In 2002 the socialists again appeared as modernising social democrats, but the image of the reformers now had a stain. The Fidesz campaign referred to the communist past – the opening of the House of Terror Museum being the prime example. In the second round, the government parties created scares about the economic shock-therapy of the left-wing government of 1994-98 and the memory of ‘those communists’, as the MSZP was branded in the pre-election leaflets. One of the arguments by Fidesz was that socialists would return the old communist-era elite to power, which would tie in with Bozóki’s argument that postcommunism did not create a clear break with the old regime and Fidesz’s youthful roots. However, more than any other aspect in the MSZP’s rhetoric, the stress on the 10 million Hungarians and the political unit ország, country, as the basis for the concept of nation, was to emphasise the importance of ruling in the interest of the citizens of Hungary.

Finally, a tiny majority of the citizens sided with the left. They voted for a government to take care of their affairs, rejecting the cultural-national identity and the sense of progress which focused on the greatest members of the nation, the polgárok. In some sense, the left had managed to gather the masses behind them with a campaign run from the position of opposition that could also be seen populist i.e., which made references to the nation, the country and the people, rather than to the ruling elite. This is a similar strategy to that emerging on the right in 2005, around the concept of

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678 This distances it from the nationalism of other socialist successor parties in South Eastern Europe.
679 Bozóki, ‘Between modernisation and nationalism’, p. 30
680 The SZDSZ campaign stressed security, guarantees and know-how in an amusing but patronising way: in the election posters a doctors’ bag was pictured whereas in the TV commercial a father changed from baby’s orange (Fidesz’s colour) to a new blue one.
681 See also the previous chapter. The leader of the MSZP László Kovács wanted to rename the House of Terror [or torture] as the Museum of Remembrance and Reconciliation, if they gained victory in the elections. ‘Hungary’s Socialists reject “red”, “white” or “spiritual” terror’, BBC Monitoring, 24 February 2002.
682 E.g. Bozóki, ‘Between modernisation and nationalism’.
the magyar emberek, (‘Hungarian human beings’ as opposed to the people as a folk), to which I will make reference below.

Even if in some ways the two camps were seen as far from each other, their competition over same key signifiers demonstrates how close to the frontier they stayed in articulating their positions and, crucially for that aim, the frontier. This shows how the two sides necessarily engage with each other, since they need the other to construct their identity in its unity. This is further highlighted in the next section where I will study frontier-building politics around the question of nationhood in the context of the referendum of December 2004.

Referendum of December 2004: protecting the frontier

The ‘national question’, or the question regarding the Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries, continued to play a role in Hungarian politics even after 2002. This was made certain by the opposition, which saw its chance to maintain its discourse and function in politics by pushing the issue and expressing paranoia regarding the way in which the minority might be otherwise forgotten by the government. Under the Fidesz government (1998-2002) the Parliament passed a ‘Status Law’ regarding the Hungarian minorities, which granted the Hungarian speakers in the neighbouring countries special rights in Hungary.683 For our purposes there is no need to go into further details about the policy on the minorities abroad and the law itself. It suffices to say that after the election defeat of Fidesz, the World Association of Hungarians called for a referendum that would initiate discussions in the parliament over the possible extension of Hungarian citizenship

rights to the ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries. This initiative was backed by Fidesz, who saw here an opportunity to keep the polgári community active, and push forward reforms, even whilst in opposition.

After the civic organisation backed by Fidesz managed to gather the required 200,000 signatures required to demand a referendum, the latter was held on 5 December 2004. It bore, in fact, on two questions taken up by the opposition – the extension of citizenship rights to ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries, which had been taken up by Fidesz, and privatisation of hospitals, which had been taken up by the ex-communist party (The Workers Party, Munkáspart). As could have been anticipated, given the prominence of national question, the biggest debate was on the extension of citizenship rights.684 Both of the questions failed, in fact. The closest to a victory, or the 25 percent required for passing a referendum, was the Workers’ Party’s question on the privatisation of hospitals, which had often been ignored in the public discussion on the referendum. This policy was quietly defended by the Socialist-Liberal government, and thus they can also be seen as the losers of the referendum. Nevertheless, there were no winners or losers. Whatever the voters may have wanted to express with their votes, either cast or uncast, was lost in political rhetoric.

My argument here is that the referendum created a way in which the opposition could stress the polarisation of Hungarian politics. Political parties maintained the nation – an item at the frontier – as a key theme in politics, despite the fact that the elections indicated a popular rejection of ‘nation politics’.685 One of the problems of polarisation, therefore, is that certain things are kept on the

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684 The exact questions posed are: 1) ‘Do you agree that public health service providers and hospitals should remain in state and local government ownership, and that parliament should therefore repeal the law which is inconsistent with this?’ and 2) ‘Do you think parliament should pass a law allowing Hungarian citizenship with preferential naturalization to be granted, at their request, to those who claim to have Hungarian nationality, do not live in Hungary and are not Hungarian citizens, and who prove their Hungarian nationality by means of a "Hungarian identity card" issued pursuant to article 19 of act lxii/2001 or in another way to be determined by the law which is to be passed?’. 5 December 2004 Referendum, ‘Public Notice’, National Election Office, Hungary, http://www.election.hu/main_en.html, last accessed 15 September 2005.

agenda when they benefit two camps, which by politicising this particular issue reject the contest over its importance. Conversely, it becomes clear, they prevent new things from emerging. Furthermore, the referendum demonstrated that the Budapest vs. countryside divide is not the basis of the division between parties.

**Fidesz gains... mobilisation**

For Fidesz the referendum was a way to carry out its constant mobilisation, begun in 2002. The collection of the 200,000 signatures kept alive the presence of the opposition on the streets of Hungarian cities and towns, and reminded people of the polarised political battle. Here I disagree with Sándor Kurtán and Gabriella Ilonszki’s quite standard conclusion that Fidesz loosened its mobilisation. Clearly, the mobilisation was not as intensive as prior to the elections, but it still remained a key theme in Fidesz rhetoric. Kurtán and Ilonszki argued: ‘After the conflictual former (election) year an understanding seemed to develop in 2003 – particularly on the conservative side of the political spectrum – that deepening of the conflicts would not bring further votes. Thus, in this vein, the conservative opposition (Fidesz) began to use a new style: it stopped blaming the average citizen for ‘collaborating’ with the communists in the former regime or for voting for ‘post-communists’ now. Also, it stopped the mobilization strategy that it sought to follow after the 2002 elections with the help of the ‘civic circles’.’ As we saw in the previous section – even in the election year 2002 Fidesz created its rhetoric around the cultural concept of Hungarianness and the defence of Hungarians abroad. The 2004 referendum in fact revealed the weakness of the opposition party. It managed to mobilise only 19 percent of the eligible voters, whereas 18 percent came to the polls to oppose the double citizenship, although this small number, in total, fell far short of the required 25 percent.

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Consequently, perhaps Fidesz has recently begun to emphasise the concept of the people, rather than the nation. Already since the elections of 2002 it had undergone significant changes. They appear to have been trying to create a hegemonic front by emphasising particular identifications and struggles (women, youth and workers) as well as admitting dual party membership, which targets both the MDF and the FKGP membership. As Sándor Kurtán and Gabriella Ilonszki have argued, Fidesz became more integrative since 2003; in discourse-theoretical terms one can see how it focused on the articulation of chains of equivalence and difference between the elements within its own discourse rather than confrontation to the other. Nevertheless, as we know, every system also needs to mark its frontiers: the 2004 referendum offered the first chance for this since 2002. Despite the failure of the proposition, for Fidesz the event provided a chance for mobilisation and publicity which it may be able to exploit in the following parliamentary elections in 2006.

**Low participation, disinterest in the ‘national question’ and the urban-rural divide**

There were competing claims regarding participation and, finally, significantly few people went to the polls. Whereas the Socialist premier opposed the poll and sided with the ‘no’, the right-wing urged people to vote on patriotic grounds. However, many Hungarians also thought that it is not the duty of the citizens but of the parliament to decide on ‘giving’ the citizenship to the citizens of other countries. László Lengyel brought up the lack of appeal of nation politics in his comment in the Slovak Pravda: The referendum also showed how the anti-Trianon slogan managed to draw to the polls 1.4 million people from the 8 million eligible Hungarian voters. It is not enough for winning elections. Hungary is not a really nationalistic country.

**687** The Fidesz-MPSZ also changed some of its organizational attributes. First of all, Viktor Orbán (after a break of close to two years) returned to party leadership, and gained more authority in some fields than before. In addition, a small presidium replaced a larger body, whilst in parallel a larger body with non-deliberative functions was also put in place. This was meant to be an instrument to integrate formerly overlooked interests: a women’s branch, a youth’s branch and, most importantly, a workers’ branch was established to demonstrate the turn towards diverse groups and thus respond to critics who lamented the closed and middle-class nature of the party. Kurtán and Ilonszki, ‘Hungary’, p. 1018.

**688** The only reason why it would fail would be that a mobilisation-fatigue would creep in, and the people would reject the party that had been visible for so long, whereas in the previous Hungarian elections the opposition parties’ advantage had been their freshness and anti-elite position, which the left managed to use to their advantage in 2002.

**689** ‘A kettős állampolgárság-vita a baloldalnak hoz több szavazatot, Lengyel László nyilatkozata a pozsonyi
stress that the national is a sign of the *de facto* weakness of the mobilising force of the ‘national question’.

The low participation rate of 37 percent showed that the people were not interested in the ‘national question’ – even if, or perhaps because, this had been on the agenda since the first parliament. Generally, the political scientists and sociologists response was that the theme was still valid and would be debated as an election theme in 2006. In doing so they sided with the political elites by not questioning the previously-formulated political priorities. Some even argued that the people were still too inexperienced to participate in referenda. This perhaps was true of the 1990 referendum on the form of presidential elections, which reached only 10 per cent of the electorate, but the referenda on NATO and EU memberships in 1997 and 2003, with almost half the eligible voters turning up, revealed that Hungarians do participate and vote, on even less contestable and inevitable issues.

Another issue has also been ignored by much of the general analysis of the referendum. While the discursive divide between the countryside and Budapest is continuously invoked in Hungarian politics, the numerical results of the referendum speak against the thesis that the division between Budapest and the countryside is a left-right division. The results of the vote demonstrate the support for dual-citizenship in Budapest, while the countryside – especially the eastern Hungary and the northern and southern border regions – were against the extension of citizenship rights. As the yes

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690 E.g. Gábor Török argued that economic populism prevailed, Tamás Fricz in emphasized the importance of nation in the political debate, in *Magyar Nemzet*, 6 December 2004, [http://mn.mno.hu/index.mno?cikk=254931&rvt=2&pos=150&s_text=fricz+tam%E1s&s_texttype=4&norel=1&pass=3](http://mn.mno.hu/index.mno?cikk=254931&rvt=2&pos=150&s_text=fricz+tam%E1s&s_texttype=4&norel=1&pass=3). In the left wing *Népszabadság* Ervin Csizmádia predicted that the referendum will not be valid, people are not used to referenda and they also do not feel they make a difference with their vote, and Péter Hack argued that it will show the real strength of the Hungarian right. "Igazi dühök jöttek elő", 6 December 2004, *Népszabadság Online*, [http://www.nol.hu/cikk/343517/](http://www.nol.hu/cikk/343517/).

691 For maps indicating this distinction see *Népszabadság Online*, 7 December 2004. The results from the National Election Office, indicate a higher turnout in towns than villages, and stronger support for the question on the privatisation in the villages than in towns, whereas there is no significant difference between the vote on the dual citizenship in towns and villages. See National Referendum on 5 December 2004, Voting Data, National Election Office, [http://www.election.hu/en/09/9_0.html](http://www.election.hu/en/09/9_0.html)
for dual citizenship was a campaign Fidesz was involved in running, the results dispute the argument that Budapest is anti-Fidesz, or that Fidesz represents the countryside, since the most rural parts of the country actually voted against Fidesz’s proposal. This would indicate that the political division is not such a totalised and cultural one as it was considered to be by the political elites.692

**Nation and Europe?**

The rhetoric prior to the elections even combined extreme forms of nationalism with Europeanism. It was argued across the English-language online-media commentary that Europeanism beat nationalism in the December 2005 referendum.693 Nevertheless, ‘Europe’ was also used as a symbol and motivation on the side of the pro-dual-citizenship campaign. One of the claims for solidarity in the referendum posters was that the dual-citizenship would bring EU citizenship also to the ethnic Hungarians across the border. The Yes camp, however, also called for national reunification (nemzeti összefogás, új nemzetegysítés).

The rhetoric of Orbán around the referendum had an irredentalist aspect, argued Michael Shafir,694 recalling Orbán’s speech at a rally on Heroes’ Square:

> “The invitations to the 5 December wedding were sent 84 years ago,” before adding that “recreating a nation of 15 million, from a 10 million country is a historic deed.” And emulating former West German leader Willy Brandt’s famous 9 November 1989 speech at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Orbán told the crowd that the vote was about “forging together what history has broken to pieces”.695

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692 Here I again wish to stress the similarity between my findings and the apparent disparity between the strength of political identification at the elite and at the mass level shown by some survey research such as that of Kitschelt et al., discussed in Chapter One. Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski and Gábor Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.


694 Shafir is one of the most prominent analysts of Hungarian politics and the editor of the liberal Radio Free Europe. In his analysis, he has been critical of Fidesz and wary of the emergence of xenophobia and irredentalism in Hungary especially when it reached the centre-right under Orbán’s government.

The place of enunciation only supports this interpretation: the Heroes’ Square was the centre-piece of symbolic politics and mobilisation of the interwar revisionist Hungary, its cenotaph containing soil from different parts of Hungary.

The rhetoric on the left was directed in opposition to this. It emphasised modernity, Europeanness and civilization, and raised concerns about the consequences of such a vote for Hungary’s progress in its integration with the EU. In contrast to national populism the left had an economic populist appeal. It put financial issues before emotional ones, appealing the masses to think about the financial costs involved in the process, while supporting the idea of both the 10 and 15 million Hungarians. By this he tried to tame the frontier: he still made claims to the distinction between these two concepts but claimed both of them for himself and his camp.

The worry about a recovery of irredentalist rhetoric in Hungary lies precisely in the transfer of discourses. As long as the left saw elements of the right wing rhetoric as successful, they would also try to claim them. This is how – while the frontier itself is maintained – the discourses around the frontier change and the frontier itself changes location. Due to the sporadic political ideas and claims of Orbán, the progress of the frontier is not constantly in one direction. Orbán continuously reinvents his political positions, moving between the anti-Semitic, the populist and the conservative-national at the national level, and in economic policy between the neoliberal and conservative statist. He has moved from being an early 1990s liberal, to being critical of neoliberalism in 1998, and back to some sort of neoliberalism again once in government (between 1998-2002), to conservatism in opposition. Recently he has argued that flat tax should be an issue for 2006 parliamentary elections.

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696 In the 1930s the squares of the Andrássy út boulevard, leading to the Heroes’ Square, were named after Mussolini and Hitler.

697 For a summary of the arguments on left and right, see e.g. Heino Nyyssönen, ‘The Debate of Dual Citizenship in Hungary’, paper given at NOPSA conference, Reykjavik, 11-13 August 2005.

698 See also Shafir, ‘Analysis: The Legacy Of Trianon’. 
The referendum had both numerical and discursive results. In the post-referendum rhetoric the victory of nationhood over other discursive elements was clear. Viktor Orbán of Fidesz declared that the two yeses won, the SZDSZ figurehead Gábor Kuncze argued that there was little participation, but the case might show the bipolar division among the people, and the MDF leader Ibolya Dávid stressed that the dual citizenship issue had to be dealt with. The Socialist leader Gyurcsány claimed that the referendums failed but that there is need for ‘responsible nation politics’ and that he would govern responsibly regarding the 15 million Hungarians.\textsuperscript{699} Not wanting really to back-up in their plans for privatising the hospitals, or drawing attention to this issue, the Socialists’ resolution in the post-referendum analysis was that the national question was important after all.\textsuperscript{700} While claiming a small victory on the issue, the Socialists again followed the Fidesz discourse, claiming that the issue of the cross-border Hungarians was an important one to look at. By doing this they ignored their small defeat on the other question of the referendum.

The Socialists also avoided the discursive void which could have emerged had the national question proven irrelevant. After all, the whole system of polarisation was reliant on this, in the same way as the Socialist-Liberal government was reliant on the centre-right opposition to bring up issues that they could criticise. As we saw in Chapter Four, Demszky’s rhetoric had been confrontational towards the right, as well as at times towards his own party in government, and yet where the Fidesz rhetoric was confrontational towards the ‘past’ and thus the Socialists, they were more actively promoting the visions of the new ‘civic’ Hungary. The left was used to constructing their discourse against Fidesz while in opposition, and it continued the habit even in the government. The Socialists’ message seemed to be: there will be nation politics, but since the referendum failed we will do it our way (whatever that is).


\textsuperscript{700} This was highlighted for example by the MSZP party Chairman István Hiller in the post-election themed TV program on the Hungarian state channel. Nap kelte, MTV, 6 December 2004.
Some reviews of the foreign press, such as the Euronews, declared a victory to Gyurcsány over Orbán. While a justified interpretation of the referendum result, this was obviously not the way in which the reading of the results went in Hungary: for reasons of political frontier-building, its simultaneous questioning and sedimentation, Gyurcsány did not declare a victory and denounce the right and their focus on the national question. In sum, the referendum revoked potentially revisionist rhetoric, gave victory to ‘Europe’ as well as the ‘nation’. It marked the continuation and importance of the politics of nationhood in Hungary, for the political parties.

To conclude, the referendum of 2004 was one of maintenance of the situation of stark political polarisation in its very preparation, the gathering of signatures to the campaign. It reproduced an appearance of political polarisation, with its 50:50 results – irrespective of the low turnout. It reasserted nationhood as the line of contestation in Hungarian politics. The rhetoric after the referendum showed that it is difficult for the electorate to counter the assumption or claim by the political elites that certain issues should be debated. The question overshadowed other possibly new questions from emerging and from being tackled. One of these could have been the privatisation of hospitals, where new division-lines could have emerged had it not been dwarfed by the question of dual-citizenship, in the media and party rhetoric.

**Integrity or difference: Presidential elections 2005**

Here I will study the presidential elections of 2005, a political event which, showed how in the situation of polarisation maintaining the integrity of the camp is important. In the Hungarian

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political system, the Parliament elects the president. In the elections the integrity of the right and manifestation of differences on the left became more decisive than the elections or of victory itself. The right kept control over the MPs voting in the elections. On the left, the elections emerged as an issue which would highlight party-political identities, rather than those of the camp which was put in question. The event raises the question as to how any ideas or critique may enter the camps of the polarised system, which rejects any contestation. This process reveals the downplaying of political frontiers within the camps. It demonstrates how the polarised frontier generates behind it a forced consensus. The dual-hegemonic polarisation is one of two consensuses. In the case of the presidential elections, consensus was forced upon the right, whereas there was a break-up of consensus on the side of the government parties, who nevertheless kept the internal party-line free of visible conflicts.

The Hungarian presidential elections of 6-7 June 2005 were not about the unity or disunity of the nation, as it often could be in the situation of an election of the symbolic figure head of the nation-state. Instead they were all about party-political unity. The Hungarian president is elected by the parliament. The candidates are nominated by the parties and must be elected, with a two-thirds majority, by a secret vote in the parliament. If during the first two rounds of votes none of the candidates gains such a majority, then on the third vote, the candidate with the largest number of votes wins. With a simple majority in the parliament the government parties – ‘the Hungarian left’ – should have won the elections. However, the elected president was supported by the right. And – surprisingly perhaps – no one seemed to care about the narrow victory itself. Judging by the press and political commentary, the result of the vote – Sólyom’s presidency – seemed less interesting than the questions about party and coalition unity. The next day’s conservative paper *Magyar Nemzet* focused on the issue of who voted for whom.\(^{702}\) The left wing press simply declared Sólyom

\(^{702}\) e.g. *Magyar Nemzet*, ‘Orbán: ki kellett védeni, hogy átvigyenek szavazókat’ [Orbán: (we) had to avoid that they would not take their votes to the other side], 2005. június 8., http://www.mno.hu/index.mno?cikk=288907&rvt=2&s_text=S%F3lyom&s_texttype=4.
as a president. Questions of party or coalition unity dominated on both left and right.

When the ‘eco-political’ NGO Védegylet (‘Protect the Future’) called for László Sólyom, one of writers of the Hungarian constitution, to be made president they aimed at creating a coalition which would break the polarisation between the right and the left. His campaign hoped Sólyom could be supported by both the parties to become the president, and the NGO would get the maximum visibility in the media, where it is dwarfed by political parties. Nevertheless, the coalition never finalised as the Socialists wanted to set their own candidate. The SZDSZ leadership hoped they might have a chance to have a common candidate with the Socialists, while many of their members and electorate would have been ready to support Sólyom. Whilst Wheatley claimed that Sólyom was beyond the party divide, on the left his action against the Bokros package, as well as his relative closeness to the Hungarian right could be taken against him. Wheatley argues: ‘It is his track record in defending social and environmental rights, as well as his reputation as being beyond corruption and narrow party interests, that led to so many committed and experienced activists and intellectuals putting their faith in him. In 1995, as the left-wing government tried to introduce the ‘Bokros’ austerity measures – neo-liberal and monetarist restructuring that surpassed the expectations of even the World Bank in its rigorousness – Dr. Sólyom, then president of the Constitutional Court, defended the rights that would have been lost, stating that these are social rights guaranteed in the constitution and hence cannot be curtailed. The Bokros Measures went ahead, but the worst parts were removed.’ Finally, Sólyom became the candidate of the

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703 The socialist Népszabadság was matter-of-fact in its reporting, the liberal Magyar Hírlap declared a victory to Sólyom and a defeat to the Socialists, whilst also contemplating the choice of Szili as a new party leader. ‘Sólyom László lesz a köztársaság elnöke’ [László Sólyom becomes the president of the republic], Népszabadság Online, 8 June 2005, http://www.nol.hu/cikk/365177/; ‘Győzött Sólyom, vesztett az MSZP’ [Sólyom won, MSZP lost], Magyar Hírlap Online, 8 June 2005; http://www.magyarthirlap.hu/Archivum_cikk.php?cikk=94312&archiv=1&next=0, and ‘Szili Katalin pártelnök még lehet’ [Katalin Szili may still become a party leader], Magyar Hírlap Online, 8 June 2005, http://www.magyarthirlap.hu/Archivum_cikk.php?cikk=94328&archiv=1&next=0.


705 Tracey Wheatley, ‘Hungary’s first “eco-president”’. 
Hungarian right. The conservatives were reluctant to tie their support to anyone, and would have preferred the president Ferenc Mádl (MDF) to remain in the post but – given his decision – sided with Sólyom. The Fidesz nominated Sólyom instead of sending one of their own candidates to the game – one who would have been unlikely to win since they did not have a majority in the House.

However, the Socialists selected a candidate the SZDSZ was not ready to support. Katalin Szili was known for her hasty and even anti-globalisation remarks; she was also a Socialist partisan candidate, ‘Our Kati’ among the rank and file. She was also quite well known nation-wide, as the Speaker of the House of Parliament, and was also quite popular in the countryside. The SZDSZ parliamentary faction, apart from three MPs who were openly ready to support Szili, made a decision not to vote in the elections. Even after the first round of votes they aspired to go for a common candidate with the MSZP. The Socialist leadership had, however, decided to keep their party-line and support Szili, who was chosen by the party congress to run. Also the SZDSZ then decided to keep their line and not to be subsumed under the Socialists. Neither of the parties seemed willing to turn it into a question on the coalition. By abstaining, the SZDSZ demonstrated that the left is not always united, and they also played their part in the final results of the elections. Nevertheless, they also did not ‘change sides’ in the situation of polarisation and vote for the Fidesz candidate. Dr. László Sólyom was elected president in the third round of voting with 185 votes to 182.

Fidesz played tactically from the first round of votes. Whereas the SZDSZ went to collect their voting slips and gave them back empty, Fidesz did not even pick them up. They could see how many MPs would support Szili. Szili got 183 votes of the 199 cast in the first round – mainly those of the Socialists. Sólyom received 13. On the second round, having seen that Szili did not receive a single majority of the vote, Fidesz declared their already-expected support for ‘the candidate of the people’ and participated in the vote. The second round gave Sólyom a lead, with 185 votes to
Fidesz also asserted their authority amongst the right-wing MPs in the House. Szili was still getting more than the votes of the Socialists, in the first round, and since the SZDSZ, in that round (and with the exception of one known Szili supporter), simply handed back their empty voting slips, the Fidesz leadership was in a good position to observe that there were some who would deviate from the party-line. The elections became a witch-hunt to deal with dissent. The Fidesz faction leader, János Áder, called for the ‘bunnies in the bushes’ to come out. The independent MPs took a group photograph with their voting slips clearly ticked for Sólyom, some other MPs took pictures with mobiles of their tickets and sent them to the leadership to confirm that they were standing on the right. The witch-hunt discredited some MPs on their own side, but showed the strength of the camp and, particularly, the Fidesz leadership on the right.

One of the people on the right suspected of voting for Szili was Ibolya Dávid, the leader of the MDF. Since the 2002 elections, MDF was the fourth and smallest party in the parliament, and had been struggling to show their independence of Fidesz, with whom it had been in electoral coalition before losing the 2002 elections. Dávid had expressed sympathy for her fellow female parliamentarian prior to the elections. She also fainted in the parliament at the second round, which added to the suspicions. What may have added to Dávid’s shock is that Sólyom, one of the one-time founders of the party, had been MDF’s favoured candidate. Fidesz, by supporting him, not

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707 Imre Mécs had publicly declared that he would vote for Szili and voted in all three rounds. So, probably, did Ferenc Wekler and Gabriella Béki, SZDSZ, who voted on the last round. Dobszay, ‘A látható elnök’, p. 9.
708 Literally, ‘bunnies intriguing underground’, see e.g. Dobszay, ‘A látható elnök’, p. 11
709 Two of the independent MPs, Guyla Balogh and Attila Körömi, declared already before the elections that they would not be voting for Sólyom. Dobszay, ‘A látható elnök’, p. 11.
710 Interestingly – as the HVG pointed out – the party-controlled voting seemed to be legitimised by the president. According to the constitution, which Sólyom had co-written, the president is elected through a secret vote in the parliament. Sólyom had asked before the vote that Fidesz refrain from controlling their MPs’ votes, and when he was later asked about this by the media, he answered that the election procedure was not against the constitution. Dobszay, ‘A látható elnök’, p. 11.
711 See e.g. Dobszay, ‘A látható elnök’, p. 11.
only claimed the candidate for themselves, but also established the position of the party on the political map. By asserting their authority, Fidesz sought to wipe out the differences within the right, and thus also discredit Dávid, one of the most successful politicians of the national conservative right and the figurehead of the only other right-wing party remaining in the parliament. Nevertheless, Dávid’s public image improved for a while after the vote.712

While the presidential elections were about reinforcement of unity on the right and about downplaying the role of the small parties, on the left a precisely opposite process took place, with the SZDSZ abstention from the vote. The SZDSZ played, along with the MSZP, a differentiating role in the coalition. The two parties emphasised party discipline and difference within the left camp and let the right wing win the contest over presidency. The damage to the coalition was maximised, since it had to measure up to the extremely tightly-held ranks of the right. The damage to the coalition was mainly caused by the negative and confused reports in the Hungarian press, throughout and after the election campaign, about the disagreement between the SZDSZ and MSZP, which did not value the differentiating or conflictual discourse. It shows the extent of polarisation and the way in which the left/right dichotomy and the imperative of unity is reproduced by the press.

Both of the big parties held conferences on the weekend following the vote. This further highlighted the importance of the big parties. There was some speculation before the Socialist conference that leadership might be changed, but the party leader István Hiller and the PM Gyurcsány continued at the top, after having expressed their apologies for poor coalition work.713 In Fidesz the former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán reinforced his position in the party leadership.714 Also – perhaps to address a pertinent issue of gender balance and votes lost for sisterhood since the orchestrated non-election of


713 See e.g. Magyar Hírlap, 13 June 2005, pp. 1, 4-5.

714 Magyar Hírlap, 13 June 2005, pp. 1& 5.
Szili – they nominated a fourth Party Chairman, as a Chairwoman.\textsuperscript{715}

In his speech as president Sólyom promised to be a quiet president who would avoid his party-political contacts and be beyond the polarisation\textsuperscript{716} – as he and the Védegylet had planned. This however, may prove difficult, as he now has not only been nominated by a relatively conservative NGO but also been certified as the Fidesz’ populist choice for a candidate. Orbán claimed that the ‘people’s candidate’ won,\textsuperscript{717} whereby it was clear that Fidesz had done a great favour to the Hungarian people by supporting him. Hereafter the populist move of Orbán was to turn from the ‘nation’ and ‘polgár’ rhetoric of 1998-2002 towards an emphasis on the ‘people’, since populism refers to the situation in which he claims to represent a universal category – even more universal than the nation or the polgár.\textsuperscript{718} This, however, is a story that has yet to be followed up in Hungarian politics, just like the rhetoric and impact of the president Sólyom.\textsuperscript{719}

The event of the election of the Hungarian president was marked by the questioning and sedimentation of the integrity of the two camps of the polarisation. It demonstrated how the politics of unity and integrity can be fought on different levels – at the level of the pole/camp as well as of the party unit, such as the SZDSZ and MSZP. The search for unity blocks dissent and any questioning of the policies and morals from within (i.e. from the legitimate side in the situation of distrustful polarisation). In the situation of polarisation the Hungarian right constantly articulates

\textsuperscript{715} In an interview after her election, Ildikó Pelczné Gall argued that it was important to have a woman at the top of the party ‘as who else could represent families [sic] than a woman’. József Nagy, ‘A Fidesz új alelnöke; Pelczné Gall Ildikó pártja felelőségéről’, \textit{168 óra}, XVII: 23, 9 June 2005, pp. 12-13

\textsuperscript{716} Presidential speech, broadcasted live on Hungarian State Channel, \textit{MTV}, 7 June 2005.


\textsuperscript{719} In his speech on the national day 20 August 2005, which was the first speech he gave after the post-election ceremony, Sólyom made reference to both the ‘Hungarian citizens’ and the ‘members of the Hungarian nation’, i.e. the earlier-mentioned concepts of 10 and 15 million Hungarians. Interestingly, he raised a point about the local knowledge and ties of the Hungarians who had been living the past 80 years in the neighbouring countries. ‘But what do we know about the neighbours of the mother country’s people? And, painful to ask: what do we know about the Hungarians living there?’ These are, indeed, issues rarely taken up in public debate in Hungary. Népszabadság Online, ‘Sólyom László ünnepi beszéde’, 20 August 2005, http://www.nol.hu/cikk/374341/.
and maintains the frontier. The left participates in the process by questioning it and competing over same signifiers. Thereby, it reinforces the frontier by following the rhetorical moves of the right. The above accounts show how political polarisation in Hungary is an ongoing process. In the rest of this chapter I will present some conclusions and a discussion on polarisation.

Post-politics, consensus and polarisation

The mistake of liberal rationalism is to ignore the affective dimension mobilized by collective identifications and to imagine that those supposedly archaic ‘passions’ are bound to disappear with the advance of individualism and the progress of rationality. This is why democratic theory is so badly prepared to grasp the nature of ‘mass’ political movements as well as phenomena such as nationalism. […] To be able to mobilize passions towards democratic designs, democratic politics must have a partisan character. This is indeed the function of the left/right distinction and we should resist the call by post-political theorists to think ‘beyond left and right’. – Mouffe.720

In the second chapter I briefly discussed Chantal Mouffe’s work on political frontiers. Here, after having studied Hungarian politics in the three previous chapters, and having particularly highlighted its antagonistic nature in this one, I will again take up her discussion of consensus and passion in politics. I will outline Mouffe’s thesis and discuss it in relation to Hungarian politics. I will also show how this case contests some of the points she is making, on the basis of the illustrations in the previous sections of this last chapter. As the above quotes show, in her work Mouffe criticises the contemporary political theorists who stress the situation of ‘post-politics’, which says that, since 1989, there is no need anymore to emphasise the role of political frontiers, and politics can be made on the basis of rational discussion. She argues that this situation draws politics further to the elite level, and creates space for right-wing populist movements, who mobilise in relation to public dissatisfaction with the elite politics, in the name of the ‘people’. While she acknowledges that the form of the populist movements is problematic, she puts forward a defence of partisan politics.721

This chapter, like the previous ones, has accounted for the partisan and post-politics in Hungary. I

721 Mouffe, On The Political.
also have discussed how the ‘left/right’ divide works for democratic politics.

Mouffe argues that politics is always creation of identifications, where the identities are relationally constructed; ‘reading Schmitt against Schmitt’ she argues that the political is about the construction of a ‘we’, which then also implies the existence of a ‘they’.⁷²² She also shows how this relationship can take different forms; the one she is advocating being *agonism*.

While antagonism is a *we/they* relation in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a *we/they* relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that their is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are ‘adversaries’ not enemies. This means that, while in conflict, they see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place. We could say that the task of democracy is to transform antagonism into agonism.⁷²³

Whilst Hungary has been ‘democratising’ since the 1990s – has antagonism turned into agonism? Do the parties share the same political association or the ‘common symbolic space’? Is politics in Hungary that between adversaries (agonistic) or enemies (antagonistic)? Mouffe writes: ‘Adversaries do fight – even fiercely – but according to a shared set of rules, and their propositions, despite being ultimately irreconcilable, are accepted as legitimate perspectives.’⁷²⁴ In Hungary, ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ appear as though they would be participating in the same competitions, and the system of polarisation requires the other side to remain in existence: it should not be ‘killed’ in order to achieve victory, since this would mean the disappearance of the ‘they’, which keeps the ‘we’ together. Nevertheless, the rules of the game can be twisted as we saw in the presidential elections, and the other becomes seen as illegitimate. I have shown in the previous chapters how it is characteristic of the Hungarian situation that many projects started by one government are not carried through after a change of power.⁷²⁵ My previous accounts indicate that the antagonistic

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⁷²³ Mouffe expects that antagonisms can be ‘tamed’ by mediating institutions, such as the parliament. This is where her analysis resembles that of Peter L. Berger, although Berger envisions this role for many different kinds of institutions, and he would wish to tame antagonism and diminish social divisions to the extent that they do not play a role in politics, in the similar way as the consensus thinkers Mouffe criticises. Mouffe, *On The Political*, p. 20. Berger, Peter L., ed., *The Limits of Social Cohesion; Conflict and Mediation in Pluralist Societies – A Report of the Bertelsmann Foundation to the Club of Rome*, Boulder, Colorado, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1998.


⁷²⁵ There are obviously also counter examples. For example, the “fundamental consensus in foreign affairs” was a
situation prevails. They also demonstrate that while participating in the same elections and the same parliament, there are reoccurring claims about the illegitimacy of the other’s action. This indicates that political association is not shared in a way that would stress the other parties as political adversaries.

The ‘common symbolic space’ is an interesting case. In Hungary, where history is politicised and national and political symbols debated and drawn from the past, the past is commonly acknowledged as the source of inspiration and symbols, but is interpreted in different ways. There exists, then, both the common heritage of a symbolic space and strong claims over it. There have also been attempts, mainly by the right, to rearticulate the symbolic space in a highly exclusionary way. This turns the political adversaries into enemies who have no other space in the symbol realm apart from their role as the ‘others’, enemies or the excluded. However, as I have demonstrated throughout my work, the enemy is always present in the identity-building by the politicians and the parties. From this perspective, the articulation of political discourses and identities occurs in roughly the same, if not yet a ‘common’, symbolic space.

Nevertheless, the Hungarian case could fit into Mouffe’s description of passionate politics. For example – elections, for Mouffe, are not about an expression of interests, but about identification: ‘In order to act politically people need to be able to identify with a collective identity which provides an idea of themselves they can valorize. Political discourse has to offer not only policies but also identities which can help people make sense of what they are experiencing as well as giving them hope for the future.’ In the first section of this chapter I discussed the election campaigns of 2002, and showed that the decision at the ballot-box was a moment of identification, as the campaigns aimed at projecting identities.

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726 pillar of Hungarian political discourse until around 2000, ‘social market economy’ was another commonly shared dogma until Bokros package of 1995.

726 Mouffe, On The Political, p. 25.
One of the instances that show that Hungary is not an agonistic passionate polity is that politics there, as in the case of liberal post-politics that Mouffe writes about, ‘is merely a competition among elites’. The problem with Mouffe’s works becomes visible in her assumption that passions imply construction of real political alternatives: ‘Politics has always a ‘partisan’ dimension and for people to be interested in politics they need to have the possibility of choosing between parties offering real alternatives. This is precisely what is missing in current celebration of “partisan-free” democracy.’ I have argued throughout this work that the ‘alternatives’ offered by the political parties are simply a way to maintain the frontier of polarisation and, thus, the positions of the political elites, even if they are mobilised and mixed with passion. Rather than substantive articulation of demands which might come from below, the contestation is mainly over who should not run the country.

But let’s presume I have been wrong all along. Perhaps the frontier of polarisation really mirrors two different world views, put forward by the two camps. A hasty reading of Mouffe could suggest that her description of the divide between consensual modernist (e.g. Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck) and partisan passionate (Mouffe and Laclau) approaches to politics is precisely what can be found in Hungarian politics, between the so called ‘left’ and ‘right’. After all, since their electoral defeat in 2002, Fidesz had become even more partisan and opened up different institutions for bridging the gap between the political elite decision-making, such as the referendum held in December 2004 and the village parliaments program, by way of universalising moves. By contrast, the MSZP and SZDSZ use what Mouffe calls ‘the rhetorics of modernisation’ when she discusses ‘theorists of reflexive modernisation’:

This gives an appearance of scientificity and incontestability to their post-political vision, making all those who disagree with them seem prisoners of an old-fashioned framework. The key word of this strategy is of course ‘modernization’ whose effect is to discriminate between those who are in tune with the new conditions of the modern, post-traditional world

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728 Mouffe, *On The Political*, p. 29.
and those who still cling desperately to the past.\textsuperscript{729}

Illuminatingly, she continues: ‘To use “modernization” in such a way is no doubt a powerful rhetorical gesture which allows them to draw a political frontier between “the moderns” and “the traditionalists or fundamentalists”, while at the same time denying the political character of the move.’\textsuperscript{730} Mouffe highlights how the ‘factual’ and ‘scientific’ position hides behind it a passionate friend/enemy relation, where the non-modernizers are excluded from the political contest as enemies.\textsuperscript{731} However, my previous accounts show that both of the sides are passionate to a certain extent: by excluding the other and thereby constituting their own political position. Fidesz was creating for itself a counter-elite, while in power in 1998-2002, and since it was not able to keep its position after its defeat in 2002, it was trying to create an alternative route to power by using a populist rhetoric that it now could exploit. The MSZP and the SZDSZ would create an ‘us’ identification, which would work against the Fidesz as a ‘they’.

In fact, discussion of right-wing populism is a key part of Mouffe’s work. Her argument is that when the politics becomes a mere consensual activity of the elites, populist parties can exploit anti-elitist sentiments and the lack of passions in politics by creating a ‘powerful pole of collective identification around the opposition between “the people” and the “consensus elites”’.\textsuperscript{732} This is precisely the position which Fidesz was taking up after the 2002 election defeat. Consequently, there was no space for an anti-establishment party that could question the position of Fidesz and the government parties, and Fidesz could also rally the extreme right party MIÉP’s supporters to their side.

Contrary to those who believe that politics can be reduced to individual motivations, the new populists are well aware that politics always consists in the creation of a ‘we’ versus a ‘they’ and that it requires the creation of collective identities. Hence the powerful appeal of

\textsuperscript{729} Mouffe, \textit{On The Political}, pp. 54-55.

\textsuperscript{730} Mouffe, \textit{On The Political}, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{731} Mouffe, \textit{On The Political}, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{732} Mouffe takes as an example Jörg Haider’s Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), which lost its position as the second largest party, with 27 per cent of the vote, and was pushed back into a position of a tiny right-wing party once it made it into government and became part of the elites. In 2005 it divided into two parties after internal struggles. Mouffe, \textit{On The Political}, pp. 67-68.
their discourse which offers collective forms of identification around ‘the people’. [...] When democratic politics has lost its capacity to mobilize people around distinct political projects and when it limits itself to securing the necessary conditions for the smooth working of the market, the conditions are ripe for political demagogues to articulate popular frustration.733

This outlines the strategy Fidesz had adopted. With the wisdom and support of scholars like George Schöpflin, currently a Fidesz MEP, who long argued for the importance of nationhood and national identification in the maintenance of the polity,734 Fidesz knew the importance of the ‘we’ creation and they also knew an easy short-cut to achieving it. They knew that the market reforms alone would not offer them a basis of steady support, since already from the start – as the movement of the anti-communist youth – they had been dealing with identifications and group formation.

Thus the above would indicate that Mouffe would be happy with the development of Hungarian politics, as there is a clear left/right dimension, which is maintained through passions and identification in politics rather than mere issues and interests. Furthermore, one could imagine her finding herself on the side of the most partisan and passionate Fidesz. Nevertheless, two facts contradict these claims. First, Fidesz play with the kind of essentialist identities, which the anti-essentialist and poststructuralist Mouffe would not see fit for political contestation. Second, despite the participation of four parties or two camps, the politics in Hungary is played out on moral ground in the same way as happens in the consensual polities Mouffe criticises.

Let me elaborate. The already-discussed emphasis on the countryside, nationhood and (Catholic) Christian religion, and the hint of anti-Semitic rhetoric, show that the points of identification Fidesz offers are essentialist.735 In the same way as they first imposed limits upon the age of their

733 Mouffe, On The Political, p. 70.
734 A defence of this is clear e.g. in one of his latest books. George Schöpflin, Nations, Identity, Power, London: Hurst, 2000.
membership, they still continue to find ‘natural boundaries’ for their support base. Mouffe argues that this is a symptom of a lack of adversarial confrontation, or a well functioning left-right divide.

The danger arises that the democratic confrontation will therefore be replaced by a confrontation between essentialist forms of identification or non-negotiable moral values. When political frontiers become blurred, disaffection with political parties sets in and one witnesses the growth of other types of collective identities, around nationalist, religious or ethnic forms of identification.\footnote{Mouffe, \textit{On The Political}, p. 30.}

In other words, it appears that the left and right in Hungary are not a functioning left and right, and, instead, that they are constructed on moral grounds – of right and wrong. The keeping of ‘politics in a moral register’ is a phenomenon Mouffe detects in the consensual democracies, where anything outside the consensus is simply denied a voice by the argument that it is absolutely wrong.\footnote{Mouffe, \textit{On The Political}, pp. 5, 72-6.}

I have sought to demonstrate in the course of this chapter that there is no ‘conflictual consensus’, or a consensus with strong dissent – as Mouffe envisioned – in Hungarian politics. The political division-lines are organised in part essentially, in part against the other group’s position. The division-line has ended up creating a situation of polarisation. This is a situation of bi-polar consensus.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The analysis of the rich and wide-ranging empirical material – the cases of the general elections of 2002, the referendum of 2004, and the presidential elections of 2005 – has sought to demonstrate how political polarisation exists through the contestation and sedimentation of the frontier, as well as the creation of a bi-polar consensus. Contestation and sedimentation refers to the marking of the frontier – ‘us’ and ‘them’. If the frontier was not contested it could not be made visible, and therefore reclaimed, reaffirmed, relocated to suit the situation, and the discursive changes or
Another recurring theme in the chapter has obviously been the concept of nation. It demonstrates the existing contingencies and discursive changes. This is always rearticulated in the contestation of concepts – mainly the people, citizens, and, finally, emberek. This framework of reference, closeness and distance gives meaning to the concept of the nation. I have shown how Fidesz was focusing on the nation of 15 million Hungarians, as well as the polgári Magyarország – the Hungary of the progressive civic bourgeoisie. I also have shown how, in contrast to this, in 2002, the MSZP was arguing for Hungarians of 10 million i.e., the civic concept of nation, which could be extended to 15 million. After the referendum of 2004, this extension was suggested to be done ‘responsibly’ by the MSZP-led government, which indicated it could also be done irresponsibly by the Hungarian political right. Whereas the political rhetoric continued with the theme of the nation in the 2004 referendum, in 2005 Fidesz shifted from the polgári representation to the people’s choice – the human beings’ choice, that is – with the emphasis on the human and the popular, rather than that of progress. This extension somewhat overshadowed the role of the nation and extended the chain of representation to an even larger or universal group.

The bipolar consensus indicates how a strong frontier requires considerable unity, particularly as the groups, discursive elements or identities united on each side of the frontier vary a lot, due to the attempts to universalise representation using large umbrella categories such as the ‘people’. To create unity, the frontiers, division-lines and differences within the unifying group are minimized. This implies that dissent from inside is silenced when it threatens the unity, and criticism from outside is rejected. Rejection of criticism is particularly important in the bi-polar situation where the unity within ones ‘own’ is based on common difference from the ‘other’. This explains the need for the Fidesz camp to reject the criticism of Orbán. It also sheds light on the building of political groupings in the presidential elections, where the MSZP and the SZDSZ constructed themselves
through the frontier in-between them (yet still were all opposed to the political right, and united along their own party-line), and Fidesz sought to minimize internal dissent and the visibility of political frontiers within the right-wing camp.

Hungarian politics is one of passion and unity, but these are generated through the relationship to the enemy, which can be created over a single frontier – the left-right dichotomy. The visibility of the dividing-line between MSZP and SZDSZ in the case of the elections of the president demonstrated a different relationship. The SZDSZ did not follow the Socialists – not because they were the friend or the enemy, but because they were different and in disagreement, and wanted to show it. And both parties sought to play on this difference in order to create their own poles. It is possible that the emergence of a multipolar situation, envisioned by Mouffe, would lead the way out of the situation of polarisation. Then the poles ought not to be fixed on only two sides, on a single spectrum of good and bad.
Conclusion

One of the main political problems in contemporary Hungary is the polarisation of politics, the stark division between ‘left’ and ‘right’. To understand the phenomenon, I tried to capture the logic of political polarisation. My study, drawing empirical examples from turn-of-the-millennium Hungary and the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, reveals that political polarisation is a bipolar hegemony, where each camp exists through the construction of the other as its enemy, i.e. through the production of the frontier between them.

Polarisation is constantly reproduced in political articulation, frontier-making and community-building. The camps use emptied-out terms to name the ‘other’ and construct an ‘us’. Even ‘polarisation’, or the ‘divided society’ itself, becomes a source of black-and-white opposition. The political elites – who wish to maintain the situation – either project all political differences, emerging demands, problems and lines of division onto this frontier, or minimize or downplay them. This creates a distance between the political elite and the wider population. Polarisation poses problems for democracy – in so far as democracy is understood in a Laclau and Mouffean sense i.e., as a process, in which multiple political frontiers and identifications are constantly created and contested (with demands supposedly emerging from, or resonating with, the imagined ‘demos’). The situation blocks out demands and concerns which do not fit with the current elite divide. It produces an illusion of political debate, and functions as a self-sustaining system that is only focused on reproducing a single frontier.

The present work is an attempt to take an anti-essentialist approach to the study of political polarisation, contemporary Eastern Europe and, to some extent, nation-building. The myth of a ‘divided’ or polarised Hungary has only really established itself during the time I have been working my PhD, from 2001. Originally, my study was supposed to be on community-building, and essentially (in all senses) – the nationalism surrounding the street names and statues of Budapest, research I had launched already in 1999. While the processes of the bipolar hegemony were intensifying, however, this topic appeared to me to be less interesting to study. I spent the election spring of 2002 in Budapest. Something else started to form a puzzle in my mind. Reading three
daily newspapers in the period between the elections, I engaged in research which appeared to be beyond the scope of my PhD topic – the city-text. I learned more about Hungarian politics, however, and shifted my focus to that of the Budapest beyond the city-text. Until after my first draft of the thesis, I focused on politics and urban planning in Budapest and the problematic of metropolis as the counter-pole to nationalism. I always suspected I was taking an essentialistic approach in the study of nationalism and, later, metropolitanism. Finally, I found a way to deal with the political divide – the crucial problem in the contemporary politics – in a way which revealed the ultimately empty character it had. I realised, in short, that the Hungarian polarisation is a construct of a bipolar hegemony, where substance is articulated on both sides in a way that it creates a frontier through which the two sides form their identifications. This allowed me to take the anti-essentialist stance, crucial for the understanding of the problematic itself.

In retrospect my move from the study of political community-building to polarisation is hardly surprising. The ‘us’ and ‘them’ always implies limits, and the demarcation of these limits as political frontiers is essential to politics. What, then, is particular to polarisation? In polarisation the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ create each other through their mutual rejection of each other. This ends up in a situation where all significant political frontiers are articulated in the frontier between the camps. Political polarisation is a bipolar hegemony, where the two sides seek to ‘freeze’ political contestation, and reduce it to that over a single frontier. As I have demonstrated throughout the thesis this situation exists via continuous rearticulation. It is also problematic, particularly since it blocks out democratic processes, as I have discussed before, and will summarise below.

Compared to quantitative or historical studies on contemporary Eastern Europe and Hungary, my discourse-theoretical work is unique. In my work theory informs empirical research in the same way as empirical research informs theory. What is gained from this approach is a wider understanding of the phenomenon. Consequently, the results of this study will contribute to different fields of academic inquiry.

In the field of political theory and the study of discourse, my contribution lies in the discussion of the role of rhetoric in political articulation. Since political phenomena and processes exist through articulation, it is important to understand the way in which the articulation occurs. We can see political frontiers and communities being built through the usage of different rhetorical tropes. These rhetorical moves also contribute to the emergence of new things, of new frontiers or constellations in politics.
In relation to the field of postcommunist study, I have sought to take seriously both the postcommunist legacies and the processes of unification within the formerly state socialist countries of the EU. Instead of imposing a western framework upon my study, I have sought to understand the particularities of the Hungarian context. Furthermore, I hope to have avoided some of the pitfalls of the study of nationalism (the scapegoating of the ‘nationalist’, for example, or the attempt to ascribe pre-existing content to political discourses, such as those drawing on nationhood). My results indicate that providing the context of the creation of multiple political discourses and frontiers in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism has been difficult. The black-and-white worldview has prevailed in political rhetoric.

My particular contribution to the study of contemporary Hungary lies in the attempt to carry out a detailed study of different moments of discourse-creation. I have conducted in-depth studies of the rhetoric of two key political actors, surrounding events such as the general elections of 2002, the referendum in December 2004 and the election of the Hungarian president in June 2005. Instead of politicising the issues, I have sought to present enough of the detail of the phenomenon that one might critically investigate their logic and the logic of political polarisation therein. Instead of merely accounting for the existence of the polarisation, I hoped to understand it. Having outlined the logic of polarisation in its empirical context, I was then able to demonstrate the problems it carries with it.

My title ‘Reading Budapest’ emphasises the empirical context from which I draw my study. Nevertheless, I hope that my work, even on political polarisation, will contribute to the understanding of politics in the city and the opportunities cities offer for political inquiry. Politics is present in the transformation of the cities and their cityscapes. Here I studied manifestations of politics in public architecture. But cities are also platforms for political action, whereby particular uses of the city may become political. Cities are not only scenes of performances but places subject to the collective imagination. City-images can be contested political symbols.

Polarisation occurs widely in contemporary politics. There are many recent examples, from the US to the Ukraine. However, not all the two-party systems (or systems which are essentially so), such as the UK, result in a situation of polarisation. Nevertheless, these are cases for future study. My thesis makes a point about the logic in which political polarisation occurs, looking at the case of

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738 In the UK the political frontiers are more fluid, and the parties – particularly the Labour party – have been moving around the political spectrum, either playing with different kinds of frontiers or, more consensually, with the lack of them. Rather than constructing themselves as opposed to the ‘other’ side, they have gained space on the other side, or have adopted the concepts of the ‘other’ as their own.
Hungary. I hope my critical reflections on Hungary will inspire future work on political polarisation in general.

To conclude the current work, I will draw together the points made in the thesis. I discussed the condition of liminality, which, as Schöpflin and Szakolczai have argued, continues until the present, and which constitutes the basis both of mistrust and of ‘othering’. I showed that there had been attempts to describe polarisation and to mark other political division-lines in contemporary Hungarian politics, but that these attempts did not deal with the logic in which it takes place or the ways in which it has been articulated into existence. Outlining the particular context of contemporary Hungary – in Chapter One – I referred to the way in which postcommunist politics plays with the lack of consensuality and homogeneous community-building. I also showed how the existing literature takes an essentialistic approach when dealing with political discourses and polarisation in contemporary Hungary.

In Chapter Two, I outlined the theoretical argument regarding the logic of polarisation, with discourse-theoretical discussion on frontiers and the construction of the people. One of the main innovations of my work is the bridging of the discourse theoretical approach of Ernesto Laclau with conceptual history of Quentin Skinner. I further argued that polarisation – by focusing upon the frontier in between the camps – creates consensus between the camps themselves. The problem with this phenomenon is that the contestation and frontier-creation which is part of democratic politics – and here I follow Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau – is minimised outside the frontier of polarisation, where the only function of the frontier is to serve as a source of (dis)identification for the political elites and to maintain the bipolar hegemony.

Analysing political speeches, in Chapter Three, I showed how political frontiers are created and negated in Gábor Démészky’s speeches, in which he demarcates either his, or his party’s, space in Hungarian politics. Even as a leading figure in a small party, yet also as the Mayor of Budapest, he relies on making a stark contrast between ‘us’ and ‘them’. So even whilst he occasionally denies the existence of frontiers of polarisation, he reconstructs the myth of the frontier. Once this myth is in existence he may position his party in the middle of the left-right continuum – at the frontier – or alternatively, he may side with the Socialists.

Analysing the speeches of the Fidesz leader, Viktor Orbán, who was Prime Minister from 1998 to 2002, I demonstrated in Chapter Four how the latter has made a distinction between himself, his government, the Hungarian nation (indeed – whatever can be added to this chain of equivalences)
on the one hand and Budapest on the other, mainly by ignoring the city. Looking at the Fidesz policies regarding new public architecture – pertaining to cultural complexes -, the frontier-making between the Hungarian left and the right, as well as between Budapest and the new complexes, becomes visible. Fidesz claims space for the projection of its discourse in the cityscape of Budapest, even as it ignores the city in general.

In the last chapter – Chapter Five – I tackled specific cases of polarisation, whilst recognising its causes and problems. I looked at the way in which polarisation was articulated in the 2002 elections. Then I observed the maintenance of the frontier in the referendum of 2004 and the presidential elections of 2005. These showed, once again, how one camp and its points of identification are articulated through the other camp. I also showed the way in which the maintenance of polarisation and the ‘hard frontier’, as a source of political identities, implies the maintenance of consensus on both sides of the frontier. I discussed the problem of this bipolar hegemony through Chantal Mouffe’s writings on both consensual and conflictual politics.

In other words, political polarisation implies both the continuation of the situation of liminality and a bipolar consensus. This situation blocks out many possible lines of division, and it is difficult for new demands or political frontiers to emerge. Anything coming from outside the situation of polarisation, such as the nomination of Lásló Sólyom as presidential candidate, is integrated into the existing system of polarisation by the political elites. This has significant problems for the democratic process, which would entail a continuous input of demands, conflicts, tasks and problems to the system, all of which will also come from outside the political elites.

Finally, I want to pose the question as to whether there would be a way out of the situation of polarisation. This has been hinted at across the thesis. There have already been some suggestions, such as those of Lengyel, whose ‘to-do list’ implies the creation of multiple frontiers and the reduction of the power of the institutions which foster the bipolar hegemony.739 Peter L. Berger

739 ‘What is to be done? The scaffolding of the authoritarian state should be dismantled from the structure of democratic politics. Fear, distrust and the neurosis of the zero sum game should be gradually reduced. Strong prime ministerial power must be replaced by collegiate and professional governance. A somewhat smaller parliament working with expert support should be created. The system of checks and balances should be reinforced. Interest groups and institutions of interest intermediation have to play a much more important role in the decision making process. The status of local governments should be reconsidered. A higher degree of centralisation in administration and at the same time a higher degree of local financial autonomy is needed. A service state should be created, which would be responsible for improving human capital and competitiveness. New social contracts are to be concluded. Extra income arising from sustainable growth should be divided more evenly and equitably. Europe and the world are already making their bargains with the various Hungarians. The national government should support and foster these processes. It would also be important to promote the process whereby the history, memories, festivals, symbols, icons of the various Hungarians become parts of the common national past.’ László Lengyel, ‘Two Hungaries or more?’ Reinventing Central Europe, http://www.talajuk-ki.hu/index.php/article/articleview/191/1/22/, 14 April 2005, last accessed 6 September 2005.
suggests the construction or realisation of mediating institutions. The main point is that the ‘frozen’ bipolar hegemony of polarisation would have to be dislocated. The above-mentioned processes could all cause such a dislocation. This could take place through a strong moment of rupture, or the system could slide smoothly into dislocation due, for example, to a process which undermines the value of the existing frontier of polarisation. Hungary might experience an anti-polarisation movement, which would show that the existing line of differentiation is not ‘valid’ – a tentative prospect given that the polarisation has not got much popular support. Nevertheless, since it is produced on the elite level and provides a real source of identification – mainly through disidentification with the other camp – this might imply the creation of a new ‘counter elite’ and/or the questioning of strong identifications. Another solution might be that one, or perhaps more usefully several of the until-now downplayed division-lines – the ones which usually do not fit with the existing situation and are therefore ignored –, become so important that they overtake the existing frontier of polarisation.

In accordance with the logic of hegemony which I have been discussing throughout the work, dislocation would lead to some degree of fragmentation, wherein new unities can be built. The democratic ethos of hegemony lies in the way in which these unities are constantly being created and contested. Political frontiers form part of the democratic process. They are plural and overlapping, instead of being fixed between two moral orders. The democratic processes imply the recognition of differences and disagreement, with which the institutions and processes and practises of politics, such as the community-building, would need to be able to deal.

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Appendix

Appendix for Introduction and Chapter Two

Appendix for Chapter Three

Appendix for Chapter Four